

# Play Confronts Sexual Politics Between Teacher and Student

**"Oleanna," a Company Carolina production, deals with issues of gender and class in a collegiate setting.**

By JEREMY HURTZ  
Staff Writer

Travis Chamberlain, director of Company Carolina's production of "Oleanna," which opens today, has a clear goal in mind for the show.

"I think the audience should get pissed off," he said. "Hopefully, it'll make them fight as they're leaving the theater."

The play by David Mamet deals with issues of gender and class — hot topics in any climate. But these issues are presented in a story of particular interest to college students, about a sexual harassment lawsuit between its only two characters: college student Carol (senior Michelle Ries) and her professor, John (alumnus Matthew Kinney).

Ries said the play debuted on Broadway in 1992, within months of the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill harassment hearing.

"Of course, there were all these parallels drawn, and it was this big kind of gender battle," she said.

"Oleanna" provides a unique perspective on a sexual harassment suit, Chamberlain said.

"All we had (in the Thomas hearing) were the accusations, and we could only go from that point forward," Chamberlain said.

"But with this play you get to see what happens before the accusations and then judge for yourself whether the accusations are valid."

Which character is at fault — or more at fault — remains open to debate, Chamberlain said. "You can side more with Carol, or you can side with John, depending on how the actors play it that night."

Ries, for whom this production represents an honors thesis in the dramatic art program, has been researching previous productions of "Oleanna" since last summer.

"We've had the time to play around with different interpretations," she said.

"Part of the reason that I chose it for my honors thesis is because it is so ambiguous ... on the basic level of what happened, what the plot is."

Although the story unfolds in a linear fashion, it's anything but straightforward, Ries said.

In keeping with Mamet's trademark trickery, the audience doesn't get all the facts.

Kinney said important events are not presented onstage, instead occurring between acts.

"It's a tease," he said. "The lights go down, and whatever happens ... you don't know."

Another characteristic of Mamet's oeuvre, hyper-realistic dialogue, poses difficulty to the actors performing the play.

"Although you'd think it would be easy to memorize how people speak,

it's much easier to have a paragraph of prose," Ries said.

"Oleanna" will play at 8 p.m. Friday through Sunday in Swain Hall.

A postmortem discussion will follow the final performance.

For more information, call Company Carolina at 918-3851.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

*"I think the audience should get pissed off. Hopefully, it'll make them fight as they're leaving the theater."*

TRAVIS CHAMBERLAIN  
Director, "Oleanna"



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## IN THE NEWS

### Four Suspects Named In Residence Hall Fire

NEWARK, N.J. — Investigators of the deadly fire at a Seton Hall University residence hall believe the blaze was set, The Star-Ledger of Newark reported Wednesday.

Authorities have identified at least four suspects in the Jan. 19 fire that killed three freshmen, the newspaper reported, citing law enforcement sources it did not name. No charges have been filed.

Charlotte Smith, Essex County executive assistant prosecutor, said her office would not comment on the newspaper report or on the investigation in general.

The newspaper said investigators believe the incident may have resulted from a feud between a group of students and some non-students who were visiting the building on the night of the blaze. But they have not concluded whether the third-floor lounge fire was started as a prank or an attempt to harm

someone.

A student resident adviser had asked three of the non-student suspects to leave Boland Hall less than an hour before the fire broke out. Investigators said they believe one of the three remained in the building, located on the campus of the 9,200-student Roman Catholic university in suburban South Orange. The resident adviser, Dana Christmas, remained in critical condition Wednesday with severe burns and has yet to speak with investigators. Three other students who are in critical condition also have not been interviewed.

### Former Sumo Wrestler Alleges Match Fixing

TOKYO — In Japan, the sumo wrestling ring is sacred ground, blessed by priests and purified with salt before each bout.

A headline-grabbing scandal over a former wrestler's claim that Japan's national sport is rife with fixed contests has renewed suspicions that sumo is not as clean as its image might suggest.

"I regret what I did in the past," Keisuke Itai said Wednesday, acknowledging that he intentionally lost many bouts. "Sumo wrestlers are true athletes, so there should be no fixed matches."

Since Itai first made his allegations last month, saying he wants to revive flagging interest in the sport with a thorough cleansing, sumo officials have issued ardent protests denying any problem.

As for fans, they aren't necessarily ruffled by the allegations.

"This kind of thing probably happens in any sport, and I imagine it happens in sumo," said Mitsukuni Kida, 56, a ramen-noodle street vendor and sumo devotee. "What can you really do about it? As long as it's not every wrestler, I don't mind."

Some 2,000 years old and with roots in Japan's indigenous Shinto religion, sumo is, along with baseball, the country's most popular sport. Fans see it as more of a cultural treasure than a mere competition.

### Problems Plague Peace Deal in North Ireland

BELFAST, Northern Ireland — Politicians in Belfast, Dublin and London struggled today to salvage Northern Ireland's joint Protestant-Catholic administration, a crisis triggered by the Irish Republican Army's continued unwillingness to disarm.

The British government was weighing the prospect of suspending the administration's powers — created with

such optimism two months ago — in hopes that would prevent its outright collapse. The office of Prime Minister Tony Blair said an announcement was likely Thursday.

A U.S.-mediated deal that spurred the Cabinet's formation anticipated the IRA would gradually scrap its stockpiled weapons in response. But a disarmament commission's report, required as part of the deal and presented Monday to the British and Irish governments, indicated no disarmament had taken place.

The major Protestant party, the Ulster Unionists, has accused its Cabinet colleagues in the IRA-linked Sinn Fein party of renegeing on their end of the deal mediated by American diplomat George Mitchell in November.

Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble warned that the only way now to keep the Cabinet intact is for the British government to suspend its powers, resume "direct rule" from London, and hope fresh negotiations would produce either a start to disarmament or political sanctions against Sinn Fein.

Trimble, in London to meet Blair, until now has outmaneuvered Protestants opposed to the 1998 peace accord. But he received only narrow support from his party grassroots to form the Cabinet — and only because he pledged to withdraw by February if the IRA didn't cooperate with the disarmament commission.

The Cabinet cannot work without Ulster Unionist participation.

### Pilot's Actions Cause Nudists to Complain

TABOR CITY — Nudists at Nirvana Sun Resort have complained to the Federal Aviation Administration that a pilot in a single-engine plane has been dropping suggestive notes over their camp since last summer.

FAA spokeswoman Kathleen Bergan in Atlanta said the agency's investigation into the matter could take several more weeks. "Last summer he dropped a couple of plastic bottles, like soft-drink bottles with water, a streamer and a note," said Chuck Gardner, who has managed the 3-year-old clothing-optional club in the New Life Community east of Tabor City for two years.

"Basically the note said, Looks like fun, can I join?" Gardner said. "One of my members who is also a pilot called him and warned him to stop."

Gardner said members were concerned about their safety. Suggestive comments in notes, inviting women to go flying with the pilot, also offended Nirvana members, he said.

"That's not the kind of place this is," Gardner said. "I've never seen anything like this."

Associated Press

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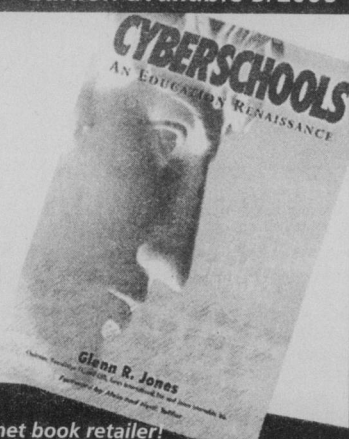
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