The First Actresses: 1660-1930s
Friday, May 23 and Saturday, May 24, 2014

“Finally, women. Reflect on the whole history of women: do they not have to be first of all and above all else actresses?”

Friedrich Nietzsche. The Gay Science, 1881

Arriving centuries late to the theatre profession, women have met with hostility, censorship, bans, and working conditions often well below those available to their male counterparts, not least of which was economic security much lower than that of actors. This symposium focuses on the actress with a view to promoting, identifying and encouraging research and scholarly directions on the work and lives of actresses from the 17th through the early 20th centuries.

Addressing the centuries long prohibition on women acting, The First Actress by Christopher St. John (Christabel Marshall) features one of the women purported to be the “first actress” to take the role of Desdemona in Othello in 1661. This short play from 1911 Britain is a touchstone for the symposium as it addresses a range of issues: the prejudice against the women performing, their “natural” inadequacies as artists in the public realm, and women’s agency in demanding access to both the public stage and the right to vote.

The second performance, a premiere of a solo work, looks at the life of the celebrated Columbus, Ohio artist with an international reputation Elsie Janis (1889-1956). This piece is commissioned for this symposium and created by Tory Matsos, from the Theatre Research Institute’s Elsie Janis Collection. Finally, we offer an exhibition on the actress drawn from multiple collections of the Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute.

This symposium was created and conceived by Lesley Ferris, Arts and Humanities Distinguished Professor of Theatre, and Nena Couch, Curator of Thompson Library Special Collections.
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<td>1:00-1:30</td>
<td>Opening Remarks</td>
<td>Thompson Library, Room 165</td>
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<td>Introduction: Nena Couch and Lesley Ferris, Co-conveners</td>
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<td>Welcome: Lisa Carter, Associate Director for Special Collections and Area Studies, OSU Libraries</td>
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<td>1:30-2:30</td>
<td>Keynote Address: The Actress and Her Merits</td>
<td>Thompson Library, Room 165</td>
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<td>Keynote Address: The Actress and Her Merits</td>
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<td>2:30-3:00</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>3:00-3:45</td>
<td>Introduction to Special Collections Exhibition</td>
<td>Thompson Library, Room 165</td>
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<td>Nena Couch, Curator, Thompson Library Special Collections</td>
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<td>4:00-5:30</td>
<td>Panel One</td>
<td>Thompson Library, Room 165</td>
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<td>Moderator: Jen Schlueter, OSU</td>
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<td>5:30-6:00</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>6:00-7:30</td>
<td>Buffett Dinner</td>
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<td>7:30-8:30</td>
<td>Performance: Girl Made Good</td>
<td>Drake Center, Roy Bowen Theatre</td>
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<td>Written and Performed by Tory Matsos</td>
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<td>Directed by Maureen Ryan</td>
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<td>8:30-9:30</td>
<td>Post-Show Discussion and Response</td>
<td>Drake Center, Roy Bowen Theatre</td>
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<td>Tory Matsos, Lee Alan Morrow, Maureen Ryan</td>
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1. **Dr. Janice Norwood, University of Hertfordshire**: “Critics, Classics and Crossdressing: A ‘Heavy Woman’ on Tour”

2. **Joanne E. Gates, Jackson State University**: “First Hedda, First Hilda and ‘Hilda harnessed to a purpose:’ Elizabeth Robins, Ibsen, and Women’s Suffrage”

3. **Antonia Kreuger, Eckerd College**: “First Foundations of an Actress: Jessica Tandy from 1932-1934”
Saturday, May 24th

8:45-9:15  **Breakfast**  
Drake Center,  
Room 2060

9:15-11:15  **Panel Two**  
Moderator: Shilarna Stokes, OSU  
Drake Center,  
Room 2038

1. **Melissa Lee, OSU**: “Call Yourself a Woman!: A New Narrative of Forgotten Pioneers”

2. **Fiona Gregory, Monash University**: “An Uncontainable Force?: Mrs. Patrick Campbell’s Contribution(s to *Pygmalion*”

3. **Shelby Brewster, OSU**: “Surviving the Scandal: The Genesis of Catherine Norton Sinclair’s Theatrical Career”

4. **Iveta Jusová, Antioch University**: “Hana Kvapilová: Spiritual Feminism on the *Fin-de-Siècle* Czech Stage”

11:15-11:30 **Break**

11:30-1:00  **Panel Three**  
Moderator: J. Briggs Cormier, OSU  
Drake Center,  
Room 2038

1. **Angelina Del Balzo, UCLA**: “Outliving Public Liking: Colley Cibber’s *Richard III* and the Aging Actress”

2. **Chelsea Phillips, OSU**: “Pregnancy, Repertory, and Reputation in the Career of Sarah Siddons (1755-1831)”

3. **Jan Clarke, Durham University**: “From Player-Manager to Pensioner: The Latter Years of an Actress’s Career at the Comédie-Française (1680-1689)”

1:00-2:00 **Lunch**  
Drake Center,  
Room 2060

2:00-3:30  **Panel Four**  
Moderator: John Schmor,  
University of Oregon  
Drake Center,  
Room 2038

1. **Pamela Decker, OSU**: “Advertising the Actress: Marketing African American Female Performance in *Shuffle Along* and Plantation Club”

2. **Jennifer Collins, OSU**: “Brushes with Danger: Lillian Gish’s Experiences in Touring Productions and in Her Early Film Career”

3:30-5:15  **Think Tank:**
**Future Research on the Actress**  
Drake Center, Room 2038

5:15  **Dinner Break**

7:30-8:30  **Performance:**
*The First Actress*  
By Christopher St. John  
Directed by Lesley Ferris  
Drake Center, Roy Bowen Theatre

8:30-9:30  **Post Performance Discussion and Farewell**  
Lesley Ferris, Melissa Lee,  
The cast of *The First Actress*  
Drake Center, Roy Bowen Theatre

“The subject of all tragedies and comedies which are to be in Latin…shall be sacred and pious; a woman or a woman’s gown must never appear on the stage.”

*Ratio Studorium* (Jesuit manual), 1599