

arts & entertainment



A lighthearted look at love

The subject is love next Wednesday at 8 p.m. in Kimball Recital Hall. That's when the Royal Shakespeare Company brings *Pleasure and Repentance* to town for the second production of the UNL Performing Arts Series.

Billed as a lighthearted look at love, the program brings together poetry, prose and song from around the world and across the ages. Company member Terry Hands devised the show.

"A Description of Love," by Sir Walter Raleigh, opens and closes the two-part show. Between the two readings, diversity is the production's keynote.

Selections from the works of Shakespeare, John Keats and John Donne are balanced by lesser known pieces by Mickey Spillane, the Rolling Stones and an 8-year-old girl named Marjory Fleming.

Among songs in the program are "Cotton Eye Joe," an American traditional tune, and "So We'll Go No More A'roving," by Lord Byron, with music composed by

Martin Best. Bill Homewood sings and plays guitar.

Lynette Davies, David Suchet and Hugh Sullivan do the acting chores in *Pleasure and Repentance*. Davies has played Regan in *King Lear*, *Lady Macbeth*, and worked with Peter Brooks in his production of *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Suchet played the king in the company's *Love's Labours Lost*, which played in Omaha last spring. Sullivan has appeared in the company's productions as Rens in *Macbeth*, Hastings in *The Wars of the Roses* and as Kokol in Peter Brook's production of *Marat/Sade*.

The Royal Shakespeare Company is headquartered in Stratford-on-Avon, birthplace of the Bard. The first theater opened in 1879, but was destroyed by fire in 1926. The rebuilt theater is still in use.

The company's financial support has come from Queen Elizabeth since 1971 when it was subsidized by the English nation.

bernstein on words

Stickler sounds of silence

By Theodore M. Bernstein

Sticklerism again. "Has the strike been called off, have the pickets been removed?" the justice asked. There was no answer. "I hear silence," the justice said. That passage from a newspaper article prompts a reader to ask, "How can you hear silence?"

The answer is that logically and technically you can't, but figuratively and idiomatically you can. The question brings to mind a sentence that was cited a couple of columns ago: "All children are not neat."

Logically and literally that should mean that there isn't a neat child in the world, but no one but a stickler would read it that way.

A word about they. "Everyone wishes they were rich." To most educated people these days that use of they sounds wrong and frequently a demand is raised for a he-she inclusive pronoun that can be used in that kind of sentence.

Some students of words, such as Ethel Strainchamps, maintain that such a pronoun already exists and has existed since Modern English began; the pronoun these students cite is they.

Surprisingly enough, some important dictionaries, including the Oxford and the Merriam-Webster second and third editions, agree. In the Oxford one definition of they is: "often used in reference to a singular noun made universal by every,

any, no, etc., or applicable to one of either sex."

It is true that in the early days of the language they was used in that way, but, as George O. Curme notes in "Syntax," a scholarly text, "This older literary usage survives in loose colloquial and popular speech."

The implication is that it does not survive in careful educated speech or writing. And that implication is substantially correct, though the locution does appear in some educated writing.

In the opening sentence above if "he or she" sounds awkward, which it usually does, you might reconstruct the sentence, making it, for example, "Everyone wishes to be rich."

Word oddities. An overused word these days is syndrome, which means a collection of symptoms or characteristics that mark a certain condition.

You wouldn't think there would be anything unusual about the pronunciation of the word, but Webster's Second Edition gives the first pronunciation syn-dro-me, with its secondary sound (in medicine) as syn-drome.

The Webster third edition, however, gives it as syn-drome, with a secondary pronunciation of syn-dro-me. Thus do even dictionaries reverse themselves.

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