I want to thank you for supporting this season. Even though it’s been a year of struggle, you have been the most inspiring audience that I’ve had in my time. May the teamwork that went into this市级 of work bring you comfort and hope. And thank you to all the artists that have put in so much effort and creativity. We are proud to be a part of this family. I hope this season is one you will remember. We appreciate your support and look forward to seeing you all again.

Wishing you health and happiness.

Sincerely,
[Signature]

P.S. The season opens on June 1st.
"You think those like the Fool..."

Literary Associate Drew Lichtenberg interviews Bill sifting King and Nancy Robbrite, two of STC's Affiliated Artists, about 5 years of making people laugh.

DL: How did you fall into classical comedy?
SK: I've always said that I came here as a young person, and two years ago, I met a group of people who were making me laugh. I've been doing it professionally for a long time now.

DL: How does it feel to be a part of the company?
SK: It feels great. I really enjoy the company. We have a lot of fun together.

DL: What's your favorite scene or character to perform as a part of the company?
SK: I think the scene I enjoy the most is the one where the Fool is talking about the world being a stage and the players being actors. It's such a great line and it always gets a big laugh.

DL: The Fool doesn't usually appear in Shakespearean plays. How do you feel about playing him?
SK: I think it's a great role. It's a chance to be silly and have fun.

DL: What's it like being on tour with the company?
SK: It's a lot of fun. We get to travel and meet new people. It's a great way to see different parts of the country.
see humor. "Boy, was I suffering." That is a
sense of humor. It's tied to intelligence. And hope.

DL: An ability to estrange yourself

FK: I remember, for example, laughing at
my father's funeral. I was very upset that
he died. But I also noticed how everyone
was acting at the funeral. They were doing
their own personal "funeral thing," and
that amused me. They were behaving in
the way they thought they were expected
to behave, and it was rather funny.

You can look back and smile at someone
who's dead or you can break into tears.
A sense of humor is our defense against
horror.

DL: Have you ever felt uncomfortable
onstage? Or would you do anything?

FK: I've been naked several times
onstage, in Quills, a
one-man version
of A Tale of Two
Cities and In Love

Valiant Compassion! You don't do it in the
rehearsal hall. It's just too cheer. Dress
rehearsal—er—un-dress rehearsal, as it
were—you have to do it. But then you're
saying, "Do these lights have to be
so bright?"

DL: Let's start by talking about your
first project with STC.

Nancy Robinette: I never expected I would
be asked to act at the Shakespeare Theatre
Company. I cut my teeth doing new plays
at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company,
and my humor is still more off-the-line
than on-the-line. Classical work is a big
struggle for me.

My first Shakespeare was Maria in Twelfth
Night. I was cast against type. Rebecca
[Bayla Taichman, the director] really
wanted—and I think this is important—to
bring out the sadness, the poles of
different experience in that play. Any
comedy is serious business. If it doesn't
have a serious undertone, it's not worth
taking everybody's time. I teach comedy
and it's actually very tedious work.

There's an essay by Henri Bergson, do you
know that one?

DL: "On Laughter?"

NR: Yes. He makes this point. The great
classical comedies are very serious, filled
with great things to say about society
as well as being entertaining. Howard
Shalwitz [the Artistic Director of Woolly
Mammoth Theatre] used to say, "Comedy
is the best way to get your point across."
because when people laugh, they're
seeing something in themselves that
they might not have otherwise.

DL: Laughter is the gift of self-
recognition.

NR: There are many reasons people
laugh, but that's the big one.

DL: You mentioned your type. What
would you say it is?

NR: Oh, [guff] I think I've played
dizzy dowager there is in classical
literature. Mrs. Malaprop, Mistress
Otter. Lady Bountiful... Mistress Quickly.
They're all extreme characters.

DL: Do you find your way into those
characters by going off-center first?

NR: I try to play the truth of the moment.
I don't like to do the same thing in
performance. I improvise. I don't want
to throw the other actors, of course,
but I really want to keep working on
the character until we close. I'm not
particularly interested in consistency
or technical prowess, but in the comic
moment, it's always a moving, changing
ing

DL: What do you mean?

NR: The only really interesting thing is
how people are affecting each other in
the moment. 90% of the time, that isn't
happening. It's a secondary version of
that experience. It's cinned and stale and
you have no idea whether it's true or not.
The only barometer is what's happening
in the moment.

But how do you get to this point where
you are free enough to play with that
type of abandonment? I have broken
onstage, a lot. It's risky. Fellow actors
get mad at me. Joy Zinoman [the former
artistic director of The Studio Theatre]
calls it "the tightrope." That ability to
play with complete abandon. So I'm a bit
of an odd duck.
ReDiscovery
THE LIFE OF AN
by Laura Henry, Artistic Fellow

At the turn of the 18th century, Jean-François Regnard appeared to be Mollière’s heir apparent. His first full-length comedy, *Le Joueur* (The Gambler) was played at the Comédie Française (Mollière’s theatre) every year until his death, and he had just begun his masterpiece, *Le Légataire Universel* (The Heir Apparent). More than 300 years later, Regnard’s name is virtually unknown in the American theatre. Lost over three centuries of political upheavals and changing tastes, his work is rarely translated and even more rarely produced. But thanks to the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s ReDiscovery Series, the rambunctious characters, knockabout plots and expertly rhymed couples of Regnard’s play are being unleashed on the stage once again.

With our ReDiscovery Series, the Shakespeare Theatre Company is committed to preserving and reinvigorating the classical repertoire through the investigation of little known plays and playwrights. Our reading series allows artist and audiences to explore plays that have been forgotten over decades, sometimes centuries. Over the past ten years, we have read more than 30 plays as part of the Series. In 2009-2010, David Ives’ adaptation of Pierre Corneille’s *The Liar* marked the first completed cycle of a play’s progress from staged reading to commissioned script, going through a series of workshops to a fully realized production—a process that took approximately three years. The play was such a success that it led directly, as you can see in the timeline, to this season’s production of *The Heir Apparent.*
Play in Process

Andrew Veenstra (Erste) and Carson Elrod (Crispin).

Assistant Director Jenny Lord and Director Michael Kahn.

Andrew Veenstra (Erste) and Kelly Herchinson (Lisette).

Set model for The Her Apparent by Alexander Dodge.

Floyd King (Garonza), Nancy Robinette (Madama Argante) and Meg Chambers Steedle (Isabelle).

C. stume rendernings for The Her Apparent by Muriel Horton.
Regnard and the French Comedy after Molière

by Marvin Carlson

The golden age of French playwriting, corresponding in influence and achievement to the Elizabethan era in England, was the mid-17th century. This era produced the great triumvirate of the French classic stage: the tragic dramatists Corneille and Racine and the master of comedy, Molière. So great was their success and their reputation in their own era that their work served as models for dramatic authors for generations. So great was the renown of these three masters, however, that their glory has tended to eclipse the contributions of others, as Shakespeare has eclipsed many talented contemporaries and successors.

This has been particularly true of Jean-François Regnard, who was the first major comic dramatist to appear in France after the death of Molière in 1673. At the time of Molière’s passing, Regnard was still a youth of 18, who showed little promise of a distinguished career in playwriting. Like the hero of his most famous play, he was the sole heir when his father, a prosperous merchant, died two years later. The fortune allowed him to travel widely across Europe and experience a wide range of romantic adventures, including a capture in 1678 by Algerian pirates, who took him as a slave to Constantinople, where he was ransomed by the French consul. This experience did not lessen his love for travel, and he gained his first literary fame through a book about his wanderings across Northern and Central Europe, published in 1681.

Back in Paris, he turned his hand to playwriting, and from 1688 to 1696 became one of the most popular authors at the Comédie Italienne. Although Italian impropriety comedy, the commedia dell’arte, had been seen at the French...
court since late in the previous century, a troupe of Italian actors established a permanent theatre in Paris in 1653. Their language was no major barrier since their productions relied heavily on farcical action, song and spectacle. Still more and more French naturally began to creep into their performances, and in 1684 they were given permission by the king (the official sponsor of the theatre) to perform works entirely in French, like their rival, the Comédie Française, the company which had been led by Molière.

At first this did not seriously affect the sort of plays presented at the Italianate, which remained primarily loosely organized entertainments in the commedia tradition, with traditional stock characters—the young lovers, the miserly father, the wily servants—traditional farcical actions and verbal interchanges, song and spectacle. Soon, however, dramatists with a more literary concern were attracted to the theatre. The most important of these was Regnard, who made his theatrical debut there with a one-act comedy, Le Diner, in 1684. Although all of Regnard’s comedies have close connections to the commedia dell’arte tradition, spectators who are familiar with the work of Molière are more likely to see a strong influence of that author. Actually, there is no contradiction here, since Molière himself was clearly strongly influenced by the work of the Comédie Italienne, with whom his company shared the same theatre during some of his most productive years. The misunderstandings, the extensive use of disguises, especially by the wily servants, the romantic rivalry between fathers and sons, the elaborate plots and intrigues, the parallel love pairings between the hero and heroine and between their servants and the grotesquely exaggerated members of the older generation all came to both Regnard and Molière from the commedia. Nevertheless, Regnard certainly shows direct influence from his French predecessor as well, and one can hardly mistake the echoes of plots like The Miner in Regnard’s best-known work, Le Légataire Universal (The Heir Apparent).

For almost a decade Regnard regularly provided plays for the Comédie Italienne, light-hearted studies of contemporary society primarily based on low intrigues and the antics and plots of ingenious servants. Other writers at this theatre, however, created works that began to trouble the court, works that were more licentious and, worse yet, irreverent about infantile figures, like the King’s mistress, Madame de Maintenon. A satire widely thought to be directed at her caused the theatre to be closed in 1697. This was not a serious blow to Regnard since he had already begun to have his work represented at the more prestigious national theatre, the Comédie Française. From 1697 onward Regnard became the leading contemporary comic dramatist at this theatre, which produced 11 of his plays. Although most of his comic dramatists of the period now wrote in 

prominence caused Regnard to be more and more regarded, not entirely fairly, as a pale imitator of the master. His imitations were seen as following the “lesser” Molière, the commedia-influenced farces like Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme or La Malade Imaginaire, and not the darker psychological comedies, more suited to 19th century taste, like Tartuffe or Le Misanthrope. He developed his own comic style, more attuned to the subtleties and nuances of everyday life and yet full of complicated plotting that made less use of devices like lengthy repetition than did the farces of his predecessor.

In such ways he looked forward to Beaumarchais as well as backward to Molière.

In the latter 20th century, Regnard’s reputation has to some extent been restored by literary scholars like Dorothy Medlin and by a number of engaging new translations like that of David Yves of The Heir Apparent, which manage to achieve the extremely difficult task of recapturing the sparkling and ingenious comic rhythms and rhythms that are at the very heart of Regnard’s effervescent and still highly entertaining evocation of early 17th century French society. Romantic and financial manipulations have been at the heart of comedy from the Greeks to today, and Regnard offers his own unique and witty exploration of these familiar themes in comedies that deserve the opportunity of delighting new audiences today and in the future.

Harvin Carlson is the Sidney E. Cohn Distinguished Professor of Theatre and Comparative Literature at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.
Building Bridges Between Past and Present
by Hannah J. Hessel, Audience Enrichment Manager

One doesn’t expect to hear contemporary idioms in an 18th-century French farce. Unexpected though it may be, this will be what greets audiences at David Ives’ adaptation of The Heir Apparent. Students attending productions during the SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK series may be surprised to find that a play can exist in both the past and present. When working on an older play, Ives knows that his job is to bring his creative voice and meld it with the original. He explains, “I have a voice and it will be there whether I like it or not.”

His goal is then to discover what the originating playwright is after, “what’s underneath the language.” Through his process he is able to blend the traditional elements of classical theatre with modern cultural touchstones, allowing audiences of all ages to connect with work that at first may feel distant.

Children and adults alike can get a little nervous when they are confronted with verse. Contemporary plays are rarely poetically written and few poems make it into an English curriculum. When we first encounter a play in verse it sounds foreign. David Ives approached Regnard’s rhymed text by transforming it into vernacular verse, making it more accessible. On stage, artists find moments that resonate with their audiences. For STC’s Teaching Artists, the key is to help the students uncover the commonalities between our society and the worlds presented to them on the page. Teaching Artists accomplish this in a myriad of ways: creating bridges from the world of pop music, allowing the students to recognize archetypal characters and familiar storylines.

As Resident Teaching Artist Jim Gagne explains, students are familiar with verse; they just know it as lyrics. When explaining iambic pentameter to middle school students, he pulls on lyrics from one of his favorite poets: Grammy award-winning rapper Eminem. Using the line, “and right now it’s a steel knife in my windpipe” from the song “I Love the Way You Lie,” Gagne is able to show how words get emphasized within a rhythmic structure. Teaching Artist Casey Kaleba uses Katy Perry lyrics to accomplish the same goal. Once the students can recognize how a familiar lyric can be broken down into accented and unaccented syllables, it becomes easier for them to deal with a line of text. Gagne finds that once the connection is made, they start to understand how to read the play before them.

For all Teaching Artists, the goal of using contemporary references is to allow the students to build deep connections to the classical texts. Gagne explains that the sooner you make the work relatable the better, and once they are able to connect, “they can experience the beauty of the language.” Ives has likewise embraced contemporary references. He found Regnard’s play to be a “constantly tumbling knockout action with characters who would do anything or go anywhere for a joke.” His adaptation does more than translate—it provides the same knockabout comedy that resonates with audiences here and now.

In every production, audiences can connect to timeless classical works by building bridges between the past and the present. When students see The Heir Apparent this fall, they will find in front of them a world at once familiar and distant. This is Ives’ goal. “We call these things plays because they must be played, which means they must be playable. My allegiance as a playwright is to the actors who have to say the lines, not to the history of dramatic literature. Theatre is a living art and my job as playwright or as adapter or translator is always the same: make it live today.”

Creative Conversations
Join the FREE exchange of ideas! STC’s Creative Conversations give our audiences the chance to connect deeply with the work on stage. Whether you are interested in historical background, theological perspective, creative points of view or voicing your own experiences, we have a discussion for you.

WINDOWS ON THE HEIR APPARENT
Sunday, September 11 from 5-6 p.m.
The Forum in Sidney Harman Hall
Join STC’s Artistic staff and a guest scholar as they provide a “window” into this production. This hour-long pre-show conversation articulates the production process through an insightful, lively discussion.

DIVINING SHAKESPEARE
Wednesday, September 14 from 5-6 p.m.
The Forum in Sidney Harman Hall
Explore The Heir Apparent’s relevance from a theological perspective. Director of the Institute for Christian Formation at the Virginia Theological Seminary Reverend Roger Feltro will be joined in conversation by STC’s Audience Enrichment Manager Hannah J. Hessel.

POST-DISCUSSIONS FREE
Wednesday, September 14
after the performance
Extend the experience by staying immediately following the evening’s production for a post-performance discussion led by STC’s Literary Associate Drew Lichtenberg.

CLASSICS IN CONTEXT FREE
Saturday, October 1 from 5-6 p.m.
The Forum in Sidney Harman Hall
Put the show in context with this lively roundtable conversation. The Classics in Context panel gives the audience the opportunity to discuss the production with a team of experts, led by Director of Education Samantha K. Wyer.
Drew’s Desk
Thoughts from STC's Literary Associate

I’m Drew Lichtenberg, the new Literary Associate at the Shakespeare Theatre Company. One of the tasks in my role here at STC is to serve as the theatre’s dramaturg, a resident scholar who provides feedback—historical, contextual and critical—on the theatre’s productions. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, a distinguished playwright in his own right, launched the profession in the 1760s with a series of such notes, written to the Artistic Directors of the Hamburg National Theater, which have come to be known as the Hamburg Dramaturgy. It’s always been a dream of mine to have a similar home in print: a sandbox, an editor’s column, a dramaturgy of my own. And that’s the reasoning behind this new column. It will be a place for transparency and philosophy, initiating a season-long conversation on the meaning behind the shows onstage. Those interested in participating in this discussion can write to me at Dlichtenberg@ShakespeareTheatre.org. I will do my best to include responses and queries of interest, either here or at Actors.ShakespeareTheatre.org.

Since I have no reader mail to respond to yet, I’ll start by honoring Lessing and keeping things German. I had the good fortune to visit Berlin this summer and attend a number of theatre performances. One of the striking things I noticed was the German approach to program notes. Rather than publishing a director’s note or a piece by a scholar, the German practice is to simply publish criticism, sometimes in another language, and frequently decades old. At a glance, you are able to see the condensed history of critical perspectives on a play such as, for instance, Hamlet, from Sigmund Freud and T.S. Eliot to the more contemporary views of Peter Brook and Shlomo Zuck. It’s a fascinating way to think about a play. So here is a miniature tribute to the German method with thoughts from some of the great thinkers on a very French play. Here’s a hint: Lessing appears.

What the Critics Said

Voltaire (“On the Comedy,” May 10, 1737): Whoever doesn’t enjoy Regnard doesn’t deserve to admire Molière.

Jean-Jacques Weiss (1892): If you would enjoy the Légalité, whoever you are, start by wiping away from the depths of yourself any idea of the seriousness of life, leave all of your worries at home, before coming to the Comédie, you must bring a light heart, a mind without subtlety and calculation, an imagination without darkness; you must be like the infant Pulcinella.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (on Regnard’s La Légaleité Universelle, “Letter on the Theatre,” 1756): False notes, supposition, theft, deceit, mendacity, inhumanity, everything is there and it is all applauded... Good instruction for the youth...

Stendhal (Racine et Shakespeare, 1825): The comedy of Molière is too often saturated with satire to give me the sensation of gay laughter... I love to find, when I am going to relax at the theater, a wild imagination [like Regnard’s] that makes me laugh like a child.

Pierre Beaumarchais (“Preface to The Marriage of Figaro,” 1778): If Regnard had called his Légalité, Le Punishment du Citoyen (“The Punishment of Célébacy”), the piece would have thrilled us.

Dorothy Medlin (1966): The tone is so light and the pace so fast that, during the performance, the plot seems well organized and coherent. Upon later reflection, certain terms in the original proposition may have been taken unreasonably, but afterthoughts of a rational nature have no place in the realm of fantasy. A long list of needless questions may be proposed, but he who stops to inject rational questions into a fantasy breaks the spell.

Victor Fournel (1897): You must read Regnard as a player, as a gambler (le joueur), making a meal out of the good sense of the joy of life and laughter.