

We gratefully acknowledge and express our gratitude for the generous support of our sponsors:

Acadiana Arts Council



Acadiana
Arts Council

Friends of the Humanities

Friends



of the
Humanities

Louisiana Division of the Arts



LOUISIANA
DIVISION OF THE
ARTS

Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities



Made Possible Through a Grant from
LOUISIANA
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES
State Affiliate of the National Endowment
for the Humanities

University of Louisiana at Lafayette



UNIVERSITY
OF
LOUISIANA
Lafayette™

The English and Performing Arts Departments
of the
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
present

The Wittlings



by Fanny Burney

*a delightfully satiric comedy about the foibles
of those who are more interested in pretension
and flattery than in literature, culture, or true love*

Burke Theater
University of Louisiana at Lafayette



This production of
The Witlings



by Fanny Burney
and directed by Neil Vanderpool

is sponsored in part by
a generous donation from
Doctors Adrien and Charles Stewart

Producer's Note

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this production of Fanny Burney's *The Witlings*, one of only a few productions of this important and entertaining play since it was written and then suppressed in the late eighteenth century.

Our inspiration for this production was the Thirteenth Annual 18th and 19th Century British Women Writers Conference, a gathering of scholars from around the world which will be hosted by the English Department of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, April 14-17, 2005 at the Lafayette Hilton. While we felt that this production would be a special treat for scholars attending the conference, we also felt that Burney's wonderfully smart and funny play deserved a larger audience. And we feel it is important that what we do in the University is relevant to the community at large. It seemed imperative, then, to share this event with theater lovers in our community and across Louisiana, as well as our local students and teachers.

Two years ago I approached Neil Vanderpool, then the new Head of the Department of Performing Arts at UL Lafayette, to see if he was interested in taking on this production. Neil was excited about the idea, but explained that he had already planned his play schedule for the 2004/2005 academic year and so had no room in his budget for this play. I then approached the Friends of the Humanities who, in the true spirit of friends, assured me that they would financially support our production as much as they could. This gave us the confidence to pursue our vision. The Acadiana Arts Council was generous with a grant, and many private donors have since proved themselves to be true supporters of the arts by donating to this production, proving once again that the University and the community working together can do amazing things. I'm pleased that our vision was brought to fruition by the generosity of so many, and by the talented direction of Neil Vanderpool and the incredible group of people he has brought together to make this production a success.

We hope, once you see this play, you will feel as we do that Burney's work deserves far more recognition than it has received in the 160 years since her death.

Christine DeVine

Assistant Professor, Department of English
University of Louisiana at Lafayette



Director's Note

Welcome to this wonderful event presented by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Department of Performing Arts. It is a privilege to greet you and thank you on behalf of the English and Performing Arts Departments for the support you give to this department and its events. We are pleased to collaborate with the English Department to present this production and we welcome the participants of the 18th and 19th Century British Women Writers Conference held in conjunction with these performances.

There have been a lot of people working very hard to bring this production to you and I would like to thank them for their dedication, commitment, and steadfastness to the vision of the project. Without them? Well, they were there, and I thank them because they were.

The department is thrilled to present this material for your enjoyment. It is not often that this genre of work can be successfully produced. However, this is a wonderful opportunity for all to work in the style of the period, to see this kind of play, and to enjoy the works of a writer who was ahead of her time as a playwright. Her time has now come!

I know you will have a great experience at this performance, and I look forward to seeing you at the theatre again soon. After you leave here tonight, you will want to tell your family and friends about the great things that are happening here at the university. Our remaining season is shown in your program, so please keep it for future reference.

Enjoy the show!

Neil Vanderpool

Head, Department of Performing Arts

P.S. Have you ever wanted to be involved with a production such as this or a dance concert? Perhaps you would like to take a class that will give you a greater understanding of the art form. Just call 482-6357.



Cast

Beaufort.....	Darnell Benjamin
Censor	Blaine Peltier
Dabler.....	Justin Bates
Jack, Beaufort's half brother	Brock Hoffpauir
Codger, Jack's father.....	Keith Dorwick
Bob, Mrs. Voluble's son.....	Joey Thibodeaux
Footman	Tate Stout
Male Servant to Lady Smatter	Zachary Stelly
Server	Scott Netterville
Lady Smatter, Beaufort's aunt	Allison Hetzel
Cecilia	Brittan Blanchard
Mrs. Sapient.....	Jill Stewart
Mrs. Voluble.....	Chava Hamlet
Mrs. Wheedle, a Milliner	Lauren Anderson
Miss Jenny, her apprentice.....	Kristal Ortego
Betty, Mrs. Voluble's maid.....	Angee Trobough
Female Servant to Lady Smatter, Young Woman.....	Cheremie Howe
Miss Polly	Lindsey Hurst
Miss Sally	Jan Hilliard
Miss Betsy.....	Felicia Overfelt
Miss Anna	Nicole Nonore

Understudies

Jan Hilliard, Brock Hoffpauir, Nicole Honore,
Cheremie Howe, Lindsey Hurst, Scott Netterville,
Kristal Ortego, Felicia Overfelt, Blaine Peltier,
Zachary Stelly, Jill Stewart, Tate Stout, Joey Thibodeaux



Production Staff

Production Stage Manager April Turner
Assistant Stage Manager Allison Barron
Costume Design & Construction Dean Mogle
Costumer/Wigs Gayle Stancil
Costume Shop Assistant..... Chava Hamlet
Makeup Artist Gayle Stancil
Technical Director/Scene Design Neil Vanderpool
Properties April Turner
Shop Foreman Blaine Peltier
Zac Stelly
Shop Assistants April Turner
Mandy Chance
Lauren Anderson
Kristal Ortego
Cate Cundiff
Evan Melancon
Blake Domingue
Tickets..... UL Student Union
Programs Dr. Christine DeVine, English Department
Leah Baudoin, Printing Services
Cover Design Leslie Donahue Schilling
Master Electrician Jessica LeBlanc
Light Board Operator Jessica LeBlanc



Supporters of the Arts

Susan Allen
Geraldine Boesch
Angell Boustany
Professor Caroline Breashears
Dr. Barbara Cicardo
Edna S. F. Cooper
Sidney M. Creaghan
Ralph DeVine
Kay Dore
Professor Robin Fetherston
Professor John E. Grant
Mrs. Arthur D. Green
Professor Elisabeth Rose Gruner
Ms. Angela Hall-Godsey
KDCG TV
Dr. Cindy LaCom
Jennifer Malin, M.D.
Ed and Karen McGlasson
Sandy Mugnier
Dr. Michelle O'Connell
Dr. Andy Plauché
Dr. Kristin Plauché
Dr. Marjean D. Purinton
Professor Donna Decker Reck
Trula Russek
Professor Sharon Setzer
Professor Daniel Siegel
Ms. Monica Smith
Drs. Charles and Adrien Stewart
Professor Kang Ok Sun
Dr. Mary Ann Wilson
Dr. Elizabeth Winston
Dr. Donna Onebane

Thank You!



Dramaturgical Note

Fanny Burney wrote *The Wiltings* in England in 1779, but for a variety of reasons, it was not publicly performed until 1994. The first published edition, put together by Clayton Delery (a University of Louisiana at Lafayette graduate), came out in 1995. The current revival of interest in Burney and her play is tied to the rediscovery of many texts by women writers who have been largely forgotten. We are pleased to be able to present Burney's work to you and to introduce you to a popular 18th-century writer with whom many of today's theatergoers are unfamiliar.

Fanny Burney (1752-1840) was a best-selling author in her day. Her first major success was *Evelina, or, a Young Woman's Entrance into the World*, a novel published in 1778. She completed *The Wiltings* the following year, receiving encouragement from some of her mentors and friends, including Richard Brinsley Sheridan and Dr. Samuel Johnson, two of the most famous writers of that era. However, her father, Dr. Charles Burney, and his prominent friend, Dr. Samuel Crisp, were uncomfortable with the subject matter of the play and succeeded in preventing it from being produced or published. Their concern was that characters Burney satirizes in the play resembled too closely people with whom they associated. In a letter to her father responding to his request that she not make the play public, Burney wrote:

The fatal knell, then, is knolled, and 'down among the dead men' sink the poor *Wiltings*—for ever, and for ever, and for ever!

You, my dearest sir, who enjoyed, I really think, even more than myself, the astonishing success of my first attempt, would I believe, even more than myself, be hurt at the failure of my second; I am sure I speak from the bottom of a very honest heart, when I most solemnly declare, that upon your account any disgrace would mortify and afflict me more than upon my own. (*The Diary of Fanny Burney*)



Dramaturgical Note

In *The Wiltings*, Burney mocks the pretense of characters, such as Lady Smatter, who purport to know everything about literature but who know very little. The pretentious literary group, whose main concern is *appearing* to be intellectual, and at whom Burney pokes fun in the play, is dubbed the Esprit party. However, her real life targets were the Blue Stockings, led by Elizabeth Montagu, and the Streathamites, a group who met at Hester Thrale's Streatham estate. Montagu promoted herself as a literary critic, but, like Lady Smatter, she was known for frequently misquoting authors and misunderstanding their work. Other characters in *The Wiltings* represent some of the different supposedly intellectual types Burney may have encountered at literary club meetings. For example, Mrs. Sapient, whose name ironically suggests a woman of wisdom, is a character who is even more shallow and materialistic than Lady Smatter. Mrs. Voluble speaks volumes but never says anything significant. Dabbler is the plagiarizing and uninspired aspiring poet who is completely dependent on the whims of Lady Smatter. Jack is a young man of privilege whose life is spent hurrying around with no purpose, and Codger, Jack's father is, a slow-witted old fellow who lives up to his name, and often talks for the sake of hearing himself while boring anyone in his company.

The farce of these characters and their pretensions is woven into the romantic story of the lovely young Cecilia and her handsome beau, Beaufort. Beneath the comedy, however, is a stinging commentary on the conceit of the wealthier classes and their superficial values which emphasize money and public image rather than real knowledge and true love.

Ultimately, there was too much truth in Burney's satire, and she was forced to silence her critique. Fortunately for us, Burney's loyalty to her father did not mean the disappearance of the play "for ever." We hope you enjoy this production and agree that Burney's play is worth reviving.

Shelley Martin
Dramaturge



Play Synopsis

Act 1

Mrs. Wheedle's shop, where she and her assistants are preparing hats, cloaks, and lace trimmings for sale. Mrs. Voluble enters, and lives up to her name by telling everyone the latest gossip. Much of the gossip revolves around heiress Cecilia Stanley's upcoming marriage to Beaufort. Beaufort himself comes in with his sharp-tongued friend Censor. He intends to meet Cecilia at the shop, but she fails to appear.

Act 2

Lady Smatter's drawing room, where she is discussing books with Cecilia. Lady Smatter invites Cecilia to the evening's meeting of her literary society, the Esprit Club. They are soon joined by the other members of the club: Mrs. Sapient, the poet Mr. Dabler, and Beaufort's stepfather Codger. Beaufort joins them. His flighty half-brother Jack enters in the midst of the discussion with news that the bank in which Cecilia's fortune was invested has failed.

Act 3

Lady Smatter tells her nephew Beaufort that he must break off his engagement with the now-indigent Cecilia. He indignantly refuses. Meanwhile, Cecilia flees Lady Smatter's house and goes to Mrs. Voluble's boarding-house, where Mr. Dabler is also lodged. Censor promises to give Cecilia Beaufort's messages, but advises the young man against contacting her directly. When Censor tries to speak to Cecilia, however, she misinterprets his gesture and refuses to hear his message.

Act 4

The second meeting of the Esprit Club, at Lady Smatter's. Censor enters to bring news of Cecilia, only to be drawn into the Club's pretentious and ill-informed discussion. He attempts to tell Lady Smatter and then Beaufort about Cecilia but is interrupted continually and gives up in disgust.

Act 5

Mrs. Voluble's house, where she and Mrs. Wheedle are gossiping about Cecilia. Cecilia herself enters, and declares herself determined to go abroad, crushed by a lost fortune and lost love. Mrs. Sapient comes in and hides herself in the closet to eavesdrop on the events. The group eventually is joined by Dabler, Beaufort, Lady Smatter, and Censor for the surprising dénouement.



Literary and Historical Context

The eighteenth century in England was known as the Age of Reason because, it is said, people turned away from superstition and looked to Reason as the ruling idea of the day. This was the era that included such great poets as Alexander Pope, author of *The Rape of the Lock* (1712), a poem that satirizes the epic form through its description of the theft of a vain woman's lock of hair. The era also counted biographer and man-of-letters Samuel Johnson among its literary luminaries. Johnson was at the center of literary activity in his time and was subsequently immortalized by the great biographer James Boswell.

But the poem was not the only genre to thrive during this period. The novel also came into its own during this century with such works as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-8), Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), and of course, Laurence Sterne's great masterpiece *Tristram Shandy* (1763-8). These masterworks laid the foundation for much of the British and American fiction that was to follow.

Oliver Goldsmith, while writing poems, essays and novels, also devoted himself to writing plays such as *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773). Goldsmith loved to make fun of the intellectual and literary characters by having them interact on stage with "low" characters. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, also wrote comedies for the stage. Such plays as *The Rivals*, staged in 1775, whose character Lydia Languish is a satire on the sentimental characters in the drama of the day, and *The School for Scandal* (1777) are comedies with a slightly darker side. A friend of Frances Burney's father, Sheridan was a supporter of Bruney's early works, and Burney's *The Wiltings* belongs very much to the satiric tradition of Goldsmith and Sheridan. The literary exuberance of the Age of Reason gave way, to some extent, in late century to works aimed at promulgating a political message whether in fiction or non-fiction prose. Writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, an early feminist, and her husband William Godwin, wrote radical polemical novels and political works reflecting the political turmoil that was sweeping Europe and seemed to threaten the British Isles.

Burney wrote and kept her journals through years that saw some of the most inspiring and some of the most frightening events in world history. She was, after all, writing *The Wiltings* just a few years after the American Declaration of Independence was signed. In 1778 France joined the Revolutionary war against Britain, followed by Spain in 1779. Protestant anti-Catholics rioted in London's streets in 1780 and a decade after Burney's play was completed, the Bastille would be stormed in France. A few years later Britain was involvement in the French Revolutionary War, sparking antiwar demonstrations and food riots in London, and causing a conservative backlash in part through the "Gagging Acts" on seditious meetings and publications. During her lifetime Burney would also see the Napoleonic War between Britain and France beginning in 1803 and lasting until 1815 when the French leader met his Waterloo.



Laughing Comedies and Weeping Comedies

According to Clayton J. Delery in his 1995 edition of *The Witlings*, the comedies appearing on London's stages at the time Burney wrote her play fell into two groups: Laughing Comedies and Sentimental or 'Weeping' Comedies. Sentimental Comedies, aimed at mollifying contemporary middle-class audiences, and tended to be morally preachy, rewarding virtue while exhibiting pity for those who suffered.

Laughing Comedies, the group into which Burney's play falls, focus more on the faults than the virtues of the character-types involved. And while both Laughing Comedies and Weeping Comedies usually employ aspects of both groups, the dominant reaction they evoke in their audience determines their label.

Suppression of The Witlings

The Witlings has been staged only a few times since it was written. Delery writes that there has been much speculation about why Burney's father forbade production of the play: critics have asserted that he stifled it because he found Lady Smatter to resemble his wife--Burney's stepmother--too closely, or because he saw his own likeness in Dabblers. The most widely-held explanation, however, is that a public performance of the scathing satire of Lady Smatter and her Esprit club would hit too close to home for Elizabeth Montagu and the other Bluestocking ladies who regularly gathered for conversation on literary topics of the day. Whatever their cause, the objections of Burney's father deprived the world of a wickedly funny play—a play whose script Delery says made feminist scholar Ellen Moers laugh out loud in the library—for far too long.

Staging The Witlings

Because our production is one of only a handful to ever bring *The Witlings* alive on stage, a great deal of research went into its production. We made the difficult decision to cut a number of scenes from Burney's script, as an unabridged production would run for over four hours. While the text has been modified to suit the time constraints of a modern audience, we have remained faithful to the styles of dress, hats and hair of the day. Such details are especially important in a comedy such as this that satirizes the pretensions of the upper class, as in Burney's time one's class status would have been immediately evident from one's dress and coiffure. Similarly, great attention has been paid to the accents of the characters, which functioned then as now as markers of class status. The sets and lighting design round out our evocation of an eighteenth-century England inhabited by status-conscious gentry, hardworking milliners, and young people in love.



Frances Burney was born in 1752 in London. Her father, Dr. Charles Burney, was a composer and organist, and Burney grew up enjoying the company of her father's famous friends such as David Garrick (theater manager, playwright and Shakespearean actor) and Samuel Crisp (a writer and mentor of Fanny Burney, who brought the first piano introduced into England from Italy). And while Burney did not receive a formal education, the literary circles in which she grew up and her love for reading produced a writer whose first novel *Evelina*, was an immediate success. Published anonymously in 1778, *Evelina, or, the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* was an epistolary novel, or one written entirely in the form of letters, a popular genre in the eighteenth century. Her next book, published in 1782, *Cecilia, or, Memoirs of an Heiress*, was also very popular. Burney's true identity soon became known and as a result of her success she became a friend of the famous Samuel Johnson and a member of his circle.

Because she needed an income, Burney, was given the position of Second Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte, wife of George III. Due to the confining nature of this position, she was unhappy during the five years she spent in the queen's household. In 1793, at the age of 39, she married a French *émigré*, General D'Arblay, and spent some years living in France. In 1768 she began a diary and continued writing it until her death in 1840 seventy-two years later. Burney's diaries and letters give an intimate view of the culture of her England.





**BUNIVERSITY
BOOKSTORE**

TEXTBOOKS • SUPPLIES • APPAREL

LOCATED IN THE STUDENT UNION

Supporter Of
The Arts At The
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Congratulations to the
Department of English at
the University of Louisiana
at Lafayette for Hosting
the 2005 meeting of the
British Women Writers
Conference.

Ann and Walter Dobie

Find out More. . .

Find out more about late eighteenth-century playwright
Fanny Burney and *The Wiltings* at the

Pre-Show Talks

April 9, 15, 16 at 6:45 P.M.

at Burke Theater

by Fanny Burney experts

Dr. Catherine Burroughs, Wells College

Dr. Clayton Delery, The Louisiana School

Dr. John Greene, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

and at a

Free Public Lecture

April 14 at 7:30 P.M.

at the Hilton Lafayette

by Dr. Catherine Burroughs,

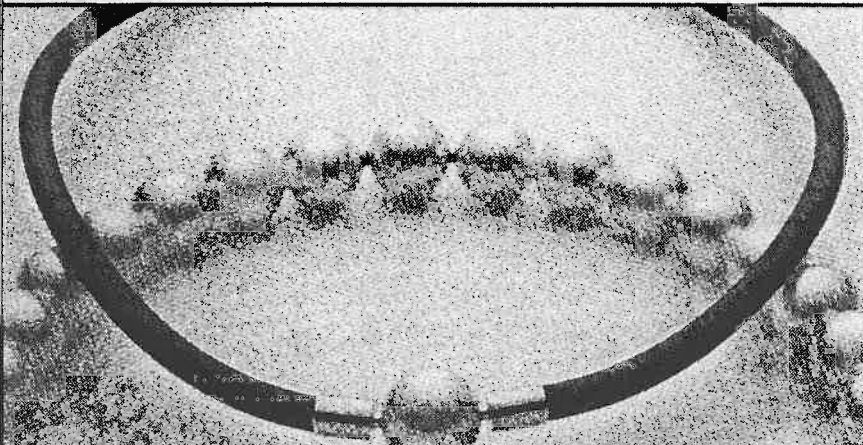
Associate Professor of English

at Wells College, Aurora, NY.

Author of numerous books and articles

on Romantic-era drama.

STULLER & PASPALEY



*Nature's
Gift*

Nothing says "I love you" like South Sea cultured pearls.

From the pristine waters of Northern Australia, Stuller & Paspaley have created an exquisite collection of South Sea cultured pearl jewelry.

Each piece is a gift from nature— as unique as the woman who wears it.

Visit us to experience the sensation of Stuller & Paspaley South Sea cultured pearls today.

PAUL'S
JEWELRY

133 Old Green Street • Lafayette, LA
3383-23-0078

BWWC 2005

*The Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century
British Women
Writers Conference*

hosted by
the Department of English
University of Louisiana at Lafayette

is proud to support
this production of

The Wifings

Broadview Press
is proud to support this
production of
The Wittlings



b Broadview Press
1985-2005
Celebrating 20 Years
www.broadviewpress.com

Department of Performing Arts

2005 Series

The Wittlings



by Fanny Burney

*directed by Neil Vanderpool
produced in association with
the Department of English*

Performance Dates

April 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 2005 at 8:00 p.m.

April 15 at 10:00 a.m.

April 16 at 3:00 p.m.

Friday, April 15 performance free for high school and college students


Lafayette Music
3700 Johnston St.
Lafayette, LA
984-3700

Dianne Lindsay
Executive Sales Representative

THOMSON

Wadsworth, Heintle and Schirmer
10 Davis Drive
Belmont, CA 94002
Office Tel (225) 766-0308 Fax (225) 767-9840
Voice Mail 800-876-2350 ext. 7861
Email dianne.lindsay@thomson.com
Desk and Review Copies 800-423-0563
www.tl-sales.com/dlindsay

*Theatre Department Showcase
Scenes, monologues, and exercises
by the Performing Arts Department Theater students*

April 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 2005