

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

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DIANA BLISS AND THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE

present



Oleanna

BY DAVID MAMET

AUCKLAND
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THE ATC
International
season

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production of



Oleanna

THE ATC
International
season 95

*Theatre Company, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the first play in our 1995 International
mma.*

*arded as one of America's foremost contemporary playwrights, and Oleanna is perhaps his most
'is inspiration for the piece was the Congressional hearing for admission of Clarence Thomas to the
rt. A former colleague, Anita Hill, testified that Mr Thomas had sexually harassed her. What
gthy series of charges and counter-charges. The nation was rivetted: was this a witch-hunt, with its
roots in the over-zealous political correctness of the feminist movement, or was it a valid and important redefinition of acceptable
behaviour in the workplace? It seemed that the very nature of the relationship between men and women was on trial.*

*From this highly-charged source material, Mamet has fashioned a work that has stirred great debate wherever it has
played. Some see it as part of a white male backlash against the advances made by the Women's' movement over the last 25 years.
Others applaud it as a voice of reason in a world where political correctness has paralysed free speech. Audiences becomes jury: it
is for you to decide.*

*We welcome as director Paul Gittins, last seen with the ATC as an actor in Daughters of Heaven. Tina Regtien, who
starred in that production as Juliet Hulme, takes on the equally challenging role of Carol, the student in need of help with her
studies. Raymond Hawthorne returns to the stage after a triumphant season in last year's Someone Who'll Watch Over Me
as John, the professor eager to educate his students. Auckland designer John Harding completes a first-class creative team, working
on a play that could not be more topical or confrontational. Theatre as it should be: Impossible to ignore.*

*We thank Kensington Swan, TVNZ, Auckland City Arts Alive and the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa for
their generous support, and gratefully acknowledge the unstinting co-operation and assistance of Greg Innes and his team at the
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*Finally, we thank you, the patron, for your support. If you are not already a subscriber, we invite you to sign up. It costs
nothing and the benefits and ticket discounts make it very worthwhile. Write to us at PO Box 1312 Shortland Street for more
information. In any event, we trust you enjoy tonight's show, and we look forward to seeing you at Dead Funny, opening at the
Herald Theatre on March 30.*



Very best wishes

Simon Prast
Producer

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

DAVID MAMET



Born in Chicago in 1947. He graduated from Goddard College with a BA in English in 1969. Throughout the '70's he worked as playwright, theatrical director and screenwriter and lectured in drama at the University of Chicago and the New York University. Mamet has received a great deal of critical recognition for his plays. Since 1976 they have been widely produced in regional theatres and in New York. In his personal and creative life Mamet resists the lure of Broadway - its establishment and its formulas for success. Chicago, where he still lives part of the year, serves not only as inspiration for much of his work but it also provides an accepting audience for Mamet's brand of drama. Yet despite his seeming indifference to Broadway and the fact that his language and the subject matter of his plays make them of questionable commercial value, several of his plays have been featured on Broadway. The first produced were *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, which won the Joseph Jefferson Award in 1976, and *Duck Variations*. However, he only emerged as a nationally acclaimed playwright with his comedy *American Buffalo*. His greatest successes to date have been *Glengarry Glen Ross*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1984, *Speed The Plow* and *Oleanna*. Mamet's screenplays include *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *The Verdict*, *The Untouchables* and *Hoffa*.

REALISM by David Mamet

Most American theatrical workers are in thrall to the idea of realism. A very real urge to be truthful, to be true constrains them to judge their efforts and actions against an inchoate, which is to say against an unspecified standard of reality.

That the standard is unspecified is important as it has become the explanation and excuse for any action or effort the artist feels disinclined to make. It becomes a peremptory challenge.

A necessary response to the artist who says "It's not true" must be "True to what?"

Stanislavsky, and more notably, Vakhtangov suggested that - that to which the artist must be true is the aesthetic integrity of the play.

This places a huge responsibility on the artist. He or she faced with this charge - to care for the scenic truth - can no longer take refuge in a blanket dismissal or endorsement of anything on the grounds of its not being realistic.

In general, each facet of every production yet be weighted and understood solely on the basis of its interrelationship to the other elements; on its service or lack of service to the meaning, the action of the play.

A chair is not per se truthful or untruthful. That one may say, "Yes, but it is a chair, an actual chair, people sit on it and I found it in a cafeteria, therefore it belongs in this play about a cafeteria," is beside the point. Why was that particular chair chosen? Just as that particular chair said something about the cafeteria in the cafeteria (its concern for looks over comfort, for economy over durability, etc.) so that chair, on stage, will say something about the play; so the question is: "What do you, the theatrical director, wish to say about the play?"

What does the chair mean in the play? Does it symbolise power? Then have that chair, Abasement? Possession, and so on. Choose the correspondingly appropriate chair. One might say, "Give it up, its just a chair..." But, again, someone is going to choose it; shouldn't that someone recognise that he is consciously or unconsciously making a choice, and make the choice consciously, and in favour of an idea more specific to the play than the idea of "reality".

A conscious devotion to the Idea of a play is a concern for what Stanislavsky called the Scenic Truth, which is to say, the truth in this particular scene. The important difference between realism and truth, Scenic Truth, is the difference between acceptability and necessity, which is the difference between entertainment and Art.

Everything which does not put forward the meaning of the play impedes the meaning of the play. The acting, the design, the direction should all consist only of that bare minimum necessary to put forward the action. Anything else is embellishment.

The problem of realism in design and its deleterious effects should be studied as a guide to the similar problem in acting. Actors for the last thirty years have been hiding in a ludicrously incorrect understanding to the Stanislavsky system and employing incorrectly understood jargons as an excuse for not acting.

Almost never are the teachings of Stanislavsky employed as an incitement, they are offered as an excuse - a substitute for action. The purpose of the system was, and is, to free the actor from extraneous considerations and permit him or her to turn all of his or her concentration to the objective, which is not "this performance" but the meaning of the play.

The notions of objective, activity, moment, beat and so on are all devoted toward reducing the scene to a specific action which is true to the author's intention and physically capable of being performed. The purpose of these concepts is to incite the actor to act. They all prod the actor to answer the one question which is capable of freeing him from self-consciousness and permitting him or her to become an artist: "What am I doing?"

The purpose of the Stanislavsky system of thought was to permit the actor to freely give the truth, the highest truth, of him/her to the ideas, the words of the playwright. The system teaches specificity as a tool of release rather than constraint. To make the transition from realism to truth, from self-consciousness to creativity, the artist must learn how to be specific to something greater than him or herself on different levels of abstraction: the meaning of the scene, the intention of the author, the thrust of the play. But never the "reality" or "truth" in general.

All theatre is about aspirations - it is about longing and the desire for answers - small theatre concerns itself with small questions, and great theatre with great. In any case, the question at stake is never the comfort of the artist.

Let us cast aside concerns of comfortability on stage. Why should one be comfortable acting Othello or St. Joan? The study of all theatrical artists should be action. Movement. A first test of all elements should not be "Do I feel comfortable (i.e. immobile) when considering it?" but "Do I feel Impelled? Do I start to Move? Does it make me want to do something?"

Actors are many times afraid of feeling foolish. We should teach each other to feel power rather than fear when faced with the necessity of choice, to seek out and enjoy, to feel the life-giving pleasure of the power of artistic choice.

This is one essay taken from a collection called "Life in the Theatre" from David Mamet's book, "Writing in Restaurants". This was published in 1986 by Faber and Faber Ltd., who gave us their kind permission to reproduce it.

RAYMOND HAWTHORNE - John



Raymond Hawthorne trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (R.A.D.A.) London from 1957-59. Prior to R.A.D.A. he served his apprenticeship as an actor with the New Zealand Players for 2 1/2 years (under the directorship of Richard Campion). From 1959 to 1971 he worked in the UK as an actor, singer, director and tutor, frequently returning to R.A.D.A. to teach and direct. His areas of expertise were Shakespeare, Restoration Comedy and Modern Acting Technique.

In 1971 Raymond returned to New Zealand and worked at the Mercury as an actor/director during Anthony Richardsons' Directorship. He played Andrei in Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*, Jaques in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, and Sir Thomas Moore in Robert Bolt's *A Man For All Seasons*.

In 1973 he instigated the formation of Theatre Corporate and was its Artistic Director for 8 years. In 1993 he played Sonia Davies' father in Gaylene Prestons mini-series *Bread and Roses*, directed Tony Kushners *Angels in America* for Auckland Theatre Company and played with great success the role of Michael in Frank McGuinness' *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* (also for Auckland Theatre Company).

Raymond runs his own Acting Studio "The Actors Space" and has recently completed 3 summer schools funded by the Dame Malvina Major Foundation under the auspices of the Auckland Opera and the New Zealand Drama School.

He is delighted to be working with Tina and Paul on this most formidable and topical play by the uncompromising David Mamet.

TINA REGTIEN - Carol



Tina graduated from the New Zealand Drama School, Toi Whakaari in 1987. Since then she has worked throughout New Zealand for Mercury, Circa, Downstage, Bats, Court and Auckland Theatre Companies.

Favourite theatre productions to date include *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Bloody Poetry*, *Twelfth Night*, *Lysistrata*, *School for Scandal*.

The Wellington and Auckland seasons of *Daughters of Heaven* and the recent

Australasian tour of the musical *Blood Brothers*. On TV she has appeared in *Undercover*, *The Ray Bradbury Series*, *Shark in the Park*, *Shortland Street* and has presented for TVNZ Holiday Programme. On film her credits include *Brain Dead*, *The Invisible Hand* and Preston/Laings production of *Bread and Roses* for which she was nominated for best supporting actress in 1994.

She welcomes the challenge and controversy of Mamet's *Oleanna* and relishes the opportunity to work with both Raymond and Paul.

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY IN ASSOCIATION WITH DIANA BLISS AND THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE PRESENT

Oleanna

BY DAVID MAMET

First Performed at the Hasty Pudding, Cambridge, Massachusetts on 1 May 1992
Orpheum Theatre, New York on 11 October 1992
Royal Court Theatre on 24 June 1993
Auckland Theatre Company on 23 February 1995

CAST

RAYMOND HAWTHORNE *John*
TINA REGTIEN *Carol*

DIRECTOR *Paul Gittins*
DESIGNER *John Harding*
PRODUCER *Simon Prast*
PRODUCTION MANAGER *Teresa Sokolich*
LIGHTING DESIGN *Robin Pentecost*
STAGE MANAGER *Bolke Water*
WARDROBE *Elizabeth Whiting*
SET PAINTERS *Keith Barclay*
Ron Burkes
SET BUILDERS *Third Stage*
MARKETING/PUBLICITY *Diana Goulding Promotions*
MUSIC *Extracts from Anthony Watson/The String Quartets New Zealand String Quartet c1994 CL Continuum Ltd CCD 1065*

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Teresa Sokolich *Production Manager*
Matthew Whiting *Financial Adviser*
Wes Lee *Administration Assistant*

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

ALBERT FINNEY GRETA SCACCHI MATTHEW MODINE

PAUL GITTINS - Director



Although Paul has become a household name through his role as Dr McKenna in Shortland Street, he is also known and remembered for many other roles created over an 18 year involvement in the industry.

For the stage these include the title role in Shakespeare's Hamlet, Eddie Carbone in Arthur Miller's View from the Bridge and Molina in Kiss of the Spiderwoman.

For television there was the indefatigable Lt Harry Anderson in Adventurer and his most recent film role was the father in End of the Golden Weather.

As Director Paul's credits include Richard III for the Pumphouse Winter Shakespeare, Via Satellite by Anthony McCarten for the Mercury, Krapps Last Tape by Beckett for Theatre Corporate and Children of a Lesser God by Mark Medoff.

Paul returns to Shortland Street after his engagement on Oleanna.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Oleanna has sparked controversy around the world since its premiere in 1992. Mamet has touched a raw nerve by wading boots and all into the arena of gender warfare. He has been accused of swinging a "wrecking ball in the face of political correctness". This makes a great headline, but I believe the canvas stretches far wider.

The philosophy of education, the enduring and traumatic effect of negative influences during ones upbringing and the use and abuse of power are just some of the other issues touched on.

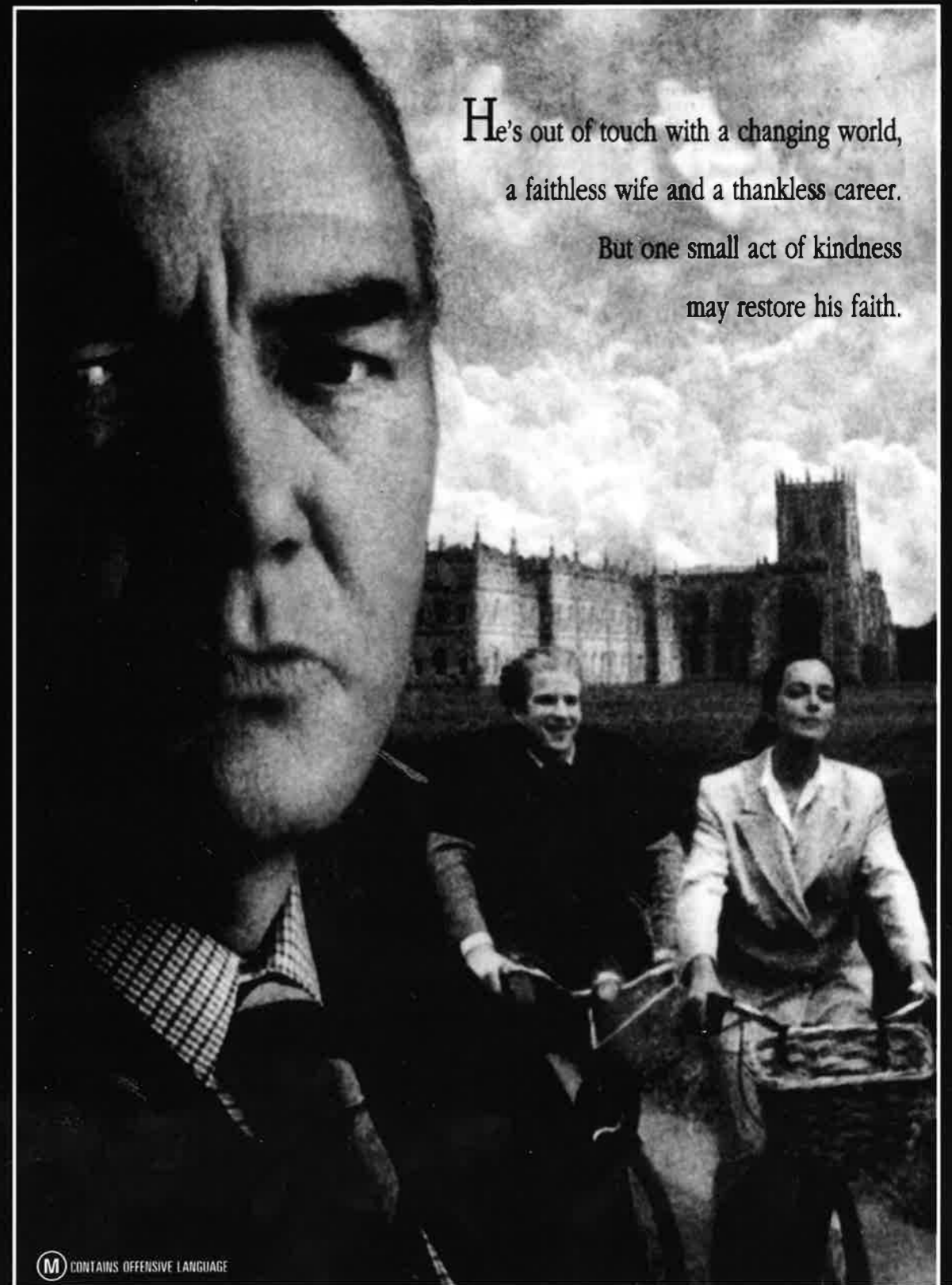
It is a play in which the balance between two protagonists is crucial. There are no winners. This is a mutually destructive conflict between male and female. There is no moral attitude that is justified, simply an argument that has the effect of sharply dividing an audience along sexual lines in the same way perhaps the trial of Lorena Bobbit did! For Auckland audiences there are echoes of the infamous incident involving Mervyn Thompson.

Mamet has stripped the argument to its essentials. Two actors, two chairs, a desk and finally his crackling and pithy dialogue. It is theatre in a very pure, distilled and exciting form.

JOHN HARDING - Designer

John's set designs include Macbeth, Hamlet, Via Satellite (Mercury), Cabaret (Watershed), Weed (Mercury), The Crucible (Mercury), The Merchant of Venice (Mercury).

As well as stage productions, John designs for television and teaches stage designs and prop construction.



He's out of touch with a changing world,
a faithless wife and a thankless career.
But one small act of kindness
may restore his faith.

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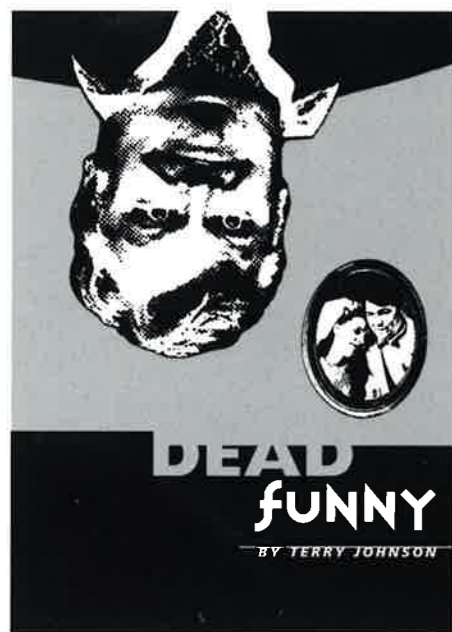
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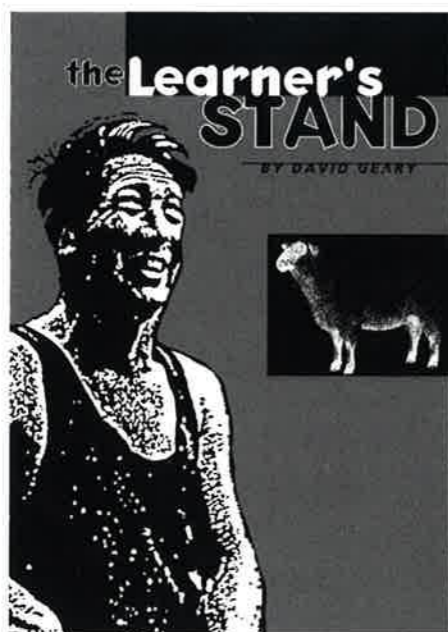
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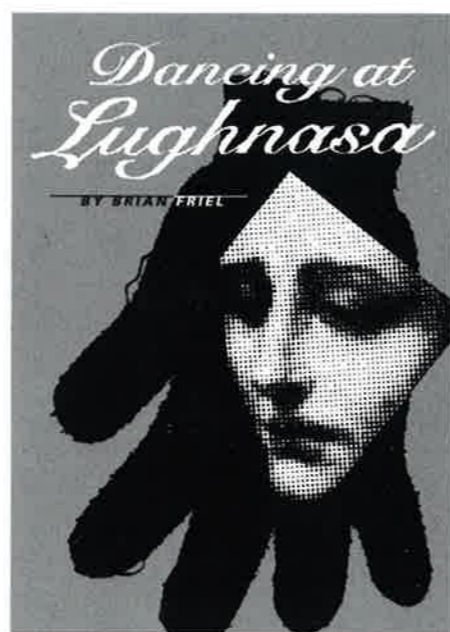
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