

**ROUNDBOUT
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THE REAL THING

PHOTO BY ERIC JOHNSON

UPSTAGE GUIDE

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ROUNDBOUT**

UPSTAGE CALLBOARD

The Real Thing

Henry is a playwright not so happily married to Charlotte, the lead actress in his play about a marriage on the verge of collapse. When Henry's affair with their friend Annie threatens to destroy his own marriage, he discovers that life has started imitating art. After Annie leaves her husband so she and Henry can begin a new life together, he can't help but wonder whether their love is fiction or the real thing.

a note from Artistic Director Todd Haines

I honestly believe that *The Real Thing* is one of the greatest modern plays in the English language. It has characters drawn in exquisite detail and with deep humanity. It tackles an eminently relatable theme - the timeless question of following the mind versus following the heart. Its dialogue is full of humor and wit, the complexities of which continue to reveal themselves with each fresh encounter. And above all, it is flawlessly structured to keep us on our toes, with each scene giving us a little puzzle to sort out as an audience, bringing up questions of artifice and reality. What's real, what's performance, and at what point do those lines become inextricably blurred?

when 1982

where London

who

Henry - A well-respected playwright with a passion for words and 1960s pop music.

Max - An actor appearing as the male lead in Henry's play *House of Cards* in the West End. He is married to Annie.

Charlotte - An actress and the female lead in *House of Cards*. She is married to Henry.

Annie - An actress who gained fame by starring in a popular children's show when she was younger. She is involved in the cause to get a young soldier released from prison and is married to Max.

Debbie - Daughter of Henry and Charlotte.

Billy - A young actor working with Annie.

Brodie - A 25-year-old soldier who met Annie on a train and got arrested at an anti-missiles rally.

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INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT TOM STOPPARD

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod interviewed *The Real Thing* playwright Tom Stoppard about his work.

Ted Sod: Who makes a good director for your plays?

Tom Stoppard: That's a really dangerous question. I don't know if it's a simple answer. Somebody who likes to do my plays is a good director for them.

TS: What traits do the actors need to be in your plays?

Tom Stoppard: I once did a Q&A at the conservatory school at ACT and one of the student actors asked me exactly this question, "What do I look for in an actor?" I didn't mean to get a laugh or anything, but I said, "Clarity of utterance is what I mostly look for." It's just the simple truth. I'm willing to buy two or three different kinds of performances, interpretations. I don't panic if somebody interprets a character very differently from the way I thought I was writing the character, but getting to the end of the sentence, not leaving out syllables, just clarity of utterance. Unless the audience hears what the actor has said, there is just no point in my writing it or the actor learning it. So to me it's kind of boringly important. I could go on about that for decades. Every sentence is simply communicating something intelligible. You figure out what that is and you need every syllable to communicate that, so that's what you do. I mean difference of opinion has much more to do with technicalities like where does the stress fall, and which is the word you land on. That tells the audience what to get out of a particular run of words.

TS: *The Real Thing* is often said to be your "most personal, popular, and most accessible play." Do you agree with that assessment?

Tom Stoppard: Seems fair enough to me.

TS: I was reading an article about the actor Toby Stephens, who was starring in a revival of *The Real Thing* as Henry, and he was saying that the play was all about you...

Tom Stoppard: Really? I don't read very much of that.

TS: You were quoted in it too, and you said, "You know what? I wrote this very much before anything happened in my personal life." Do you remember that?

Tom Stoppard: I do remember that, yes.

TS: So when people appraise it as a personal play, would you say Henry came to you independent of yourself?

Tom Stoppard: No, it's actually very personal in the sense that he keeps saying things that I would say or think: his taste in music, his feelings about writing. Of course that's very close to me, yes.

TS: Henry is a playwright. How difficult is it to write about artists? Does it make it easier when you are writing about somebody who is an artist?

Tom Stoppard: It's not a question I ask myself. I don't know whether it does or not. I mean, you're writing a story, it's got this character: this

one happens to be a writer, this one happens to be a painter, this one happens to be a Latin scholar. I have a feeling that everything is coming backwards at me at the moment. It's just not one of the problems you have to solve. It's really hard to talk about writing and I'm usually conscious if I'm misleading people or misleading the questioner, because the problem with writing is the next line. On one scale your problem is what the next line is, and on another scale your problem has to do with the structure of maybe an hour of stage time or



maybe two hours of stage time. The whole thing about writing a play is that it's all about controlling the flow of information traveling from the stage to the audience. It's a stream of information, but you've got your hand on the tap and you control in which order the audience receives it and with what emphasis, and how you hold it all together. This is the subconscious act. There's no book that tells you how to manipulate information from the stage to the audience, but that's what you're doing. If you tell the audience too much about something, then you've lost them because they are overloaded with it. If you tell them too little, you've lost them because they've lost their way. They don't know what you mean. It's constantly this thing of making the audience feel that they're abreast of the situation and they're not floundering in the wake of it, and they are not miles ahead of you either. So although it's a subconscious operation, I think that's what a writer is doing. I think that's half of what he's doing. I like humor and comedy on all levels, and part of the drive is that you're sensitive to the possibility of a good joke, so you head that way for a moment.

TS: Will you be rewriting any of *The Real Thing*? I believe it was revised in 1999, so I am curious if you'll be making any revisions in 2014.

Tom Stoppard: I'm not like some other writers; I have no actual urgent need or desire to add to what's written. You write it, if you're lucky it's performed, and that's the end of the whole thing. When it's time to write the new play, I'm constantly trying to remember how I wrote the last one, thinking that must help. If only I knew how I got into that one, maybe I could get into this one. But I have no memory of getting into it. So, I just feel very lucky that I've grown up and lived in a period where people still like to go to the theatre and therefore there are theatres looking for plays. And that's stranger than you might think. There are many small theatre companies in England. They don't exist to do Ibsen and Shakespeare, I mean obviously they do that as well, but what they love is two things: one is to rediscover a forgotten play by a distinguished, celebrated writer, which happens in the case of very early Noël Coward or Rattigan for example. But mostly, they want new work to put on. I find that quite interesting and surprising, that that's what they mostly want. And also I find it quite interesting and surprising that there seems to be an endless supply of people trying to provide it. Writers who in this day and age consider it valuable to have a play performed for an audience of one hundred people. That is the objective. I find that really moving because that's how I felt when I was twenty. •

TOM STOPPARD: PLAYWRIGHT

Tom Stoppard is not shy about his distrust in biographers and consistently refutes any assertion that his plays are directly inspired by his own life. Stoppard's plays begin with an idea, a structure, or a conceit that he focuses and builds upon, discovering the characters along the way. However, there are clear connections between his characters and Stoppard's own personal story.

Born Tomas Straussler in Czechoslovakia on July 3, 1937, his father, Eugene Straussler, was a doctor for a local shoe manufacturing company. The Strausslers were Jewish, but seeing the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe, Stoppard's mother protected her children by downplaying their heritage, which Stoppard was unaware of until his mid-50s. The family fled to Singapore during the Nazi invasion in 1939 but was forced to split up when the Japanese invaded in 1946. Mrs. Martha Straussler moved with her sons to India (their four years in Darjeeling would eventually influence the setting of the play *Indian Ink*). Dr. Straussler remained behind in Singapore and later perished on a ship trying to escape Japanese imprisonment.

After the war, Martha married British army officer Kenneth Stoppard, who was stationed in Darjeeling. The family took his name and moved to England when Tom was 8, eventually settling in Bristol. Much of Tom's early childhood remained a mystery to him until Stoppard found out from a Czech relative that all of his grandparents and three previously unknown aunts died in concentration camps.

After finishing high school at 17, Stoppard began working as a journalist for the local Bristol papers. In two years he went from Junior Reporter to writing features, but it was through writing theatre reviews that Stoppard befriended the members of the Bristol Old Vic, including a relatively unknown actor, Peter O'Toole. He has stated that seeing O'Toole's performances in both *Hamlet* and *Look Back in Anger* ignited his interest in theatre. After celebrating his 23rd birthday, Stoppard quit the Bristol papers, retaining two columns to provide a modest income. Within three months he had written his first full-length play, *A Walk on the Water*, which he submitted to the Bristol Old Vic. In retrospect, he would realize that the play closely borrowed from Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Robert Bolt's *Flowering Cherry*, and he has since referred to this play as *Flowering Death of a Cherry Salesman*.

Despite the rejection of *A Walk on the Water*, Stoppard

wrote his second play, *The Gamblers*. It was these two plays that attracted the attention of the literary agent Kenneth Ewing, who helped to get Stoppard his first professional optioning agreement. This was the first time Stoppard had been paid for playwriting and inspired his move to London in 1962. Stoppard continued to immerse himself in the theatrical scene by writing as a drama critic and developed an admiration for Brecht, Ibsen, Shakespeare, and Beckett. He received a fellowship to spend five months writing in Berlin and emerged with a one-act play entitled *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Meet King Lear*, which eventually led to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Shortly after his return to London, Stoppard married his first wife, Jose Ingle, and worked on a number of small productions, but it was the 1967 National Theatre production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* that would catapult Stoppard's reputation, almost overnight. At the time, he was the youngest playwright to have his work mounted at the National Theatre. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern...* became one of the National's greatest successes and their first Broadway transfer. Within the year the play had been staged in twenty-three countries.

There was a five year gap between *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern...* and his second major production, in which Stoppard got divorced, worked on one-acts and radio plays (including *The Real Inspector Hound* and *After Magritte*), and tried not to be overwhelmed by his newfound professional status. With this second full-length play, Stoppard tackled the subject of absolute morality through the lens of a farce in *Jumpers*. In the play, a troupe of philosophy professors who perform acrobatic tricks grapple with a murder within their ranks. "I wanted a device enabling me to set out arguments about whether social morality is simply a conditioned response to history and environment or whether moral sanctions obey an absolute intuitive God-given law," the playwright said. "I wanted to write a play about this particular conflict between emotional and intellectual responses to the idea of God, because I've always thought the idea of God is absolutely preposterous but slightly more plausible than the alternative proposition that given enough time, some green slime could write Shakespeare's sonnets."

There was great anticipation for Stoppard's second production after his early success, and the critical response was so divided that *Jumpers* won both the Best Play Award and Most-Over-Rated-Play Award from Plays and Players,

TOM STOPPARD: PLAYWRIGHT CONT.

London's theatre critics' award. However, Stoppard's reputation as an intellectual linguistic artist was cemented, and he had taken his first look at a question that he would return to many times throughout his work: the nature of art and truth and their respective roles in society. He touched on this theme in his 1974 play *Travesties*, saying, "One of the impulses in *Travesties* is to sort out what my answer would in the end be if I was given enough time to think every time I'm asked why my plays aren't political, or ought they to be?"

Stoppard continued to let his characters explore more personal depths with *The Real Thing*, his most commercially successful play. He started with the idea of a play where the first scene is written by a person in the second scene, and he wanted to work with repetition. These constructs naturally led to his characters being a playwright and an actress. There are many correlations between Stoppard and Henry, the playwright character. They were both at similar stages in their careers and started as journalists, both are publicly wary of writing about love, both were happily married to a woman they had an extramarital affair with, both enjoy cricket, and both much prefer pop music to opera. *The Real Thing* ran for more than two years in the West End and won five Tony Awards® on Broadway in its original production.

Since *The Real Thing* premiered, Stoppard has continued to explore ambitious themes: chaos theory in *Arcadia*, the philosophy of empire and the dichotomy of truth and art in *Indian Ink*, three decades of Russia as seen through the country's intellectuals in the trilogy *The Coast of Utopia*, and returning to the role of art and politics, this time in the establishment of the Czech Republic in *Rock 'n' Roll*. Throughout his career, a unifying theme among all of Stoppard's work is the complexity of truth and inability to rely on a moral imperative. Every character presents an opposing argument concerning the central question he has posed, and Stoppard has no interest in guiding the audience toward a tidy conclusion.

On December 12, 1997 Stoppard became the first playwright to be knighted since Terence Rattigan in 1971. This honor came right after Stoppard had discovered the extent to which his mother had shielded him from his Czechoslovakian family history. "I was instantly proud," he said. "I have felt English almost from the day I arrived, but knighthood puts some kind of seal on that emotion." •

A young Tom Stoppard



Firdous Bamji and Romola Garai in Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink*



WRITERS WRITING ABOUT WRITING

To write a play in which the first scene was written by a character in the second scene, Stoppard's protagonist would necessarily have to be a playwright, a fact that left Stoppard in a state of dread. "I didn't want to write a play about a playwright. That seemed to be the end of the rope: you write a play about someone who's trying to write a play."

And so, Stoppard didn't write a play about writing a play. Instead, he wrote about the intersection of life and art, demonstrating the ways in which the characters' onstage worlds repeat in their lives.

Though *The Real Thing* isn't about the act of writing, it is filled with discussions about the craft of writing: What makes it quality and what makes it hackneyed? Who gets to be a writer and for whom should they write?

Stoppard is not the first nor the last to ask these fascinating questions. Below are some examples of the many other plays, musicals, and movies that explore the craft of writing, some daringly tackling the premise Stoppard so dreaded: a writer trying to write.

ADAPTATION

Written by Charlie Kaufman and directed by Spike Jonze, this film follows a screenwriter (played by Nicholas Cage) struggling to adapt a non-fiction book, *The Orchid Thief*, for the screen. Cage's character is, in fact, a fictionalized version of screenwriter Kaufman. When (the real) Kaufman was hired to adapt *The Orchid Thief*, he found the task nearly impossible and decided to instead dramatize his herculean adaptation effort. The fantastical result features Kaufman's (fictional) twin brother, Donald (who is credited as a co-writer on the actual screenplay), a love affair between *The Orchid Thief*'s writer and subject, a deluge of writing angst, and an unlikely chase scene.

"Writing is a journey into the unknown, not building a model airplane." —Charlie to Donald, *Adaptation*

SEMINAR

Theresa Rebeck's 2011 play delves into a fiction master class presided over by a cynical literary icon, Leonard (Alan Rickman in the Broadway premiere). As his four students vie for his attention and approval, Leonard ruthlessly attacks their talent. An examination of success, ambition, and ego — and the need that underlies all — the play unmask the

desires of both the overeager students and their callous teacher.

"What else do you have? And don't tell me nothing, I'll know you're lying. How much writing have you got stuffed in drawers and jamming up the circuits on your computer. How many pages do you have that you haven't shown a fucking soul." —Leonard to Martin, *Seminar*

STRANGER THAN FICTION

Written by Zach Helm and directed by Marc Forster, the movie follows IRS agent Harold Crick (Will Ferrell), who realizes he is the main character in a novel by Karen Eiffel, a writer who tends to kill off her protagonists. Luckily, Eiffel is suffering from writer's block, giving Harold time to find her — and try to convince her to keep his character alive.

Nurse: "Are you suffering from anything?"

Karen: "Just writer's block."

—*Stranger Than Fiction*

BULLETS OVER BROADWAY

Woody Allen and Glen Kelly's 2014 musical (based on Allen's 1994 film) follows David Shayne, an earnest and ambitious playwright whose Broadway debut spirals out of his hands thanks to a coercive producer, a talented hit-man/dramaturg named Cheech, and an overbearing star.

Cheech: "My father used to listen to the Opera. He loved the Opera. If a guy stunk..."

David: "What, he'd kill him?"

Cheech: "Once. In Palermo."

—*Bullets Over Broadway*

GIRLS

Writer-director Lena Dunham's take on millennial life in Brooklyn centers on the travails of Hannah Horvath (Dunham), an aspiring novelist who struggles with both finding the material to write about and finding the discipline to write. In the show's second season, after a few years of low-paying, post-college angst, she lands an e-book deal, but her exultation quickly turns to dread at the thought of delivering on the deadline.

"I don't want to freak you out, but I think I may be the voice of my generation. Or at least a voice. Of a generation."

—Hannah to her parents, *Girls*

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR SAM GOLD

Director of *The Real Thing* Sam Gold discusses the play with Education Dramaturg Ted Sod.

Ted Sod: Why did you choose to direct Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*? What would you say the play is about?

Sam Gold: We all create narratives to live our lives. And then, at various times, we look from outside these constructs and ask ourselves what is the real thing? From our small introspective moments to our full-blown searches for self, we realize how many fictions we have to sift through. Am I really the person I say I am? Do I really love the person I say I do? Do I really believe in this political cause I am fighting for? Our answers are impossible to separate from our fantasies, lies, and the stories we like to live inside. Stoppard has given us the definitive play on this subject. Formally, it is an intricate puzzle of artifice and reality. But it is also a raw, emotional journey towards self-discovery.

TS: Does this play have personal resonance for you? And if so, how?

SG: Anyone who works in the arts has spent their life wrestling with the themes of this play. We all read *As You Like It* and contemplated "All the world's a stage..." and decided to make the stage our vocation. The questions Stoppard raises in this play are the great questions that I've asked myself my whole life. It's such a pleasure to come across a play that takes questions and feelings out of my own mind and heart and lays them on the page so fully and so successfully.

TS: The play was first performed in London in 1982, and a revised version was performed in 1999. Do you feel audiences will see the play as contemporary or as a period piece and why?

SG: The play explores love, jealousy, commitment, and the search for



your true self. There is nothing dated about any of these topics. There are references that are clearly from the '80s, but that just creates the slight distance that shows you the universality of the play.

TS: What type of research did you have to do in order to direct the play?

SG: I don't believe in research. I'm a director, not an academic. A certain amount of ignorance helps me maintain a relationship with the play that is closer to the audience's perspective. Of course I'm sort of lying, because I do what I need to do to understand the world of the play.

TS: What did you look for in casting the actors? What qualities do you need to act in *The Real Thing* besides a facility with language?

SG: I think language has been devalued in contemporary culture. We no longer recite poetry in school. Our music is no longer lyric driven. Texts and Tweets value extreme brevity of communication. Stoppard is writing from a tradition and a culture where people expressed themselves through language much more. I have spent a lot of my career working on contemporary American plays that explore the failure of language and rely heavily on sub-textual communication and even on inarticulateness. It will be a pleasure to work with actors to express themselves through the language, to value rhetoric and argument, and to find the depths of their emotional life within that context and not beside it. Though I hate to generalize, to a certain degree this is accentuated by differences in American and British acting training. We are more sub-textual and British acting tends to start from the words. But I am very excited to work with a cast from both sides of the Atlantic to bring Stoppard's words to life.



Ewan McGregor

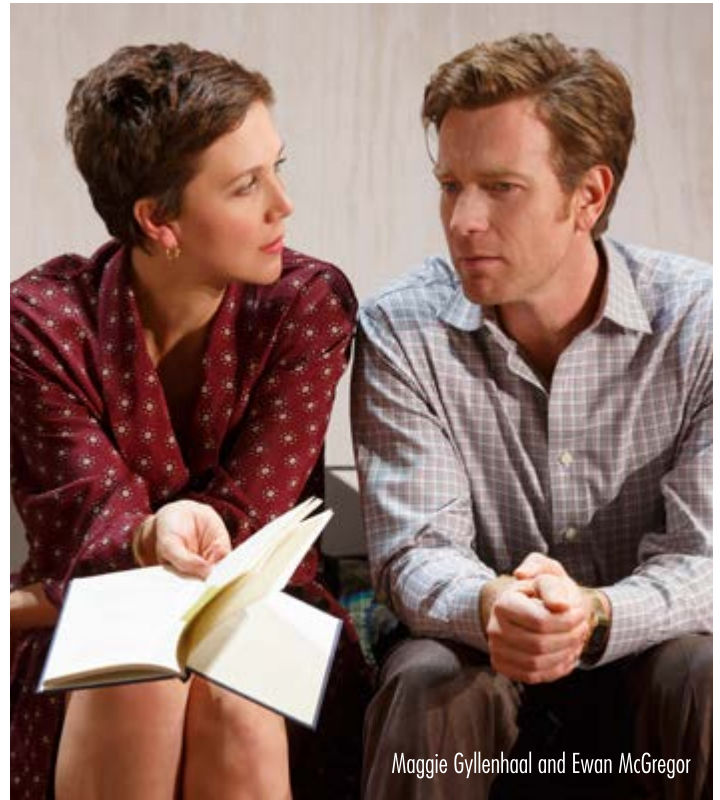
“THE PLAY EXPLORES LOVE, JEALOUSY, COMMITMENT,
AND THE SEARCH FOR YOUR TRUE SELF.”

TS: How are you collaborating with your design team? How will the play manifest itself design-wise? Will there be original music or sound in addition to the music that is referenced in the script?

SG: The play presents a very complicated puzzle of artifice and reality, plays within plays, etc. Luckily it does so quite successfully, so I've decided to make a very simple, human, honest production that puts the focus on the words and the work of the actors. As for the music, it's tricky because Stoppard wrote this play when he was in his forties about a protagonist his own age who listened to the music of the early '60s—the music of Stoppard's romantic, teenage years. Most people find the music they will love for life as a teenager, so this makes sense. But '60s music has a different context today. It's now the teenage music of someone in their seventies, and it has been playing on the radio, in movies, etc. for an extra 30 years. But the protagonist has a teenage daughter, Debbie, who I would imagine listens to the music of the early '80s. That also happens to be the music a forty-something today would have grown up with. So I think I will augment the music that Stoppard wrote into the play with some songs that relate more to Debbie, in order to find my own connection to those romantic teenage years and to evoke for the audience a different kind of nostalgia than the '60s music will.

TS: You are one of the busiest directors in NYC. How do you balance work with your personal life?

SG: My second child is due during our third week of rehearsal, so the word “balance” is maybe not applicable. I just take it one day at a time. I love what I do. •



Maggie Gyllenhaal and Ewan McGregor



Ewan McGregor, Cynthia Nixon, Josh Hamilton, and Maggie Gyllenhaal

THE CRICKET BAT SPEECH

Likely the most famous passage in *The Real Thing*, protagonist Henry's "cricket bat speech," is a superb example of writing about writing. Henry and Annie have been arguing about the writing talent of Brodie, a political-prisoner-turned-playwright. Annie, who wants to renew public interest in his case, has encouraged him to write a play and plans to perform in it. She asks Henry for his advice on the script, hoping that he'll help Brodie with rewrites. When Henry scoffs at the writing, Annie attacks his pretension, insisting that his writing style is an empty intellectual exercise and that Brodie's, by contrast, is less polished but more passionate. After asking Annie to bring him his cricket bat, Henry defends his disgust by illustrating an extended metaphor. Using his bat as a prop, he argues that a writer with a facility for language (a well-sprung bat) can hit and propel an idea forward effortlessly, so that the moment resonates beyond the mechanics of the scene. By contrast, the unskilled writer (brandishing a hunk of wood) will attempt the same hit, but though the motion may look identical, the tool is insufficient, and the idea falls with a dull thud. To Henry, the latter kind of writing is as painful to listen to as a harshly reverberating bat is painful to the hands (thus his "Ouch!").•



¹Marylebone Cricket Club, a famous London cricket club and the authority on the Laws of Cricket. Founded in 1787, the club holds matches, hosts youth cricket programs, owns a museum and library, and runs the World Cricket committee.

HENRY: Shut up and listen. This thing here, which looks like a wooden club, is actually several pieces of particular wood cunningly put together in a certain way so that the whole thing is sprung, like a dance floor. It's for hitting cricket balls with. If you get it right, the cricket ball will travel two hundred yards in four seconds, and all you've done is give it a knock like knocking the top off a bottle of stout, and it makes a noise like a trout taking a fly... (*He clucks his tongue to make the noise.*) What we're trying to do is to write cricket bats, so that when we throw up an idea and give it a little knock, it might... travel... Now, what we've got here is a lump of wood of roughly the same shape trying to be a cricket bat, and if you hit a ball with it, the ball will travel about ten feet and you will drop the bat and dance about shouting 'Ouch!' with your hands stuck into your armpits. (*indicating the cricket bat*) This isn't better because someone says it's better, or because there's a conspiracy by the MCC¹ to keep cudgels out of Lords.² It's better because it's better. You don't believe me, so I suggest you go out to bat with this and see how you get on. 'You're a strange boy, Billy, how old are you?' 'Twenty, but I've lived more than you'll ever live.'³ Ooh, ouch! *He drops the script and hops about with his hands in his armpits, going 'Ouch!' Annie watches him expressionlessly until he desists.*

²"Lord's Cricket Ground," located in St. John's Wood, London. The home of the Marylebone Cricket Club since 1814.

³Henry is quoting a bit of dialogue from Brodie's new (and first) play. The scene he's referencing is a stilted, heavy-handed set-up of Brodie's political beliefs. Henry cringes at both the bald self-righteousness of the ideas and the clumsiness of the language. Earlier in Henry and Annie's conversation, Annie says, "I know it's raw, but he's got something to say." Henry replies, "He's got something to say. It happens to be something extremely silly and bigoted. But leaving that aside, there is still the problem that he can't write. He can burn things down, but he can't write."

PLAYS (AND PLAYERS) WITHIN PLAYS

The Real Thing can be seen within a tradition of plays about theatre artists, and it uses the device of the “play-within-a-play” to raise questions about the nature of “reality.” What better way to explore the relationships between a playwright and the two actresses with whom he shares his life?

Perhaps the first use of the play-within-a-play device was Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, performed in the 1580s. An enraged nobleman takes revenge against his enemies by casting them in a play and, during that play’s climax, he kills them with real swords while the onstage “audience” watches, unaware of what is really happening. Kyd used multiple levels of theatricality and challenged his audience to question what is “real” onstage.

Anton Chekhov based the characters of *The Seagull* (1895) on people he knew in Moscow theatre. A young playwright, Konstantin, struggles under the shadow of his actress mother and loses his love, also an aspiring actress, to his mother’s lover. These characters worry about work and success, but the plot focuses on the four interlocking romances and unrequited love. We see only a few minutes from Konstantin’s play, and its symbolic style differs from Chekhov’s realism. Still, Chekhov suggests the conflation of art and life through the novelist character Trigorin, who incorporates events and details from the play we see into the stories he is “writing.”

Noël Coward’s 1942 farce *Present Laughter* centers on the antics of philandering actor Gary Essendine in the midst of a midlife crisis. The action takes place in Gary’s home, and we never see him “onstage,” but his offstage life resembles a French farce. Many of the characters are theatre professionals, most notably a sycophantic playwright who tries to win Gary’s attention. Coward drew upon his own friends and relationships for this semi-autobiographical comedy of (bad) manners amongst theatre people.

Jean Anouilh’s 1950 drama *The Rehearsal* examines the power of artifice in 20th-century society. A jaded group of aristocratic friends sets out to hurt an idealistic young woman who comes into their circle. These relationships unfold around rehearsals for an amateur production of Marivaux’s *The Double Inconstancy*. Marivaux’s 1723 play features a Prince who kidnaps a bourgeois maiden and reflects on the behavior of Anouilh’s characters. By having his modern characters rehearse in 18th century costumes,

Anouilh suggests that aristocrats of his own time still treat each other as viciously as those who lived centuries before. •



The Real Thing's Annie, played by Maggie Gyllenhaal

ANNIE'S ROLES

In the course of *The Real Thing*, Annie plays two demanding roles. First, we see her rehearsing the title role in August Strindberg’s 1888 play *Miss Julie*. Julie is a headstrong, sexually curious young woman who seduces her father’s manservant and then commits suicide. Next, Annie plays Annabella in John Ford’s 1633 tragedy *'Tis Pity She's A Whore*. Ford sought new ways to shock Renaissance audiences. Here, he depicted an incestuous brother-sister love story that culminates in one of the goriest death scenes of its day, with Annabella’s bloody heart displayed on stage!

INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR CYNTHIA NIXON

Ted Sod, Education Dramaturg, sat down with actress Cynthia Nixon, who plays Charlotte in this production, to talk about her connection to and history with *The Real Thing*.

Ted Sod: You have a fascinating history with this play, having done it in the '80s. Will you tell our readers about that?

Cynthia Nixon: Yes. I was in this play exactly 30 years ago, in 1984, when Mike Nichols directed it on Broadway, which was the New York premiere, with Jeremy Irons, Glenn Close, Christine Baranski, Ken Welsh, Peter Gallagher, and Vyto Ruginis.

TS: You were acting in two different Broadway plays at the same time: you performed in the first act of *Hurlyburly* and the second act of *The Real Thing* – correct?

CN: Right. I was first asked to be in *The Real Thing*, and after we took it out of town to Boston, and brought it into New York, we were a big hit. Shortly thereafter Mike pulled me out of it to be in his production of *Hurlyburly*, which we took out of town to Chicago and then brought off-Broadway and then moved to Broadway. I started doing both plays in the fall of '85 in my first semester of college.

TS: Tell us about the role of Charlotte in *The Real Thing*. Why did you want to play her?

CN: Charlotte's a great character, and I have strong memories of Christine Baranski playing the role in 1984, which actually don't bother me at all. I like hearing Christine's voice in my head but know my Charlotte will be its own thing because I'm so different from her and Sam Gold's production will be so different from Mike Nichols' one. Charlotte is an actress – very successful, appearing on the West End, which is like the London version of Broadway – and also a movie actress, a very glamorous person. And she's married to Ewan McGregor's character, Henry, who is a playwright. It's his play she happens to be appearing in when *The Real Thing* starts. I think that one of the hilarious things about the play is that Charlotte complains about her part in the play her husband has written, because the male actor in the play (played by Josh Hamilton) gets all the zingers. He gets to be free and witty even though he thinks that I'm cheating on him. And instead of dissolving in a little puddle of tears he becomes very sarcastic and biting and ironic. And my character has a stiff upper lip and says things like, "I'm sorry you feel that way." She gets no jokes. She's just basically wounded and noble.

TS: What would you say the play is about?

CN: The play is about a lot of things. It's about men and women who are really different. It's about love, fidelity, and how you make a marriage last. I think it's also a battle of the sexes. And the different way men and women view relationships.

TS: How do you go about preparing for a role like Charlotte? Does she think she is Henry's equal?

CN: She is his match even though he is the intellectual. She's just a lowly actress. I've been talking to Christine Baranski, who I'm still in touch with, and she was so tickled when she heard that I was going to



be doing this part. "It's just the best part," she said. She comes onstage and she gets to play all these different things. When the play starts, of course, you think that she's really that person she is portraying in the play – that sort of noble, long-suffering, beautiful but quiet woman. And then you realize she's not that at all. You see that she's sarcastic and sexy and in a marriage that's not really working. It's not the kind of damage George and Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* inflict on each other, but there's some marital barbing.

TS: Once Charlotte and Henry separate, she seems to soften a bit.

CN: In the second act – two years later – we see a very different aspect of Charlotte. We see her as a mother, but we also see her a little older and wiser. She's still very funny, and she's still very wicked, but she has more regrets than she did in the earlier part of the play.

TS: How do you see the relationship between Charlotte and Debbie, her teenage daughter?

CN: I think they have a great mother/daughter relationship. And I think the Debbie character is very evolved. She has a bit of bravado and maybe she's a little bit of a smartass. She thinks she's a little more mature and sophisticated than she is. But she's actually pretty mature and sophisticated. I think Charlotte has a very liberated attitude toward sex and love. And I think Debbie inherited it. And it serves Debbie well. She's watched her parents' marriage collapse and she's made her own decisions. She's come up with her own philosophy of love.

"THE PLAY IS ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS. IT'S ABOUT MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE DIFFERENT. IT'S ABOUT LOVE, FIDELITY, AND HOW YOU MAKE A MARRIAGE LAST."

TS: Do you have a sense of why Charlotte doesn't know what's going on between Henry and Annie?

CN: I don't. We're not in rehearsal yet, so I don't actually know that she doesn't know. I'm not sure about that yet. She's not saying anything to her husband about it, but what she might know or might wonder about it is unclear to me yet. If you think your spouse is cheating on you, and you decide not to confront them about it...I think that means you're not really sure. And by Charlotte's own admission, she thought he was having affairs with a dozen people during their marriage – none of which happened. I think it's very hard if you are possessive and jealous in that way – as I think Charlotte is – to be sure if your spouse is cheating. You think, oh, that's just me again. If he wasn't doing it the last 12 times, why would he be doing it this time? You stop trusting yourself when an affair is actually happening.

TS: How do you like to collaborate with a director?

CN: I like to collaborate very closely. The director/actor relationship is my favorite. I love other actors and working with designers and I love the interaction with the audience, but my favorite interaction is with the director.

TS: Do you look for specific things from a director, or does it change from text to text?

CN: It changes, but I certainly like to feel that I have a partner. I know there are a lot of actors who like to be left alone to sort of muck about and explore in their individual way. I like to explore in tandem with someone. I like to feel like we're on a search party together – I don't like feeling as if I were sent out into the wilderness. I like to be in tandem with someone. I'm such a fan of Sam Gold's work and we've been trying to work together for a while. I am really very excited to get into the rehearsal room next week. My wife said, "Oh my God. You're going into another play. You're going to be gone every evening, and it's going to be such a slog." And I said, "But honey, I'm not dying from ovarian cancer in this one. No one's dying in this play. And I'm not trying to indoctrinate little girls into the ways of fascism in this play. It's a delicious play to be in." I think all Tom Stoppard's plays are delicious to be in because of their artistry and language.

TS: What would you say to a young person who says, "I want to be an actor"?

CN: I would say keep your options open. Don't throw all your eggs in that basket. Follow your dream if that's your dream, but it's good to have a college education in something other than theatre. And I would say that to the most talented 18-year-old actor in the world. I would say be around and create as much theatre as you can. Get cast in things. And if you're not getting cast in things, make it happen yourself. Go see as much theatre as you can. Theatre is very expensive, obviously, but theatres like the Roundabout offer all kinds of discounts to students.

TS: You don't ever regret having started your career as young as you did, do you?

CN: I do not. I know there are certain things that maybe fell by the wayside. But by and large it was pretty much a win-win for me.

TS: I understand you will be directing later this season. You have cast two powerhouse actresses – Dianne Wiest and Tonya Pinkins. What made you want to direct?

CN: I feel like I've wanted to direct for a really long time and I just haven't been brave enough to do it. I feel that Scott Elliott at The New Group has just given me a tremendous chance and so much support and guidance. We haven't started rehearsal yet, of course, but I'm meeting with the designers, and I'm casting people. I'm sure there will be many unforeseen challenges along the way, but so far it seems like such a good fit for me. I'm friends with Lonny Price, who used to be an actor and is now primarily a director. I told him with great excitement a few months ago that I was going to be directing my first play. And he said, "You're going to be great. You're going to wonder what took you so long." •



Jeremy Irons
(Henry)



Glenn Close
(Annie)



Christine Baranski
(Charlotte)



Kenneth Welsh
(Max)



Cynthia Nixon
(Debbie)



Peter Gallagher
(Billy)



Vyto Ruginis
(Brodie)



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The original *The Real Thing* Playbill cast page with Cynthia Nixon

HENRY'S PLAYLIST

As he prepares to be a guest on the real-life radio show *Desert Island Discs*, Henry's musical tastes reveal feelings he hides beneath a sophisticated facade. Since its first broadcast in 1942, each week a celebrity guest has identified 8 albums they would take if they were cast away on a desert island. Some of the most famous "castaways" are Noël Coward, Margaret Thatcher, and Desmond Tutu. In almost 75 years on the air, the 3 most selected musicians are Mozart, Beethoven, and Bach—thus Henry's concern about choosing music that's not "all right to like." Learn more about—and listen to—Henry's songs:

"DA DOO RON RON"—THE CRYSTALS, 1963

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqgtsai2aKY>

The nonsense syllables of the song's chorus were intended as fillers by the songwriters, but producer Phil Spector thought they were "just dumb enough" for the teenage audience. The girl group The Crystals (1960-1966) recorded the song, but there is still a controversy about whether the lead vocals on the released version were Dolores "LaLa" Brooks or Darlene Love. Cher sang back-up vocals.

"OH! CAROL"—NEIL SEDAKA, 1959

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ux49UBie-w8>

The song was named for songwriter Carole King, a high school friend of Sedaka's (though they did not date). Producer Don Kirshner advised Brooklyn-born Sedaka and co-writer Howard Greenfield to "write a song with the girl's name in the title, [and] talk in the middle, like The Diamonds did in 'Little Darlin'." The song became Sedaka's first top 10 hit.

"I'M INTO SOMETHING GOOD"—HERMAN'S HERMITS, 1964

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFvXvfUF-Co>

The British group Herman's Hermits won millions of fans and hits galore but scarce respect, perhaps because they were produced for the younger teen market. Their version of "I'm Into Something Good" (written by Carole King) went #1 in the UK upon its release. The song's easy-going sound and harmonic vocals had a distinct California sound, which was quite exotic in England.



Herman's Hermits album cover, including their hit single "I'm Into Something Good"

"A WHITER SHADE OF PALE"—PROCOL HARUM, 1967

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mb3iPP-tHdA>

Songwriter Gary Brooker claimed that while he was listening to lots of classical music at the time, he was not consciously referencing Bach's "Air on a G String." The song has sold over 10 million copies worldwide and been covered over 1000 times. The phrase "a whiter shade of pale" has since gone on to become a common saying in the English language.

"YOU'VE LOST THAT LOVIN' FEELIN'"—THE RIGHTEOUS BROTHERS, 1964

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEkB-VQviLI>

After splitting off from a larger band, The Righteous Brothers (Bill Medley and Bobby Hatfield) signed with Phil Spector. Although the duo usually shared lead vocals, this song put Medley's low voice in the forefront. The song has been played on radio and television more than any other song in the 20th century—this includes all versions, including covers by Elvis, Dionne Warwick, Hall and Oates, and Neil Diamond. •

ANTI-MISSILE DEMONSTRATIONS

In *The Real Thing*, Private Brodie is arrested for vandalism of a war memorial during an "anti-missile demonstration." This article explores the history of the anti-missile demonstrations in 1980s Britain.

In 1945, the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing 185,000 people. The bombing ended the second World War and inaugurated the nuclear era. Soon, nations around the world were pursuing nuclear technology for use in weapons and as a means of generating energy.

The Cold War, a decades-long period of hostility between the communist Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R) and the capitalist United States and the Western Allies, began in the late 1940s. The Cold War was a battle for control of the planet's destiny: would Soviet Communism spread, or would western capitalism triumph?

The Cold War spurred both nations to develop nuclear weapons to defend against the other. By the late 1950s, the U.S. and U.S.S.R.

both had nuclear bombs, more powerful hydrogen bombs, and intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of delivering these bombs to targets over 3,400 miles away. If one country launched a warhead, the other would do so as well, resulting in what was known as "mutually assured destruction." Security, therefore, was a matter of both sides having the same ability to annihilate each other. (Britain, not wanting to be dependent on the United States for its defense, also developed nuclear and hydrogen bombs.)

British scientists, theologians, and ordinary citizens mobilized against nuclear weapons and energy in the

late 1950s. They were concerned about the potential for destruction, moral implications, and environmental effects. Additionally, Britons resented being in the line of fire of an American war, and the cost of defense took money away from popular social programs.

In the latter half of the 1970s, the U.S. concluded that the U.S.S.R. had greatly increased the number and strength of its weapons. Of specific concern were intercontinental

ballistic missiles stationed in Eastern Europe. In response, the U.S. and Britain announced plans to station 572 cruise missiles in Greenham Common, Berkshire, and Cambridgeshire.

Massive protests against the missiles began in the summer of 1981. On October 24, 1981, approximately 250,000 people marched through London in an anti-nuclear rally. Tony Benn, a Member of Parliament, spoke at the march: "President Reagan cannot ignore us because President Reagan does not own Britain and Europe. This is

our continent and we will shape it for ourselves."

A group of Welsh women, soon joined by others, set up a Women's Peace Camp outside the Greenham Common air force base. Women engaged in acts of nonviolent protest at the peace camp for the next eighteen years.

Despite continued protests, the missiles were installed in Britain in the autumn of 1983. The Cold War ended in 1991, and the missiles were gradually removed. •

Thousands gather in London to protest nuclear missiles



INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR EWAN McGREGOR

Actor Ewan McGregor, who plays Henry in *The Real Thing*, spoke with Education Dramaturg Ted Sod about his role in *The Real Thing*.

Ted Sod: Let's start with some biographical information — where were you born and educated?

Ewan McGregor: I grew up in a small town called Crieff in Scotland. I left school when I was 16 and got a job working backstage. Occasionally, if there was a one-line part or a little acting role I would get that. The first thing I remember having a line in was a production of *Pravda*, and from there I went to a one-year theatre arts course in Kirkcaldy, Fife, which was a really solid theatre training — we would have to construct sets, make costumes, advertise the shows. We would all have an acting role and a production role. It was a really good theatre arts course for people who were too young to get into drama school. After that, I went to London and spent three years at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. One term into my third year I got cast in Dennis Potter's series, "Lipstick on Your Collar." I left college to do that and I was off and running.

TS: Did you have any teachers who you felt were influential?

EM: Yes, Patsy Rodenberg. She's the only person I'd ever go to really. I went to her for a few movie roles when I wanted to do something with my voice, and I went to her another time when I was doing a play.

TS: I believe one of your uncles is also in the business.

EM: Yes. And the only other actor to come out of Crieff, to the best of my knowledge, is my uncle Denis Lawson. He's my mother's brother and was my inspiration once I decided to become an actor and has remained my inspiration throughout my life really.

TS: You worked with him on a play. Am I correct about that?

EM: After leaving drama school I spent seven years making movies and TV shows, and I wanted to go back to the stage, but I was terrified after such a long break. I went to my Uncle Denis and I said, "Look, I really want to go back onstage, but I want you to direct me because I'll be terrified and I'd be happier if you were in the room." He found this great play that he'd done in the '60s entitled *Little Malcolm and his Struggle Against the Eunuchs* by David Halliwell. For the first time back on stage in so long it was a real kick up the ass. It was a great cast and such an amazing experience.

TS: Do you still feel a bit of terror going on the stage?

EM: Everybody's nervous to go onstage. I can't imagine it would be quite as exciting if you weren't. I think it's part of the process for me. I never walked onstage totally without some sort of nerves or adrenaline running. And I wouldn't want it any other way, really.

TS: Talk about the role of Henry in *The Real Thing*. What attracted you to it?

EM: Well, I met Sam Gold, the director, and I wanted to work with him. I knew him by his reputation, and when I spent time with him, I felt like he was someone that I could work with and feel comfortable with.



He sent me some scripts. After reading some things that were still in development, he sent me Stoppard's *The Real Thing*. Luckily for me, I suppose, I've never seen the play. I read it without any preconceptions. I just totally fell in love with the character of Henry. I love his mind and his language and all his relationships and observations about life and love. I'm absolutely drawn to him and I find every time I read it that there's another little gem in there that I discover for the first time. Right now I haven't got the bigger picture of it because we haven't even begun to rehearse, but I feel like it's an extraordinary play. It's very accessible. Stoppard is a very clever writer.

TS: Is it complicated as an artist yourself to play a character who is an artist, or is it easier?

EM: No, I don't think it's complicated to play artists because in a way we know what it feels like to sit in that place of creativity. I've played a lot of writers, and I think it's because writers like to write about writing. And in this play, there's even discussion about what good writing is and why it's important — the respect of words that writers have. It's Stoppard, a very brilliant writer, writing about his love of writing.

TS: Is there any kind of research or preparation that you have to do other than reading the text?

EM: I just threw myself into the text. I've been attached to the play for over a year, so I've been reading it and re-reading it. I'm familiar with it in a good way — more than I've ever been with a text before rehearsals. I'm feeling super-excited. And those horrible nightmares I'd experienced before rehearsals, I haven't experienced them at all. I absolutely think it's because I've had so much time to steep myself in the words. I've

“I JUST TOTALLY FELL IN LOVE WITH THE CHARACTER OF HENRY. I LOVE HIS MIND AND HIS LANGUAGE AND ALL HIS RELATIONSHIPS AND OBSERVATIONS ABOUT LIFE AND LOVE.”

enjoyed it very much. Every time I open the script I am provoked into thinking about the things that Stoppard wants me to think about.

TS: Will you talk about Henry's relationship to the women in his life? What do you make of his relationship with his teenage daughter, Debbie?

EM: I think Henry's very close to Debbie. I think he absolutely adores her — his only daughter. I think the scene where she leaves to go off with a young man is one of the tenderest, most beautifully written scenes I've ever read in my life. It's the scene that we all wish we had with our own daughters. I stopped off in London to have lunch with Tom Stoppard before coming back to America and I thanked him for it. I said, "I'm looking forward particularly to saying that speech every night." There's an absolute beauty in what he tells her about being in love — the way he opens up and tells her about what our lovers expect of us and what being a lover is about. It's quite incredible, open, and intimate.

TS: I find Debbie very mature for her age. I expect she will be the window into the play for some of our school audiences.

EM: She's completely the child of an actor and a writer. She is absolutely the offspring of people who are very interested in themselves.

TS: What about Charlotte and Annie? They're very different women — don't you think?

EM: Yes, I think they are very different. Charlotte seems somewhat embittered by her relationship with Henry. I mean, she's had nine affairs. And she assumes that he is having affairs left, right, and center, although he isn't until this one with Annie. Charlotte thinks that there is no such thing as true love or commitment, only bargains. She suggests that they're idiots for believing in love. And Henry doesn't believe that. He says, "It's the kind of idiocy I like." I assume that we've got to accept that it's not the real thing between Charlotte and Henry and what's happening between Henry and Annie is.

TS: Do you have any advice for a young person who thinks they might want an acting career?

EM: Always do the work. When you leave school try and do as much theatre as possible. Do bigger roles in smaller productions as opposed to smaller roles in bigger productions, and see where you come out. The more you can do, the better. When I was in school, I didn't necessarily do a lot of acting because it's difficult. There's not a lot of acting to do at school. Occasionally there's a school play you can be in. And I would always try and be in them. But I did lots of things to do with performance. I was very musical. I think music is very important in acting because dialogue is music. Having a sense of the music in your soul is very important to being a good actor. •



Ewan McGregor



Ewan McGregor and Maggie Gyllenhaal

INFIDELITY IN SOCIAL CONTEXTS

“Dignified cuckoldry is a difficult trick, but it can be done. Think of it as a modern marriage. We have got beyond hypocrisy, you and I. Exclusive rights isn’t love, it’s colonization.”—Henry, *The Real Thing*

Playwright Tom Stoppard and his contemporaries came of age in the 1950s, an era when society idealized the nuclear family: male provider, female homemaker, and children. But the reality wasn’t always domestic bliss. The sexual double standard normalized the sexually adventurous man and the virginal, sheltered woman. Social pressure, rigid divorce laws, and lack of economic opportunity for women were what kept marriages together.

Dr. Alfred Kinsey’s scientific research into sexual behavior in the late 1940s and early 1950s United States provides a view of sexual attitudes and practices in the post-war world. He found that 85% of men and 50% of women had premarital sex, but half of those women had slept only with their fiancé.

Kinsey also found that by the age of 40, 25% of women had been unfaithful in some way; for men, the figure was 50%. Women tended to have just one experience of infidelity, while men conducted a string of affairs. A similar study undertaken in Britain at the same time concluded that 25% of men had visited a prostitute.

Perhaps the best evidence of the sexual double standard comes from a 1953 *Life Magazine* analysis of the Kinsey Report: “All in all, it appears, the figures on woman’s promiscuity are mostly a reflection of the fact that the male wolf is always with us, providing as much temptation as he can to as many women as he can.” Women’s sexuality was seen as a by-product of male behavior and desire.

By 1982, the year *The Real Thing* premiered, times had changed. Contraceptive pills, which gave women the power to prevent pregnancy, became available in Britain in 1961 and free in 1974. After the Divorce Law Reform Act of 1969, the divorce rate in Britain more than doubled. The women’s liberation movement of the seventies called out sexist policies and attitudes. Laws were passed guaranteeing equal pay and outlawing discrimination against women.

British women were more empowered than ever before, and their independence was changing marriage. British playwrights responded to the shift, which likely played out in their personal lives, with plays investigating the concept of fidelity. Stoppard’s *The Real Thing*, Harold Pinter’s *Betrayal*,

Peter Nichols’s *Passion Play*, Christopher Hampton’s adaptation of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, and Simon Gray’s *The Common Pursuit* all explore adultery: What does it mean to be faithful to one’s spouse? Is it strictly a question of sexual fidelity? How does marriage change when both partners are acknowledged as full human beings with emotional, sexual, artistic, and spiritual needs?

Interestingly, overall infidelity rates have remained the same since the early 1970s. But the gender gap is shrinking: today’s young women are nearly as likely to cheat as men, and older women are catching up to their male counterparts as well. •



Alfred Kinsey, a renowned researcher of sexual behaviors, on the cover of *Time Magazine* in 1953

DESIGNER STATEMENTS

DAVID ZINN, SET DESIGN

The Real Thing is a play in which a lot of scenic trickery usually takes place and Tony Walton, who designed the premiere of this play in New York, did that iconically and brilliantly. And un-repeatably. There's a pull in the play, a game really, between what's "real" and what isn't and, in a lot of situations, the set designer would be the person making those distinctions clear. But, Sam Gold, the director, and I from the get-go have been a little more interested in the mystery and the tension of not knowing exactly what's what. We've talked a lot about shifting the burden of that to the ensemble—replacing the "stage" magic with the porous relationship between the ensemble and the audience. I guess an easier way of saying that is that we want to simplify the set and trust and celebrate the actors and the story – and to watch them make the story. So we've made a pretty simple container for it. The set has some period and place information, but mostly it's just simple materials (including some awesome period furniture) and the bare minimum we felt we needed to hold this beautiful and smart love story. It shifts and moves a little, but its focus is on the relationships being played out in front of it.

MARK BARTON, LIGHTING DESIGN

Following from Sam Gold's and David Zinn's impulse to dial back the overt theatricality that seems to be what people remember about previous incarnations of *The Real Thing* and to focus instead on the simple, awkward, human relations at the play's core, I am trying to find a way to step out of the way of the actors, while still engaging the environment in a subtle way. Punctuated by abrupt, stark shifts, I hope that we are able to find a visual simplicity in the lighting that verges on the transparent. These characters are just people, in a room adjacent to ours as viewers, and they are going through something profound and perhaps inarticulable. Without telegraphing what that is or should be, I hope that we can frame it in a way that lets the audience experience it in both its verbal and nonverbal fullness.

BRAY POOR, SOUND DESIGN

Written into the text of this play are pop songs from the 1950s and 60s to be used as transitions, coming from radios and off of turntables. They're Henry's songs; music that he would play at home, and his taste is proudly outdated. These old pop songs can feel sometimes a bit weighed down by years of commercial and film appropriation. They can lose some of their power, and some of their innocence. At our first meeting, Sam and I



Josh Hamilton, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Cynthia Nixon, and Ewan McGregor



Cynthia Nixon and Ewan McGregor

grasped for a way we to reconnect with these old tunes; to hear them as Henry does. We both imagined the cast singing in some way. We went back and forth as to when, or how much of, a song should be sung. What does it mean to have a play where a company sings along with a tune during a transition? Or just sits and sings? We spent a lot of time asking, "What if during this song...." The cast has been so game, so willing to experiment with this idea. At a front porch session, I played guitar while actors found their parts, harmonies, melodies. No sheet music, nothing laid out ahead of time. It was a joyous process. Sam wanted this production to be centered by a strong sense of ensemble. When the company began singing from the first rehearsal, the songs became part of the DNA of the story. Good pop songs can be open-hearted, vulnerable, yearning, heartbreaking or unabashedly romantic. As can this play.

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

HOW DO WE DEFINE AND COMMUNICATE OUR VALUES IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS?

The Real Thing deals with questions of monogamy (having only one sexual relationship at a time) and fidelity (faithfulness demonstrated by continued support and loyalty) in marriage. What does it mean to be true to your partner?

ACTIVATE Label one side of the classroom “agree” and one side “disagree.” Ask students to stand in the center of the room, and move toward the wall that represents their response to the prompts below. Students may choose to position themselves anywhere along the agree-disagree continuum.

I would immediately break up with someone who cheated on me.

If someone cheats on their partner, they aren’t trustworthy in other areas of their life.

If you marry someone, you should stay married until death.

It’s ok to cheat if your partner doesn’t find out.

It’s ok to cheat if the affair means nothing to you emotionally.

It’s better to have different relationships at different times in your life rather than stay married to one person.

REFLECT As the activity progresses, ask students to defend their choices: why do you agree with that statement? Why not?

WRITE Ask students to write a monologue from the point of view of a character who is entering a new relationship and wants to communicate their values to their partner. What does this character want from their partner? What is acceptable to them? If time, pair students up and have them share monologues. Could these two characters be in a relationship together? Why or why not?

HOW DO ACTORS PERFORM A “PLAY-WITHIN-A-PLAY”?

The Real Thing follows people who work in the theatre, and in some scenes Tom Stoppard challenges the audience to guess what is “real” and what is a play-within-a-play. This activity explores how actors approach different levels of theatrical “reality.”

MATERIALS: Copies of the scenes: found by clicking [here](#).

INTRODUCTION Discuss the concept of a play-within-a-play and examples of where this has been used. (An essay on plays within/about plays can be found on page 11 of this UPSTAGE guide.)

ACTIVATE Students work in pairs and use the script attached. Students should stage this scene in 2 DIFFERENT ways. One way should be as if it were “reality.” The other way should be as if it were a play-within-a-play. Make different choices to suggest this play-within-a-play. (Physical, vocal, staging, etc). When showing the scenes, students should decide an order but DO NOT share this with the class. Allow the class audience to guess which version is the “the real thing” and which is the “play-within-a-play.”

REFLECT When acting, how did you differentiate the “real” version from the “play-within-a-play?” When watching the scenes, what clues did you look for to help you determine which was which?

WRITE Create a new scene, in which the playwright from the scene we just used tries to explain to a friend why she or he wrote this scene. What story does this playwright want to tell, and why?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

HOW DOES A PLAYWRIGHT USE DIALOGUE AND ACTION TO REVEAL CHARACTER?

In *The Real Thing*, Henry uses witty, intense speeches to explain what he believes in to his wife, Annie. Do Henry's actions match what he says is important to him? Do Annie's actions match what she says matters to her?

ANALYZE Read the scenes and speeches located in this pdf [here](#) out loud. Make a list on the board for each character, noting what he or she says they believe in. Then make a second list for each character, noting what he or she does.

REFLECT Compare the lists you've made. Where do the characters' words match their actions? Where do they differ?

ACTIVATE Hold a debate on the following question: Do Annie and Henry live by their professed values? Why or why not?

EXTEND Ask students to create a list of their own values, and reflect on how their own actions reveal what is important to them.

HOW DOES THE MUSIC WE LOVE BECOME IMPORTANT IN OUR LIVES?

You've heard Henry explain why certain songs bring up strong feelings for him. Discuss Henry's musical preferences and what his choices reveal about his character. (See page 14 of this UPSTAGE Guide for background on the music in the play.)

WRITE Imagine you are asked to be a guest "castaway" on the British radio show *Desert Island Discs*. The producers have asked you to select 8 songs that you would take with you if you were cast away on a desert island. Create a list of the songs you would choose, and identify WHY these songs are important to you. What memories, experiences, feelings make these songs special for you? Be specific and personal with your explanations.

ACTIVATE Have students choose one lyric from their list that is particularly moving to them. Allow students to work in groups to a stage tableaux (frozen stage picture) representing/illustrating each student's lyric. Have students announce their lyric before showing their tableaux.

REFLECT Why does certain music become special for us? What part of music most moves you? In 20 years, which songs on your list do you predict will still be important for you?

GLOSSARY

ANACHRONISM

Something that is inconsistent chronologically
Henry believes that royalty is an anachronism.

APOLOGIA

Formal justification of one's actions
Henry tells Annie that Brodie's apologia will bore an audience.

BANAL

Lack of originality in such a way that is utterly boring
Henry describes one of his music records as banal.

CUCKOLDRY

The act of being the husband to an unfaithful wife
Henry believes that it is possible to have dignified cuckoldry.

DILETTANTE

Someone who is only superficially interested in a specific topic
Charlotte tells Henry that the Justice for Brodie Committee does not want dilettantes to be a part of it.

ELASTOPLAST

British version of a Band-Aid
Max notes that Henry's kitchen does not have any Elastoplast when he cuts his finger.

ERSATZ

A subpar imitation of something extraordinary
Henry describes his daughter Debbie's philosophy on exclusivity as being ersatz.

FASTIDIOUS

Demanding
Annie says that Henry has fastidious taste.

FEINT

Purposefully distracting action
Max says that the Swiss created digital watches as a feint to their Japanese competitor

LASCIVIOUS

Lustful or unruly
Billy's character says that Annie's characters' hands could make innocent men lascivious

SELF-ABASEMENT

Voluntary self-punishment to atone for believed wrongdoings
Henry believes that people should take part in self-abasement.

SOD

Offensive term normally used in bouts of frustration
Annie exclaims "sod you!" when she is angry with Henry.

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ABOUT ROUNABOUT

ROUNABOUT THEATRE COMPANY

Founded in 1965, Roundabout Theatre Company has grown from a small 150-seat theatre in a converted supermarket basement to become the nation's most influential not-for-profit theatre company, as well as one of New York City's leading cultural institutions. With five stages on and off Broadway, Roundabout now reaches over 700,000 theatergoers, students, educators and artists across the country and around the world every year. We are committed to producing the highest quality theatre with the finest artists, sharing stories that endure, and providing accessibility to all audiences.

2014-2015 SEASON



Book by Joe Masteroff
Music by John Kander
Lyrics by Fred Ebb

Starring Alan Cumming
and Michelle Williams

Co-directed and
choreographed by
Rob Marshall

Directed by Sam Mendes



By Moss Hart and
George S. Kaufman

Directed by
Scott Ellis



By Tom Stoppard

Directed by
Carey Perloff



By Tom Stoppard

Starring
Ewan McGregor,
Maggie Gyllenhaal,
Josh Hamilton
and Cynthia Nixon

Directed by
Sam Gold



Music & Lyrics by
Stephen Sondheim
Book by James Lapine

Reimagined by Fiasco
Theater

Directed by Noah Brady
and Ben Steinfeld



Book & Lyrics by
Betty Comden
& Adolph Green
Music by Cy Coleman

Choreographed by
Warren Carlyle

Directed by Scott Ellis



By Jeff Augustin

Directed by
Giovanna Sardelli

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: COMPANY MANAGER, CARLY DIFULVIO ALLEN

Ted Sod: Tell us about yourself. Where were you born and educated?

Carly DiFulvio Allen: I was born and grew up in Rochester, NY. I went to school at Ithaca College where I majored in Theatre Arts Management.

TS: How would you describe the job of being company manager for the shows at The American Airlines Theatre?

CDA: It's something new every day! Technically, my job is defined as management's representation at the theatre. I'm the direct liaison between the management office and everyone here at the theatre – cast, directors, designers, crew, etc. I am responsible for the day to day things that involve the logistics of putting on the shows. I work very closely with Denise Cooper, our general manager, to make the shows happen. I do some contracts, all housing and travel, obtaining visas for foreign artists, payroll, ticketing, tracking invoices and keeping track of the budget just to name a few. I'm also at the theatre for every show and check in with the actors and crew before each performance. If a problem arises or someone gets injured I'm usually the first person called. It's a great job as I'm really working directly with the artists and am incredibly involved with the shows. It is a lot to do and it definitely keeps me on my toes!

TS: Why did you want to work at Roundabout Theatre Company?

CDA: I had admired Roundabout for a long time and knew I would ideally like to work at a non-profit theatre company. I was fortunate enough to get a summer job here in the business office while I was still in school and took the opportunity to learn more about the company and specifically the management office. I shadowed the company manager a few times at Studio 54 and we hit it off. Later on, I ended up getting hired to be her assistant and then took over after she left. We're still great friends to this day and about to work together with the music department for *On the Twentieth Century*.

TS: What is the best part of your job?

CDA: The best part of my job is just how close we get to the artists and the work. We are usually the first to communicate with them and are able to really provide support so they are able to produce great work. I work with a lot of people that I grew up admiring and now interact with them daily. Often I end up taking care of a lot of mundane things for them, so they don't have to worry about it and can focus on their performances. My job can be a lot of long hours and hard work, but being able to stand at the back of a house and see the audience enjoy the show for the first time is so rewarding. Then there are the special moments like openings, album recordings, TV appearances and photo shoots which are always fun and inspiring to attend. •

Learn more at roundabouttheatre.org. Find us on:



WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE

TICKET POLICY

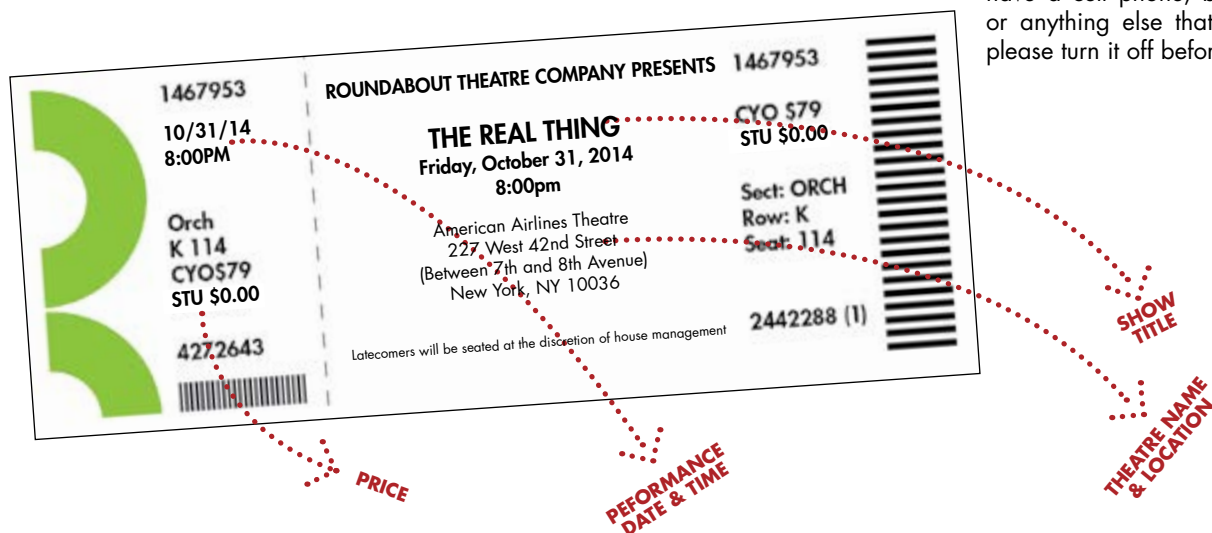
As a student participant in Producing Partners, Page To Stage or Theatre Access, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to 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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