Jean-François Regnard’s

The Heir Apparent

adapted by David Ives
directed by Michael Kahn

SHAKESPEARE THEATRE COMPANY

FIRST FOLIO:
TEACHER AND STUDENT RESOURCE GUIDE
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Consistent with the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s central mission to be the leading force in producing and preserving the highest quality classic theatre, the Education Department challenges learners of all ages to explore the ideas, emotions and principles contained in classic texts and to discover the connection between classic theatre and our modern perceptions. We hope that this First Folio: Teacher and Student Resource Guide will prove useful to you while preparing to attend The Heir Apparent.

First Folio provides information and activities to help students form a personal connection to the play before attending the production. First Folio contains material about the playwrights, their world and their works. Also included are approaches to explore the plays and productions in the classroom before and after the performance.

First Folio is designed as a resource both for teachers and students. All Folio activities meet the “Vocabulary Acquisition and Use” and “Knowledge of Language” requirements for the grades 8-12 Common Core English Language Arts Standards. We encourage you to photocopy these articles and activities and use them as supplemental material to the text.

Enjoy the show!

The First Folio Teacher and Student Resource Guide for The 2011-2012 Season was developed by the Shakespeare Theatre Company Education Department:

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Crispin and Lisette, servants in love, discuss the condition of their masters. Lisette works in the household of Geronte, a wealthy old miser, while Crispin works for Geronte’s nephew, Eraste, who has been waiting for the old man to die. Eraste has been wooing the lovely Isabelle, but her mother Madame Argante refuses to approve their engagement unless he is named Geronte’s heir apparent. Eraste joins them to hear that Madame Argante is next door, arranging a wedding and a will with Geronte.

Geronte, complaining of his illness, reveals his new plan, hatched with Madame Argante: he himself will marry Isabelle that afternoon. Isabelle faints amidst the uproar, leaving Eraste, Crispin and Lisette in a state of disbelief. Geronte has more bad news: he plans to leave sizable inheritances to two newly found relatives. As Geronte demands to finish his will (and write Eraste out of it), Crispin appears, dressed as Geronte’s newfound American nephew. After a series of increasingly violent and outrageous threats, Eraste plays the role of hero and dispatches this newfound American cousin. But Crispin reappears as Geronte’s other new relative, Niece Julie, a pork heiress. Unexpectedly, Isabelle has also dressed up as Niece Julie. The two Niece Julies begin quarreling, having forgotten Geronte. Just when they appear to have stopped, Eraste appears, also dressed as Niece Julie. The scene climaxes with Geronte, stricken and returning to his bedchamber. Lisette checks on him and returns to report Geronte’s apparent death. The two lovers and two servants set off eagerly in search of his money.

Crispin, Eraste and Lisette, still searching for Geronte’s money, are interrupted by Scruple, Geronte’s diminutive lawyer. Crispin, again improvising, decides to impersonate Geronte and dictate the will himself. Crispin and Scruple have almost finished when Geronte, very much alive, reappears and tries to get into his bedroom. Eraste and Lisette attempt to block Geronte’s way, as Scruple continues to take dictation from Crispin in disguise. Geronte sits in his chair, and Crispin immediately begins to work his hands like a puppet. Scruple, who has been buried in his papers, looks up and begins arguing with Geronte.

Just when Crispin seems to have the situation back under control, Madame Argante barges in, dragging Isabelle, and accuses Eraste of having some plan afoot. Scruple finally sees the two Gerontes and utters a startled shout, causing Madame Argante to turn and begin berating the lawyer. Eraste takes this opportunity to grab the will and announce its final details. Madame Argante, seeing that Geronte has left her money, is touched and forces him (i.e. Crispin) to sign the will, acting as his legal witness.

Yet again, it appears that Crispin and Eraste have secured their fortunes. But suddenly, Lisette rushes in with the surprising news that Geronte is alive and well, and dressing for his wedding day. The events of the past day have transformed him completely into the picture of good health and spirits. The whole company gathers onstage to see Geronte agree (with some last complaints) to the terms of his will, allowing three couples to get married amidst a huge pile of money.

**WARNING:** It is best to read the following after seeing STC’s production. If you must read it before, realize that doing so may result in jokes being deflated and surprises ruined.

**Classroom Activity**

- Write a synopsis of a favorite comedic film or play. Is it possible to create the synopsis without giving away the punch-line?

Common Core Standards: Argument and Persuasive Writing, Questioning, Analysis and Evaluation
**WHO’S WHO in *The Heir Apparent***

**Madame Argante (muh-DAMM ahr-GAHNT)**
A middle-aged battleaxe. Isabelle is her daughter.

**Geronte (zher-AHNT)**
Miserly old uncle to Eraste.

**Scruple**
A middle-aged lawyer.

**Eraste (air-ASST)**
In his late twenties and in love with Isabelle.

**Crispin (cree-SPAN)**
A crafty young manservant in love with Lisette.

**Lisette (lee-ZETT)**
A down-to-earth maid in her mid-twenties.

**Isabelle**
Daughter of Madame Argante and in love with Eraste.

**KEY**
- = family
- = love
- = friend
- = servant
Many people have never heard of Jean-François Regnard, even though he was one of the most successful playwrights of early 18th century France. These days he is currently as unknown in his home country as he is in the United States. Regnard followed in the footsteps of the most renowned French playwright, Molière. To this day, Molière’s successful works such as *The Miser* and *The Imaginary Invalid* are performed with regularity across the world. Meanwhile Regnard’s work has sat untouched for years. The Shakespeare Theatre Company asked contemporary playwright David Ives to bring Regnard’s work back to life. *The Heir Apparent* is not a straight translation of Regnard’s work, *Le Légataire Universal*, but rather what Ives calls a “transladaptaion,” at once a translation and adaptation. Ives saw himself as a collaborator with Regnard, despite Regnard being dead for over three hundred years. Through this collaboration we are able to rediscover this lost classical playwright and learn more about his life and his influence.

Regnard’s influence can be seen in these quotes from a range of authors and historians:

He who does not delight in Regnard is not worthy of admiring Molière. – *Voltaire*, “On the Comedy,” 1737

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. – *Stendhal*, *Racine et Shakespeare*, 1823

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. – *Victor Fournel*, 1891

One can draw a straight line from *Légataire* …straight from there, or should I say down from there, to TV sitcoms. And what could be more up-to-date than his characters’ almost feral obsession with money? – *David Ives*, 2011

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**Timeline**

The following timeline will take you a little deeper into Regnard’s background:

1655 – Jean-François Regnard is born in Paris.
1673 – Molière dies, after performing in *The Imaginary Invalid*. Regnard is 18.
1675 – Regnard comes into a fortune after his father’s death. Regnard travels to Italy and Constantinople.
1678 – Second trip to Italy and the Near East. On return he and his friend are captured by pirates and sold into slavery in Algiers.
1679 – Thanks to substantial ransom, Regnard is freed.
1683 – Returns to Paris.
1696 – *Le Joueur* (*The Gambler*), first full-length verse play, plays at Molière’s old theatre the *Comédie Française*.
1705 – *Le Légataire Universel* (*The Heir Apparent*) is first performed at the *Comédie Française*.
1709 – Regnard dies unexpectedly at his country estate. According to competing accounts, he may have committed suicide, tried to end his severe indigestion with drugs meant for a horse, or dropped dead of a stroke after drinking a glass of ice water when he was over heated.
1731 – First complete edition of Regnard’s *Works* published, in French.
1856 – Students playing in a graveyard unearth Regnard’s skull and use it as a ball.

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**Next Steps**

*Common Core Standards: Argument and Persuasive Writing, Questioning, Analysis and Evaluation*

- Why do you think Regnard is rarely produced?
- How do you see Regnard’s life influencing his writing in *The Heir Apparent*?
- Do you agree with Ives’ quote, that *The Heir Apparent* is related to TV sitcoms?
Voltaire said, “Whoever doesn’t enjoy Regnard doesn’t deserve to admire Molière.”

Now that’s a puff line to put on a theatre marquee.

Consider these tidbits from the life of Jean-François Regnard: first, that as your average young man of 23 gadding about the world he was taken prisoner in 1778 by Algerian pirates, sold into slavery, did six months’ hard labor, got ransomed and when he arrived home hung his slave-chains on the wall in his Paris house. Second, that after a cushy Treasury job, he launched himself as a comic playwright at age 38 and became the Next Big Thing after Molière. Third, that after he’d been buried 125 years, some kids found his skeleton when his church was being renovated and used his skull as a projectile. In other words, Regnard had an archetypal career as a playwright: a slave while alive, a football when dead.

In other words, Regnard had an archetypal career as a playwright: a slave while alive, a football when dead. Add to this that he was beloved by all who knew him, that he made a great portion of his fortune on a gambling spree, and that, passing through Lapland, he caused a furor because of his uncontrollable laughter at a typical Lapp funeral. His name is cognate with renard, the French word for fox, and he lived up to it. “Il faut, par notre esprit, faire notre destin,” Crispin says in The Heir Apparent, “It’s with our wits that we create our fates.”

The buoyancy with which Regnard lived is so intrinsic to his art that the man and his work are one. The play at hand (from 1708, titled Le Légataire Universel) is worldly, utterly honest, satirical without being condemnatory, oftentimes bawdy, sometimes scatological, now and then macabre and it craves jokes as a drunkard craves his pint. Like a drunkard, the play will do anything to find the pint as Regnard goes off on knockabout detours hunting for laughs—not out of desperation but out of brio. Granted, some of Heir is a

shameless rip-off of Molière’s Imaginary Invalid. But is there anything in the Malade Imaginaire to match Crispin’s (i.e., Regnard’s) inspired impersonations?

Because Regnard was writing as French classical theatre was heading into a century of much different character, the verse dialogue is more conversational than Molière, the concerns more bourgeois, while the farce is turned up (as they say in Spinal Tap) all the way to 11. One can draw a straight line from Légataire to Feydeau’s middle-class nightmares, and straight from there, or should I say down from there, to TV sitcoms. And what could be more up-to-date than his characters’ almost feral obsession with money? When Michael Kahn sent me Légataire to look at for possible adaptation for the Shakespeare Theatre, I had never heard of Regnard. Yet, just as when Michael had sent me Corneille’s Le Menteur two years previously (which became The Liar, which became Michael’s priceless production of last season, which turned out to be the most fun I ever had working on any play) I needed only a single reading to know I had to take on the piece. The off-color jokes made me howl even while I marveled at Regnard’s facility at rendering them in such graceful couplets.
How to bring the play into English? I took it as my job, while pruning some of his more extravagant asides, to mirror Regnard’s restless inventiveness and tumbling action. As with The Liar, I took my liberties. Among other things, I beefed up Isabelle and Madame Argante, both of whom disappear in the original for the bulk of the play. Geronte held such delicious comic possibilities I probably almost doubled his part. I extended the Geronte-versus-Eraste marriage complication and embellished the impersonations that are the play’s set pieces. Finally I attempted a more satisfying ending, since the original—like many French plays of that period—simply stops, abruptly, just when we expect a final cascade of unravelings and recognitions.

Working with (I won’t say “on”) Regnard has been a delight, for he’s been, as he was in life, the best of company. As Lady Mary Wortley Montagu said of Henry Fielding: “It is a pity he was not immortal, he was so formed for happiness.” Wouldn’t it be wonderful if Regnard could be raised from his tomb—not to be a plaything this time, but to take his rightful place in the English-speaking theatre as a natural master of comedy, for gaiety ran in his veins as his birthright.

“Les gens d’esprit n’ont point besoin de précepteur,” says Crispin in a line I didn’t include. “True wits don’t need a tutor.”

Claudio

Thus answer I in name of Benedick,
But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.
’Tis certain so, the Prince woos for himself.
Friendship is constant in all other things
Save in the office and affairs of love.
Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues.
Let every eye negotiate for itself
And trust no agent, for beauty is a witch
Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.
This is an accident of hourly proof,
Which I mistrusted not. Farewell therefore, Hero.
(act 2, scene 1)

To take it one step further: write your updated version in verse.

Claudio as Scruple with Carson Elrod as Crispin. Photo by Scott Suchman.

Classroom Activity

Common Core Standards: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use, Knowledge of Language, Understanding of Classical Literature, Questioning and Listening, Analysis and Evaluation

I Can Do That! Modernizing a Piece of Classical Text

In David Ives’ new “transladaptation” of Jean-François Regnard’s The Heir Apparent, the language has been updated to resonate with a modern audience. Ives’ use of 21st century language in the play serves as an effective tool for telling the story. See if you can modernize the language in this excerpt from Much Ado About Nothing without changing the main ideas that the characters are discussing. Examine the excerpt line by line and update each line of text on its own. Feel free to look up any words or phrases that you are not familiar with. This activity gives you the opportunity to closely examine a classical text and recognize how the ideas contained in it are timeless.

Strategies for Close Reading

When exploring text, it is also helpful to understand paraphrasing and operative words.

- **Paraphrasing** is a good way of making the text more accessible by putting it in your own words.

- **Operative words** are the words that are essential to telling the story. They are the most important words in a line of Shakespeare’s text. Operative words are generally in this order of importance: verbs, nouns (including title and names the first time they are mentioned), adjectives and adverbs.
**Introduction to Commedia dell’Arte**

*Commedia dell’arte* (which translates as “theatre of the professional”) began in Italy in the early 16th century and quickly spread throughout Europe. On February 25, 1545, in Padua, Italy, Ser Maphio’s troupe of performers signed a letter of incorporation establishing themselves as the first professional theater company in history. Since these troupes were traveling through Europe, the actors used masks and the acting style became very physical, allowing the stories to translate to an audience regardless of what language they spoke.

The only record we have from the commedia dell’arte troupes are the scenarios. That is because there were no playwrights or directors. These troupes of actors worked together all the time developing and honing acrobatic stunts, gags, and an arsenal of witty dialogue and jokes. These comedy shticks were called *lazzi* (singular *lazzo*) and could be inserted into performances over and over again. Many of the *commedia* scenarios are saturated with stories of two young lovers who are not allowed to be together much like Eraste and Isabelle in *The Heir Apparent*.

In *The Heir Apparent* the main function of the character Crispin (Eraste’s servant) is to provide comic relief. When he dresses up as the long lost relatives of Geronte in Act 1, this comic bit is written purely for comedy and can therefore be considered a *lazzo*.

The style of *commedia dell’arte* is characterized by its use of masks, improvisation, physical comedy, recognizable stock characters and traditionally being multi-lingual. Hundreds of character names exist, each the invention of a particular actor, but all of them can be categorized into these five major character types.

**The Zanni** are the servant characters. They try their best to serve their masters, despite their lack of intelligence. The hierarchy amongst the Zanni is represented by their masks. Typically the longer the nose of a masked character the lower their status and dimmer their wit. The most famous of the Zanni is Arlecchino, who later in France becomes known as Harlequin. Columbina is the saucy female servant who is typically much smarter than her male counterparts.

**The Captain (or Capitano)** is a braggart soldier usually from a foreign country. He boasts and brags of his strengths, abilities and triumphant battles but in reality cowers in the face of conflict. This exotic attention-seeker often arrives in the scenario just when things start to go badly, and only makes them worse. The Captain is a lover of war and women—but mostly a lover of himself!

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**Commedia Connections**

Some modern examples of commedia influenced characters include:

- Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, a classic Pantalone.
- Gabrielle and Troy in *High School Musical*, two classic Innamorati.
- Professor Gilderoy Lockhart in *Harry Potter*, is a classic Capitano.
- Gloria Delgado-Pritchett from *Modern Family* is great example of a La Signora.
- Kenneth the page from *30 Rock* is a Zanni.
- The clumsy comic duo Pintel & Ragetti in *Pirates of the Caribbean* are a classic 1st and 2nd Zanni.

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*Kelly Hutchinson as Lisette, Nancy Robinette as Madame Argante, Andrew Veenstra as Eraste and Carson Elrod as Crispin. Photo by Scott Suchman.*
The Lovers (or Innamorati) are typically the children of the Old Men. They are highly emotional, passionate, and will do anything to marry the person they love—each other. They are unmasked and therefore the most intelligent characters. Common plot devices include: two lovers not being allowed to marry because of disagreement between their fathers and the female lover, often named Isabella, disguising herself as a man in order to escape her fate.

The Old Men (or Vecchi) are the masters. The most well known are:

- **Pantalone**—a wealthy old man who is greedy and self-interested.
- **Dottore**—he is an expert in everything—especially food. Sometimes a know-it-all, sometimes a charlatan, he loves to ramble on.
- **Tartaglia**—from the south of Italy, stutters, is often blind or deaf or both causing unending comic miscommunication.

La Signora is often the new, young wife to Pantalone. Typically, she has married him for his wealth and cuckold him every chance. She is usually more interested in the Capitano or chasing one of the young lovers.

**Next Steps**

**Common Core Standards: Analysis and Evaluation, Questioning**

- Based on the descriptions of the commedia dell’arte characters, how would you categorize the characters in *The Heir Apparent*? Could you write a scenario for one of the scenes?

- Write down a few of your favorite sitcoms. What characters on these shows fit the commedia dell’arte categories?

**Spotlight on the Role of Women**

The female characters in *The Heir Apparent* at first glance fit easily into comedic female stereotypes. They are all descendents of their commedia counterparts. David Ives’ adaptation mixes past and present sensibilities, and the women portrayed are more than the stereotype.

**Lisette** is a version of the commedia Columbina, the saucy female servant who is typically much smarter than her male counterparts.

**Madame Argante** is described in the script as a battleaxe, the type of domineering older woman found throughout literature, including the work of Oscar Wilde.

**Isabelle** is an Innamora of the commedia tradition. She is in love with Eraste and her character’s needs are bound up in ensuring the happy ending of their relationship.

**Next Steps**

**Common Core Standards: Analysis and Evaluation, Argument and Persuasive Writing**

- What do you think their characters tell us about the role of women at the time the play was written?

- Think of some of the women in your lives. Which character are they similar to?

- What advice would you give Isabelle when her mother is forcing her to marry Geronte?
Recommended Reading


Ives, David, Time Flies and Other Short Plays, New York: Grove Press, 2001

Medlin, Dorothy, The Verbal Art of Jean-François Regnard, New Orleans: Tulane studies in Romance Languages and Literature, Vol. 1, 1966.


Standards of Learning

The activities and question sequences found in the Folio supports grade 8-12 Common Core standards in English Language Arts. Primary content areas addressed include but are not limited to:

- Understanding of Classical Literature
- Vocabulary and Content Development
- Stagecraft
- Argument and Persuasive Writing
- Inference

- Performance
- Questioning and Listening
- Research
- Analysis and Evaluation

Andrew Veenstra as Eraste, Floyd King as Geronte and Nancy Robinette as Madame Argante.

Photo by Scott Suchman.
The phrase “theatre etiquette” refers to the special rules of behavior that are called for when attending a theatre performance.

Above all, it is important to remember that the actors on stage can see and hear you at the same time you can see and hear them. Be respectful of the actors and your fellow audience members by being attentive and observing the general guidelines below:

Before you go:

- *The Heir Apparent* takes place before cell phones and other fun technology existed. Please help us create the environment by turning off your cell phone and other electronic devices (iPods, games, etc.). Not only will it be historically inaccurate, but it can be very distracting, not to mention embarrassing, when a cell phone goes off during a performance. The lights from cell phones and other electronic devices are also a big distraction, so please no text messaging.

- We’re sure that you would never stick your gum underneath your chair or spill food and drinks, but because this theatre is so new and beautiful, we ask that you spit out your gum before entering the theatre and leave all food and drinks in the lobby or the coat check.

- We don’t want you to miss out on any of the action of the play, so please visit the restroom before the performance begins.

During the performance:

- Please feel free to have honest reactions to what is happening on stage. You can laugh, applaud and enjoy the performance. However, please don’t talk during the performance; it is extremely distracting to other audience members and the actors. Save discussions for intermission and after the performance.

Thoughts about the importance of being an audience member from Shakespeare Theatre Company Artistic Director Michael Kahn

“When you go to the theatre, you are engaging with other living, breathing human beings, having an immediate human response. In the theatre you sense that all of this may never happen again in this particular way.

As a member of the audience, you are actually part of how that’s developing—you have a hand in it … You are part of a community where you are asked to be compassionate, perhaps to laugh with or grieve as well as to understand people, lives and cultures different from your own.”