



## The Rome Savoyards and Plays in Rome

Present

### *The Rivals*

by

**Richard Brinsley Sheridan**

Directed by **Sandra Provost**

**In English**

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#### About the Play and Author

***The Rivals is a comedy of manners by Richard Brinsley Sheridan.***

***The Rivals*** was Sheridan's first play. At the time, he was a young newlywed living in Bath. At Sheridan's insistence, upon marriage his wife Eliza (born Elizabeth Linley) had given up her career as a singer. This was proper for the wife of a "gentleman", but it was difficult because Eliza would have earned a substantial income as a performer. Instead, the Sheridans lived beyond their means as they entertained the gentry and nobility with Eliza's singing (in private parties) and Richard's wit. Finally, in need of funds, Richard turned to the only craft that could gain him the remuneration he desired in a short time: he began writing a play. He had over the years written and published essays and poems, and among his papers were numerous unfinished plays, essays and political tracts, but never had he undertaken such an ambitious project as this. In a short time, however, he completed ***The Rivals***.

***The Rivals*** was first performed at Covent Garden, London, on 17 January 1775. After initial criticism, it became a favourite of the royal family, receiving five command performances in ten years, and also in the Colonies (it was George Washington's favourite play). It became a standard show in the repertoires of 19th-century companies in England and the US. The play is now considered to be one of Sheridan's masterpieces, and the term malapropism was coined in reference to one of the well-known characters in the play.

The ***Rivals*** concerns the romantic difficulties of Lydia Languish, who is determined to marry for love and into poverty. Realizing this, the aristocratic Captain Jack Absolute woos her while claiming to be Ensign Beverley. But her aunt, Mrs. Malaprop, will not permit her to wed a mere ensign, and Lydia will lose half her fortune if she marries without her aunt's permission. Among the play's many plot complications is the appearance of Sir Anthony (Jack's father). The situations and characters of the play were not entirely new, but Sheridan's rich wit and remarkable sense of theatrical effect gave them freshness. Mrs. Malaprop proved to be one of the most popular caricatures in English drama.

***The Rivals*** has been revived many times since its premiere and has been adapted for television and musicals with great success.

## Presentazione in Italiano

**Prosegue la rassegna del teatro in lingua originale Inglese al Teatro San Genesio, con il secondo appuntamento della stagione con un amatissimo classico della commedia di maniere, *The Rivals* di Richard Brinsley Sheridan, in scena dal 30 Gennaio al 4 Febbraio 2018. Lo spettacolo è presentato dalla compagnia filantropica e di lingua inglese Plays in Rome/The Rome Savoyards.**

Commediografo e impresario teatrale inglese (Dublino 1751-Londra 1816), Richard Sheridan nacque da una famiglia di grandi tradizioni letterarie (sua madre, Frances, fu autrice tra l'altro di un romanzo sentimentale e di commedie), con cui si trasferì in Inghilterra. Scrisse per il teatro delle farse, un'opera comica e tre commedie di gran successo. Fu direttore del teatro Drury Lane e dal 1780 al 1812 deputato al Parlamento, occupando anche incarichi di governo. Sheridan ha raccolto la tradizione della commedia britannica di costume, portandola a esiti esemplari, che gli assicurano un posto di rilievo nel teatro comico e satirico di tutti i tempi. I suoi lavori hanno un impianto teatrale robusto, un dialogo avvincente, ritmo e situazioni serrate. Dei suoi capolavori, il primo ad andare in scena fu *The Rivals* (1775), a proposito del quale il celebre critico W. Hazlitt sostenne che Sheridan sapeva imitare con lo spirito dell'inventore. La spropositante ricercatezza di linguaggio di un personaggio della commedia, Mrs Malaprop, diede origine a un neologismo cui arrise durevole fortuna ("malapropismo"). "The Rivals" che inizialmente fu un insuccesso; l'anno seguente, in seguito ad un approfondito rimaneggiamento della stessa commedia ottenne un successo trionfale.

Sheridan prese brillantemente di mira gli aspetti più ridicoli del teatro sentimentale del suo tempo, raggiungendo risultati di duratura validità che rendono le sue opere attuali, esilaranti e ancora sorprendentemente moderne.