



For Immediate Release

Contact: Chad Sirois

Phone: 508-753-8278 x107

E-mail: csiros@worchesterhistory.net

May 22, 2012, 12:01 AM

Summer Writers Series Celebrates Worcester Greats

Worcester Historical Museum and American Classic Theater partner to recognize the Talent of

Benchley, Behrman, & Bishop

Worcester, MA – Worcester Historical Museum is bringing back the concept of the “salon” with American Classic Theatre for a three-part summer performance series occurring on the fourth Thursday in June, July and August. Directed by American Classic Theater’s James B. Nicola, **Benchley, Behrman, & Bishop** promises to offer an evening of fun, satire, poetry, and wit - served over ice. Each performance will feature a series of readings from three of Worcester’s greatest writers, Robert Benchley, S.N. Behrman and Elizabeth Bishop, along with works by their contemporaries, individuals like Dorothy Parker and Frank O’Hara.

“Worcester Historical Museum loves the idea of using theatre and performance as a way of engaging audiences in Worcester’s history,” states William Wallace, WHM’s executive director. “Worcester is generally known for its industrial might and innovation, but it also has a long history of being the birthplace and home of literary giants like Ernest Thayer, the author of Casey at the Bat, and Isaiah Thomas. Benchley, Behrman and Bishop all fit into this tradition and it is a wonderful thing to celebrate their talents and achievements in such a dynamic way.”

Nicola, when asked why ACT was interested in showcasing these three writers, felt that it was important to put a spotlight on Worcester’ literary legacy, stating, “How many folks in Worcester know that some of the great humorists of the 20th century - and some of the great poets - are from Worcester!” Staging this series at Worcester Historical Museum was his first choice in the hopes of “putting history geeks, theater junkies and poetry aficionados in the same room and seeing what might happen.”



For those who are unaware, Robert Benchley was one of the great funny men of the 20th century as both a writer and actor – he even won an Oscar. A member of the Algonquin Round Table and close friend to

Dorothy Parker, Benchley's unique and sharp wit was a staple of *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker* magazines in the '20s and '30s. Benchley's grandson, Nat Benchley, an accomplished writer, producer and actor in his own right will be performing in the series as well. When approached to participate in this series Nat said that it would be...

"...a great pleasure to present some of my grandfather's oldest and best material to an audience in his home-town. His style of humor - and his need for it - was formed in Worcester, and there appears to still be a great appreciation of him here. His father was an integral part of the city government, and the citizens of Worcester were very generous to his older brother Edmund. And let's not forget that my grandmother also came from Worcester. She too was an important - if under-appreciated - part of his story. Of course, Worcester is also important as the place where he learned that cleanliness is next to a broken hip."

S.N. Behrman was one the eminent playwrights of his day. Known for his "drawing-room comedies," he also ventured into film, working on the Greta Grabo classic, *Anna Karenina*, and wrote for the *Harvard Lampoon*, *The New Yorker*, and *Vanity Fair*. Critic/anthologist John Gassner said Behrman's *Biography* is "one of the best high comedies written by an American playwright..." Behrman grew up in the Water Street neighborhood, the son of Jewish-Lithuanian immigrants. His childhood in Worcester is documented in his memoirs *The Worcester Account*.

Poetry lovers will be interested in Worcesterite, Elizabeth Bishop, whose talent made her one of the luminaries of poetry in the 20th c., winning her a Pulitzer for her poetry.

Inspired by the conversations and readings of the Algonquin Round Table, **Benchley, Behrman, & Bishop**, will be presented in an informal-actors-workshop style with American Classic Theatre performing scenes from Behrman's plays interlaced with readings by Benchley and Bishop, along with some of their contemporaries. The audience will be able to sit back, have a glass of wine – or two, and enjoy some timeless comedic performances. Each performance will feature an honor bar and hors d'oeuvres. Tickets are \$20.00 per person and \$15.00 for WOO Card Holders.

Performance Dates:

06/28/2012 – 6:30 PM-8:30 PM

07/26/2012 – 6:30 PM-8:30 PM

08/23/2012 – 6:30 PM-8:30 PM

American Classic Theater is a nonprofit theatre troupe dedicated to the presentation, promotion, and celebration of American plays, playwrights and the American experience. Their mission is to foster appreciation for the American classic play in a theater-going tradition that will endure.

Founded in 1875, Worcester Historical Museum is the only organization solely dedicated to the collection, preservation, and interpretation of Worcester's unique and diverse history from all time periods and

subject areas. The holdings of WHM encompass thousands of documents and artifacts vital to the study of Worcester history. Worcester's history is interpreted through a calendar of exhibitions, educational programming, tours, and publications. WHM features both permanent installations and changing exhibits.

###