

Plot Summary

The year is about 1676, the scene Virginia. The dashing General Bacon has fought valiantly against the Indians, but since he has acted without orders, the Council has refused him a commission and has labeled him a traitor. This Council, led by the noble Colonel Wellman but otherwise comprised of cowards and rascals, seeks to overthrow Bacon without incurring the wrath of the populace, who love him. Convincing themselves that Bacon is driven by his love for the Indian Queen, rather than by English loyalty, the Council decides to trick him into coming to Jamestown where they plan to arrest him.

Into this turbulent society comes Hazard, a young man seeking his fortune in the New World. Upon his arrival, he meets an old friend, Friendly, who convinces him to introduce himself to the rich and beautiful Mrs Surelove, who will probably soon be widowed. Friendly, courting Surelove's friend Mrs. Chrisante against her father's objections, helps Hazard win his introduction by forging a letter that identifies him as Col. Surelove's relation.

After fighting with some of the rascally Justices of the Peace, who have gained undeserved social advancement upon leaving England, Hazard proceeds to Surelove's, where he meets the outrageous Widow Ranter, a rich, low-born woman of means, in love with the half-hero, half-rake Lieutenant-General Daring.

The subsequent action of the play follows Bacon as he fights against the Council, who have betrayed him, and the Indians, whose Queen he loves. All come eventually to the battlefield, as the lovers join Wellman's ranks, the soldiers fight, the Justices of the Peace fight (on various sides), the ladies are taken prisoner, and Ranter disguises herself as a man to follow after Daring. The varying fates of the characters shape Behn's lively, bittersweet tragicomedy.

Theatrical History

The Widow Ranter was performed in 1690, a year after Aphra Behn had died. The play was unnecessarily and irresponsibly edited, to omit hilarious scenes and render the complex script unintelligible. The play was so miscast that critics speculate the blundering was intentional, to sabotage the production. The play was a failure, and enjoyed no revival. In keeping with the spirit of the Annual Conference on 18th- and 19th- Century British Women Writers, we gladly revive a play by the first British woman writer to support herself solely by her writing. Our goal is to offer the play another opportunity before an audience, hoping that our revival comes closer to the play that Behn envisioned.

--Margaret Stein

The Widow Ranter

by

Aphra Behn



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Directed by James Glazier

Produced by

*The Fourth Annual Conference on 18th- and
19th-Century British Women Writers*

Special Thanks

Bruce Auerbach

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Notre Dame's Center for Continuing Education

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Program Cover: Anne Bracegirdle as Semernia, the Indian Queen.
Photo taken from Elizabeth Howe's *The First English Actresses:
Women and Drama 1660-1700*, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MEN

Indian King, called *Cavernio*,
Bacon, General of the *English*,
Colonel Wellman, Deputy Governor,
Col. Downright, a loyal honest Colonel,
Hazard, Two Friends known to one another
Friendly, many Years in *England*,
Daring, Lieutenant Generals
Fearless, to *Bacon*,
Dullman, a Major
Timorous Cornet,
Whimsey, Justices of the Peace, and
Whiff, very great cowards,
Boozer,
Parson Duncce, formerly a Farrier, fled from
England, and Chaplain to the Governor,
Clerk,
Soldier,

Mr. *Baier*
Mr. *Lucas*
Mr. *Horn*
Mr. *Voigt*
Mr. *Stanford*
Mr. *O'Hara*
Mr. *Tatarka*
Mr. *Aguirre*
Mr. *Smith*
Mr. *Marchal*
Miss *Marcheschi*
Miss *Meany*
Mr. *Reuland*
Mr. *Wallace*

Miss *Bohan*
Miss *Bohan*

WOMEN

Indian Queen, call'd *Semernia*, belov'd by *Bacon*,
Madam Surelove, belov'd by *Hazard*,
Mrs. Chrisante, Daughter to Colonel *Downright*,
Widow Ranter, in love with *Daring*,
Mrs. Flirt, a Tapstress,
Mrs. Whiff,
Nell, Maid at the Inn,
Anaria, Confidante to the *Indian Queen*,
Maid to *Madam Surelove*,

Miss *Dunne*
Miss *D'Amelio*
Miss *Szkwarko*
Miss *Blaha*
Miss *Bowman*
Miss *Bohan*
Miss *Bohan*
Miss *Bohan*
Miss *Bohan*

SCENE, *Virginia* : in *Bacon's* Camp, *James-Town*
and the surrounding Country

Alejandro Aguirre (*Fearless*) is a Notre Dame junior majoring in Government. Alex makes his acting debut with *The Widow Ranter*.

Scott Baier (*Indian King*), a Notre Dame senior majoring in English, has taken the title role in *Tom Jones*, as well as the role of Louis in *Suicide in "B" Flat*. Scott hates actors and drama-types with a passion.

Susan S. Blaha (*Widow Ranter*), a Ph.D. candidate in Notre Dame's English Department, has had much experience in the dramaturgical world, from all angles in the theatre. She played Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Marian in *The Music Man*, and has been in several musicals and operas, the most recent being *Oklahoma!* and *Dido and Aeneas*. Susan spent a summer with the Peninsula Players in Wisconsin, participating in shows from behind the scenes. Most importantly, she has taught numerous courses on Shakespeare and Renaissance drama, and is about to defend her dissertation on Female Sexuality in Shakespearean Tragedy. Resume and recommendations upon request.

Catherine R. E. Bohan (*Nell, Maid, Anaria, Clerk, Seaman*) works in the scene shop at Saint Mary's, where she is a sophomore majoring in Art. Considering a minor in Theatre, Catherine makes her stage debut with *The Widow Ranter*.

Tiffany L. Bowman (*Mrs Flirt*), having appeared as Jessie in *Prisoner of 2nd Avenue* and as the Passenger in *Heaven Can Wait*, begins her collegiate theatrical career by crossing the street over from Saint Mary's College, where she is a freshman majoring in Theatre.

Dana A. D'Amelio (*Mrs Surelove*), a Notre Dame freshman, brings ample theatrical experience with her to her Notre Dame debut. She has most recently played Queen Aggravain in *Once Upon a Mattress*, Madame Paravicini in *The Mousetrap*, and Mrs. Higgins in *My Fair Lady*.

Melissa Dylan Star Dunne (*Indian Queen*), is a Saint Mary's Theatre major in her sophomore year, having transferred from a conservatory program. Her recent credits include the Chorus Leader in *The Bacchae*, Mae Peterson in *Bye, Bye Birdie*, Marjorie in *Extremities*, and the Lion in *The*

Wizard of Oz. She has also been cast in ND's upcoming *Our Country's Good* as Liz Morden. She thinks her mom Cyndi is very cool, her dad Charlie is awesome, her sister Kirsten is the smartest girl in the world, and her best friend John in the bestest friend that ever lived. She would also like to give a shout out to the Gordon family. Despite her great acting experience, the Indian Queen is the first nice role she has ever played.

Paul Horn (*Wellman*), a sophomore majoring in Govt'/International Relations at Notre Dame, joins the cast as he continues his theatrical experience, that has had him appearing as Adam in *The Diary of Adam and Eve*, Jonathan in *Arsenic and Old Lace*, and as the lead dancer in *The Music Man*.

James Glazier (*director*) has long had an interest in Restoration drama. A Physics professor at Notre Dame, *The Widow Ranter* is his first N.D. production.

Greg Lucas (*Bacon*), a Notre Dame sophomore majoring in Computer Science, has taken roles in *As You Like It* and *Godspell*. He has most recently appeared in *The Crucible* as Rev. Hale, and as Mr Mushnik in *Little Shop of*

Horrors.

Joseph A. Marchal (*Timorous Cornet*), a Notre Dame junior majoring in Theology, has recently returned from studying in London, where he acted in *Love's Labour's Lost* as Boyet. Joe has also acted in several student films. Though not by nature a coward, Joe comes to us with an impressive background in buffoonery. Unlike his character in *The Widow Ranter*, he has never sampled "the lousy juice of the grape," "high Burgundy claret," nor "brave edifying punch"; never "supped with his wenches," never "set and stript tobacco," and he has never inhaled, except for that once. . .

Chiara Faith Marcheschi (*Whimsey*), a sociology major at Saint Mary's where she is a freshman, makes her acting debut with the *Widow Ranter* production. Chiara (Key-ara) has lived with three actors all her life, and is now ready to make her family proud by joining the acting profession.

Nora "Earl" Meany (*Whiff*), a Saint Mary's freshman majoring in Communications, has an impressive resume of acting experience, including Melissa in *Love Letters*, Irena in *I Never*

Saw *Another Butterfly*, the Housekeeper in *Man of La Mancha*, and the Mother in *Inaudible Silence*. Nora is a DJ for WVFI (Thursdays at 4:30), and is currently eager for her sophomore year which will find her studying abroad in Ireland. She hates being called "Whiff," and wants to mention that "I know where you live. No, I'm not kidding."

Michael O'Hara (*Friendly*), has most recently played the Boy in *Waiting for Godot*, and also appeared in Notre Dame's *Julius Caesar*, and *You Can't Take It With You*, as G-man. Michael, a Government/ Communications & Theatre major, has taken courses in acting, directing, costuming, lighting, and is beginning to feel at home in the theatrical business.

Andrew J. Reuland (*Boozer*, prop manager/staff), somehow manages to find time to attend class despite a rigorous involvement with the Notre Dame Theatre. A freshman math major, Andrew has just appeared as Frank the Bum in last week's *The Freshman Four*, and has been working on two Notre Dame productions in Props. Andrew plans to continue working as a prop manager, both at Notre

Dame and in Chicago community theatres. His motto: "Once a Blackfriar, Always a Blackfriar."

Dan Smith (*Dullman*), is a Notre Dame freshman considering majoring in English. Currently a member of the Notre Dame Chorale, Dan has extensive theatrical experience, having played Charlie Brown in *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*, Ingolsby in *The Trysting Place*, Seabee in *South Pacific*, Arvide in *Guys and Dolls*, Bert Bentley in *Red Peppers*, the Baron in *Madwoman of Chaillet*, and Franz in the beloved *Sound of Music*.

Darian A. Stanford (*Hazard*), has recently arrived at Notre Dame, having graduated from Baylor University. A first year American Studies graduate student, Darian makes his theatrical debut with *The Widow Ranter*.

Andrea M. Szkwarko (*Chrisante*) is a Pre-Med/Biology major at Saint Mary's. She has recently performed in *The Wizard of Oz* as the Guardian of the Gate and the Good Witch of the South, in *Juvie*, and in *The Nutcracker* as a Snowflake.

Gregg Tatarka (*Daring*) begins his theatrical career with this production. Gregg is a freshman at Notre Dame.

Laurence M. Voigt (*Downright*), a Notre Dame freshman, writes for *The Observer* and can be heard weekly on WSND. Larry returns to the stage having played Archie Beaton in *Brigadoon*.

Nathan Wallace (*Parson Dunce*), a first year English graduate student at Notre Dame, has volunteered his acting expertise to support this conference, even while he is on the steering committee for next week's Irish Conference. Nathan has been in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, playing Marlon Brando, and has taken the title role in *Waiting for Godot*.

Props

Andrew Reuland

Costumes

Susan S. Blaha

Margaret Stein

Publicity

Tiffany Bowman

Michael O'Hara