

Lester Martin Theater  
May 8, 9, & 10 2015 at 8pm



*Bennington Drama Presents*

# *The Don Juan Project*

Moliere's *Don Juan*, translated by Virginia Scott,  
with selections from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*  
Directed by Jean Randich





*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*



*Molière*

*‘Inequality is a Choice,’ by Nicholas Kristof, NYTimes, 2 May 2015*

The eruptions in Baltimore have been tied, in complex ways, to frustrations at American inequality, and a new measure of the economic gaps arrived earlier this year:

It turns out that the Wall Street bonus pool in 2014 was roughly twice the total annual earnings of all Americans working full time at the federal minimum wage.

You read that right: *Just* the annual bonuses for *just* the sliver of Americans who work *just* in finance *just* in New York City dwarfed the combined year-round earnings of all Americans earning the federal minimum wage....

### *The Seducer Seduced: Giving His Hand*

“The last symbolic gesture in Don Juan’s fantastic execution is that of the fatal contact of his hand with the statue’s:

STATUE: Give me your hand.

DON JUAN: Here it is.

The gesture accomplishes and crowns the poetic justice of the punishment, since “to give one’s hand” also means “to marry,” and since Don Juan’s transgression consisted precisely in *giving his hand* over and over, in being “a marrier at every hand.”

The fantastic conclusion thus unfolds as a sort of dialectic between gift and debt. If Don Juan dies, symbolically, for not having kept his promises, for not having respected his debts, for having refused to *give in return*, he dies no less through what he *gives*. Don Juan, who gives food, who gives his hand, who gives his word, dies while giving food, his hand, his word to the statue of death.

STATUE: Stop, Don Juan: You gave me your word yesterday to come eat with me.

If the only word Don Juan keeps is the word he gives to the statue, is it because only death can seduce the seducer?”

—Shoshana Felman, “The Perversion of Promising,” in *The Scandal of the Speaking Body*.

### *The Promising Animal*

“Don Juan obviously abuses the institution of promising. But what does this abuse signify about promising itself? The scandal of seduction seems to be fundamentally tied to the scandal of the broken promise. *Don Juan* is the myth of scandal precisely to the extent that it is the myth of violation: the violation not of women but of promises made to them: in particular, promises of marriage.”

—Shoshana Felman, “The Promising Animal,” in *The Scandal of the Speaking Body*.

### *Between Body and Language, or, What is an Act?*

“Man is a political animal,” as Aristotle said, already defining man by the very specificity of his *acts*. But it was Nietzsche, characterizing man not as a “political animal” but as a *promising animal* (which is, of course, not without relation to the “political animal”), who defined what is human more specifically not by acts but by speech acts; and not simply by speech acts but by the essentially paradoxical and problematic nature of the speech act: “Is that not man’s true problem?” ....

If the language act turns out thus to be at the root of tragedy, it proves to be in just the same way — as Moliere’s *Don Juan* attests — at the root of *comedy*. The tragic and the comic both stem in fact from the relation between language and body: a relation consisting at once of incongruity and of inseparability. The speaking body is *scandalous* precisely to the extent that its *performance* is, necessarily, either *tragic* or *comic*.”

—Shoshana Felman, “Knowledge and Pleasure,” in *The Scandal of the Speaking Body*.

*Don Juan (holding a gold coin): Take it, here it is... Take it, I tell you. But blaspheme first.*

*Pauper: No sir, I’d rather die of hunger.*

—From Moliere’s *Don Juan: The pauper scene*  
*ignited such an uproar at the premiere that it was dropped after opening night.*



Acting Ensemble (in order of appearance)

Donna Elvira.....	Margot Spanu
Don Juan.....	James Overton
Sganarelle, Don Alonzo.....	Dado Damir Ćobo
Gusman.....	Joana Rita Santos
La Violette.....	Julia Crowley
Ragotin.....	Sarah Jack
Malachou.....	Victoria Nation
Bartender.....	Conor Hannon
Pierrot.....	Will Larsen
Charlotte.....	Emma Plotkin
Mathurine.....	Maddy Kostman
A Pauper.....	Janis Young
Don Carlos.....	Trevor Gibbons-Reich
The Statue of the Commander.....	Andrew Elk
Monsieur Dimanche.....	Patrick Harnett-Marshall
Groucher.....	Tigger
Don Juan’s Father, Don Luis.....	Kirk Jackson

Director’s Note

The legend of Don Juan emerged in Renaissance Spain. In 1616 Gabriel Tellez, a friar who published under the name Tirso de Molina, wrote *El Burlador de Sevilla y convidado di piedra* (*The Playboy of Seville, or Supper with a Statue*). The Spanish Don Juan is a man who single-mindedly chases sensuality and pleasure – the masculine drive incarnate. Spanish society offered him a world in which women were cloistered and the loss of their chastity equaled the loss of their families’ honor.

Moliere wrote *Don Juan* in the period of his great “dark plays”: *Tartuffe* (1664), and *The Misanthrope* (1666), both of which, like his *Don Juan*, assault the hypocrisy so fashionable at court in his day. Moliere himself played the part of Sganarelle, the wily servant who sees through the debauchery of the aristocracy, and yet must cater to their decadence to survive. Don Juan may be a serial marrier and irresistible lover, but that is not as intriguing as his skill at lying. He reads people and says what they want to hear.

No Don Juan, however, is as famous as Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*. The librettist, Lorenzo da Ponte, was born of Jewish parents, but studied for the priesthood. As Signore Abbate da Ponte, he held teaching posts, wrote poems, and loved women, until he was accused of adultery and exiled in 1779. Years later he approached Mozart with the idea of writing this opera. Mozart wanted him to emphasize all the serious dramatic events, but Da Ponte wanted to capture the comedy. And thus this incredible hybrid was born –an operatic masterpiece with the power of folk tales, revenge tragedies, and erotic chases. Mozart’s music rises to such sublimity that it’s as if heaven and earth were opening up.

*The Don Juan Project* imports scenes from the opera into the world of the play. We created a montage in which the play and opera talk to each other. Sometimes you experience them discretely, at other moments they merge, and at times, they transform into something altogether new. Through clown work we sought to uncover the roots of this Dionysian tale in commedia and bacchanalian rituals of life. Women today are a new breed. We’ve fashioned a *Don Juan* for our time. Our hero, or perhaps anti-hero, Don Juan, flees from commitment, relationship, and most of all, from time itself. Perhaps that’s why, four centuries later, his doomed bid to defy time still rivets us. We are all invited to sup, one day, with a stone statue, no matter how quick our tongue, how fast our moves.

No one can flee time. Theater is where we exist in time together. We delight to share the surprise, magic, and mystery of *The Don Juan Project* with you.

Singing Ensemble & Musicians

Donna Elvira.....	Katherine Colbert
Leporello.....	Chris “Mowgli” Giannitti
Don Giovanni.....	Rohan Edwards
Zerlina.....	Sarah Hamilton
Don Ottavio.....	Alex Diaz
Commendatore.....	Liam Dailey
Ensemble.....	Emma Plotkin
Piano.....	Keane Southard
Mandolin.....	Linrong Zhang

Creative Team

Director.....	Jean Randich
Choral Direction.....	Tom Bogdan
Music Direction.....	Keane Southard
Assistant Director, Fight Choreography.....	Andrew Elk
Set/Projection Design, Video Content/Programmer.....	Sue Rees
Costume Design.....	Yael Rose
Lighting Design.....	Michael Giannitti
Sound Design.....	Dominic Romano
Stage Manager.....	Emma Welch
Technical Director.....	Michael Rancourt
Costume Shop Manager.....	Richard MacPike
Master Electrician.....	Sarah Chapin
Sound Technician.....	Dan Roninson
Props Manager.....	Emily Shea Messinger
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Nathaniel Guevin
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Dale Hoagland
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Astra Pierson
Assistant Stage Manager, Page Turner.....	Pixel West
Costume Design Assistant.....	Paul Van Sickle
Choereography Assistant.....	Julius Fuentes
Followspot.....	Caleb Blansett
Light Board Operator.....	Lucas Marten
Projector Operators.....	Nathaniel Guevin , Roma Lucero, Alec MacNeil, Lulwama Mulalu
Wardrobe.....	Maeve Kinney, Alex Pauly, Emily Walker
Make-up.....	Catalina Adragna

Scene Shop Carpenters

Caleb Blansett
Dado Damir Ćobo
Lecil James
Marshall McGraw
Zadie Ross
Rebecca Warzer
Viva Whitman

Set Construction Lab Crew

Maria Vargas Aguilar
Caroline Albrechtsen
Hannah Beacham
Sumedh Chatterjee
Olivia Hurd
Hadil Marzouq
Angela Williams-Van Steenberg
Morgan Noonan Wilson

Costume Shop Work-Study

Yael Rose
Sierra Reid
Kione Kochi
Lecil James
Hannah Brookman
Bebe Nyiri
Anna Eckert-Kramer
Sonja Einem

Costume Lab Crew

Carmina Marquez
Amalia Waitr Lewis
Alixandra Eisen
Carla McDonough

Student Electricians

Martin Carrillo
Chris DeFilipp
Benny Elhers
Nate Guevin
Sarah Jack
Zadie Ross
Ben Simpson

Electrics Lab Crew

Aviva Kornel
Dana Foote
Georgie Richer
Hytham Hanna
Meghan Herzfeld
Sydney Bradley

## **Drama Faculty & Staff Spring 2015**

Sarah Chapin

Kathleen Dimmick

Michael Giannitti

Sarah Hammond

Linda Hurley

Kirk Jackson

Dina Janis

Sherry Kramer

Richard MacPike

Michael Rancourt

Jean Randich

Sue Rees

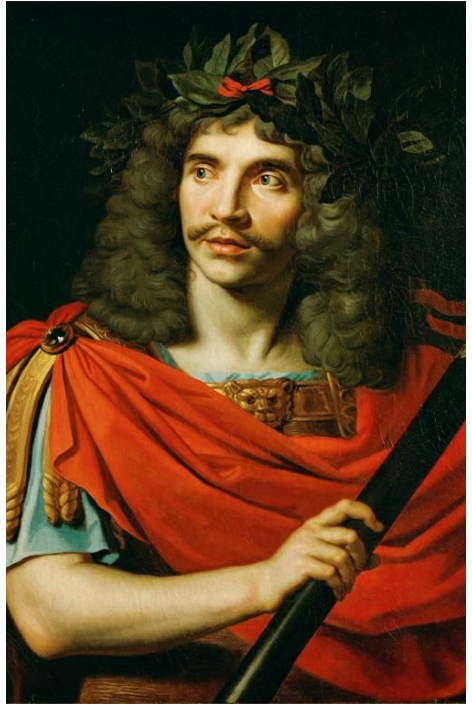
Jenny Rohn

Dan Roninson

Charles Schoonmaker



*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*



*Molière*