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Dramatic Publishing

A R R I V A L S

**A Departure from
Richard Brinsley Sheridan's THE RIVALS**

In One Act

by

JEROME McDONOUGH



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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To the memory and honor of
Richard Brinsley Sheridan

And to the Original Cast:

Tina Stratton, Matt Sherman, Caryann Wheeler,
Robby Taylor, Tracy Allen, Jennifer Tamplen,
Heather Morin, John Burlingame, Chris Scheetz,
Jeremy Hoffman, David Ramos, Megan Thompson,
James Pratt-Mullins, and Brian Harlan

Why ARRIVALS?

Richard Brinsley Sheridan's literary classic, *THE RIVALS*, is a masterpiece from a brilliant theatrical age. One character, Mrs. Malaprop, has even donated her name to our lexicon as a synonym for the blatant misuse of a word.

Yet, the very nature of Mrs. Malaprop's speech and that of her fellow characters makes *THE RIVALS* a difficult piece for modern actors and an even more difficult one for contemporary audiences. A recent production for a young adult audience yielded this response—"I thought you said it was a comedy." While this may be a comment on today's literary awareness, I think it is more likely the reflection of a society which has moved on. We do not speak so many of the playwright's words anymore, much less understand them. Sheridan's comic genius, however, should still strike a chord with contemporary audiences—if a compromise between the classic and the modern can be reached. *ARRIVALS* is my attempt to build that bridge.

Those familiar with Sheridan's work will notice that several characters have become much younger in *ARRIVALS*. The chafing and rage which arose from generational differences in *THE RIVALS* is refocused to the resentment and fire which results when personal control must be yielded to one only slightly older than ourselves. A practical advantage is the increased credibility of performances by actors who occupy the same frame of emotional and physical development. The renaming of the cast follows the Sheridan-era tradition of names which suggest, often ironically, the nature of the character.

Heresy? Fraud? Literary criminality? I hope not. My admiration for work in this style is great and I want to let current audiences in on the fun. That which remains of the original play—the greater percentage of the script—is a monument to Richard Brinsley Sheridan. The other stuff is my fault.

Jerome McDonough

ARRIVALS

A One-Act Play
For Six Men and Six Women

CHARACTERS

Female

MISS ROMANNE TICKE strong-willed, romantic. 18
MISS LEXICAHNA MERRIAM-WEBSTER . half-sister and
guardian of Romanne. 23
MISS PAYNEN THEN-ECK executor of family estate and
half-sister of Lieutenant Peerliss Ahner. 22
TELLER OVLIZE Romanne's maid. 19
MISS VIQUI TIMM compliant fiancée of N.C. Curity,
confidante of Romanne. 18
MERRI MERRIEST Viqui's maid. 17

Male

LIEUTENANT PEERLISS AHNER (also known as
CORPORAL MANOV SKRUPULLS) . . . a military man. 21
PLUCKY BRASHMAN a blustery Irishman. 24
DEEK VEEYUS Lieutenant Ahner's servant. 20
N.C. CURITY the doubting, insecure fiancé of Viqui. 21
SIM PULTON . . . a bumpkin. Hopeless suitor to Romanne. 22
IG NURANT servant to Sim Pulton. 19

PLACE: England (or perhaps elsewhere).

Locales: Romanne's Flat, Peerliss's Rooms, Pleyintha Field

TIME: Any time when young people fall blindly in love
or act unbearably pretentious—or both.

ARRIVALS

AT RISE: *We see Romanne's Lodgings at R, Peerliss's Lodgings at L, and an expanse of stage with double, masked, UC entrances—the entire C area representing Pleyintha Field. Action flows seamlessly among these three locales as the play progresses.*

The opening MUSIC, a lively Mozart or other selection, comes up and a fast motion MASQUE begins, all in mime. ROMANNE enters from R, glances about, then moves to the highest area of her Lodging and gestures for TELLER. TELLER enters from UCR and moves rapidly to ROMANNE, who gives her a note—and a bit of money. ROMANNE smiles in expectation. As TELLER crosses toward L, LIEUTENANT PEERLISS enters, L, and moves upward in his Lodging. TELLER gives PEERLISS the note, receives money from him, and crosses to exit ULC. PEERLISS starts to write a note. At R, LEXICAHNA enters and sends ROMANNE on some nameless errand. ROMANNE exits as TELLER enters from URC and crosses to LEXICAHNA, who gives her a note—and some money, of course. TELLER exits URC as PEERLISS gestures to DEEK, who enters quickly from L. PEERLISS gives DEEK a note and money. PEERLISS exits L, as ROMANNE re-enters, R, and dispatches LEXICAHNA on some nameless errand. LEXICAHNA exits as DEEK arrives from L, bearing PEERLISS's note. ROMANNE takes the note, gives DEEK

money, and eagerly sits, to read. DEEK exits URC as PLUCKY enters from L. TELLER enters from ULC and crosses to PLUCKY, who takes the note, pays TELLER, and exits, reading. TELLER exits ULC as the MUSIC fades under and DEEK enters from URC and MERRI enters from ULC. The two encounter each other and the spoken play begins.

DEEK. Miss Merriest, what are you doing here on holiday?

MERRI. My mistress, Miss Paynen Then-Eck, felt an oncoming fit of the vapors, so we were off from the city at an hour's warning, Mr. Deek. And your master, Lieutenant Peerliss Ahner, he is here on leave?

DEEK. On leave, yes, but I do not serve the lieutenant now—I am employed by Corporal Manov Skrupulls.

MERRI. A change for the better?

DEEK. I've not changed.

MERRI. But you said...

DEEK. Ahner and Skrupulls are one and the same. And, the Corporal being on guard, the Lieutenant has nothing to do with me.

MERRI. What's the cause?

DEEK. Love, of course. His lady fancies him better as an impoverished corporal than half-brother and co-heir with Miss Then-Eck.

MERRI. And his lady's name?

DEEK. Miss Romanne Ticke. Yet there is HER half-sister in the way—Miss Lexicahna Merriam-Webster—who has never seen my master. But, we must to our duties.

MERRI. Keep me informed. *(Exit severally.)*

(Focus shifts to ROMANNE, still seated in her rooms, R. She is reading a romance novel as VIQUI enters.)

ROMANNE. Viqui!

VIQUI. What is the matter, Romanne? You were denied to me at first.

ROMANNE. Let me impart my distress. My letters have informed you of my love for Manov. But my sister discovered a note from him and has confined me. Yet, she is in love herself.

VIQUI. You jest!

ROMANNE. She corresponds with one Plucky Brashman under the feigned name, "Deceiva."

VIQUI. Then surely she is now more indulgent.

ROMANNE. She is more suspicious than ever! And she has accepted another suitor for my hand, that odious Sim Pulton.

VIQUI. Yet, think, Romanne. Your Manov is only a Corporal and you are a young woman of means.

ROXANNE. I lose my fortune if I marry without my sister's consent, so I am determined to do so.

VIQUI. This is only your fancy!

ROMANNE. You charge ME with fancy? You are a slave to the fancy and jealousy of your ungrateful fiancé, N.C. Curity.

VIQUI. My N.C. is too noble to be jealous. He merely suspects that he is not loved enough. This has cost me many unhappy hours, yet I love him still.

(Enter TELLER, hurriedly.)

TELLER. Miss Paynen Then-Eck and your sister are below.

VIQUI *(exiting)*. I'll take another opportunity to pay my respects to Miss Lexicahna, her words so astonishingly misapplied, though not entirely mispronounced. Adieu. *(Exit VIQUI.)*

ROMANNE (*stashing the book she was reading*). "The Constancy Of Love" must hide awhile. (*To TELLER*.) Teller, leave Fordyce's "Sermons" open and fling Lord Chesterfield's "Letters" to me. Now for 'em.

(*Exit TELLER as LEXICAHNA and PAYNEN enter from URC.*)

LEXICAHNA (*speaking of ROMANNE*). There's the in-gate who beshrews her defection on a fellow not worth a shilling!

ROMANNE. Lexicahna, I thought...

LEXICAHNA. Thought does not become a young woman. You must forget this Manov—illiterate him from your memory.

ROMANNE. It is not so easy.

LEXICAHNA. It is! I forget several matters daily. I think it my duty.

PAYNEN (*speaking of ROMANNE*). The girl remembers what she is ordered not to! This is the consequence of excessive schooling.

LEXICAHNA. Will you except the husband whom your sister perplexes?

ROMANNE. Had I NO preference, yours would be my aversion.

LEXICAHNA. Preference and aversion don't become a young woman. To your room, with utmost delay, hussy!

ROMANNE. Willingly. (*Exit ROMANNE.*)

PAYNEN. The girl's been taught too much. I'd sooner see a young woman wed to Attila the Hun than wallow in higher education. I never endured it myself, and still I inherited a fortune. But, what would YOU have a young woman know, Miss Lexicahna?

LEXICAHNA. She should not ensue a college pedigree nor seek an advanced pamplona; so much learning don't become a young woman. But I would have her destructed in geometry, that she might know of the contagious countries. Above all, she should not mispronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and she should reprehend their meanings.

PAYNEN. So, to the matter at hand. You have no objection to the marriage proposal?

LEXICAHNA. None. I hope Lieutenant Peerliss will excess no objection.

PAYNEN. He dare not.

LEXICAHNA. I'll prepare Romanne. Please represent her as an object not altogether illegible. (*Exit PAYNEN.*) I shall be so happy, so related by Romanne's removal as she has discovered my insaturation toward Mr. Brashman. Sure, Teller didn't betray me! No, the girl is much too simple and stupid, an utter idiom. (*Calls.*) Teller!

(*Enter TELLER.*)

TELLER. Yes, madam?

LEXICAHNA. Presently I'll pen a loving missile to my Plucky. Your deliverance shall follow. But mind—if you ever betray me, Teller, you forfeit my malevolence forever. (*Exit LEXICAHNA, to write her "missile."*)

TELLER. Let's see how my simplicity has served me lately—(*Savoring her money.*) For abetting Romanne Ticke—twelve pound, twelve! From the Corporal, six guineas. From Miss Lexicahna, for betraying the young people, two guineas. From Plucky Brashman, three crowns and a silver snuff box. Well done, simplicity. Yet, I MAY have led

Plucky to believe he was corresponding with the younger sister. (*Exit TELLER, laughing as...*)

(*PEERLISS and DEEK enter into PEERLISS's rooms.*)

PEERLISS. Has N.C. been informed of Viqui's arrival?

DEEK. No, sir. (*Exit DEEK.*)

PEERLISS. Now to tease my friend.

(*Enter N.C.*)

PEERLISS. N.C.!

N.C. How stand matters with you and Romanne?

PEERLISS. Perfectly.

N.C. Why not escape with her at once?

PEERLISS. And forfeit her inheritance? No, no.

N.C. You trifle too long.

PEERLISS. My Romanne would elope with me as Corporal Skrupulls, yet not with the impediments of her friends' consent—nor my family's wealth. I must prepare her gradually. (*Changing subjects.*) But say, will you dine with me?

N.C. I am not in a suitable humor.

PEERLISS. What does your brain conjure now?

N.C. I fear for my Viqui's spirits, her health. My absence may oppress her. The heat, the dews, may endanger her.

PEERLISS. If she were well, would you be content?

N.C. Beyond measure.

PEERLISS. Then content yourself. Miss Viqui Timm IS in perfect health, and arrived here within the hour.

N.C. Nothing could now make me uneasy.

(*Enter DEEK.*)

DEEK. Mr. Pulton is below. (*Exit DEEK. N.C. starts to exit toward C.*)

PEERLISS (*stopping N.C.*). Stay. Sim Pulton can witness—or, perhaps, witless—how your mistress has been. Further, he is a rival of my other self—It's marvelous to hear him complain of "...this bounder, Skrupulls." Hush!

(*Enter SIM PULTON.*)

SIM PULTON. Peerliss! (*To N.C.*) And YOUR servant, sir.

PEERLISS (*introducing*). N.C. Curity, Sim Pulton.

SIM PULTON. Miss Timm's N.C.? (*N.C. nods assent.*) You are a happy man.

N.C. Viqui enjoys full health?

SIM PULTON. Healthy as the German spa.

N.C. (*angry*). There!

PEERLISS. You are angry she is not sick?

N.C. Never. But a little indisposition is expected when absent from those we love. This robust health is unkind.

PEERLISS. Oh, very.

N.C. (*to SIM*). Miss Timm has been merry?

SIM PULTON. Very!

N.C. (*incensed*). VERY merry and I away!

PEERLISS. I am glad when my lady is merry.

N.C. As am I. But mightn't she have been TEMPERATELY healthy, PLAINTIVELY merry? (*N.C. exits, angrily, ULC.*)

SIM PULTON. The gentleman were out of sorts.

PEERLISS. Jealous, I believe.

SIM PULTON. Jealous of ME? You jest. Yet, I'll not joke when I unearth this Corporal Skrupulls.

(*Enter DEEK*)