

# Bogarting that drama

## ATL will examine modern masters, beginning with director of 'Picnic'

By WILLIAM MOOTZ  
Staff Critic

**A**NNE BOGART, whose staging of William Inge's "Picnic" last season was arguably the most exciting production in the history of Actors Theatre of Louisville, will be the focus of attention in the company's 1995 "Classics in Context."

It will mark the first time producing director Jon Jory and his staff have featured the career of a contemporary theater artist during the festival.

"This gives 'Classics in Context' a new kind of emphasis," Jory said last week. "Ever since we started the festival in 1986, we've been approaching it from other angles — like concentrating on a playwright, with Moliere; or on a particular period, when we did the 'French Romantics' and 'Commedia dell'Arte.'"

When it occurred to Jory that the work of theater directors doesn't survive — except maybe in a few faded photographs — he decided to expand "Classics in Context" to include the careers of theater artists whose work otherwise might not receive the kind of attention the festival will provide.

"There's no way for directors to sit down with a record of their careers to see what they did right and what they did wrong. So I set about searching for a way to relate to a single person's body of work in a complex way. We're calling it 'Modern Masters,' and we'll do it perhaps once every three years.

"Next year we're conducting a midcareer investigation of an

important director, but in the future we might take on a scenic designer or a composer. There are all sorts of possibilities."

Jory chose a director for his first "Modern Masters" because "this is supposed to be the era of the 'auteur' director (meaning that a director's vision shapes a performance equally with a playwright's)."

"I thought how interesting it would have been if something like this had been done for Elia Kazan, who in the '40s and '50s was considered the most powerful, transforming force in American theater. Yet today, his work exists only as a theatrical footnote."

Bogart, formerly artistic director of the Trinity Repertory Company in Providence, R.I., has won numerous

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**Anne Bogart will be represented with three productions in 1995.**

awards, including two Obies in New York. She has worked in numerous theaters and universities throughout America and Europe, and is co-artistic director, with Tadashi Suzuki, of the recently formed Saratoga International Theater Institute. In addition to "Picnic," she directed Eduardo Machado's "The Eye of the Hurricane" during Actors' 1991 Humana Festival of New American Plays.

In selecting Bogart for "Modern Masters," Jory is courting controversy.

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"Critics and professionals either adore Anne's work or they think of her as a theatrical Antichrist," Jory said. "But there is no denying her influence on contemporary theater.

"I think she is often misunderstood, in that she really is not out to change American theater. Rather, she uses classical tools of the trade to find new meanings in works we tend to take for granted. Her productions, for me, are exciting because she is a serious researcher for new insights into American drama."

Jory thinks opening Bogart's career to the scrutiny of "Modern Masters" will help to make her directing style better understood.

"One of the good things about 'Classics in Context' is that it provides you with so much information about its subjects that you can really enjoy what you are seeing. This is what makes an opera buff, after all. Opera fans take so much into the opera house about a certain diva or conductor or director that they became fanatical supporters of the entire art form."

Jory would like to create a similar fervor about various aspects of theatrical performance.

"For instance, I doubt that many in our audiences have had the

chance to see more than one or two actors play Hamlet. But once you've seen half a dozen different Hamlets, as is easily possible in England, you bring a different expectation and reaction to another staging of Shakespeare's classic."

Bogart will be represented with three major productions during next season's "Classics in Context."

Actors will produce a rare revival of Elmer Rice's "The Adding Machine" under her direction. The play is considered a landmark in the history of 1920s American Expressionism.

The festival also will feature two productions Bogart originally staged at the Saratoga institute.

One is "The Medium," based on the writings of Marshal McLuhan, of "The medium is the message" fame. The other, with the working title of "Small Lives/Big Dreams," is a Bogart adaptation from Anton Chekhov's plays and stories.

Bogart also will present a 90-minute workshop-demonstration of her directing techniques. Jory plans to schedule panel discussions and lectures about her career.

The three plays will be performed in the Pamela Brown Auditorium, the Victor Jory Theatre and the Bingham Theatre, due to open in the fall. Complete details will be announced later.