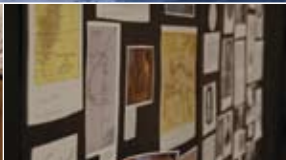


BACKSTORY

THE  
**GENERAL**  
FROM AMERICA



Your behind-the-scenes look at TimeLine productions

YESTERDAY'S STORIES.  
TODAY'S TOPICS.

**TimeLine**  
Theatre Company

## MESSAGE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR PJ POWERS

Dear Friends:

On behalf of TimeLine's entire company, I am thrilled to welcome you to our 2006-07 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season!

To be honest, it seems strange to even type those words, because I don't feel all that removed from our earliest meetings in 1997 when TimeLine was created by five colleagues and me from The Theatre School at DePaul University. We had just \$300 and the idea to create a theater company that focused on exploring history. As one of the loudest squawkers in those initial meetings, I recall saying to our ringleader Nick Bowling: "Just doing plays about history? That sounds positively awful to me and not the type of theater I want to build a company around!"

Nick carefully pointed out that using history as our roadmap did not mean that our plays had to be stuffy, dry and academic (all things I feared). He had a vision of TimeLine doing something far different.

He was right. I was quite wrong.

Now—25 productions later, and as we launch our 10<sup>th</sup> season—I am grateful for the clearer heads that my fellow founders possessed.

I think our work during the last nine seasons has proven Nick's theory that history plays can be anything but boring and dry. Through the years, it has been our goal to share with you daring and innovative theater that forges a connection between the social and political issues of the past and the present. We're proud to have built a body of work that seeks to expand our view of history and give us new ideas to ponder, question and debate together.

It is with that same goal that we chose the plays for this milestone season, a year that will take you to the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries (not necessarily in that order). The plays will transport you to wildly varying historical settings yet immerse you in issues and debates you can find peppered throughout today's headlines.

Our first stop on this quad-century journey is 1779 with *The General from America*.



Going far beyond merely a historical portrait or biography, playwright Richard Nelson has crafted a sophisticated and provocative drama that asks us to examine our country's process of nation building and the great sin of pride that destroyed (as it has many leaders throughout history) America's most notorious traitor, Benedict Arnold.

We're delighted and honored to begin this year's conversation with *The General from America*, and we look forward to continuing our dialogue throughout a 10<sup>th</sup> year of making history together.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PJ'.

PJ Powers  
Artistic Director

## Backstory Credits

*Dramaturgy @ Historical Research*  
by Maren Robinson

*Written by* Maren Robinson

*Edited by* Karen A. Callaway and  
Lara Goetsch

*Photography and Graphic Design*  
by Lara Goetsch

*Original Design by*  
Rogue Element, Inc.

*Pictured on front cover (left to right):* Actors Tom Bateman and Terry Hamilton; research materials on the production "dramaturgy wall"; costume designer Alex Wren Meadows with actor Mackenzie Kyle; actor Stephan Madar.

*Pictured on back cover (left to right):* Director Louis Contey and props designer Julia Eberhardt; actor Sean Sullivan; scenic design model by Brian Sidney Bembridge; actors Stephan Madar and Mackenzie Kyle; actor Nigel Patterson.

## RICHARD NELSON

# the playwright

Richard Nelson was born in Chicago in 1950. He graduated from Hamilton College in Clinton, N.Y., and worked as an associate director at The Goodman Theatre and a dramaturg at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis.

His earliest plays include *The Killing of Yablonski: Scenes of Involvement in a Current Event* (1975), *Conjuring an Event* (1976) and *The Vienna Notes* (1978, OBIE Award). He received a second OBIE for his contributions as literary manager at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's theater company during the 1979-80 season.

He began a long association with the Royal Shakespeare Company with *Principia Scriptoriae* (1986) and *Some Americans Abroad* (1989, Olivier Award nomination). His ongoing collaboration with the RSC has included *Columbus and the Discovery of Japan* (1992), *Misha's Party* (1993, co-written with Alexander Gelman for the RSC and the Moscow Art Theatre), *New England* (1995) and *Goodnight Children Everywhere* (1999, Olivier Award for Best Play).

Nelson adapted his play *Sensibility and Sense* for PBS' "American Playhouse" (1990). He also scripted *The End of a Sentence* for "American Playhouse" (1991).

He earned his first Tony Award nomination for Best Play for *Two Shakespearean Actors* (1992).

Recent plays include *Left* (2002), *Franny's Way* (2001-02 Drama Desk Award nomination for Best Play), *Madame Melville* (2000), and his adaptation of *James Joyce's The Dead* (1999, Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical, Tony Award nominations for Best Score and Best Musical, Lucille Lortel Award for Best Musical, New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Musical).

His latest play, *Frank's Home*, will have its world premiere at The Goodman Theatre in November.

## SETTING THE STAGE

# the setting

*The General from America* opens in 1779 with the Colonists already deeply embroiled in the war with Great Britain. On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress signed and confirmed the Declaration of Independence, but in the years following the Colonists are not certain of success against the British.

Gen. Benedict Arnold has garnered a reputation as a war hero for his role in the Battle of

Fort Ticonderoga and the Battle of Saratoga. Multiple injuries to his left leg have left him unable to sit comfortably in a saddle and command troops in battle. He is given the military command of Philadelphia while he continues to recuperate.

The abrasive Arnold finds himself frequently at odds with the town's politicians, particularly Joseph Reed. Further irritating Arnold are the slights he has received at the

hands of fellow generals. Worst of all is Congress' failure to recognize his achievements with a promotion, pay his back salary and reimburse personal expenses. He also has just married a beautiful woman half his age who has expensive tastes and a roving eye and whose family has Loyalist sympathies.

## Post-Show Discussions

Join members of the cast and production team for free post-show discussions on *Thursday, August 31*; *Sunday, September 3*; and *Thursday, September 7*.

## Sunday Scholar Series

Following the performance on *Sunday, September 10*, please join us for our Sunday Scholar Series, a free one-hour panel discussion with experts talking about the themes and issues of *The General from America*. For the names of panelists and more information on the event, please visit [www.timelinetheatre.com](http://www.timelinetheatre.com).

To reserve tickets for the Sunday Scholar Series, please call (773) 281-8463 x24. You do not need to attend the September 10 performance of *The General from America* to attend the discussion.

## Gen. George Washington

George Washington is a legendary figure in America. In 1779, when America was still a loose band of rebellious Colonies, he already was a national hero. But he also was a general embattled. Washington gained distinction during his service in the French and Indian War. On June 15, 1775, he became commander in chief of the Continental Army, the creation of which had been adopted by the Continental Congress the day before. It was believed that, as a southerner, he could unite the Colonies behind the war effort.

After some initial success, Washington lost several battles in New York and steadily retreated to New Jersey. In spite of his famed crossing of the Delaware River and surprise attack on the British army's Hessian (German) mercenaries stationed at Trenton on Dec. 25, 1776, he had few successes in New Jersey. His failures led many Colonists to doubt the Continental Army's chances of success against England.

Soon Gen. Charles Lee, upset at not being named commander in chief, was criticizing Washington's skills. Fellow generals Horatio



*"Washington at the Battle of Princeton" by Charles Willson Peale, (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts)*

Gates and Thomas Conway lobbied members of the Continental Congress to replace Washington with Gates. This plan, known as the Conway Cabal, failed. Conway resigned, and Gates sent an official apology to Washington. These intrigues among his fellow generals showed how tenuous Washington's position was.

Washington felt deeply betrayed when Benedict Arnold's plan to turn over West Point to the British was revealed. Adding to the sting of the betrayal was the fact that he had supported the often-unpopular Arnold and given him the command at West Point.

## Joseph Reed

Joseph Reed served on Washington's staff in 1776. During this time, Reed wrote a letter to Lee criticizing Washington. Lee's response miscarried and was opened by Washington, who, in a display of magnanimity, returned the letter to Reed and apologized for opening it. Reed resigned in embarrassment, but later reconciled with Washington.

Arnold, aware of this event, added it to the list of resentments he held against Reed.

In December 1778 Reed became president of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania. It was in this position that he would clash with Arnold, who had been named military commander of Philadelphia. The enmity between the two deepened as tensions between military and political rule in the city escalated.

## Benedict Arnold

In 1779, Benedict Arnold was a well-known war hero and respected general who had served his country and, in doing so, lost full use of his left leg. His dramatic rise in the military began in 1775. As head of the Connecticut Militia, Arnold led them to Fort Ticonderoga and, with Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys, succeeded in capturing the fort. When the Continental Congress put Col. Benjamin Hinman in control of the fort, Arnold resigned his commission.

**"Arnold is a traitor, and has fled to the British! Whom can we trust now?"** — *George Washington*

**Jan. 14, 1741** Benedict Arnold is born in Norwich, Conn.

**1756** The 15-year-old Arnold runs away to join the militia. His parents trace him, and he returns home, in a few months he runs away again and enlists in the provincial army.

**Feb. 10, 1763** The Peace of Paris ends the Seven Years War, known in the Colonies as the French and Indian War. Britain is left with substantial debts.

**April 5, 1764** The British Parliament amends the Sugar and Indian War. Colonies and prevent Colonists from buying cheaper French sugar for making rum.

**March 22, 1765** The British Parliament passes the collection of taxes in the amount raised by the act is minimal. Colonists resent Parliament's attempt to raise money without consulting the Colonial legislatures. This prompts the formation of a Stamp Act Congress, which meets in New York with delegates from nine Colonies.

Later, when Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler planned to invade Canada, Arnold proposed a second force join him. Congress approved, and Arnold was commissioned as a colonel. The offensive failed and Arnold was wounded in the leg at the Battle of Quebec. He was promoted to brigadier general for his services.

When Maj. Gen. Thomas Mifflin was given control of the troops in Philadelphia, Arnold resigned his commission again until Washington persuaded him to return.

He fought in the Saratoga Campaign to prevent the British from capturing the Hudson River; a loss would have separated New England from the rest of the Colonies.

Although Arnold played a decisive role in that victory, he disobeyed the command structure set by Gates, creating an open animosity between the two. During this campaign, at the Battle of Bemis Heights, Arnold again injured his



*Benedict Arnold, oil painting by Doug Henry (Norwich Historical Society)*

left leg; he refused to let military surgeons amputate. Although the leg healed, he never regained full use of it. It was when Arnold became military commander of Philadelphia that his troubles began. The successful—if unorthodox and headstrong—general was not a conciliatory politician. He was accused of numerous counts of profiteering and abuse of power and ultimately was called before a court martial. Though given a light reprimand, Arnold was deeply embittered.

He already had begun communicating with British Maj. John André. As his plans for switching sides in the conflict developed, Arnold learned he would be more valuable to the British if he could turn over a military outpost. He asked Washington for the command at West Point and moved forward with his plans to trade control of the fort to the British. When the plan failed, Arnold had received only £6,000 of the potential £20,000 he hoped to claim. He wrote a letter “To the Inhabitants of America,” attempting to justify his actions.

After defecting, he was commissioned as a brigadier general in the British army. He captured Fort Griswold, Conn., for the British before being ordered back to England.

The remainder of Arnold’s life was fraught with thwarted successes. He did not win the hearts of the British public and had few friends there to help advance his career.

**“The heart which is conscious of its own rectitude, cannot attempt to palliate a step which the world may censure as wrong; I have ever acted upon the principle of love to my country, since the commencement of the present unhappy conflict between Great Britain and the colonies. The same principle of love to my country actuates my present conduct, however it may appear inconsistent to the world, who very seldom judge right of a man’s actions.”**

*—Benedict Arnold in a Sept. 25, 1780, letter to George Washington, written aboard the British ship *Vulture* as he escaped to the British*

After failed ventures in Canada, he and his wife settled in London.

He died June 14, 1801, in London never having achieved the success or wealth he felt he deserved. He asked to be buried in his Continental uniform. Today, in memorials at Saratoga and the U.S. Military Academy, Arnold is not mentioned by name—only as major general.

**Feb. 22, 1767** Benedict Arnold marries Margaret Mansfield.

**June 1767** Parliament passes the Townshend Acts—new import taxes on various goods. They are repealed in 1770—except for the tax on tea.

**1768** Great Britain dissolves the Massachusetts Assembly for refusing to assist in the collection of taxes.

**March 5, 1770** The Boston Massacre: Tensions reach a boiling point when British soldiers fire on an angry crowd, killing five Colonial civilians and injuring six.

**1772** The Boston Assembly demands rights for its Colonies and threatens secession.

**Dec. 16, 1773** Colonists dressed as Indians dump tea into Boston Harbor to protest the Tea Act (May 10, 1773), which allowed the British East India Company to sell tea in the Colonies, undercutting the prices of Colonial merchants. It comes to be known as the Boston Tea Party.

## Peggy Shippen Arnold

Margaret “Peggy” Shippen was the youngest of four daughters of Judge Edward Shippen. He was known as a Loyalist, although other members of the family supported the Colonies.

When British troops occupied Philadelphia, a young British major named John André courted Peggy. The courtship was not serious and André continued to correspond with her after the regiment moved.

Peggy met Arnold July 4, 1778, at a party he hosted as the new military commander of Philadelphia. The couple married April 8, 1779.

Peggy was known as a coquette among the troops, and after Arnold’s transfer to West Point his aide and his sister, Hannah, wrote letters of concern about her friendships with other men.

After Arnold’s plan to turn over West Point was discovered, he asked for Peggy’s protection and proclaimed her ignorant of the plot. Most historians, however, believe she was aware of her husband’s plans and had aided his correspondence with André. It also is likely that, as Arnold nursed the wounds of his conflicts with Congress, the Philadelphia politicians and the rebuke of his court martial, Peggy encouraged him to believe he would receive better treatment from the British.

After Arnold’s defection, the Philadelphia public was unsympathetic to her and she was mocked

and hounded until she left to join her husband in London. She and Arnold had five children.

## Hannah Arnold

Hannah Arnold was the only one of Benedict Arnold’s five siblings to survive to adulthood. Her brother disapproved of the French suitor courting her and warned him to stay away. When he caught him visiting Hannah again, the unfortunate Frenchman was forced to dive out the window to avoid being shot. Years later Arnold encountered this would-be suitor in Honduras and challenged him to a duel, during which he severely wounded the Frenchman. Hannah never married.

Arnold’s first wife, Margaret, died June 19, 1775, at age 30. They had been married eight years and had three sons. Hannah then took over the care of her young nephews.

Although frequently away with his military duties, Hannah offered the only home Arnold had until his marriage to Peggy Shippen.

After he and Peggy married, Arnold sent for Hannah and his sons so they could join their household. Later, the boys Hannah had raised were sent to boarding school when the pregnant Peggy said they irritated her nerves.



*John André by Sir Joshua Reynolds (Alex P. Haig of Blair Hill, Rumbling Bridge, Scotland)*

## Maj. John André

John André was known for his beauty, charm and talents. He was a gifted artist, singer and actor and was known for his eloquence and poetic language.

André enjoyed a meteoric rise in the British army. He joined in 1770 when he was 20, and by age 29 he had attained the rank of major and the title of deputy adjutant general.

He also oversaw British intelligence in the Colonies. He began his clandestine correspondence with Arnold in 1780.

André had been stationed in Philadelphia, where he had been a frequent visitor at the Shippen home. He had courted the beautiful youngest daughter, Peggy, who subsequently married Arnold and likely acted as a go-between André and her husband.

**“He was more unfortunate than criminal: an accomplished man and a gallant officer”**

*— Inscription attributed to George Washington from the memorial for John André in Tappan, N.Y.*

**March 1774** Parliament passes the first of a series of Coercive Acts (called Intolerable Acts by the Colonists) in response to the resistance and sabotage throughout Massachusetts. The British close the port of Boston.

**Sept. 5 – Oct. 26, 1774** The First Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia and decides not to import British goods.

**June 15, 1775** George Washington is named commander in chief of the newly created Continental Army.

**April 18, 1775** Paul Revere rides from Charleston to Lexington.

**April 19, 1775** Paul Revere rides at the Battle of Lexington.

**May 10, 1775** Britain is defeated Connecticut Militia and joins the Fort Mifflin and Concord.

**May 10, 1775** Arnold leads the Continental Congress to Philadelphia and the Green Mountain Boys to conquer Fort Ticonderoga.

**May 10, 1775** The Second Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia.

**The British Perspective**

Great Britain signed the Peace of Paris agreement ending the Seven Years War (known as the French and Indian War in the Colonies) Feb. 10, 1763. It was called by Winston Churchill the first world war, because it drew in most European nations as well as the Colonies.

The years of war left the nation with massive debt. Many in the country felt King George III gave too many territories back to the French and the Spanish as part of the treaty. George III had to pay bribes to get the treaty ratified in the House of Commons.

Corruption was rampant in the British Parliament in the 18th Century — votes were commonly sold to the highest bidder. In addition, the parliamentary system allowed only a very small and wealthy part of the population to vote: In a country with eight million people, only 215,000 males could vote.

As England struggled under the weight of bribery and debt, the population grew angry at the measures used to raise money. There were 159 riots between 1740 and 1775 because of the popular anger against political dishonesty and the high price of necessities such as bread.

Parliament viewed the lucrative Colonies as a possible solution to its financial woes. The Colonies were lax in enforcing tariffs, and many in England perceived the Colonists as growing wealthy under their British protectors.

Not all the British were supportive of the war in the Colonies. The Evening-Post newspaper called the war “unnatural, unconstitutional, unnecessary, unjust, dangerous, hazardous, and unprofitable.

**“Those who give up essential liberty, to preserve a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety.” —Benjamin Franklin**

**The Colonial Perspective**

The British Parliament passed a series of acts to raise taxes or enforce existing tariffs. This would provide the funds necessary to maintain a standing army in the Colonies and pay for the Crown's officials there.

The Colonists were confronted by a series of acts designed to raise money for the British Government. The Stamp Act (1765), Townshend Acts (1767) and the Coercive Acts (1767) (or Intolerable Acts as the Colonists called them) were followed by the Tea Act (1773).

Colonists resented the high-handed way in which Parliament passed legislation affecting them without the approval of their Colonial legislatures. Additionally, Colonial militias felt they were capable of maintaining their security and mistrusted the British motive in stationing troops near their homes.

Tax collectors were tarred and feathered, and Colonists resorted to acts of sabotage, such as the Boston Tea Party. This prompted stricter sanctions by Parliament and even more British troops.

As it became apparent the Colonies would not have representation in Parliament and skirmishes

with British troops increased, some Colonists began advocating separation with the mother county.

There was no single Colonial perspective on war with England; many factions were involved. The Quakers were pacifists and did not support violence. Many governors, judges and other officials were in positions appointed by the British government and did not want to lose their incomes. Others, while unhappy with the taxes, did not want to form a new nation separate from the protection offered by the British government and army. The Colonies that were not occupied by the British were not as anxious to enter the war.

**June 19, 1775** Margaret Arnold dies, leaving Arnold with three young sons. His sister, Hannah, takes over their care.

**June 17, 1775** The British army is victorious at the Battle of Bunker Hill before the Siege of Boston. It suffers more than 1,000 casualties in the three assaults back. The losses associated with their victory are demoralizing to the British. This, the first major fight between British and Colonial troops, is when the Colonial troops are ordered not to fire until they can see “the whites of their eyes.”

**June - December 1775** Arnold captures British schooner and sails north to Canada. He has 1,100 volunteers and plans to take Quebec. With the onset of winter volunteer numbers dwindle to 700. Richard Montgomery for reinforcements and Richard Montgomery for reinforcements. Montgomery arrives with 300 men, but the artillery fire from the British under Sir Guy Carleton decimates the troops. Arnold is wounded in the left leg during the battle.

Two weeks into rehearsals for *The General from America*, TimeLine's Artistic Director PJ Powers (PP) chatted with Terry Hamilton (TH) about his work on TimeLine's stage during the last two seasons and his current portrayal of America's most notorious traitor, Benedict Arnold.



**(PP)** Terry, it's a little hard to believe that your first TimeLine show was less than two years ago. Yet in that time you've become one of the most recognizable faces on our stage—you've appeared in *This Happy Breed*, *Pravda*, *Martin Furey's Shot*, *Copenhagen* and *Fiorello!* What is it that has drawn you so often to TimeLine's work?

**(TH)** Well, to be honest, I auditioned for and was cast in *This Happy Breed* before I ever saw a production at TimeLine. I was recovering from some personal trauma around that time, and all I wanted to do was immerse myself in work. I loved the script and wanted to keep myself busy. Once I was cast, I thought I'd better check you out. You were running the remount of *Hannah and Martin*, so that was the first thing I saw. About 10 minutes into it I realized I was watching something very special. The performances were wonderful—the production values, the energy—and I was impressed with how much you did with so little. It was a very exciting experience for me. I also felt that to produce theater of that quality there had to be something special going on behind the scenes as well.

I left the theater elated, and then panic set in. "I'm not that good," I thought. But everyone was so sup-

portive and the atmosphere you create at TimeLine is so conducive to helping artists, designers and everyone involved in the production do their very best, it just felt like I belonged here.

**(PP)** From the list of shows you've done, do you have a favorite?

**(TH)** Every show has its challenges, and there is always something I like about every production I'm involved in. The challenges of *Copenhagen* seemed enormous, and I'm very proud of what we did with that production. And I had great fun with the role of Eaton Sylvester in *Pravda*. But I have a special place in my heart for *This Happy Breed*. Frank Gibbons was a marvelous role; the cast was just right, Nick Bowling, the director, did a fabulous job—it just seemed everything fell into place. Plus, it was the first show I did at TimeLine. I could have run that show for years.

**(PP)** Prior to working in Chicago you spent some time in New York, and some of our audience may not know about your stint working on a Broadway stage many years ago. This, of course, is one of my favorite anecdotes about you. Please share some information about what you appeared in on Broadway—and tell us a little bit about your costume.

**(TH)** Right. And thanks a lot, PJ, for bringing this up. I did *Oh! Calcutta* on Broadway for nine months, and the costume you're referring to is my original birthday suit. I lived in New York for 11 years, studying and trying to make a living as an actor. Producers of regional, summer stock and dinner theaters come to New York from all over the country to cast. So I'd get a job, leave New York, do the gig and then come back and live on unemployment until the next job came around. I really wanted to try and stay in the city for a long enough time to see if I could start working there. I went to the audition for *Oh! Calcutta* thinking I wouldn't have the slightest chance of getting it. The whole audition process took about a week. They would have a bunch of us come in and we'd cold read scenes, then they had us sing. And then there were the dance and movement auditions. As the week went on I kept noticing people peeling off, and I kept getting called back. Finally it was down to five of us, and I thought, "Oh, my God, I could actually get this." The last day was

**1776** Arnold is cited for his bravery in Quebec and promoted to brigadier general.

**Jan. 10, 1776** Thomas Paine publishes "Common Sense," denouncing British rule and laying out the reasons for a revolution.

**July 4, 1776** The Continental Congress approves and signs the Declaration of Independence.

**Dec. 23, 1776** Thomas Paine writes "The American Crisis," which contains the famous words, "These are the times that try men's souls."

**Dec. 25, 1776** Washington leads his troops across the Delaware River at night and succeeds in surprising the Hessian troops stationed at Trenton, N.J.

**July - August 1777** British Gen. John Burgoyne invades New England, attempting to separate New England from the rest of the Colonies by securing the Hudson River. Arnold disobeys Gen. Gates and leads a final attack. He re-injures his leg.





Actor Terry Hamilton plays Gen. Benedict Arnold in *The General* from America.

the day they separated the “men from the boys,” so to speak, and one by one we were led into the theater. My turn came. I walked on to the stage. A voice came out of the dark. “Mr. Hamilton, please walk off stage to your left. You will see a robe hanging up. Please take off all your clothes, put the robe on, walk to center stage. Music will begin. Drop the robe, and we want to see you move.” I didn’t have the faintest idea what I was going to do. The music started. I dropped the robe and began moving like my life depended on it. To this day I can’t remember exactly what I did, but it must have been a hell of a show because I got the job.

Now wait a minute—as I recall, you were naked yourself, PJ, in *TimeLine*’s very first production. Perhaps that’s why we work so

well together. Neither one of us obviously has any shame.

**(PP)** Oh, without a doubt! Although hardly anyone saw our first show (*Summit Conference*), so there are only a handful of people who saw me naked and I’ve sent each one a letter of apology.

So, aside from getting to wear clothes here, what do you think is different about your experience working in Chicago as opposed to New York?

**(TH)** There’s a very palpable sense of community in the Chicago theater scene that is rare in New York. I’ve seen some great theater in New York. But let’s face it, in most cases the New York scene is often driven by money. Here I feel it’s driven by people and ideas. That may seem simplistic, but I feel here

we’re allowed to take more risks. We have to rely on creative choices to overcome the obstacle of having no money. It forces you to come together and figure it out. But I do love the training I got in New York.

**(PP)** You’ve played a variety of roles at *TimeLine*, including a South African war photographer, a Danish physicist, a New York political hack (and song-and-dance man). And now you’re tackling Benedict Arnold. That’s quite a range. What drew you to this character?

**(TH)** Benedict Arnold was a traitor; that’s undisputed. The thing that interests me is why. Each morning when our feet hit the floor we are faced with hundreds of choices. Some we don’t even think about; we just react. Others are very deliberate and considered. Depending on the outcome of those choices we can be perceived as being the good guy or the bad guy at any given moment. Many historians say that if the bullet that shattered Arnold’s thigh at Saratoga had entered his heart, he would be considered one of America’s most honored heroes.

**“Mr. Hamilton, please walk off stage to your left. You will see a robe hanging up. Please take off all your clothes, put the robe on, walk to center stage ...”**

- Nov. 15, 1777 The Articles of Confederation are written.
- June 1778 Arnold is appointed military commander of Philadelphia.
- Sept. 25, 1778 Arnold proposes to 18-year-old Margaret “Peggy” Shippen.
- April 8, 1779 Arnold and Peggy Shippen marry.
- May 1779 Arnold makes contact with a British General, Sir Henry Clinton, through his deputy adjutant general, Maj. John André.
- June 1, 1779 Arnold is court-martialed for misconduct and abuse of power while in command in Philadelphia.
- July 1780 Arnold seeks the command at West Point and is appointed commander Aug. 5.
- Sept. 22, 1780 Arnold and André meet to discuss plans for Arnold to secure West Point for the British.

We live and die by our choices. To us, George Washington is a great hero, the father of our country. To the British, he was the traitor. It's all about the choices we make and how those choices are perceived. There's a little bit of George Washington and Benedict Arnold in all of us. It's a very delicate balance.

**(PP)** Having worked with you on a few shows in the last couple years, I've already noticed that you seem to be approaching *The General from America* in a different way from your previous roles. How has your preparation changed to play Benedict Arnold?

**(TH)** For me, every show has its demands and priorities. I'll approach each production slightly differently depending on where I believe I need to be and how I need

to get there. Thank God, I don't have to do that alone. The director, the other actors, the dramaturg, the designers and many others are there to help.

I do like to do as much research as possible. That also depends on how much time I have.

Ultimately I have to live in the world of the play. And when you do a play with characters who actually lived and situations that actually happened, obviously there is going to be a certain amount of artistic license taken. I love this time period and find the Revolutionary War very dramatic. But there comes a time in the process where you have to let go of all that information and simply live in the play. It may not be exactly how it happened, but that's usually not the point the author is trying to make.

For this production I read a lot, watched documentaries, gleaned what I believed would be useful—and let everything else go. There have been other times when all I had time to do was to learn the lines and get out there and do the best I could.

**(PP)** This play marks your third time working with director Lou Contey. Why do you like working with him?

**(TH)** I love Lou. He's a very smart man. He's very flexible when it

comes to working with actors who have very different approaches. I never feel he's dictating to the actors but rather asking questions that prompt you to discover choices you may have never considered. He knows when to ease up and when to put the pedal to the metal, so to speak. He's always willing to let the actors try their ideas. Sometimes he's inspired by that and begins to riff on our ideas. At other times he very diplomatically steers you in other directions. So many times he'll express an insight very off-handedly, and the light bulb just goes on in the actor's head. He's very smart, very creative and very open to try things. I love that.

**(PP)** I must admit that I didn't know that much about Benedict Arnold except the simple phrase that we all learned in our 6th-grade social-studies class: "Benedict Arnold was a traitor." What do you hope people gain from seeing this play, to better understand this man?

**(TH)** He's human. He's really no different than you or I. He made the mother of bad choices, and that's all that most people know about him. But in the early years of the war he was considered by George Washington to be the finest field general in the army. The man was fearless. Unfortunately he painted himself into a corner because of his pride. He felt that



(Left and above right) *Terry Hamilton as Benedict Arnold* (left) with *Jennifer Avery* (center) as *Arnold's sister Hannah* and *Mackenzie Kyle* (right) as *his wife Peggy* during a recent rehearsal of *The General from America*.

**Sept. 23, 1780** Arnold's plot to surrender West Point to the British is revealed when André is captured. Two days later, Arnold escapes to the British aboard the British ship *Vulture*—the same ship that brought André.

**Oct. 2, 1780** André is hanged as a spy.

**Sept. 6, 1781** After a hearing, British, Hessian and Tory troops capture Fort Griswold in Connecticut.

**Oct. 19, 1781** Arnold and his Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown, Pa.

**Sept. 3, 1783** British Gen. George ends the American Revolution and Britain recognizes the independence of the United States.

**Jan. 14, 1784** The Treaty of Paris.

**May 25, 1787** Congress ratifies the Philadelphia to revise the Articles of Confederation—and end up drafting what would become the Constitution of the United States.



because of the sacrifices he made he was entitled to certain things, and his moral insight became clouded. We've all been there, to a greater or lesser extent. We've all been tested. Sometimes we make the right choice, sometimes not. The important thing is to learn, not only from our mistakes but by examining the choices of others. We really don't have to keep making the same mistakes. That's easier said than done, however.

**(PP)** Do you think the play aims to explain or make excuses for Arnold's actions?

**(TH)** No one can truly get inside the head of another person. All you can do is examine the facts presented and make your best educated guess. I think the playwright, Richard Nelson, does that admirably. I certainly don't think he's making excuses for Arnold. He did what he did, and he had to live with that. Even in Britain Arnold was never truly respected for what he did because the plan failed. If Arnold's plan had succeeded, who knows?

**(PP)** What's next for you?

**(TH)** I'm going to be playing Cardinal Richelieu in Chicago Shakespeare's new musical of *The Three Musketeers*, which I'm very excited about. I've wanted to work there for some time, and finally the time was right. Then, shortly after that closes, I'll be back at TimeLine in George Bernard Shaw's *Widowers' Houses*—acting with you once again. I've never done a Shaw play, so I'm really looking forward to it. I get to play a character named Lickcheese. How exciting is that? If you just say "Lickcheese," you get a lot of insight into who this person is. ○

**Sept. 17, 1787** Delegates approve and sign the final draft of the Constitution.

**June 21, 1787** New Hampshire becomes the ninth state to ratify the Constitution. Congress had required that nine state legislatures endorse the document for it to become effective.

**April 30, 1789** George Washington is elected the first president of the United States and takes office.

**June 14, 1801** Benedict Arnold dies in London, England.

**Aug. 24, 1804** Peggy Arnold dies in London.

by **RICHARD NELSON**

directed by **LOUIS CONTEY**

**CHICAGO PREMIERE!**

Tony Award-winning playwright Richard Nelson's powerful drama about the early, uncertain birth of America introduces us to the new country's most notorious traitor, Gen. Benedict Arnold. Betraying his reputation as a Revolutionary War hero, Arnold makes an uncharacteristic decision to defect to the British and surrender West Point, a plot that threatens to derail the war. What caused this founding father to betray his fellow Colonists? *The General from America* delves into the complex story of one man's life and honor — and the stunning choice that would make him infamous.

**AUGUST 26 – OCTOBER 8, 2006**

**The Cast** (in alphabetical order)

Jennifer Avery: *Hannah Arnold*  
 Tom Bateman: *Alexander Hamilton*  
 Craig Degel: *Lt. Col. John Simcoe/Orderly*  
 Terry Hamilton: *Benedict Arnold*  
 Paul S. Holmquist: *Stephen Kemble*  
 Mackenzie Kyle: *Peggy Arnold*  
 Christopher Labove: *2nd British Officer/Continental Soldier*  
 Stephan Madar: *John André*  
 Vincent Mahler: *Joseph Reed/Mr. Robinson*  
 Niall McGinty: *1st British Officer/ Pauling*  
 David Parkes: *George Washington*  
 Nigel Patterson: *Sir Henry Clinton*  
 Sean Sullivan: *Timothy Matlack/Van Wart*

**The Production Team**

Brian Sidney Bembridge: *Scenic Designer*  
 Alex Wren Meadows: *Costume Designer*  
 Keith Parham: *Lighting Designer*  
 Julia Eberhardt: *Props Designer*  
 Maren Robinson: *Dramaturg*  
 Seth Vermilyea: *Stage Manager*  
 Ryan Edberg: *Assistant Stage Manager*  
 Eva Breneman: *Dialect Coach*  
 Jennie Martin: *Production Manager*  
 Bob Groth: *Technical Director*  
 Michael Smallwood: *Master Electrician*  
 Rob Coleman: *Graphic Design*  
 James Keister: *Lobby Display Design*  
 Lara Goetsch: *Director of Marketing and Communications*  
 PJ Powers: *Artistic Director*  
 Brian Voelker: *Managing Director*



**AUGUST 2006**

Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

**SEPTEMBER 2006**

Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

**OCTOBER 2006**

Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8						

**SHOW TIMES**

**THURSDAY & FRIDAY 8 PM**

**SATURDAY 4 PM & 8 PM**

**SUNDAY 2 PM**

**PREVIEWS & SELECT WEDNESDAYS 8 PM**

- REGULAR PERFORMANCE
- PREVIEW PERFORMANCE
- OPENING PERFORMANCE (sold out)

- BRIEF POST-SHOW DISCUSSION *with cast @ production crew*
- SUNDAY SCHOLAR SERIES: *a one hour post-show panel discussion with experts on the themes and issues of the play*

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