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15 February 2010

Students use drama skills to bring French to the public

Students from the University of Sheffield will be hitting the road this week, as they take a play designed to bring French language and culture to members of the public, on tour.

13 students from the University's Department of French will be performing 'Le Barbier de Séville' for three nights in Sheffield before staging the play in Oxford. The play, which was famously turned into an opera by Rossini, was originally performed on 23 February 1775 and will be brought to the stage by the students 235 years later on the same date in Oxford.

The University has staged a French play annually in the Drama Studio since 1976, when it put on Jean Cocteau's Orphée. The play is the result of a combined effort from students and staff in the Department of French and international Erasmus exchange students, who spend one or two semesters at the University, before returning to their home countries in Europe.

Previous performances by the group have included classic plays from the 17th and 18th centuries through to 20th century avant-garde pieces.

Becky Woods, a fourth year French student, said: "This is the third French Department play which I have been involved in, because once I was involved, I just couldn't stop! As performers, we have the good fortune to work with some of the most creative and enthusiastic staff in the University, and with their support and help we are encouraged to create something of quality, of which we and the University can and should be proud.

We are all really looking forward to promoting ourselves, our University and, of course, the wonderful French language in our first ever French foray outside Sheffield."

Dr David McCallam, an eighteenth-century specialist from the Department of French, who has co-directed the play for the last few years, said: "Staging a French play is a unique way to make the French language more accessible to members of the public. The performance of 'Le Barbier de Séville' will really bring alive a major cultural spectacle of the French eighteenth century and demonstrate its continuing pertinence. It will also allow the students and members of the public to learn French



The Department's 2009 production of 'Les Justes'

in a fabulously interactive way. There has already been a great deal of interest in the Oxford performance from students, staff and the public there, and we are looking forward to taking the play on the road."

Performances in Sheffield will take place on Wednesday 17 February, Thursday 18 February, and Friday 19 February, 2010, at 7.30pm in the University Drama Studio, Shearwood Road, Sheffield. Tickets, which will cost £5 and £3.50 for concessions, will be available on the door, or on sale in Union Space, Ground Floor, Jessop West in the week before and during the performances. For further information and tickets, contact [David McCallam](#) or [Julia Dobson](#).

There will be a one-off performance in Oxford on Tuesday 23rd February at 6pm in the Taylor Hall, Taylor Institution, St Giles, Oxford with tickets available on the door.

For further information please contact: Lauren Anderson, Media Relations Officer, on 0114 2221046 or email l.h.anderson@sheffield.ac.uk

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