

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Montana Masquers Event Programs, 1913-1978

University of Montana Publications

10-26-1961

The Contrast, 1961

Montana State University (Missoula, Mont.). Montana Masquers (Theater group)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/montanamasquersprograms>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Montana State University (Missoula, Mont.). Montana Masquers (Theater group), "The Contrast, 1961" (1961). *Montana Masquers Event Programs, 1913-1978*. 156.

<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/montanamasquersprograms/156>

This Program is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Montana Publications at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Montana Masquers Event Programs, 1913-1978 by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

FIFTY-SEVENTH SEASON OF GREAT PLAYS
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA
and
MONTANA MASQUERS
present

THE CONTRAST

by
Royall Tyler

Directed by SARAH JAMES*†

Set designed by JANE NELSON

Technical Director, GEORGE BALDWIN‡

Costumes designed by SARAH JAMES‡

OCTOBER 26, 27, 28; NOVEMBER 3, 4, 1961

MASQUER THEATER

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Letitia	Helen McKeague
Charlotte	Christine MacDonald
Maria Van Rough	Leslie Shumate
Van Rough	Larry James
Colonel Henry Manly	James Bompert
Jessamy	Gordon Jensen
Jonathan	Mike Fallon‡
Billy Dimple	Delbert Unruh
Jenny	Tam Scriven‡

Time: 1787

Place: In and around New York.

There will be a 10-minute intermission following Act I and Act II.

Assistant to the Director	Veronica Grooms
Stage Manager	Veronica Grooms
Lighting	Ione Hutchings‡
Costumes	Katy Van Aelstyn,‡ Chris Cheetham, Nikki Paulsrud, Helen McKeague, Russell Eliasson, Margo Maxon, Jean Nichols
Properties	Jane Nelson, Tam Scriven‡
Box Office Manager	Roger DeBourg‡
Photographs	Cyrile Van Duser‡
Consultant	Paul A. Carter

*Tonight's play is the eleventh major production to be directed by a student since the opening of the Masquer Theater. The director is Sarah James, a senior majoring in drama, a Montana Masquer, and Masquer costume mistress.

‡Members of Montana Masquers.

Members of the audience are invited to participate in the post-mortem session of **THE CONTRAST** on Wednesday, November 8 at noon in the Lodge Territorial Room.

WATCH FOR: **THE VISIT**, by Friedrich Duerrenmatt

November 16, 17, 18, 1961—University Theater

and Clifford Odets' **THE COUNTRY GIRL**

November 30, December 1, 2, 7, 8, 1961—Masquer Theater

NEW YORK, 1787 — MISSOULA, 1961

Tonight the earliest play by an American to have been professionally produced after the Revolution has its Missoula premiere. It is appropriate that a production of this play, Royall Tyler's **The Contrast**, should open the 1961 theater season in Missoula. The New York City of 1787 was about the same size as the Missoula of 1961; deer and porcupines wandered into Wall Street and Broadway as they occasionally wander into North Higgins Avenue today—symbolizing that the United States of the late 18th Century, like the Missoula of the mid-20th, lived on a scale that was small, human and remote from the centers of urban civilization.

Yet the consciousness of those urban centers is present in both cases. One of the "contrasts" acted out in this play is the contrast between simple, moralistic, rural virtue and artificial, intellectual, urban villainy—a contrast expressed then in terms of America versus Europe, as it is now in terms of Montana versus the Eastern seaboard. But the play would never have been the comedy hit of the Broadway season of 1787 if it had been no more than a propaganda tract.

Few as were the inhabitants of New York City in those days, they were already sophisticated theater-goers. They had seen Shakespeare, Congreve, and Dryden in repertory since the 1750's; more significantly, when the Continental Congress had banned public entertainments during the Revolution (revolutionists are generally opposed to frivolity), New Yorkers had continued to go to the theater—behind the British lines. The problem for the commercial playwright of the 1780's was to write a play sufficiently urbane in temper to attract these seasoned theater-goers without at the same time arousing the wrath of Congress. (How contemporary this all sounds!)

Tyler solved the problem with a time-tested device of the satirist: overstatement. The Congress's simple morality is satisfied; vice is discomfited, and virtue triumphs. But the playwright deliberately overdoes all this. In the Sheridan tradition of characterizing by name (e.g., "Lady Sneerwell" in **School for Scandal**), Tyler names his hero "Manly" and his villain "Dimple"; and the "good" characters' goodness is exaggerated to the point of farce. Colonel Manly's simple republican dignity becomes comic pomp; his servant (or "waiter") Jonathan's good-hearted rural Americanism becomes hayseed incompetence. The New York audience of 1787 was thus able to agree with Tyler's cozy patriotic sentiments while laughing at the characters who embodied them. This dodge has been effectively employed in the American Theater from that day to this; we all love to say, affectionately and yet condescendingly, that "Everything's Up-to-Date in Kansas City."

—Paul A. Carter
Associate Professor of History
Montana State University