Serban’s Richard 3 Reveals Three Faces of Evil and a Relevant Message for The Times

By Loraleen O’LeTTi

Director Andrei Serban was in Paris with the week of Sept. 11 for the opening of his “The Merchant of Venice” at the Comedie Francaise. When he returned to New York last Sunday, his third-year acting students from Columbia’s School of the Arts in residence at the Joslyn Center, Richard III, Serban told his students to look inward and tell the story in that light of the moment—revealing their confusion, their torment, their loss and their redemption.

His students translated his direction into their expression. Serban’s “Rise of Richard 3,” (the title reflective of the three actors playing the lead role of Richard) playing at LaMama e.t.c. Annex, 74A East 4th Street, through Nov. 18, explores the depths of evil, “unfolding the catalyst, moving the good to action and clearing the path to power understanding.” It is possible two months ago that, in art as in life, wickedness could function as a voice, for we soon name and confront it. Now the moral factor of why we do theater is more relevant than ever.

Serban is an important name in contemporary theater. He has won many Obies with a Tony interpretation of Chekov’s, “The Cherry Orchard.” In addition, he received an Achievement award from Romania, the Elliott Norton Award in Boston and the George Abbott Award from the Society of Stage Directors & Choreographers, honoring artists who have made a major impact on theater in the twenty-century.

Teaching at Columbia since 1992, Serban is the director of Oscar Hammerstein II Center for Theater Studies and heads the M.F.A. acting program. He has also taught at Yale, Harvard, Carnegie Mellon, Sarah Lawrence, University of California, the Paris Conservatoire d’Art Dramatique and the A.R.T. (Institi- tion for Advanced Theater Training).

A Serban production of Shakes- peare is always a surprise for an audience and critics alike as the director is known for rethinking the classics and challenging the canon. And the current production is an example of just that.

Richard III features three actors as Richard, played by graduate acting students Thomas P. Gissen- damer, Jason Griffin and Chip Per- sons. The director explains that the three Richards reveal the three sides of evil from the seemingly angelic to the perverse.

“He has three aspects in one self. We all have different voices and we try to cover them up,” said Serban. “Its also interesting to see more than one actor handle the role. Richard is a chameleon.”

If you see one actor play the role you get used to mannerisms and voice, but here it’s constantly changing.”

The cast also includes Colum- bia’s MFA acting students from the class of 2002: Sekou Camp- bell, Kevin Cohen, Kyle Haydel and Jeanne Harris.Haeryn Kin, Ben- jamin Muris, Anne Femeber, Anjali Nuhi, Sherey Wells, Annie Tim and Samir Younis.

Conference on Arsenic in Drinking Water

On Oct. 31, under pressure from Congress and opposition from health researchers and other scientists, the Bush Administra- tion reversed its position and low- ered allowable levels of arsenic in U.S. drinking water. On Nov. 26- 27, the Columbia Earth Institute’s School of International and Public Affairs will host a conference on the problem of arsenic in drinking water. The conference will take place on the fifth floor of Lerner Hall each day from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Arsenic in drinking water is both a domestic and an interna- tional issue. In the U.S., water utilities in New Mexico, Califor- nia and elsewhere will have to cut down on arsenic levels in the water they provide to meet the new environmental Protection Agency standards. In 10 million gals per year (ug/l), down from the previously permitted level of 50 ug/l.

In Bangladesh, 35 to 85 million people are currently exposed to poisoning by arsenic in water in soil. In Bangladesh is listed as a poisoning in most supply with millions of hand pumps. The situation in Bangladesh is hindered by a serious absence of interaction between donor agencies (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, USAID, and the World Health Organization) and international community of scien- tists currently working on arsenic-related issues. A major objective of the Columbia conference is to bridge these gaps and to increase the attention of the international community on the ongoing tragedy in Bangladesh.

Columbia has been central to a recent effort to develop seven interdisciplinary research projects aimed at understanding and de- veloping solutions to the problem of arsenic. New research by Columbia sci- entists Dorethy Senior Research Scientist Sandy Walter and Professor Joseph Graziano, head of the Division of Environmental Health Sciences at Columbia’s Mailman School of Public Health, has shown that although half the 55,000 people living within their study area in Bangladesh currently drink and cook with water containing unsafe arsenic levels, over 90 percent of the population lives within 200 meters of one of the safe wells interspersed through- out the region.

By implication, millions of people in Bangladesh could avoid arsenic poisoning by switching to their neighbors’ wells, if social obstacles, private property barriers, and economic problems could be surmounted. The two-day conference will include a range of expertise on the science, technologies, and poli- cies. Participants will address the problems and funding potential from public health, social sci- ence, and natural science per- spectives. Conference presenters will discuss how studying arsenic in Bangladesh can give U.S. sci- entists greater insight not only on the geochemistry and hydrologi- cal aspects of arsenic contamin- ation in drinking water, but also on potential health effects for vulner- able U.S. populations.

Solutions to the problems cre- ated by arsenic in drinking water in the U.S. and Bangladesh include human as well as physi- cal factors. At the upcoming con- ference, participants will explore the health, the social sciences, and the geosciences will be able to communicate and listen to each other.

Columbia has taken a unique, interdisciplinary approach to the problem drawing from the Earth Institute’s large network of scien- tists from the Mailman School of Public Health, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Henry Krumb School of Mines, the Center for Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), the School of International and Public Affairs and many related departments. “Our interdisciplinary nary approach is part of why Columbia’s Supersoul seminars and conferences are always so enlightening,” according to Executive Director Jim Tilton.

The conference is free and open to the public, however, seating is limited and pre-registration prior to Nov. 15 is recom- mended. For more details or to register, go to http://www. superfund.columbia.edu.

Student Financial Service Launches New Web-Based Payment Method

Student Financial Services launched a new web-based pay- ment method for students this fall, making payments easier and more accessible.

In conjunction with two outside vendors, Student Financial Services (SFS) implemented e-payment software that allows students to view and pay their current student account statement as well as authorize others to pay on their behalf.

The new system, QuikPay™, allows students to download a PDF version of their current student account statement and pay it on- line from a checking account, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Students may authorize other individu- als, including parents and employ- ers, to view the bill and pay part or all of the balance due. User profiles require secure log-in and users must maintain their own passwords, ensuring complete privacy for every user on each account.

Columbia is one of the first edu- cational institutions using Quik- Pay™, which is particularly helpful to the international students who comprise 21% of Columbia’s enrollment.

“Paying on-line has revolution- ized expedient payment for stu- dents and parents living around the country and overseas,” said SFS’s Executive Director Jim Tilton. “We are thrilled to offer accounts that immediate payment options to students that often suffer from mail delays and re-routes.”

The system also allows SFS to send an e-mail notification to users, letting them know when a new balance account statement is available in the Kiosk.

Since QuikPay™ was intro- duced in the fall term, over 1,598 domestic students and students from countries all over the world—Argentina, Austria, Australia, Ger- many, Switzerland, Singapore, and many, many, many more—have viewed their student statements and over 510 students have made payments totaling over $2.1 million.

“Just by looking at the usage we know we have succeeded in our goal, which was to improve service to Columbia’s students and make their lives easier,” said Tilton.

Eventually, we hope to offer stu- dents the opportunity to receive all their bills electronically in lieu of paper billing,” Currently, SFS’ prints and mails over 250,000 stu- dent account statements each year.

In addition, many of the SFS- authorized individuals can access the system on Student Finan- cial Services On-Line at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/sfs/. Students also can access the pay- ment system through the Electronic Debit from a checking account by an Automated Clearing House (ACH) process through authorized accounts to within two business days. For more information, contact Student Financial Services at (212) 854-4206 or visit their website at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/sfs/.

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Nov. 26-27

Water 26-27

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