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SHOTGUN PLAYERS
PRESENTS
The Rover

By Aphra Behn
Directed by M. Graham Smith

Berkeley— Just how much have sexual politics changed since 1677? Set in Naples during the Carnival masquerade, *The Rover* is a comic romp with an edge. When three women push the boundaries of their expected roles, the responses range from utter delight to violence. Playwright Aphra Behn uses the mask of comedy to explore romance, gender stereotypes, and the particular dangers for women daring to have a voice. Shotgun Players continues its celebration of women playwrights with this classic from Aphra Behn. ***The Rover* previews October 15 - 21, opens Thursday, October 22, and runs through November 22 at the Ashby Stage.**

Virginia Woolf wrote in *A Room of One's Own*: "All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds." With *The Rover*, Aphra Behn uses incisive wit to puncture a wide range of stereotypes. Women are defying convention at every turn throughout the play. Shotgun's take on Behn's classic follows Hellena as she wanders through Carnivale looking for romance. With a dark underpinning, it's the kind of experience that will have audiences talking long after they leave the theatre. Provocative, bold, timely - a perfect play for Shotgun Players.

Restoration scholar Ann Marie Stewart writes: "Inequality for women, forced marriage, the sexual double standard...are themes to which Behn returns repeatedly. She kept her audiences captivated with witty dialogue, clever plots and risque romantic scenarios. From this platform, Behn drew attention to violence and injustice against women." Against the madcap backdrop of the Carnivale in Naples, *The Rover* features three scenes of attempted rape. Behn creates a comedic landscape that also provides scathing social commentary.

Aphra Behn, one of the most influential dramatists of the late seventeenth century, was also a celebrated poet and novelist. Her contemporary reputation was founded on her "scandalous" plays, which she claimed would not have been criticized had a man written them. Behn's unique role in English literary history is confirmed not only by the extraordinary circumstances of her writings, but also by those of her life history.

It is believed that Behn was born in 1640. She was propelled into writing for a living by the death of her husband in 1665, and her indebtedness as a result of her employment as a spy for King Charles II. Charles sent Behn to Antwerp to gather intelligence. But the King did not respond to Behn's requests for money for her trip home, so she was forced to borrow for her return passage to England. Charles continued to refuse payment, and in 1668 Behn was thrown into debtor's prison. The circumstances of her release are unknown, but in 1670 her first play, *The Forc'd Marriage*, was produced in London. Behn, having vowed never to depend on anyone else for money again, became one of the period's foremost playwrights. She earned her living in the theater and then as a novelist until her death on April 16, 1689.

Aphra Behn's reputation as a playwright, novelist, and poet has served as a model for women writers—first noted by distinguished Victorian women of letters Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf.

The Rover features Set Design by **Maya Linke**, Costume Design by **Christine Crook**, Sound Design by **Theodore J.H. Hulsker**, Light Design by **Heather Basarab**, and Properties Design by **Kirsten Royston**, & Fight Choreography by **Dave Maier**.

Dramaturgy by **Joanie McBrien**.

The cast of *The Rover* features **Siobhan Doherty**, **Justin Gillman**, **Jeremy Kahn***, **Caitlyn Louchard**, **Alex Lydon**, **Dan Sasaki**, **Lauren Spencer** & **Elissa Beth Stebbins**.

*A member of Actor's Equity Association.

WHAT: Just how much have sexual politics changed since 1677? Set in Naples during the Carnival masquerade, *The Rover* is a comic romp with an edge. When three women push the boundaries of their expected roles, the responses range from utter delight to violence. Playwright Aphra Behn uses the mask of comedy to explore romance, gender stereotypes, and the particular dangers for women daring to have a voice. Shotgun Players continues its celebration of women playwrights with this classic from Aphra Behn.

WHEN: Wednesday – Sunday, October 15 – November 22

WHERE: The Ashby Stage, 1901 Ashby Avenue, Berkeley

TICKET PRICES: Pay What You Can Previews October 15 - 21. Opening Night Thursday, October 22. Regular performance nights \$20 - \$30. Advance reservations strongly advised – shows will sell out!

For more information go to www.shotgunplayers.org or call 510.841.6500