

THE CRITIC

BY
**RICHARD
BRINSLEY SHERIDAN**

ADAPTED BY
JEFFREY HATCHER



THE CRITIC
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The world premiere of *The Critic* was produced by the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, D.C. (Michael Kahn, Artistic Director), in association with the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, MN (Joseph Haj, Artistic Director). It opened at the Guthrie Theater on February 23, 2016. It was directed by Michael Kahn; the scenic design was by James Noone; the costume design was by Murell Horton; the lighting design was by Mark McCullough; the sound design was by Christopher Baine; the production stage manager was Joseph Smelser. The cast was as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| DANGLE | John Ahlin |
| MRS. DANGLE | Naomi Jacobson |
| SERVANT/PROMPTER | Hugh Nees |
| MISS BUXOM/ACTRESS 1 | Sandra Struthers |
| SNEER | Robert Dorfman |
| SIGNORA DÉCOLLETÉ/ACTRESS 2 | Charity Jones |
| SIR FRETFUL PLAGIARY/ACTOR | John Catron |
| MR. PUFF | Robert Stanton |

Characters

SCENE 1

DANGLE
MRS DANGLE
SERVANT
MISS BUXOM
SNEER
SIGNORA DÉCOLLETÉ
SIR FRETFUL PLAGIARY
MR. PUFF

SCENE 2

DANGLE
SNEER
PUFF
PROMPTER
QUEEN
SIR WALTER RALEIGH
LEICESTER
TILBURINA
GOVERNOR
DON GRANBARBATUPIDA
CONFIDANT
LORD BURLEIGH
BLUE ROBED ACTOR
GREEN ROBED ACTRESS 1
GREEN ROBED ACTRESS 2

Doubling Scheme

ACTOR 1—DANGLE

ACTOR 2—SNEER

ACTOR 3—PUFF

ACTOR 4—SIR FRETFUL PLAGIARY
SIR WALTER RALEIGH
LEICESTER
SOLDIER
GOVERNOR
DON GRANBARBATUPIDA
LORD BURLEIGH
BLUE ROBED ACTOR

ACTOR 5—SERVANT
PROMPTER

ACTRESS 1—SIGNORA DÉCOLLETÉ
QUEEN
CONFIDANT
GREEN ROBED ACTRESS 1

ACTRESS 2—MISS BUXOM
TILBURINA
GREEN ROBED ACTRESS 2

ACTRESS 3— MRS. DANGLE

THE CRITIC

Scene 1

A room in Dangle's house.

Closed double doors U.S. C.

Dangle and Mrs. Dangle are seated at a breakfast table, reading many newspapers.

DANGLE. (*Reading.*) "Lord North Delivers Ultimatum on the Unpreparedness of the Army—" Pshaw!

Tosses away newspaper, picks up another.

"Admiralty Asserts New Intelligence Is Proof of Imminent—" Ugh!

Tosses away newspaper, picks up another.

"Fate of the Nation to Be Determined By—" Oh, now, *really*, there's absolutely no news at all!

MRS. DANGLE. Mr. Dangle! Thousands upon thousands of words have been printed today on every subject imaginable!

DANGLE. Not about the theatre!

MRS. DANGLE. What have you to do with the theatre?

DANGLE. Madam, I am a critic.

MRS. DANGLE. My point is made.

Gives him her newspaper.

Look at this: proof, anonymous but authoritative, demonstrating the certainty of an invasion! Why, the French might be landing a troop as early as tomorrow!

DANGLE. A theatrical troupe?

MRS. DANGLE. Oh!

Mrs. Dangle takes a newspaper out from under a dish where she hid it and swats Dangle. Newspapers go flying about the room.

DANGLE. Ow! Here, now, stop—! Hey—

Grabs newspaper from her.

You took my *Morning Chronicle*!

Looking through Chronicle.

You insult my avocation, madam, but I can't see that my position has gained *you* anything but *advantage*. Did you not attend a fortnight previous to its premiere the first reading of Mr. Plott's new play?

MRS. DANGLE. It was a pantomime. I sat for three hours listening to stage directions!

DANGLE. What about Mr. Smatter? Didn't he, at my particular request, dedicate his recent farce to you?

MRS. DANGLE. Yes. "*In and Out*, For Mrs. Dangle."

Dangle slaps down his Chronicle.

DANGLE. How humiliating! My notice for last evening's play is missing entirely! It's been pushed off the pages by all this nonsense about the Admiralty and the fleet!

MRS. DANGLE. "Nonsense"? Mr. Dangle, all you need do is *read* to know that the nation is *utterly undone*! If you had the least sense of duty you'd have volunteered for an Infantry formation. You'd be a casualty by now.

A Servant enters.

SERVANT. Mr. Dangle, sir, a visitor to wait on you.

MRS. DANGLE. It begins. Each morning our house is made a register office for every would-be playwright and actor in the city, the very furniture trembling at the unprovoked rants of aspirant Hamlets and bent-back Richards!

DANGLE. Mrs. Dangle, the stage is the "Mirror of Nature," and actors the "Abstract and Brief Chronicles of the Time."

MRS. DANGLE. "Brief"! There's not an actor knows the meaning of the word!

DANGLE. Who is it calls?

SERVANT. A lady. She says you met last evening.

DANGLE. Show her in.

*Miss Buxom, whose description matches her name, enters.
She carries a small carpetbag.*

Why, Miss...

MISS BUXOM. Buxom.

DANGLE. Miss Buxom, yes! Erm, Mrs. Dangle, Miss Buxom performed in the play I attended last night, what was it called?

MISS BUXOM. *Chastity's Belt.*

DANGLE. Yes, *Chastity's Belt.* Miss Buxom was terribly moving in the scene where the belt came off.

MISS BUXOM. Shall I put on my costume?

MRS. DANGLE. "Costume"?

MISS BUXOM. As Ophelia. Mr. Dangle offered to assess my attributes. Where may I dampen my dress?

Miss Buxom takes out a very small white dress made of material so thin it is almost see-through.

MRS. DANGLE. That's a dress, is it? I thought it was a handkerchief.

DANGLE. Heh, yes, uhm... (*To Servant.*) Take Miss Buxom into the drawing room.

SERVANT. Yes, sir. Also, Mr. Sneer is come to call.

DANGLE. Sneer. Ah. Show him up.

Servant escorts Miss Buxom off.

MRS. DANGLE. And what favor has Mr. Sneer to want of you?

DANGLE. Nothing, I'm sure. Probably wishes to compare opinions on last evening's performance.

Sneer enters, holding a manuscript.

Sneer, my dear fellow!

SNEER. Dangle, do you know one of the actresses from *Chastity's Belt* is in your drawing room?

MRS. DANGLE. (*Baleful.*) Yes, she's going to show him her Ophelia.

SNEER. I do believe more people have seen her Ophelia than have seen *Hamlet*. At least she's not the one who *sang*.

Signora Décolleté, whose appearance matches her name, bangs through the door, singing:

SIGNORA DÉCOLLETÉ. Buongiorno, Signore Dangleno!

DANGLE. Signora Décolleté! She, too, was in...

MRS. DANGLE. *Chastity's Belt.*

SIGNORA DÉCOLLETÉ. Sì! Signore Dangleno ha detto che voleva scoprire che cosa la mia bella bocca può fare!

SNEER. What was that?

DANGLE. I wish I knew.

SNEER. I thought you claimed to be a linguist.

DANGLE. So I am, if she would only speak a language I have mastered.

SIGNORA DÉCOLLETÉ. Hai detto che dovevo venire a casa tua questa mattina e vi mostrerò quello che ho. Ma Lei ha detto che non avrei dovuto venire prima delle dieci, perché tua moglie non lascia la casa fino alle dieci.

SNEER. I know a little Italian. She says you told her to come by this morning, but not before ten o'clock because that's when Mrs. Dangle goes out—

DANGLE. No, no, that's a mistranslation!

SIGNORA DÉCOLLETÉ. Che idiota! Sono venuto a *cantare!* (*Mouth wide, points at it.*) Canta! Canta!

DANGLE. She's saying she wishes to vocalize. Here, she can rehearse in the music room. (*To Signora Décolleté.*) La Signora, pardonome por favor s'il vous plaît partez con mi esposa Signora La Dangle dans la chambre de la musica. Would you mind, my dear?

SIGNORA DÉCOLLETÉ. Va bene, andrà con te, ma devo aprire la mia gola.

Signora Décolleté sweeps out. Mrs. Dangle follows, closing the door.

DANGLE. Difficult morning.

SNEER. Especially when a wife doesn't keep to her schedule. I see you managed to divert yourselves with the papers.

DANGLE. "Invasion Imminent."

SNEER. Catastrophe. Pushed my notice back three full pages. I didn't see *yours* this morning. Was it not printed?

DANGLE. Tomorrow, I'm sure.

SNEER. The play will be closed by then.

DANGLE. You thought it that bad?

SNEER. No play should take longer to perform than it does to go from London to Edinburgh by foot.

Door opens. Mrs. Dangle enters.

SIGNORA DÉCOLLETÉ. (o.s.)

MISS BUXOM. (o.s.)

LA! LA! LA LA LA LA LA!

Non. Non non. Non non non-

EYOHH! EYOHH!

ny. Non non nonny heigh.

Mrs. Dangle closes the door. o.s. sound cuts off.

MRS. DANGLE. Signora Décolleté is unpacking her instrument, and Miss Buxom has sent for more water. She feels she is not wet enough.

SNEER. For what?

MRS. DANGLE. Ophelia's drowning scene.

SNEER. But Ophelia drowns offstage.

MRS. DANGLE. In this version, she drowns in our drawing room.

Spies manuscript.

Why, Mr. Sneer, I see you have something in hand. Would it by chance be a play to give to my husband?

SNEER. Indeed it is, one which he must exert himself to make the managers accept, for, although submitted anonymously, it is written by a person of consequence who has long toiled by other means to make the theatre a more elevated enterprise.

DANGLE. (*Takes MS, reads title.*) *The Reformed Housebreaker.*

SNEER. *The Reformed Housebreaker* is a brooding drama, whereby the crime of housebreaking is so severely mocked that, if the play has a proper run, bolts and bars will be obsolete by the end of the season. It is the first in a series of plays dramatizing all the penal laws.

The door opens.

THE CRITIC

BY RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN
ADAPTED BY JEFFREY HATCHER

5M, 3W (doubling)

From comic mastermind Jeffrey Hatcher comes a fresh take on Richard Brinsley Sheridan's 18th-century romp *THE CRITIC*, a whirlwind comedy about bad theatre, worse playwrights...and, worst of all, the critics. The meta-theatrical frenzy builds throughout, from wacky antics and quick changes to an operatic burlesque as the company jumps from role to role. Experience a madcap night of life in the theatre with this classic behind-the-scenes comedy.

"...delightful... arch, witty and farcical... Although the critic is the putative target of [the play], no one engaged in the theater game comes out unscathed. Hatcher's adaptation jabs the playwright, producer and director. ...a thoroughly enjoyable evening in the theater..."
—*Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN)*

"[A] streamlined and metastasized update... a wild, fun-filled riot with laughs aplenty..."
—*Washington City Paper*

"...turns the tables on the vanity, presumptuousness and solipsism of the criticizing business, in ways gleefully entertaining—and often right on the mark."
—*The Washington Post*

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