

THE

C O M M O N
P U R S U I T



UPSTAGE

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UPSTAGE Callboard

Tony Award® nominee Moisés Kaufman (*33 Variations*, *I Am My Own Wife*) directs celebrated playwright Simon Gray's sharply comedic tale about the promises of youth and the compromises of adulthood. *The Common Pursuit* chronicles twenty years in the lives of six friends, from their ambitious collegiate days to their surprising discoveries in the real world.

Idealistic Cambridge student Stuart Thorne enlists some of his classmates to help him launch a new literary magazine. With the pursuit of great literature as their common thread, they become lifelong friends. But when damaging secrets crop up and business demands creep in, Stuart is faced with some unexpected decisions. Delightfully witty and remarkably poignant, *The Common Pursuit* is a captivating journey from who we think we are...to who we turn out to be.

A NOTE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR TODD HAIMES:

“This play is beautifully crafted and showcases incredibly vivid characters, some of the most memorable ones Simon has written. I think audiences who are new to *The Common Pursuit* will find it captivating and surprising. And I know Moisés's talent and vision will be particularly well-suited to this play.”

WHEN

1968—1988

Spans ~~twenty~~ years

WHERE

Cambridge and Holbord,
England

WHO

STUART THORNE

Ambitious founding editor of
The Common Pursuit

MARIGOLD WATSON

Stuart's love interest and writer

MARTIN MUSGROVE

Budding Publisher

HUMPHRY TAYLOR

Scottish philosopher and poet

NICK FINCHLING

Fame seeking literary critic

PETER WHETWORTH

Historian

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IN PURSUIT OF ACTING

INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR JOSH COOKE

At the beginning of rehearsals, Education Dramaturg Ted Sod sat down with Actor Josh Cooke to discuss his thoughts on *The Common Pursuit*.

Ted Sod: Where are you from originally and where were you educated?

Josh Cooke: I'm from Gladwyne, a little town just outside of Philadelphia. My first acting experience was a summer program at the Walnut Street Theatre. I continued doing plays throughout middle school and high school and then majored in theater at UCLA.

TS: How long have you been in New York?

JC: Actually, I only found my way to New York this past November. I'm very new. I've always wanted to live here.

TS: What do you make of Stuart, the character you are playing in *The Common Pursuit*?

JC: I think Stuart is a charismatic, driven person. He is also a man of words with a sharp wit and intellect. His initial passion is to create a literary magazine called *The Common Pursuit*. He has the taste and intelligence to envision all of it and never wants to compromise that vision. It's his passion for this project that brings this group of people together, whose friendships we see unfold over the next two decades.

TS: How do you approach a role like this? What kind of research do you have to do as an actor?

JC: Most of my career since college has been in television and film. Then I did a play a few years ago in Los Angeles called *Come Back, Little Sheba*. That experience reminded me just how much I missed the rehearsal process and really diving into a character. That's not to say that it can't be done in television or film; but the kind of work that I was fortunate enough to get moves quickly and doesn't allow much, if any, time for exploration. My process is very much changing—changing on an hourly basis. We've spent the last two days, about 14 hours or so, sitting around and talking about the play page-by-page, and it has been wonderful. I'm someone who needs to be prepared as much as I can be, so I do a lot of research. As soon as I got this role, I went to the Lincoln Center Performing Arts Library and watched director Moisés Kaufman's major productions to get acquainted with his past work. I read *An Unnatural Pursuit*, which is a diary that Simon Gray kept during the first production of *The Common Pursuit* (directed by Harold Pinter in 1984). I read about Simon Gray, himself, and Cambridge at that time to learn about what types of personalities, influences and themes could be introduced into this process. I come to rehearsal with all of that and try to keep an open mind about everything else.



TS: What about the accent—is that something that you have to start working on right away?

JC: I started working on that immediately as it was required for auditions. We have a dialect coach on the production and will get to meet with her shortly. Whatever accent I managed to throw together for the audition was at least passable, I think! But I'm sure I'll be working and refining the accent until closing night.

TS: What do you think the play is about?

JC: It's about friendships and all the territory that comes with living your life in the midst of people who truly know you—what they let you get away with, what they don't. A huge part of the narrative is this very hopeful and idealistic meeting of these young minds—the whole world is in front of them. Then as the years go by, you see these raw, idealistic and carefree characters begin to shape themselves into carefully crafted identities. There's this dance that happens throughout the play, of people coming to the precipice of truth—whatever "truth" may mean to a particular character. Some of them can face the truth about themselves, others can't.

The language and the crafting of the scenes is beautifully layered and subtle. There is a real sense of full lives and relationships that exist among this group onstage and off.

TS: Can you tell us about the relationship between Stuart and Marigold?

JC: I think there's true love between Stuart and Marigold, but Stuart's passion for his magazine pervades his life. The idealist vision he has for *The Common Pursuit* becomes his identity, which is an interesting source of conflict between Stuart and Marigold. When you are identified with an ideal, you're suddenly faced with the harsh reality that perhaps your humanity has been lost in the pursuit of that ideal. It's a beautiful relationship, and it's a sad one. I think Stuart is almost a tragic character in that his focus can be so intense that he fails to see the life going on around him, and the powerful affect he has on others.

TS: It seems Stuart has very strict views on what makes excellent poetry—do you agree?

JC: He's accused of being an elitist fairly often, and at one point he admits it and basically defends that point of view. Stuart stands for what he sees as true art and rejects what is not. I admire that - having strong convictions. And since I don't know nearly as much as Stuart should know about poetry, I'll hold off on that judgment for the moment.

TS: What do you look for from a director?

JC: Inspiration, collaboration and a clear vision. Moisés is wonderful about talking through the ideas. I don't feel like he's someone who has all the answers and is waiting for you to give the right one. I feel like he's someone who has an incredible amount of knowledge and insight, and a real understanding of art, with great insight into the best and worst parts of humanity. Some directors come in and say, "This is the way. I have the blocking ready to go and this is what we're saying with this story. This is what the play is about and this is what I want to say with the direction." It's so wonderful

to be in the presence of someone like Moisés who is all about exploration and collaboration.

TS: Sounds like he's building a true ensemble.

JC: It's essential for this show in particular. This show is undoubtedly an ensemble piece, and I believe that feeling of true friendship and love is what Moisés is trying to present.

TS: What is your advice to a young person who wants to be an actor?

JC: Read about the history of theater, read about the Group Theatre, read books by influential teachers: Stanislavski, Meisner, Adler, Strasberg, and go and take classes and investigate it all. See if it really interests you. But one of the most important things that you can begin to do immediately is to open yourself up. Take into account all the behaviors that happen around you, all the personalities around you. From observing other people you'll begin to understand yourself better. That's very lofty, isn't it? I'm a constant student and I've already learned an incredible amount from this group here. Read a lot of plays, see a lot of plays and study, really train. I've met a lot of people living in Los Angeles especially, who tend to just wing it. And there might be one person in a million who is incredible at winging it, but raw talent is not going to do it. It's the structure of a craft that will allow your talent to grow.

TS: Is there a question you wish I had asked or something else you'd like to say about *The Common Pursuit*?

JC: I would like to say that this is the most excited I have been about any job I have ever had. And it has to do with the play, Roundabout's reputation, Moisés's reputation and meeting this cast. This ensemble is incredibly inspiring. I am just very grateful. It is an exhilarating production to be a part of and I mean that 100%. In no way is this just a party line.

“It's about friendships and all the territory that comes with living your life in the midst of people who truly know you—what they let you get away with, what they don't.”

IN PURSUIT OF DIRECTING

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR MOISÉS KAUFMAN

Just before rehearsals, Education Dramaturg Ted Sod sat down with Director Moisés Kaufman to discuss his thoughts on *The Common Pursuit*.

Ted Sod: Is this the first time you'll be directing at the Roundabout?

Moisés Kaufman: Yes.

TS: Tell us a bit about where you were born and educated. How did you become a playwright and director?

MK: I was born in Caracas, Venezuela and I moved to the United States in 1987 to go to NYU to be an experimental theatre major. I was an actor in Venezuela for five years before I came to New York and decided to become a director and playwright. I started my work as a director; directing other people's plays for about five years in New York and then I decided that some of the questions I was posing about theatre needed to be answered by writing my own text. So I wrote *Gross Indecency* in 1996.

TS: Can you talk about the differences between directing and writing? What is it like to direct your own writing?

MK: Lonely. That's the hardest part; you don't have a collaborator to bounce ideas off of. There is something similar about the job of the director and playwright; it's about creating worlds on the stage, worlds that follow their own internal logic. My job as a director, when I'm working with a playwright other than myself, is to really understand what the playwright is trying to say and understand the world that is being created. So there is this collaboration that happens when you're working with these brilliant minds that are trying to create these worlds on stage. Your job as director is to be a conduit and to really try and articulate what is in someone else's heart and mind. Being a playwright is trying to keep thinking about what it is you're interested in saying.

TS: What attracted you to *The Common Pursuit*? Why did you choose to direct it?

MK: There are some plays that once you see them, they always stay with you and you think: this is a play I will want to do one day. Todd Haimes and I had been talking about *The Common Pursuit* for a long time and we both love the play. He called and said, "What about now, this year, do you want to do it?" I jumped at the opportunity because it's one of those plays, although it's only 20 years old, that feels like a classic to me. It deals with some very large issues in a very personal way. In a way it feels Shakespearean and in another way it feels like the movie *The Big Chill*. There is something epic, something very personal, and intimate about the play. It covers twenty years in the lives of a group of friends; when you're in college you make these big connections that will be with you for the rest of your life. In the story, we follow this group of friends who start a literary magazine. They want to create a thing of beauty, and the play follows the course of the next two decades and what happens to the lives of these idealistic youths. The minutia of life interferes and intervenes; it is that minutia where life exists. What happens when they have to compromise and decide what can they live with and what can they not live with? Also, what happens to them as a group? I was telling one of the designers that I think of this play as a love story among these six people. They meet when they are very young and they have the same ideals and ambitions for things and then over the next twenty years you see what happens to the group. How the love they feel for each other changes—some fall away and some stay. In that sense, the play is personal and epic at the same time. There is something very moving about that, especially for those of us who are in theatre. We do theatre because we want to bring a bit of beauty or insight into the world, but then what happens to the work when life intervenes?



TS: Do you think it will be hard for an American audience to relate to these characters? They're from a somewhat rarified world.

MK: I would hope not. I don't think so because the characters are so real and so well drawn.

TS: Can you talk about what you were looking for in casting the play? What traits do you need from the actors?

MK: There is a lot of beautiful language in the text, so the actors need to be able to handle language really well. This play is about relationships among these six people so I'm looking for actors who are really good at listening and who are good at relating to others on stage. Sometimes you find wonderful actors who unfortunately act alone and I think one thing that will be important for this cast will be to become an ensemble and a group of people that really listen to each other.

TS: I'm interested in the casting of Marigold. I've been reading about the play and, of course, some people take issue with her portrayal by the playwright, Simon Gray; but I think she finds herself during the course of the action. Would you agree?

MK: I do. I also think that Simon Gray was keenly aware when he was writing that role that he would need an incredibly strong actress because she's a little bit of a cipher. But she is the wisest person in that room. She understands things before anybody else. In that sense, she is making a statement in a world of men and how men behave with each other.

TS: I've been reading about the revival in London in 2008 and a word that comes up regarding the portrayal of the character of Marigold is "misogynistic." I don't feel that way. She ultimately realizes she's not in a good relationship...
MK: And it changes her life.

TS: Exactly. What about the character Humphry, who in my mind is a repressed homosexual, how do you relate to that character?

MK: I think he's rather open with the people in his group. I think there is something about the time and place in which he lives that created lies like that. Without trying to give anything away, if you look at the trajectory of that character in the play, it has much more to do with his lie than with his sexual orientation. I think what I find interesting is how open he is with everybody in that group about who he is. There are several really strong remarks about who he is and what he's doing. What I love about it, is that nobody in the play really discusses it, everybody loves him and has the same relationship with him. I think, in that sense, it feels like a very contemporary play.

TS: What kind of research do you have to do with a play like this?

MK: For a play like this, you really try to understand the time period and where it takes place; you try to understand the characters. I studied Gray's other plays. With a living playwright, you try to understand the world that they're trying to create onstage. With a playwright who is no longer with us, you read everything he's ever written so you can understand what he was trying to talk about, what he was interested in, the things that inspired and moved him and what he was curious about, so that when you get into the rehearsal room, you have an understanding of his body of work. You have a sense of what he was trying to articulate. I think that more than anything is important.

TS: Gray wrote quite a bit about academia, true?

MK: Yes, and there is this fascinating book he wrote while he was working on *The Common Pursuit* entitled *An Unnatural Pursuit*. When Harold Pinter was directing the original production, Gray wrote a diary of what it was like to work on the play. It is a blog of sorts of the 1984 production and it's a wonderful document to have access to.

TS: Would you talk about collaborating with your design team? You've worked with these people quite often, correct?

MK: Yes. I'm working with Derek McLane (sets), David Lander (lights) and Clint Ramos (costumes).

TS: Tell us about the visual world of this play. How will it manifest itself?

MK: What's wonderful about working with these designers is that there is a shorthand because we've worked with each other for so long—you don't have to really articulate what it is we need from each other. There's a lot of work going on, but there is also a lot of reminiscing about our school days, which really allows us to get to know each other better. In terms of the visual world

of the play, we talked a lot about how to articulate visually that the play moves from utopian plans of what's possible to the gritty reality of what's doable. We ask ourselves, "How does it work visually when you're talking about a play about people who believe in ideas?"

TS: I'm curious about the role of poetry in this play. The character of Stuart believes that poetry is absolutely vital to human existence. Do you have a special relationship to poetry?

MK: I've always believed that poetry is one of our highest forms of knowledge. I think there was a scientist that said, "Science is finally able to prove what the poets have known all along." I think there is something moving and true about that.

TS: I also wanted to talk to you about running a theatre company. Tectonic is a company that you devised and it has been around at least 15 years or longer...

MK: 20 years.

TS: Will you talk about what that company means to you and what your plans are for it?

MK: For me Tectonic has always been a laboratory of new work. We developed *The Laramie Project*, *I Am My Own Wife* and *33 Variations*, so it's a place for us to dream.

TS: I've been telling people that I think it is time for a revival of *Gross Indecency*. Do you feel that way?

MK: I've been hearing that a lot recently. I'm not sure I want to do a revival.

TS: Is it hard to return to a piece that you've already done?

MK: A little bit.

TS: What kind of advice would you give someone who wants to direct?

MK: Get in a room and just start directing. When the Tectonic Theatre Project began, we started in the basement of a church and we made a deal with the church that we would clean the church if they let us have the space downstairs. The only way to become a director is by directing. Do the work that really speaks to you. I feel like a lot of young directors talk a lot about a career and that's important; but whenever I've tried to think about my career, I've always ended up making the wrong decisions. However, when I do a play that I love and I try to do it in a way that is truthful and legitimate and with some integrity, then the career projects itself.

TS: Is there a scene in the play or a line that is special to you?

MK: Well, there's a line that I'm going to paraphrase but it's: "What is it that we're going to bring to the world?" That's the line that made me want to do the play.

“There is something epic, something very personal, and intimate about the play.”

IN PURSUIT OF LIGHTING DESIGN

INTERVIEW WITH LIGHTING DESIGNER DAVID LANDER

Just before rehearsals, Education Dramaturg Ted Sod sat down with Lighting Designer David Lander to discuss his thoughts on *The Common Pursuit*.

Ted Sod: Where you were born and educated and how did you decide you wanted to be a lighting designer?

DL: I was born in Toronto, Canada. My father was transferred to the States in the early '70s. So I grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I did my undergraduate studies at The Ohio State University in Columbus. And then my master's at NYU here in New York, and I've been living in New York ever since.

TS: Did you have an epiphany about lighting design? Had you tried acting or anything else?

DL: When I was ten or eleven, I started doing puppetry. I had a puppet theatre troupe that lasted till I was a senior in high school. My father helped me design a really cool puppet theatre stage; and I made a lighting system so we could make the scenes different colors. It's interesting to think back that my puppets had great lighting. I also was performing in high school musicals and working on the crew. When I went to Ohio State, I was interested in both performance and design, specifically lighting. I knew that before I enrolled, so when I was looking at colleges and universities, I was interested in schools that had good technical programs, facilities and physical plants because I knew I wanted to go to a school that had excellent equipment in order to learn the craft.

TS: Can you tell us how you met Moisés Kaufman, the director?

DL: I owe the credit of my introduction to Moisés to Jim Nicola who is Artistic Director at New York Theatre Workshop. I had done several projects there, the first one being *Dirty Blonde* with James Lapine directing. Moisés was developing *I Am My Own Wife* at the time. He directed a reading as part of the Monday night series on whatever set was currently playing at the Workshop, and that's when Jim recommended me to him.

TS: What's the first thing you have to do to start your process as a lighting designer?

DL: The first thing that any designer does is read the play. When I read the play, I generate my own point of view, my personal interpretation of the play. Every director has their point of view and their concept, of course, but before I hear what the director wants to do with it, I want to have my own opinion. I think as designers, we're hired for our point of view and for our style, so I want to have thoughts about the play before I hear anybody else's opinion. When I get to hear the director's perspective, we then start a dialogue because it is a collaborative art form. Moisés is very interested in this collaboration and the design elements; I believe lighting is his favorite. It's the most intangible, but it's very malleable and emotional and he responds quite well to lighting. It's a joy to work with Moisés because he spends a lot of time on the lighting of the production. We've been able to create luscious environments of light for the plays we've collaborated on.

TS: How did you and Moisés talk about *The Common Pursuit* in your first meeting?

DL: We were talking about the play by looking at the model. We were going



scene by scene through the model, through the story, talking about what takes place in each scene and how the lighting will evoke Moisés' ideas. He was talking about the first scene, which is twenty years in the past. A group of students going to Oxford are deciding to create this magazine, *The Common Pursuit*. They're young and the world is at their fingertips. They have these high hopes, an idealism and a grand plan, which we find out at the end of the play doesn't quite work out. Life happens and their world becomes smaller and smaller. We want the first scene to have this endless, huge sky. They're in a dorm room overlooking the campus, with lots of sky, lots of light, endless possibilities. It's really just a metaphor for the idea that "the sky's the limit".

TS: How do you personally respond to the play?

DL: I think the play is funny. I created this new word in response to it: "poignetic." I talked to Moisés and I said, "The play's very poignetic." And he looked at me and said, "What's that? That's not a word." It's poignant and poetic: it's about writers, it's about choices, it's about life.

TS: Do you have to do any research on this play in terms of climate, etc.?

DL: Typically I research the season, time of day, location of the room or place, in respect to the city. In our production a large window dominates the set. I usually figure out if it's a southern exposure or a northern exposure, etc., and track the sun in each scene/season. I try to figure out how to get sun through the window. With this play though, it's not a literal room, so the daylight and sun light do not have to actually come thru the window, as being realistic. I want to invoke a sense of light, but I am not going to be restricted to a reality of sun must come thru the window. My concept of "the sky is the limit" removes a lot of architectural boundaries.

TS: Can you talk about collaborating with the other designers?

DL: My favorite scenario is when we have a kick-off design meeting and the director invites everybody and we just sit and talk about the play. Everybody has read the play individually, so we all have our own opinions and points of view about the piece. We talk about the play and then the director says, "Okay, these are my ideas." I love it when we all get together for the first time and all the designers hear the same thing so we are all on the same page. That doesn't happen often, because our schedules are such that it's hard to get everybody in the room at the same time. But that is the ideal scenario.

TS: How about working with the costume designer? Sometimes lighting can change the color of a fabric, true?

DL: Correct. Typically the costume designer will do renderings. We'll see them, we'll talk, I'll get swatches to see if there's any unusual fabric. With most realistic plays, there's what I call white light. White light is the color of light that you have in a home lamp, a desk lamp, a table lamp—most clothes look good in white light. If you're doing something that's abstract or stylized and you have a specific color concept, that's when you need to relate more closely to the costume designer to make sure that there's a certain color that you're not going to kill. Or if there's something that the set designer wants emphasized, you can help in that aspect. But with this production, it's primarily white light. It's the '70s and '80s, so it's going to be pretty straightforward in terms of color and fabric.

TS: Moisés described the play as a love story—do you see it that way?

DL: That's interesting. I never saw it that way. I saw it as a group of people trying to make their way in the world, trying to learn, failing, learning more, manipulating each other. I saw it as a darker picture of people because they don't really treat each other well at times. Everybody has an agenda and it's not necessarily for the good of the collective. They all start in this collective and then they all end up separately over time. So calling it a love story, that shifts my personal relationship to the play. I will have to think more about that.

TS: Is there a particular character in this play that you relate to emotionally? Is that something that happens to you when you work on a play?

DL: Part of my training at NYU was to come up with a lighting concept following the through line of a character we relate to emotionally. In this

play, I feel it's Stuart's story. He is present throughout and everything happens around him. It's his idea to create the magazine. I am drawn to his character as his storyline works its way through the play. He sees the world as a great opportunity, with hope and possibility. As the play progresses, life intervenes and he becomes confined by reality, mainly money or lack thereof. His world darkens and becomes troubled. In terms of lighting, the environment becomes darker with more shadows. The endless sky of possibilities is gone and he is lit by fluorescent overhead lighting, darkening the atmosphere to match his mood and situation. I find that when we get in the rehearsal process and when I hear the actors start speaking the words, I will get more connected to the character. My point of view might shift slightly because I'll hear an actor interpret a line differently than how I read that line in my head.

TS: Stuart is starting a poetry magazine in the play. It seems that poetry isn't as important to us as a civilization as it once was. Do you agree?

DL: I don't necessarily agree. I think poetry is important. Our country has a poet laureate who I believe the President appoints. I have some friends who publish poetry. It's just a small division of a large publishing company and they know they won't make any money, but it's their mission to publish poetry because it's meaningful to people. It is an art form and I am all for supporting the arts.

TS: Since you started in this business hasn't the lighting technology changed?

DL: It certainly has. We have new energy-efficient light sources. We have new lighting consoles. Everything is digital, so we have great new tools that make the process smoother, faster, easier, more interesting and fun.

TS: Do you have advice for a young person who is interested in being a lighting designer?

DL: If you're living in New York City, you have a great advantage. You should go to see as much as you can, and not just theatre—go to museums, too. As designers, we steal from all art disciplines, so the more you're familiar with other art, artists, designers, musicians, writers, the better you'll be at enhancing your own work.

“As designers, we steal from all art disciplines, so the more you're familiar with other art, artists, designers, musicians, writers, the better you'll be at enhancing your own work.”

IN PURSUIT OF PLAYWRITING

PLAYWRIGHT BIOGRAPHY: SIMON GRAY



SIMON JAMES HOLLIDAY GRAY was born on October 21, 1936 on Hayling Island in Hampshire, England. His father, James Gray, was a physician, and his mother, Barbara Holliday Gray, was a bronze medalist in the standing long jump at the 1926 Women's World Games. Gray had an older brother, Nigel, and a much younger brother, Piers. Gray's father engaged in extramarital affairs, and Gray would return to the theme of adultery in many of his plays, including *The Common Pursuit*.

In 1940, Gray and Nigel were evacuated to Montreal, Canada, where they lived with their paternal grandparents and aunt for five years before returning to England in the final year of WWII. It was the scruffy, rationed, restrained world of post-war England that shaped young Gray's worldview.

In 1949, Gray won a spot in the prestigious Westminster School, the same school attended by playwright Ben Jonson, composer Henry Purcell, actor and director John Gielgud and others. After graduating from Westminster, Gray matriculated to Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He then returned to England and read English at Trinity College, Cambridge, before publishing his first novel, *Colmain*, in 1963. *Colmain*, and Gray's subsequent novels, *Simple People* and *Little Portia*, were well received. In 1965 he was appointed lecturer in English at Queen Mary college, University of London, a post he would hold for over twenty years. Gray married his first wife, Beryl Kevern, in 1965. They had two children, Benjamin and Lucy.

Gray was an accidental playwright. It began when he adapted one of his short stories, *The Caramel Crisis*, for television. He then wrote an original screenplay for television, *Wise Child*, but couldn't get it produced because its subject matter—a criminal disguised as a woman—was deemed inappropriate. Gray turned *Wise Child* into a stage play, which opened on the West End in 1967 with Alec Guinness in the main role.

Gray hadn't even seen many plays when *Wise Child* was produced—just a few Terence Rattigan-type matinees with his mother. He counted Dickens, Austen, and old Hollywood movies as his writing influences, drawing on his knowledge of film plots to help shape his well-made plays.

After *Wise Child*, Gray continued to write for both television and theatre, turning out over 40 plays during his life, including *Butley* (1971) and *Quartermaine's Terms* (1981). His greatest American success was *Otherwise Engaged*, which ran on Broadway for 309 performances in 1977.

Most think of Gray's work as tales of the lives of upper-middle-class English academics, characters unable to fully express themselves. But in fact, his work also concerned such varied subjects as cannibalism in the 19th-century Congo, criminal drag queens, garrulous madmen, shell-shocked World War I veterans, deranged lady novelists, pedophile piano teachers and more. Adultery pops up as a theme in many of Gray's works and in his life. In 1990, the writer admitted to an eight-year affair with Victoria Rothschild, a fellow lecturer at Queen Mary, whom he married after divorcing his first wife.

During the first production of *The Common Pursuit* in 1985, Gray's editor suggested he keep a diary of the process, which became *An Unnatural Pursuit*, the first of eight successful volumes of memoirs.

Although a teetotaler in his later years, Gray was a prolific drinker and smoker—he admitted to sixty cigarettes and several bottles of champagne or Scotch a day. He suffered from lung and prostate cancer, but died from an unrelated aneurysm on August 7, 2008.

GLOSSARY

BELEAGUERED

Harassed or troubled.
Stuart says words such as "beleaguered" make the magazine seem boring.

INCISIVE

Penetrating, clear, and sharp.
Nick asks Martin to hold off on all his incisive questions while Nick smokes a cigarette.

INVETERATE

Firmly and long established; deep-rooted.
Nick thinks all rich upper class people are inveterate snobs.

LOQUACIOUS

Very talkative; wordy and rambling.
Humphry calls Marigold's roommate a very loquacious girl.

NAPPIES

British word for "diapers".
Nick calls a rival of his "Nappies" because he was known as a bed-wetter.

PORTENT

Prophetic or threatening significance.
Stuart believes that seeing Hubert Stout was a portent.

PUGILIST

One who practices the sport of fighting with the fists; a boxer.
Nick jokingly calls Humphry a pugilist as well as a poet.

RESOURCES

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When you get to the theatre...

BELOW ARE SOME HELPFUL TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR THEATRE-GOING EXPERIENCE MORE ENJOYABLE.

TICKET POLICY

As a student participant in Producing Partners, Page To Stage or Theatre Access, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. These tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

PROGRAMS

All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. In the "Who's Who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films, perhaps some you have already seen.

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. They appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the rest room for intermission. Also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone, beeper, alarm watch or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.



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