

2013-2014 ON HER SHOULDERS CALENDAR

July 15	<i>Diana of Dobson's (1908)</i>	Cicely Hamilton	Gwynn MacDonald, Artistic Director, Juggernaut Theatre
Aug 12	<i>Trifles</i> (1916)	Susan Glaspell	Tricia McDermott, Artistic Director, Airmid Theatre Company
Sept. 16	<i>A Taste of Honey (1958)</i>	Shelagh Delaney	Ludovica Villar-Hauser, Founder, Works by Women
Oct 21	<i>Les Blancs (1970)</i>	Lorrain Hansberry	Pat Golden
Nov. 18	<i>The Years Between (1944)</i>	Daphne DuMaurier	Abigail Zealey Ensemble Studio Theatre
Dec. 16	<i>A Bold Stroke for a Wife</i> (1717)	Susanna Centlivre	Rebecca Patterson, Artistic Director, The Queen's Company
Jan TBA	<i>The Convent of Pleasure (1668)</i>	Margaret Cavendish	Elyse Singer Artistic Director, The Hourglass Group
Feb TBA	<i>I'll Tell You What</i> (1785)	Elizabeth Inchbald	Kay Matschullat
Mar TBA	TBA	TBA	Rachel Dickstein Artistic Director, Ripe Time

ON HER SHOULDERS is a sponsored project of Fractured Atlas, a non-profit arts service organization. Donation checks in support of this program should be made payable to Fractured Atlas and mailed to: (specifying ON HER SHOULDERS as the intended beneficiary).

New Perspectives Theatre Company
456 West 37th Street
New York, NY 10018

Credit card donations may be made via the ON HER SHOULDERS website at:
<http://onhershoulders.weebly.com/>.

Cash gifts are gratefully accepted at readings; a receipt can be provided if requested.
 All donations are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Thank you to our generous donors who have made this reading possible:

Anonymous, Judith Barlow, Suzanne Bennett, Julie Bleha, Rachel Brill, Jennifer Brown, Thomas Burka, Sanjay Cherubala, Michael Coleman, Jill Dolan, Lue Douthit, Keller Easterling, Gia Forakis, J. Ellen Gainor, Jayne Atkinson-Gill, Julie Gochman, Lorraine H., Ludovica Villar-Hauser, Darlene Rae Heller, Mari-Lyn Henry, Heide M Jonassen, Leon Katz, Betty Kronsky, Justine Lambert, Kenneth Levis, Tim Licht, Katt Lissard, Isaac Loftus, Sarah Lyons, Gwynn MacDonald, Susana Meyer, Georgianna Page, John Parks, Laura Riveros, Rachel Routh, What's the Story?, James SoRelle, Harriet Slaughter, Simon Trevino, Karen's Workshop

ON HER SHOULDERS

in association with

New Perspectives Theatre Company presents

Cicely Hamilton's

"Diana of Dobson's"

New Adaptation by Susan Jonas



Directed by Gwynn MacDonald

Dramaturgy by Loren Noveck

Monday, July 15th at 6:30pm

The New School for Drama,

55 West 13th St, Lang Student Center

Women have been writing plays and contributing to Western Theatre for 1,000 years

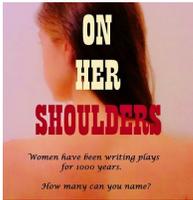
How many of the plays or playwrights can you name?

Total plays by women produced in commercial and regional theatres in the U.S. have remained below 20% for most of the 20th Century and now into the 21st. Yet many of these plays have been the most successful of their time, earning greater awards and box office income than their male counterparts.

At the first reading of this series, Rachel Crothers' *A Man's World*, ON HER SHOULDERS surveyed the audience about their knowledge of the play and/or the playwright. Given that our audience is generally composed of theatre practitioners and those with an interest in women in theatre, the numbers were still shocking: only 40% had ever heard of Rachel Crothers; just 21% had read any of her plays, and only 7% had seen a production of one of them.

With a general audience, we can imagine that these numbers would be even worse!

The goal of ON HER SHOULDERS is to remedy this situation. By presenting staged readings of plays from across the spectrum of time and place, with contemporary dramaturges adapting them for modern audiences, we are making it impossible to deny or ignore the great tradition and value of women's contribution to the theatrical canon. Through our reading series we intend to motivate producers and directors to champion and produce these brilliant plays in New York and regionally, and to incite audiences to demand to see them.



In making history visible, we also shine the light on today's women playwrights and see their work as part of a continuum a thousand years long. They stand on the shoulders of giants--and in restoring our foremothers to their rightful place, we elevate all women playwrights.

The Play in Context, the dramaturgical and scholarly presentation component for all of the readings, is sponsored in part by the League of Professional Theatre Women, a not-for-profit organization promoting visibility and increasing opportunities for women in theatre since 1982. www.theatrewomen.org

LEAGUE OF PROFESSIONAL
**THEATRE
WOMEN**

ON HER SHOULDERS is also aligned with the goals and projects of 50/50 in 2020: Parity for Women Theatre Artists. This grassroots initiative was launched in August 2009 to work toward 50% representation for women playwrights and directors by the 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage in the U.S.

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facebook.com/OnHerShouldersReadingSeries

living the life of someone with 276 times her income, "settling" for 46 times isn't really so bad.

Yet as one goes up the play's economic ladder—from the shop-girls to the moneyed tourists in the Swiss Alps—every character in it except for perhaps the plutocrat Sir Jabez Grinley is conscious not just of their relative social position, but of exactly how much money is required to keep or improve it. As members of society's non-working classes, women like Mrs. Cantelupe or young men about town like Victor Bretherton see money as a thing one can acquire by a method almost entirely unrelated to how one spends one's time. It's only when forced to attempt to earn income by his own labor that Victor comes to think of his small fortune as riches indeed.

As a purportedly rich widow, observed in conspicuous consumption, Diana is putting on a masquerade not only of class (though of course it is that), and not only of a particular gendered status (marriage), but of unconcern with money, of having enough money not to think about money, which, ironically, is what makes her attractive to Sir Jabez.

Unlike Sir Jabez Grinley, for a woman it's not enough to have "grit and push and pluck enough to raise [one]self out of the ruck and finish at the top"; Diana has all those qualities in spades, but they get her docked wages rather than success. Nonetheless, she is enormously—and rightly—proud of herself for earning her bread, for making her way in the world "without being beholden to any man and without a penny at my

back."

That position, and that sense of pride, are very much Hamilton's own; it was crucially important to her that women be able to find their place in society outside of marriage, outside of being dependent on even the most beloved of husbands. As she writes in "Marriage as a Trade," "I hold...that the narrowing down of woman's hopes and ambitions to the sole pursuit and sphere of marriage is one of the principal causes of the various disabilities, economic and otherwise, under which she labors to-day. And I hold, also, that this concentration of all her hopes and ambitions on the one object was, to a great extent, the result of artificial pressure, of unsound economic and social conditions – conditions which forced her energy into one channel, by the simple expedient of depriving it of every other outlet, and made marriage practically compulsory."

It's somewhat bittersweet, then, to realize that despite Hamilton's political commitments and Diana's fiery spirit, this play (like many of Hamilton's plays) ends with that most conventional comedic wrap-up: a marriage. Are we meant to see this as, in the end, a pragmatic and financially prudent decision, or a genuine romance—between characters who almost never interact in the play? Are we meant to be happy for Diana because her days of penury are over, or because she's genuinely attached to Victor—or are we meant, just a little, to be worried for the freedom she's giving up?

Diana of Dobson's and the Economics of Womanhood

by Loren Noveck



Diana of Dobson's was Cicely Hamilton's first full-length play and the second production by Lena Ashwell's Kingsway Theatre in February 1908. Said the theater's reader, Edward Knoblock, "Just about five in a hundred were worth reading at all... one in two hundred ready to put on stage with a fair chance of success." Knoblock saw *Diana's* potential right away: its strong characters; its humor; its passionate explication of ideas.

As a woman who had to support herself from a young age, and never married, Cicely Hamilton—who worked as a teacher and an actress before finding success as a writer—had an exquisite awareness of both the power and freedom bought by money, and the constraints placed by social mores on women's ability to acquire that power and freedom. And although she could not have, obviously, used the term, what strikes me as relevant about *Diana of Dobson's* is that it's very much about the contemporary issue of income inequality, here operating intertwined with both class and gender. (Spoiler alert: you might want to finish this *after* the reading, as plot developments will be discussed in some detail.)

For Diana Massingberd, Hamilton's heroine, it is impossible not to think, constantly, about the vast gulfs that

exist between her position behind the counter in a drapery shop—selling goods she can't dream of affording and living in a grim dormitory—and the plutocrat (the "one-percenter," to use today's term) who owns that store; it's impossible not to think of how few options she has when, unlike her coworker Kitty, she sees no prospect of marriage, the only path likely, in that time and place, to get her off the lowest rung of paid work. (Her path, of course, takes her past several possible marriages by the end of the play, but none of these are predictable at the beginning.) It's telling that the play is called *Diana of Dobson's*, not *Diana Massingberd*; her life at the start of the play is so constrained by that place of employment that it dictates everything for her.

Diana's unexpected inheritance, then, allows her to *be*, albeit briefly, Massingberd rather than "of Dobson's." Three hundred pounds, which she spends on a brief period of luxury rather than improving her lot incrementally over a longer period, represents 23 years of her salary. (For today's minimum-wage worker, this would be like inheriting around \$200,000; not enough to change your life in a permanent way unless you're extremely frugal, but if you were going to blow it all in a month, you could live in the lap of considerable luxury—and of course in Hamilton's era there was no minimum wage and very few worker protection laws, so the contrast in lifestyles was even more extreme.) Even the money Diana does end up marrying is a vast improvement on her current lot. If she was momentarily

The Play in Context:
Introduction by Loren Noveck

"Diana of Dobson's"

A romantic comedy in four acts
Directed by Gwynn MacDonald

CAST

Laura Tietjen *Miss Smithers / Mrs. Whyte-Fraser*
Tina Chilip* *Kitty Brant / Police Constable Fellowes*
Elizabeth Fleming *Miss Jay / A Waiter*
Flor De Liz Perez* *Diana Massingberd*
Rosie Sowa *Miss Morton / A Waiter*
Virginia Bryan** *Miss Pringle / Old Woman*
Constance Zaytoun *Mrs. Cantelupe*
Chris Wight** *Sir Jabez Grinley*
Jared McGuire* *Captain Victor Bretherton*

* Member AEA ** AEA: EMC candidate

Produced by Lillian Rodriguez, Andrea Lepcio, and Melody Brooks

Gwynn MacDonald (Director) is a freelance director and AD of Juggernaut Theatre. Her work on women playwrights includes producing "The First 100 Years: The Professional Female Playwright" -- a project exploring the lives and plays of women who wrote for the 17th & 18th century English Stage; contributing the chapter "Engaging Social Issues, Expressing a Political Outlook" to *Women Writing Plays* (UT Press, Alexis Greene ed); and co-directing with Immigrants' Theatre Project the 2012-13 series "Eastern European Playwrights: Women Write the New" featuring eight plays from six countries. Gwynn is a Princeton alum, Drama League Fellow, member of LPTW, LCT Lab, and SDC.

Susan Jonas (Script Editor) was Resident Dramaturg at The Acting Company and Classic Stage Company, Producing Director at Classical Theatre of Harlem, and Co-Founder of 50/50 in 2020. She teaches a survey of ten centuries of women playwrights, most recently at Ithaca College and New York University. She co-edited *Dramaturgy and American Theatre*, co-authored with Suzanne Bennett "The Report on the Status of Women in Theatre," and writes occasionally for *American Theatre*. She curated and helped launch the inaugural season of On Her Shoulders.

Loren Noveck (Dramaturg) writes for nytheatre.com and is a New Georges affiliated artist and a member of the advisory council of NYTE (the New York Theatre Experience, home of nytheatre.com and Indie Theater Now). Formerly the literary manager of Six Figures Theatre Company, she is delighted to be once more advocating for recognition and production opportunities for women theatre artists.

THERE WILL BE A BRIEF INTERMISSION

Join us after the reading for a discussion with the director and dramaturg.

Cicely Hamilton:
Actress, Playwright, Journalist, Feminist, Suffragist
by Loren Noveck

Cicely Hamilton (1872-1952) came to writing as a profession more than an artistic calling, a means to support herself and her sister. Her published output includes six full-length plays, three one-acts, seven novels (three also published as plays, including *Diana of Dobson's*), seventeen nonfiction books (including perhaps her most famous work, *Marriage as a Trade*, and a nine-book series on modern Europe from 1931 to 1950), and countless articles, pamphlets, and speeches. (Ten more plays were never published, though most of them were produced.) For her whole career, her writing went side-by-side with political and social activism, which might be seen as her genuine passion (and, of course, comes through in her writing; in *Diana of Dobson's*, the political issues include rights of working women, the pay scales of shop-girls, and one of her common themes, the economics of marriage).

Hamilton was born in 1872, as Cicely Mary Hammill, the oldest of four children. Before she was twenty, both her parents had passed away, both her brothers had been shipped off to Canada to make their own ways in the world, and her sister, Evelyn, was trying to become a governess. Cicely started her self-supporting life as a "pupil-teacher" (something sort of

like a modern teaching assistant, who pays tuition giving lessons to other students), but (in her own words) she turned her "back on the teaching profession before it turned its back on me." Instead, she decided to become an actress, changing her name to Hamilton and

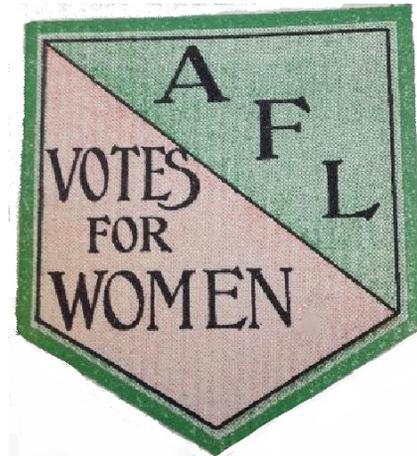


working primarily with the lowest rung of touring companies.

By 1903, she'd tired of the touring circuit and, now needing to support her sister, returned to London and began writing. Although she had aspirations as a playwright, it proved more lucrative to begin with romantic fiction and sensation stories for pulp periodicals. Her first play was produced in London and Brighton in 1906; at the advice of the producer she disguised her name to hide her sex. Hamilton credits the suffrage movement—with which she was about to become involved—with the subsequent decision to put her

full name on everything else she ever wrote.

Spurred by her own varied work experiences and the need to support herself and her sister, Hamilton was intensely committed to making sure women had the means to obtain financial security and, for lack of a historically appropriate term, self-esteem. Suffragism was an important part of this project, but only a part: "My personal revolt was feminist rather than suffragist." Her important work *Marriage as a Trade* (1909) was concerned with women's financial self-sufficiency, rather than their political emancipation, and how that factored into the marriage



contract and their ability to choose to marry or not and whom.

By then, Hamilton was active in the suffrage campaign, helping to found the Women Writers' Suffrage League and the Actresses' Franchise League in 1908. Even after the beginning of women's enfranchisement in Britain, Hamilton remained active,

politically and artistically. She continued to write plays, columns, novels; edit the league for European Freedom's press bulletins; and give speeches until the end of her life.

Major works, in addition to *Diana*, include the plays (several of which were also published as novels) *Just to Get Married*, *The Cutting of the Knot* (also known as *A Matter of Money*), *Jack and Jill and a Friend*, *Lady Noggs*, and *The Old Adam*; the novels *William, an Englishman*, *Theodore Savage*, and *Full Stop*; and the nonfiction works *Marriage as a Trade*, *Senlis*, her autobiography *Life Errant*, *Lament for Democracy*, and *The Englishwoman*.

Suggested reading list:

Cicely Hamilton, *Marriage as a Trade*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1909.

Cicely Hamilton, *Life Errant*. London: Dent, 1935.

Lis Whitelaw, *The Life and Rebellious Times of Cicely Hamilton*. London: The Women's Press, 1990.

Cicely Hamilton, *Diana of Dobson's*, Diane Gillespie and Doryjane Birrer, eds.. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2003.