

## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Monday, January 26, 2009

CONTACT: Patrick Finlon, PR Director

315-443-2636 or [pjfinlon@syr.edu](mailto:pjfinlon@syr.edu)



*Syracuse University Department of Drama Presents*

## **The Way of the World**

Love, Lies & Money

By William Congreve

Directed by Malcolm Ingram

**ARTHUR STORCH THEATRE at SYRACUSE STAGE**

Opens: February 6, 2009

Closes: February 15, 2009

(SYRACUSE, NY)- A man willing to go any lengths to secure a wealthy wife meets his match in this comedy of manners. Witness the complex twists in the plot and watch as it all unravels as Mirabell maneuvers and schemes to achieve his desired social status through an advantageous marriage in William Congreve's *The Way of the World*, presented by the Department of Drama in The College of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University. **Running February 6 to February 15**, tickets are available at 315-443-3275 or by visiting <http://vpa.syr.edu/drama>.

*The Way of the World* provides us with a satirical glimpse into 18<sup>th</sup> century England's upwardly mobile class. Marriage, money and class are the keys to survival in this society, leading one to question the existence of a romantic foundation to marriage. Congreve's final play, *The Way of the World* is considered a shining example of Restoration Comedy, a genre known for its humor regarding relationships, as well as an emphasis on elegance, class and manners.

"I was attracted by the richness of the characters, and the elegant, beautifully constructed language through which they express themselves. They compete with each other both in appearance and in clever word play," notes Director Malcolm Ingram. "Unlike Shakespeare, it's as if their passion is always channeled and expressed through their intellect, and I felt that this would present a very worthwhile challenge for myself and the students."

Restoration Comedy propelled audiences to dizzying heights of laughter. Written in 1700 during a time of transition from conservative to liberal attitudes, *The Way of the World* is a social commentary on the blurred line between the desire for romance in marriage and the need for financial security. To emphasize this point, Congreve set a precedent in both the theatre world and high society by having Mrs. Millamant, who

does love Mirabell, insist he agree to a pre-nuptial agreement that will preserve her control over her inheritance once they are married.

## SYNOPSIS

Mirabell, a man about town, loves Mrs. Millamant and wants to marry her (during the Restoration, even unmarried women at this time were called Mrs.). Mrs. Millamant loves Mirabell, but is fiercely protective of her independence and not ready to rush into marriage. She lives with her aunt and guardian, Lady Wishfort, who has control over one-half of Mrs. Millamant's fortune of twelve thousand pounds (about \$1.5 million dollars in today's money). Mirabell has flirted with Lady Wishfort as a means of gaining access to her niece. Upon discovering his true intentions, Lady Wishfort, who is desperate to get a man for herself, has forbidden Mirabell to enter her house and resolved not to release the six thousand pounds, should Mrs. Millamant and Mirabell marry.

Since love minus her entire fortune is not an option for either Mirabell or Mrs. Millamant, Mirabell plans to embarrass Lady Wishfort into consenting to their marriage and releasing the money by instructing his manservant Waitwell to impersonate a nobleman called Sir Rowland, who will woo Lady Wishfort and inveigle her into marrying him. The ruse will then be revealed, in the hope that rather than face the public disgrace of having agreed to marry a bogus Lord, Lady Wishfort will give Mirabell what he wants and allow him to marry Mrs. Millamant with her blessing (and her fortune).

Fainall and Mrs. Marwood also have designs on Mrs. Millamant's money, and on the fortunes of Mrs. Fainall and Lady Wishfort. Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall, however, possess a secret weapon.

## PLAYWRIGHT

Born on January 24, 1670, William Congreve was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and the Middle Temple, where he studied law. His literary apprenticeship was served under the tutelage of John Dryden, the leading playwright of the day. Congreve's first play, *The Old Bachelor* (1693), was an enormous success at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Dryden wrote that he had never read so brilliant a first play. Congreve's next effort, however, was not so successful. *The Double-Dealer* (1693) revolves around a socialite who deceives everyone with the simple device of telling the plain truth. Although most modern critics consider *The Double-Dealer* an improvement over Congreve's first play, it was snubbed by critics and audiences alike. Congreve was irritated by what he perceived as the ignorance of the public. *Love for Love* (1695) returned Congreve temporarily to public favor, and his reputation improved still further with the production of his only tragedy, *The Mourning Bride*, in 1697. But Congreve's masterpiece was still to come.

Although *The Way of the World* (1700) was coolly received when it was first performed, it has since come to be considered one of the most intellectually accomplished English comedies. The story revolves around a pair of lovers, Millamant and Mirabell, who establish a rather unconventional marriage arrangement based on their knowledge of the world which, as they know, is inhabited primarily by intriguers, fops, and fools. Unfortunately, Congreve's wit and his characters' sexual freedom and experimentation was at odds with the thinking of certain moralists of the day. The conservative middle class, determined to make its tastes felt, sided with the Society for the Reformation of Manners and it became increasingly difficult to get a play produced unless it conformed to that group's doctrine. Realizing that his protests were in vain, Congreve gave up playwriting altogether, resolving to "commit his quiet and his fame no more to the caprices of an audience." He was only thirty years of age.

Although he would write no more plays, Congreve did not retire entirely from the theatre. He wrote the libretto for two operas and collaborated, in 1704, in translating French playwright Molière's *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*. However, for the next twenty-nine years, he lived mostly on his reputation and the royalties from his plays. He died on January 19, 1729, in a carriage accident, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. The Duchess of Marlborough, with whom he was rumored to have been romantically involved, erected a monument over his grave.

## DIRECTOR

Malcolm Ingram teaches voice and acting in the Department of Drama. His previous productions include *Henry V* (an all female cast), *Charley's Aunt*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, *Our Country's Good*, *Macbeth*, *Twelfth Night*, *Sir Patient Fancy*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Malcolm is also an actor with a long career in the U.K. as well as many professional productions in this country. His most recent appearances were as the Narrator in *Shakespeare and the Symphony* at the Syracuse Civic Center, and last summer's performance as Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and Mellersh Wilton in the award-winning *Enchanted April* (Best Production in The Berkshires 2006), both at Shakespeare and Company in Lenox, Massachusetts.

## CAST

**Brendan M. Cullen** (Mirabell) is a junior Acting major from Danvers, MA. **Jessica DiScipio** (Mrs. Marwood) is a senior Acting major from Albany, NY. **Raffy Ganimian** (Coachman) is a sophomore Acting major. **John Garry** (Witwoud) is a junior Musical Theatre major from Forestburgh, NY. **Peter Hourihan, Jr.**, (Waitwell) is a junior Acting major from Washington, NJ. **Stella Heath** (Mrs. Millamant) is a senior, majoring in Acting and Geography. **Kerry Kazmierowicztrimm** (Fainall) is a junior Acting major from Chatham, NY. **Jacob Keefe** (Mirabell's Servant, u/s Mirabell) is a junior Acting major from Bedford, NH. **Kristin Rose Kelly** (Betty) is a junior Musical Theatre major at SU. **Kayla Levitt** (Mrs. Fainall) is a junior Acting major from Chatham, NJ. **Justin Nichols** (John, The Footman) is a sophomore Musical Theatre major from Tewksbury,

MA. **Emma Ritchie** (Mincing, u/s Lady Wishfort) is a junior Musical Theatre major from Huntington Woods, MI. **Emily Robinson** (Foible) is a sophomore Acting major from Natick, MA. **Robbie Simpson** (u/s Witwoud) is a sophomore Acting major from West Springfield, MA. **David Snyder** (Sir Wilfull Witwoud) is a senior Acting major from Ridley Park, PA. **Kelsey Stalter** (Lady Wishfort) is a junior Musical Theatre major from Milford, PA. **Dariana Sub** (Peg, u/s Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood) is a sophomore Acting major from New York City. **Jorge Torres** (Petulant) is a junior Acting major from San Juan, Puerto Rico.

## TICKETS

Tickets for the Syracuse University Department of Drama's production of *The Way of the World* are \$15 for adults and \$13 for students and seniors. \$7 rush tickets are available at the door, one hour before curtain. Wednesday, February 11 is "Pay What You Can Night" for valid SU ID cardholders. For tickets and more information, contact the Department of Drama box office at 315-443-3275 or visit <http://vpa.syr.edu/drama>.

## VPA AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

The College of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University is committed to the education of cultural leaders who will engage and inspire audiences through performance, visual art, design, scholarship and commentary. It provides the tools for self-discovery and risk-taking in an environment that thrives on critical thought and action.

## Fact Sheet

*Syracuse University Department of Drama Presents*

# The Way of the World

By William Congreve  
Directed by Malcolm Ingram

**ARTHUR STORCH THEATRE at SYRACUSE STAGE**

Opens: February 6, 2009      Closes: February 15, 2009

### Designers:

Rachel A. Slotnick (Set Designer)  
Doreen Sayegh (Costume Designer)  
Bridgette 'Jet' Levy (Lighting Designer)  
David Huber (Sound Designer)

### Stage Manager:

Dimitre Guenov

### Cast:

Brendan M. Cullen (Mirabell)  
Jessica DiScipio (Mrs. Marwood)  
Raffy Ganimian (Coachman)  
John Garry (Witwoud)  
Peter Hourihan, Jr. (Waitwell)  
Stella Heath (Mrs. Millamant)  
Kerry Kazmierowicztrimm (Fainall)  
Jacob Keefe (Mirabell's Servant, u/s Mirabell)  
Kristin Rose Kelly (Betty)  
Kayla Levitt (Mrs. Fainall)  
Justin Nichols (John, The Footman)  
Emma Ritchie (Mincing, u/s Lady Wishfort)  
Emily Robinson (Foible)  
Robbie Simpson (u/s Witwoud)  
David Snyder (Sir Wilfull Witwoud)  
Kelsey Stalter (Lady Wishfort)  
Dariana Sub (Peg, u/s Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood)  
Jorge Torres (Petulant)

### Performances: February 6-15

February 6 - 8 p.m.

February 7 - 8 p.m.

February 8 - 2 p.m.

February 11 - 8 p.m.

February 12 - 8 p.m.  
February 13 - 8 p.m.  
February 14 - 2 p.m.  
February 14 - 8 p.m.  
February 15 - 2 p.m.

Ticket are \$15 for adults and \$13 for students and seniors.  
\$7 rush tickets available at the door, one hour before curtain.  
Wednesday, February 11 is "Pay What You Can Night" for valid SU ID holders.  
For tickets and more information, call 315-443-3275  
or visit <http://vpa.syr.edu/drama>.

###