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Theatres of Opposition: Empire, Revolution, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan

David Francis Taylor

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Theatres of Opposition: Empire, Revolution, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan David Francis Taylor Richard Brinsley Sheridan is best known as the author of two of the English stage's most popular comedies, *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*. In his own lifetime, however, Sheridan was as renowned a politician as he was a playwright, and during a parliamentary career that spanned thirty-two years - the large majority of which he spent in opposition - he was an advocate of reform, a supporter of the French Revolution and of Irish independence, and a fierce critic of the government's curtailment of civil liberties. Drawing upon a wide range of sources, from previously unpublished manuscript materials to political pamphlets and satirical cartoons, *Theatres of Opposition* rehabilitates this too often forgotten figure, and offers the first detailed examination of the complex simultaneity and interconnectedness of Sheridan's theatrical and political practices. Moreover, by tracing the artistic and professional trajectory of Sheridan as a playwright, radical parliamentarian, celebrated orator, and playhouse manager, this book sheds important new light on the overlap between theatrical and political cultures in London during the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. Sheridan, Taylor contends, provides a prism through which we can revise our understanding of the ways in which the sites of power and performance habitually bled into one another at this time. Excavating a theatrical politics as precise as it is problematic, *Theatres of Opposition* speaks to a spectrum of interests, from theatre and political histories to the studies of oratory and visual culture.

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