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# Richard Brinsley Sheridan: A Life

*Linda Kelly*

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**Richard Brinsley Sheridan: A Life** Linda Kelly

The first night of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*, on 8 May 1777, was one of the great dates in theatrical history. From then on, Sheridan was launched into eighteenth-century society, as much at home in the salons of the Duchess of Devonshire and the Prince of Wales as in the taverns and coffee-houses around Drury Lane.

Sheridan's comedies were all written by the time he was twenty-eight. For the next thirty years he was wholly involved in his twin careers as manager of the Drury Lane theatre and Member of Parliament. At a time when politics were dominated by a few aristocratic families, he rose above his poverty to become one of the greatest parliamentary figures of the age. In the theatre, he presided over one of the most brilliant periods in the history of the English stage.

Drawing on a wide variety of sources, Kelly gives a comprehensive picture of Sheridan's tempestuous career and chaotic private life. For all his faults, his charm was irresistible - 'there has been nothing like it since the days of Orpheus,' wrote Byron. It is charm that illuminates her narrative, bringing Sheridan to life.

'I can imagine no better biography of this talented, dynamic, impossibly unreliable firework of a man.' Victoria Glendinning, *Daily Telegraph*

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