Midland College English Department sponsors one woman show, performed by New York actress Michéle LaRue

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A "side-splitting" anti-suffrage satire, and Mark Twain’s ever-inquisitive Eve appear on campus, Thursday, September 27, at 7:00 p.m. Genders will battle in the Allison Fine Arts Building, Wagner Brown Auditorium, when - tongue firmly in cheek - New York actress Michèle LaRue delivers Marie Jenney Howe’s vintage lecture, Someone Must Wash the Dishes: An Anti-Suffrage Satire, and offers Eve’s Diary (a dramatization of Twain’s popular short stories) in a double-bill titled The Rib Speaks Out.

The event is FREE and open to the public.

Written in 1912 — eight years before women won the vote — Someone Must Wash the Dishes: An Anti-Suffrage Satire is celebrating its centennial. Author Marie Jenney Howe, a pro-suffragist, had a lilting (one might say “winning”) sense of humor and a keen ear for the conflicting arguments of the opposition. In the 1890s, before taking up her suffragist work in
New York City, she was a promising Unitarian minister, and served as assistant to Mary A. Safford in Iowa.

“Woman suffrage is the reform against nature,” declares the unlikely, but irresistibly likeable, heroine of Someone Must Wash the Dishes. “Ladies, get what you want. Pound pillows. Make a scene. Make home a hell on earth — but do it in a womanly way! That is so much more dignified and refined than walking up to a ballot box and dropping in a piece of paper!” Howe’s fictional speaker is a charming, guileless enthusiast who sincerely believes that her efforts as a “womanly woman” will keep the Home intact — and save the Nation from anarchy.

Someone Must Wash the Dishes was labeled “wicked” in New York City and “side-splitting” in Victorian Cape May, New Jersey. Directed by Warren Kliewer, it is performed exclusively by Michèle LaRue — who stunned MC students in spring 2011 with her haunting production of “The Yellow Wallpaper.”

Eve’s Diary dramatizes several works by Mark Twain, celebrating the complexities of both the author and his heroine. Twain revisited Eve over decades, in his stories and comic essays. She evolved into his most endearing creation . . . and ultimately a paean to his wife. The writer’s familiar sardonic wit and gleeful anachronisms contrast with Eve’s fierce passion for “an education,” and with the profound growth and sorrow that she learns accompany it. Twain revels in depicting the original “battle between the sexes”: Adam, Eve hypothesizes, might be a reptile—or, on the other hand, “architecture.” With wifely insight she forms surprising opinions about his talents as scientist and explorer.

Eve’s Diary was compiled from several works by Mark Twain: Eve’s Diary, Extract from Eve’s Diary, Papers of the Adam’s Family, and various essays on Eve. This stage adaptation is by Hoosier-turned-New Yorker Gayle Stahlhuth, a playwright and actress. Cliff Goodwin, former head of the prestigious New Dramatists in New York, directed this production. It is, wrote one Manhattan reviewer, “an actor’s tour de force . . . LaRue brings Eve radiantly to life.”

BIOGRAPHIES

MICHÈLE LaRUE, a native of Chicago, earned her Acting degree at University of Kansas, eventually settling in New Jersey . . . just across the Hudson from the Great White Way. Among her favorite New York roles are Dinah, the bitter servant in A New England Legend (adapted by Estelle Ritchie from Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter); Agatha, in Key West, a quirky contemporary comedy by Jennifer Camp; and Katherine, in Robert Anderson’s poignant Silent Night, Lonely Night.

Michèle tours nationally with a wide-ranging repertoire of performances based on literature from America’s Long 19th Century. Her fascination with this period grew from her work with New Jersey’s The East Lynne Company—founded in 1980 by her late husband, Warren Kliewer, to revive American plays and literature of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
In addition to “Eve’s Diary” and “Someone Must Wash the Dishes,” Michèle’s offerings comprise “The Yellow Wallpaper” (Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s 1892 horror story—seen here in April 2011); “Places Please, Act One” (Kliwer’s contemporary “poems around and about theatres”); and “Tales Well Told,” a repertoire of vintage American short-story performances. Her past sponsors include Washington, D.C.’s National Portrait Gallery, Chicago’s Newberry Library, two international conferences of the American Quilter’s Society in Kentucky, the international conference of the Charlotte Perkins Gilman Society in Maine, and the Popular/American Culture Association’s most recent gatherings, in San Antonio and in Boston. Michèle belongs to the two major actors’ unions: Actors’ Equity Association and newly merged SAG-AFTRA. As a theatre editor and writer, she is a member of Drama Desk, an organization of New York drama critics.

WARREN KLIWER (director, “Someone Must Wash the Dishes”) was a playwright, poet, essayist, director, actor, teacher—and founder (in 1980) of New Jersey’s The East Lynne Company. Prior to his death in 1998, he produced all—and directed most—of the ELC’s 46 productions. These included John Howard Payne and Washington Irving’s “Charles II,” “Rip Van Winkle” as performed by Joseph Jefferson III, David Belasco’s “Madame Butterfly,” and Rachel Crothers’ “He and She.”

Born and raised a Mennonite in Mountain Lake, Minnesota, Kliwer taught in Theatre and English departments at colleges and universities in Kansas and Indiana. His published works include three volumes of poetry and one of short stories; among his produced plays are “A Lean and Hungry Priest,” “Seventy Times Seven,” “The Berserkers,” and “The Booth Brothers.” As Resident Director of the federally funded National Humanities Series (1970 – 1974), Kliwer worked with scholars and performers to turn 35 original manuscripts into probing dramatic productions that traveled to culturally isolated communities in 42 states, including Texas.

CLIFF GOODWIN (director, “Eve’s Diary”) has directed in New York, regional, and university theatre; has been an artist-in-residence at colleges and universities throughout the U.S.; and with the National Humanities Series has acted, taught, lectured, and conducted workshops in more than 200 American towns. As Program Director of New York’s New Dramatists, in the late 1960s, Goodwin produced workshop stagings of more than 150 new American plays, among them, works by Paddy Chayevsky, William Gibson, and Lanford Wilson; and directed a group of young, unknown New York actors including Al Pacino, Christopher Walken, Robert De Niro, James Earl Jones, and Bette Midler. Goodwin began his career in Washington, D.C., in the film documentary unit of ABC-TV News. He became an Emmy-nominated staff writer-producer before moving to New York, where he turned to acting and for several years played major roles on three daytime dramas. For the past twenty years, he has been an audition coach in New York City.

GAYLE STAHLHUTH (adaptor, “Eve’s Diary”) is an actress, playwright, artist-in-residence—and current Artistic Director of the East Lynne Theater Company. Her one-person plays include “Lou: The Remarkable Miss Alcott” and “Fabulous Ferber,” which have toured Illinois and Missouri with Heartland Chautauqua. For her theatrical work throughout the country, she is among 200 listed in the National Endowment for the Arts’ Directory of Community Artists.

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