

OUR SPECIAL THANKS TO

Eleanor and Ray Thompson, Hazel Skinner, John and Diana Stege, Trish Hobart, Frances Mosely Joe Henson, David Gabriel, Dennis Ussery, The Trading Post, Rescue Mission, Anna Shaw, and the Mercer Music Department,

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224 Walnut Street
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484 1st Street
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Auditions for the fall production of *The Taming of the Shrew* will be held on September 16th and 17th at 6:30 pm in Willingham Auditorium.

The DRESSER

by RONALD HARWOOD



produced by
MERCER THEATRE

THE BACKDOOR THEATRE

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

The tradition of actor-management made a deep impression on me. I came to understand that from the early 18th century until the late 1930's the actor-manager was the British theatre. He played from one end of the country to the other, taking his repertoire to the people. Only a handful ever reached London; their stamping-ground was the provinces and they toured under awful physical conditions....They developed profound resources of strength, essential if they were to survive. They worshipped Shakespeare, believed in the theatre as a cultural and educative force, and saw themselves as public servants. Nowadays, we allow ourselves to laugh at them a little and there is no denying that their obsessions and single-mindedness often made them ridiculous;...we accept, too readily I think, that their motto was '*le theatre c'est moi!*' The truth of the matter is that many of them were extraordinary and talented men; their gifts enhanced the art of acting; they nursed and kept alive a classical repertoire which is the envy of the world, and created a magnificent tradition which is the foundation of our present-day theatrical inheritance....

The play, however, is called *The Dresser*. No actor-manager ever survived entirely through his own efforts. Publicly he liked to proclaim pride in his individuality while acknowledging, in private, his debt to all those who devoted their lives to him and to his enterprise.

Ronald Harwood

(from the Foreword of the Grove Press edition
of *The Dresser*)

THE DRESSER

by Ronald Harwood

Directed by
Sherry Hodges* & Jennie Mayes*

Set & Light Design by
Marian Zielinski*

Sound Design by Sherry Hodges*

THE CAST

NORMAN	Jim Hesselman*
HER LADYSHIP	Sherry Hodges*
MADGE	Marian Zielinski*
SIR	Paul Oppy*
IRENE	Sherrrie Jamison
MR OXENBY	Kim Renz*
GEOFFREY THORNTON	Chris Dockins

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

January 1942. A theatre in the English provinces.

ACT I: Before curtain-up

ACT II: After curtain-up

*Members of Alpha Psi Omega Dramatic Fraternity

PRODUCTION STAFF & CREWS

Stage Manager	Jennie Mayes*
Technical Director	Marian Zielinski*
Scenic Construction	Sherry Hodges*, Jennie Mayes*, Emily Campbell Tom Kirby*, Lewis Fuller*
Costumer	Marian Zielinski*
Crew	Sherrrie Jamison
Properties	Jennie Mayes*
Crew	Emily Campbell, Sherry Hodges*
Lighting Crew	Lewis Fuller*, Tom Kirby*
Light Board Operator	Emily Campbell
Sound Engineer	Chris Dockins
Hair Design	Chu Lin
Publicity Crew	Allison Ploeger, Emily Campbell
Poster Design	Marian Zielinski*
Box Office	Sherrrie Jamison, Sherry Hodges*, Emily Campbell
House Manager	Dale Gonzalez*

*"The Dresser" is produced by special arrangement
with Samuel French, Inc.*

Synopsis of KING LEAR by William Shakespeare

"Sir" himself plays Lear, the aging king of ancient Britain (England, Scotland and Wales - hence the "triple crown"), who is planning to retire. In the first scene, Lear is dividing his kingdom among his 3 daughters. Angered by the youngest, Cordelia (played by Her Ladyship), he gives her in marriage to the king of France. With no dowery. Even though he has relinquished the power of the throne, Lear imposes his retinue on the households of Goneril and Regan. Further angered by these daughters who resent his imposition, Lear rages out onto the heath in the midst of a violent storm. Accompanied only by the fool (played by Mr Thornton) and Kent, Lear defies the elements. Nature, however, defeats Lear and teaches him a lesson in humility.

Cordelia returns to England at the head of the French forces - determined to protect her father from her sisters and their cohort Edmund (played by Mr Oxenby). Soon after she finds her father, deranged and wandering on the heath, they are captured by Edmund's forces and sentenced to hang.

In the final scene, Lear's son-in-law Albany and his old friend Kent try to save Lear and Cordelia. But Lear comes to them, bearing in his arms the body of his dead daughter. Lamenting over her, Lear dies. Albany's final line, "We that are young shall never see so much nor live so long," ends the play.

For "The Dresser," the playwright Harwood meticulously recreates the insider's experience of backstage life with a British touring company. However, a few British names and terms in the dialogue may be unfamiliar to American audiences

"the Ugly Sisters in panto" - Cinderella's step-sisters in an English Christmas "pantomime" - musical fairy-tale extravaganza in which the hero is played by an actress and the comic female roles are played by men.

The Corsican Brothers - popular Victorian "gentleman's" melodrama by Boucicault in which the lead actor plays twins.

Outward Bound - 1923 fantasy-drama by Sutton Vane.

Benson - Sir Frank Benson (1858-1939) a great Shakespearean actor-manager.

Edmund Kean - the leading English romantic actor of the 19th century.

Crewe - railway junction in the middle of England, a common layover for companies on tour.