



TIME AND THE CONWAYS

ROUNDAABOUT
THEATRE
COMPANY

UPSTAGE GUIDE

A publication of

EDUCATION AT
ROUNDAABOUT

UPSTAGE SPOTLIGHT



TIME AND THE CONWAYS

By J.B. Priestley

Directed by Rebecca Taichman

In 1919 Britain, Mrs. Conway is full of optimism during her daughter's lavish twenty-first birthday celebration. The Great War is over, wealth is in the air, and the family's dreams bubble over like champagne. Nineteen years later, though, the Conways' lives have transformed unimaginably.

A NOTE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR TODD HAIMES

The act of "rediscovering" lesser-known but deserving classics by masters such as Priestley and bringing them back to Broadway stages is, I believe, a core component of Roundabout's mission. With trademark nuance and depth, Priestley delves into the Conways' most personal aspirations, shortcomings, and fears, and as their story unravels, he examines those life-altering moments that put dreams at odds with destiny. What begins as a theatrical exploration into a theory of perception and the subconscious becomes a piercing look at the consequences of greed and the worship of status.

WHEN An autumn night in 1919

WHERE Mrs. Conway's house, a detached villa in a prosperous suburb of a manufacturing town, Newlingham.

WHO

Mrs. Conway: A charming woman in her mid-forties.

Hazel: Mrs. Conway's daughter, in her early twenties.

Kay: Mrs. Conway's daughter, intelligent and sensitive, turning twenty-one.

Ernest: A business associate of Gerald's, socially awkward, about thirty.

Alan: Mrs. Conway's son, shy and quiet, in his early twenties.

Robin: Mrs. Conway's son, a high-spirited Air Force officer, twenty-three.

Carol: Mrs. Conway's daughter, sweet-natured, seventeen or eighteen.

Madge: Mrs. Conway's daughter, serious and responsible, a year or two older than Hazel.

Gerald: A solicitor with a pleasant and consciously-cultivated air, early thirties.

Joan: A friend of Hazel's who is around the same age and rather foolish.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Interview with Director Rebecca Taichman..... Page 4-5

The Life of J.B. Priestley Page 6

Disrupted Time as a Theatrical Device..... Page 7

Interview with Actor Elizabeth McGovern..... Page 8-9

Britain in the Interwar Years..... Page 10-11

Interview with Actor Charlotte Parry Page 12-13

The Middle Class Family in a Time of Change Page 14-15

Dunne’s Theory of Time..... Page 16-17

Designer Statements Page 18-19

Pre-Show Activities Page 20

Post-Show Activities Page 21

Glossary and Resources..... Page 22

About Roundabout and Staff Interview Page 23

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INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR REBECCA TAICHMAN

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Director Rebecca Taichman about her work on *Time and the Conways*.

Ted Sod: Where were you born and educated? Did you have any teachers who had a profound influence on you?

Rebecca Taichman: I was born in Madison, Wisconsin to two amazing Canadian-hippie-leftists: my father, at the time a young scientist, and my mother, on her way to becoming a social worker specializing in poverty law. I have one sister, Laura, who did her best to protect me from all the dangers in life then—and still now. We moved to Long Island when I was about five, and I grew up there. I went to McGill University in Montreal for undergrad and then many years later to the Yale School of Drama for an MFA in directing. As far as teachers are concerned, the list is long—to just name a few: Ming Cho Lee, Elinor Fuchs, so many of my colleagues, Sam Gold, Simon McBurney, Mary Zimmerman, Julie Taymor, and on and on. I've also been very lucky to be part of the Henry Crown Fellowship at the Aspen Institute. As part of the fellowship, 20 leaders from various fields are put through a two-year series of seminars on the ethics of leadership and social responsibility. The Crown Fellowship has been the single greatest learning experience of my life. Some of my greatest teachers were in that group: the 19 other fellows and the leaders Peter Reiling, Skip Battle, Tonya Hinch, and Ben Dunlap.

TS: You directed a revival of *Time and the Conways* in 2014 for the Old Globe in San Diego. Why did you choose to direct this play?

RT: The play came to me through Barry Edelstein, Artistic Director of the Old Globe. He called me several years ago and said, "There is this extraordinary play by J.B. Priestley called *Time and the Conways*. I would like to produce it, and I think you are the right director for it." I read the play that night—and couldn't put it down. I remember reaching out to Barry the next morning and saying, "I'm in. Just tell me when and I'll be there." I think Priestley is a genius and the play a neglected masterpiece—at least in the U.S. As soon as the Globe production opened, I hoped to do it again. I pitched the idea to Todd Haimes, Artistic Director at Roundabout, and he said yes.

TS: Does the play have personal resonance for you? What do you think the play is about?

RT: *Time and the Conways* is about so much. On one level, it's the story of an upper middle class British family just as the upper classes were about to tumble and how, over time, they are hurt by their own greed and narcissism. They are characters from another time and place but feel oddly familiar, and their story feels important and resonant to us in the United States today.

On another level, the play is about our perception of time. With this play, and in many of his plays, J. B. Priestley is challenging our perception of time as a linear arrow, shooting ever forward. *Time and the Conways* suggests an alternate view of time, one in which the past, present, and future are available all at once. It's a hard thing to wrap one's mind around, but Priestley was writing at a time when time and space were being redefined by new breakthroughs in science and technology—much like our own sense of the world is being transformed by the internet and social media. In *Time and the Conways*, Priestley



Rebecca Taichman

proposes that the past, present, and even future are coexistent with each other. I think that Priestley was proposing a sharpened sense of the wholeness of our lives, offering his audience an invitation to release themselves from the panic of being "on a sinking ship," moving ever closer to death. This was a social awakening as much as an aesthetic one. Theatre, Priestley understood, was the perfect medium in which to communicate this idea—being a place in which, as he once wrote, "Everything still exists: that life of the voice, that gesture, that look, they are still there. [Theatre is able to] recapture the past that has not really vanished at all." Priestley manages to marry these streams—the story of a family in Great Britain and his ruminations on what he called the "time problem" in the most theatrical of ways. The form of the play and its content are so brilliantly entwined that they reveal and release each other.

TS: Can you give us some insight into your process as a director? How did you prepare to direct this play? What kind of research did you have to do?

RT: When I directed the play at the Old Globe, I did an enormous amount of research and of course was greatly aided by the dramaturg there: Danielle Mages Amato. Right now I am working with a wonderful dramaturg, Drew Lichtenberg, who is again teaching me so much. I am still trying to understand the context of the play as deeply and intimately as I possibly can. Also, and this is true for anything I direct, I read the play over and over and over until I think I know it on the cellular and the cosmic levels. With a play like this, I also like to ask the company to share in the research. In this case, for example, I

have asked Gabe Ebert, who plays Alan, to research the theory of time in the play and share what he learned with us in his own way. Each actor is researching a topic that relates intimately to the character they are playing. I find it is a wonderful way to get the whole room engaged in the research together and bring the world of the play to life. I first heard about this idea from Mark Wing-Davey, and I love doing it.

TS: How do you understand the characters of Kay and her elder brother, Alan, at this point in your process?

RT: Kay and Alan are privileged with sight in the play, and capable in some ways of moving from past to present and back again. Alan is partially the voice of Priestley. In the middle of this story of corrosive classism, Priestley creates this humble, unambitious, beautiful character who offers an alternative view, a way of looking at life that unspools the greed and narcissism that infects this family. Alan is the tender-hearted, surprising hero of the play. He envisions a world driven by love, rather than panic and fear.

Ultimately, the play warns against a life of greed, and Alan sees it all most clearly. Kay has glimpses of understanding and struggles to see the larger picture Alan seems to perceive so easily. Many of the play's ideas relate to what is happening in this country now. We are grappling with greed overtaking the country, with a 1% who can't seem to see past themselves and an enraged working class that feels it has been rendered invisible. All sense of larger community is broken, and we are divided. Priestley writes about this in *Time and the Conways* and sees the same basic dynamic unfolding in Great Britain during the years between the first and second World Wars. Despite containing what sounds like the classic ingredients for a tragedy, I feel the play is full of hope. That hope is personified in the characters of Alan and Kay. The fact that they can sense another path for the future invites us to believe that we can, too.

TS: What did you look for in casting the actors? What traits do you need?

RT: Actors who have a tremendous facility with language and can make the language feel visceral and real—not distant—so that the action is deeply lived and alive. We also need actors capable of great emotional complexity and range. In the play, they age 20 years. They have to be able to access two sides of one character with grace and dexterity. Not easy, needless to say.

TS: How are you collaborating with your design team?

RT: Working with such extraordinary designers is a thrill. It's a very collaborative process that is iterative. I ask lots of questions—that lead to more questions. Designers this good bring exceptional ideas to the table, and I respond.

TS: Are you using original music?

RT: There's a piece of music by Dustin O'Halloran that we are using.



Elizabeth McGovern, Brooke Bloom and Charlotte Parry

It exists on one of his records, which I listen to obsessively—especially when I am dreaming about the play. Somehow it takes me to the center of the play every time I hear it. Matt Hubbs, our sound designer, found it and brought it to me. What a gift.

TS: Do you have any advice for young people who want to be theatre directors?

RT: Being a director for the stage is a very hard life. I believe that if you can do anything else and be happy: do it. For a lot of people there really is no choice. I just couldn't imagine doing anything else. It's the lens through which I see the world. So, if directing is something you absolutely must do, then my advice is: fight for it with everything you've got and don't give up, even when it seems impossible. It's a complex journey with all kinds of twists and turns. Go, go, go, and don't allow yourself to be driven by fear, but rather by faith or hope.

TS: How do you keep yourself inspired as an artist?

RT: As a director, I think you are a vessel through which a story flows. You're translating that story onto the stage. I view my job as ever searching for the most evocative, theatrical, moving, and honest way to tell the story of the play. The story for me is the inspiration and guides every choice. As long as the story truly compels and moves me, that's all the inspiration I really need. I have been very lucky to tell stories that I believe are important and deeply moving, like the one in *Time and the Conways*.*

THE LIFE OF J.B. PRIESTLEY

Before he was known as “The Last Great Man of English Letters” and hailed as one of England’s greatest dramatists, John Priestley was born in the village of Bradford in Yorkshire, England on September 13, 1894. Priestley had what he described as a “golden adolescence” in Bradford, despite the fact that his mother died while he was young—he had a kind stepmother and a pleasant childhood. As a young man, Priestley decided against entering the world of academia, and he instead got a job with a wool firm.

As World War I began, Priestley joined the British Army and was sent to the Front. He was seriously injured in battle and returned home, only to heal and be sent back to the Front a second time, where he was this time gassed. He spent the remainder of the war in administrative work. After the war, Priestley returned to academia, studying English Literature at Trinity College, Cambridge University.

Upon graduation, he began writing almost exclusively fiction, and his novel *The Good Companion* won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Fiction in 1929. However, much of Priestley’s other writing took a bent toward social commentary and activism. According to one biography, in 1933 Priestley “was invited by Victor Gollancz to undertake a journey round the country to experience at firsthand the life of people in the industrial areas.” The result of this journey was the non-fiction work *English Journey*, which explored the social climate of England and its people and “established [Priestley’s] reputation as a social commentator.”

It was around this time that Priestley also began to experiment with writing plays, shifting into the form

that, according to the J.B. Priestley Society, “many have considered best suited to his great talents.” His plays (including *Time and the Conways*) are often set prior to World War I and include experimentation with form and an examination of time. His most famous play, *An Inspector Calls*, premiered in 1945 in the Soviet Union and in 1946 in the UK. The National Theatre revival production

of *An Inspector Calls*, directed by Stephen Daldry, premiered in 1992 and has been revived several times, running almost constantly somewhere across England ever since, including a run in the West End that ended in April of this year.

Priestley’s activism did not end with his writing. As he made his *English Journey*, Priestley became (according to the BBC) “very concerned about

the consequences of social inequality in Britain.” To fight injustice, Priestley helped set up a new political party, the Common Wealth Party, which “argued for public ownership of land, greater democracy, and a new ‘morality’ in politics.” Even though this party merged with the Labour Party in 1945, Priestley continued his work with government and arts advocacy, lecturing on the need for “a properly organised Theatre.” He also broadcast a weekly radio show during World War II, arguing for progressive social and political policies. The show became wildly popular, though it rankled Winston Churchill enough to be prematurely cancelled.

Priestley died in 1984, leaving behind great works of literature, theatre, activism, and his legacy as “The Last Great Man of English Letters.”•



J.B. Priestley in his study in 1940

DISRUPTED TIME AS A THEATRICAL DEVICE

Time and the Conways sits among J.B. Priestley's "Time Plays." Written in the 1930s and '40s, Priestley explored different concepts of time across a group of plays (which also include *Dangerous Corner* and *An Inspector Calls*) in order to show how time changes people and how we react to time's effects.

All playwrights make choices about how to structure time. Many plays—such as *Oedipus* and more recently Stephen Karam's *The Humans*—take place in "real time": a single setting over one uninterrupted time period. Most of Shakespeare's plays employ an "extended time" structure: the action extends over months or years, with long time gaps implied between scenes.

In the 20th century, Priestley and other playwrights became interested in the theatrical potential of "disrupted time." Playwright David Edgar explains the device, "in which incidents from the story are put in a different order from their

literal chronology (including plays which flash backwards or forwards, or go into reverie)." Their plots could unfold in chronological order, but by re-ordering time, playwrights alter the significance of the events. Edgar asserts that disrupted time "disempowers the characters" because the audience is given "privileged information" that the characters do not have.

By using a disrupted time rather than a chronological structure in *Time and the Conways*, Priestley allows the audience's understanding of events to surpass that of the Conways. But he also leaves open to interpretation whether the 1937 scene is a flash forward or Kay's dream. In his essay "J.B. Priestley in The Theatre of Time," Professor Jesse Matz suggests that we may interpret the play as an ironic comment about hope and disappointment over time, or as a warning to consider how the decisions we make today may shape our futures. •

DISRUPTED TIME IN OTHER PLAYS

DEATH OF A SALESMAN by Arthur Miller (1949).

As Willy Loman confronts failure, scenes of his subjective, sometimes altered memories flow in and out of the present tense.

"What is original about *Salesman* is that Loman's memory is unreliable, and that we are invited to witness how these unreliable memories provoke his present actions." (David Edgar, *How Plays Work*)

BETRAYAL by Harold Pinter

(1978 – Roundabout revival 2000)

A triangular relationship between husband, wife, and her lover unfolds in reverse time, so the audience first meets the characters in the aftermath, then watches the affair from end to beginning.

"Betrayal is a play that happens twice, once in front of your eyes, once in your head, when you revisit certain scenes to judge their proper weight." (Julian Meyrick, *The Conversation*)

TOP GIRLS by Caryl Churchill (1982)

The play follows one woman's drive to succeed in business at almost any cost, but the last scene jumps backwards in time and reveals her greatest sacrifice: giving up her own child.

"This disruption of chronology is intentionally unsettling in that it refuses to allow the spectator to fantasize a sentimental ending for (her child) and people like her." (Lisa Merrill, *Modern Dramatists: A Casebook of Major British, Irish and American Playwrights*)



Liev Schreiber and Juliette Binoche in Roundabout's production of *Betrayal*



INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR ELIZABETH McGOVERN

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with actor Elizabeth McGovern about her role as Mrs. Conway in *Time and the Conways*.

Ted Sod: Will you tell us where you were born and if you had any teachers who had a profound influence on you?

Elizabeth McGovern: I was born outside Chicago in Evanston, but I was raised in Los Angeles. My mother is a teacher—she was never my teacher—but I would say that she had a profound influence on me. I had a writing teacher in my junior or senior year of high school, whose name is Christine Adams, who had a very big impact on me. She taught a method of thinking clearly about things, and I've always remembered it. I really responded to it.

TS: Was becoming an actress something that you always knew you wanted to do?

EM: Well, I probably did deep down, but I didn't like to admit it. I thought that coming from an academic family, it was a silly profession to pursue, but in a subconscious way, I really wanted to act. I always did plays in high school; that was definitely the most vivid memory of my high school experience. It brought life into Kodachrome for me. I attended a school in North Hollywood, and it wasn't until I was aimlessly applying for colleges that an agent came to see one of the plays we did and asked me if I wanted to go on some auditions for summer work and I did. That led to a job, which got me started in my career before I even got the chance to think about it too deeply. I let the decision be made for me in a way. It was a very odd way to get into this profession. I do believe in it as a profession now. I think that there is some good that you can give to the world, and that keeps me going.

TS: Is this the first time you'll be performing at the Roundabout?

EM: No, it's not. The last thing I did in New York was *Hamlet* at the Roundabout. I played Ophelia, and I think that production was twenty-five years ago.

TS: Why did you choose to do the role of Mrs. Conway? What do you think the play is about?

EM: For me, the play is about—and this may sound pretentious—the shades of light and dark that make up a family. It is encapsulated by the title, because what you see is this microcosm of family life at two different times in its existence. One time is very happy, and the other is quite the opposite. You experience the dynamics that have gone into creating both those realities. Both of those realities are very true for the family; one is very dark and depressing, in which none of their dreams have come to fruition and they're all bitter and angry, and the other is a reality in which they are at the cusp of their lives and they're full of love, gaiety, and joy. J.B. Priestley, the playwright, has woven a tapestry which for me adds up to a complete life experience—it includes both light and dark, and you can look at it from two different angles. You see the way that this family and their actions affect and bounce off one another and create both unhappiness and happiness.

TS: Would you give us some insight into your process as an actress? What are the challenges of playing Mrs. Conway, and what are the challenges of doing a period piece like this?



Elizabeth McGovern

EM: That is an interesting question. I have spent a lot of time in this period. I've been embodying it for quite some time and living the reality of it. In fact, weirdly, I'm currently doing an independent film which is also set in this period, so I'm destined to always be in a corset and early 20th century dresses. It is almost part of my unconscious now; all of the things that at the beginning of *Downton Abbey* might have been research for me are now really deeply in my bones. I'm not an expert in a historical sense, but I have lived in it in my imagination. I feel research makes my job more fun and fills in the space between the lines in terms of my own imagination. Research allows me to bring things to life inside my brain, but I don't know if it is absolutely necessary—it's just a lot of fun. I think my process as an actress is to really study what is in the writing and getting all my clues from what that writer teaches me about the character and her relationship to the other characters. I like to let the writing guide my work and then be open to what the director is suggesting in terms of characterization. Also, for me, it is very exciting to respond to other actors and what they are bringing to their roles—that will influence me, too.

TS: I'm curious about how you view Mrs. Conway even though rehearsals haven't yet begun.

EM: At the moment, I am really fascinated by Mrs. Conway because even though she is a mother who obviously adores her children, as a person, she is so unevolved; she is not self-aware. I would describe her as a crap mother; I can't think of a better way of putting it. She has a lot of love and passion, but so little emotional intelligence. You can see her wreak destruction on her kids without meaning to, and



Elizabeth McGovern

you see the damaging effect that it has on them as they develop and grow. I am very eager to explore that. She is probably one of these people who would have been well-advised not to become a mother at all, but, of course, that probably wasn't something that was an option for her. She did what was expected of her and had a pack of children. I don't mean to imply for one second that she doesn't love them or that she's not devoted to them, but she is not really grown up herself is my assessment. I haven't started rehearsing or exploring this with the director or the other actors yet; but right now, I think she is still a child herself.

TS: I keep wondering why Mrs. Conway seems to favor her son Robin over her eldest son, Alan?

EM: My instinct—again, this is without exploring it in rehearsal—is that she has a romantic fixation on Robin; she has substituted Robin in her mind as her husband; it is as irrational as that. Alan is, in her estimation, an uncolorful, unexciting guy. She just doesn't get him; she doesn't take the time to see what is there, to appreciate what the audience will about Alan. He is the one who has the wisest things to say. For me, he is the moral voice of the play, but Mrs. Conway cannot see that because she is caught up in Robin's charm. I don't think all mothers are maternal; they sometimes put their children in positions that aren't appropriate for them psychologically.

TS: Priestley's writing seems very modern to me in that way.

EM: Yes, it is modern in the sense that we now look at character from a psychoanalytic point of view, whereas the playwrights who wrote before Freud didn't necessarily write about the subconscious.

TS: How do you see what happens in act two?

EM: I've never seen it in performance; but on reading it, I think it is very significant that Priestley ends with that quote that Mrs. Conway's daughter Kay asks her brother Alan to tell her—knowing it will cheer her up. The quote basically says, "There is lightness and there is dark. There is both. That is the fabric of life." My feeling is that Priestley is showing us that the Conway family we see in the first act is exactly the same family that we see in the second act, but it is their darker side. It is when everything has gone awry. That isn't to say that in another decade they'll have found their way again and things will be better. I don't think that Priestley is saying that we're all headed for hell and that life is going to be all bitterness and woe. The reason I say this is because Alan does comfort Kay with those words.

TS: How do you keep yourself inspired as an artist?

EM: I love these questions! I have invested a lot in my marriage and children, and that feeds me. It has given me the energy to stay really excited about the work that I do. I think if I lived for nothing but work, it would soon lose its allure. I've had years and years of being away from acting, and that makes me really hungry for it when I come back. I stay inspired by seeing other people's work; that has always been really important to me. And it's something that I share with my husband because he is someone who loves seeing things. Also, I love the process of acting. I find it hilarious and fun and, yes, sometimes I despair, but it's always oxygen for me.

TS: A lot of public school students will be very well prepared for seeing this play, and they'll be studying theatre as part of our program in the education department. If a young person were to ask you for advice about being an actor—what would you say to them?

EM: I would say to find the joy in every aspect of it. Find the joy when you do find work and also when you don't have work, as strange as that sounds. Find the positive in not working; invest in life, invest in the opportunity to develop other parts of your brain, your body, and your soul—look at not working as an opportunity. If you are committed to doing that, you and your work will grow and grow and grow. That is not to say that there aren't going to be frustrating times and times you feel you have fallen short or the business has disappointed you, but learn to forgive and forget. Find the joy.*

BRITAIN IN THE INTERWAR YEARS

Time and the Conways follows a family through a span of years known as “the interwar period.” Between 1919 and 1939, Britain was recovering from World War I, isolating itself from political turmoil across Europe, and watching as its Empire began a slow decline. Domestically, England struggled with a slow economy, while social shifts laid the ground for greater equality. We first meet the Conways in a celebratory mood, but as time moves forward, they reflect their country’s shift into disappointment and depression.

HUMAN COSTS OF THE GREAT WAR

World War I was popular with the English, who saw it as one Britain’s greatest victories, but the celebratory mood soon gave way to despair. The death toll surpassed any 4-year period in history; nearly three-quarters of a million British died in the war, wiping out almost an entire generation. Surviving veterans, many working class, returned with physical disabilities and mental distress, leaving a bitter legacy for these men and their families. As the English wondered whether the victory was worth the human sacrifice, politicians came to view military force only as a last resort. This wariness to use force reduced Britain’s role as an international power, contributing to the erosion of the British Empire and causing its slow, reluctant entry into World War II.

1920s: A DECADE OF ECONOMIC DECLINE

Britain’s economy stagnated in the interwar years, while the U.S. gradually emerged as the leading industrial power. During the war, England incurred enormous debt, primarily owed to American banks. The war hurt Britain’s lead on foreign trade, as countries once reliant on British goods developed their own industries and now became competition. England experienced a difficult recession in 1920-21, and the next decade brought currency deflation, high unemployment, and stagnant growth. The coal industry was struck especially hard due to lowering supplies, rising costs, increasing competition in Europe, and a growing preference for oil. Although the economy stabilized by the late ‘20s, the American stock market crash of 1929 spurred a worldwide recession. However, England’s lackluster economy made the impact of the Depression less stark than in the U.S.

LABOR STRUGGLES

The interwar years were marked by great labor unrest. Unions grew in size and strength during World War I, but labor had limited power. The British viewed the Russian Revolution as a warning of what could happen if order

was not upheld. In 1919, widespread strikes by miners, railway workers, and the police led to riots on the streets; some divisions of the army rose in mutiny. Rather than allow a Russian-style revolution, union leaders gave in to the industrialists and government. In 1926, the country experienced a 9-day general strike, starting with 1.2 million coal miners striking against wage reductions and longer work shifts, supported by 1.3 million workers from other industries. Despite large numbers and solidarity, the workers had little support from the government and the upper- and middle-classes. When the strike ended, the miners received none of their demands, and a year later, the government outlawed all general strikes. Despite these failures, the Labour Party, which represents the interests of working people, elected more representatives than ever and actually controlled parliament for two short periods in the ‘20s.

A MORE DEMOCRATIC ENGLAND

British society, with its stratified class structure, became modernized during World War I and more democratic in the interwar period. Social barriers were reduced in the battle trenches, where men of different classes fought together. The landed classes suffered a higher proportion of casualties, reducing the upper class within the overall population. After the war, an increasing number of the working class rose to white collar professions. As women and the working class gained the vote and became more organized, there was less deference to the upper classes and overall loosening of rigid class hierarchy throughout English society.

FROM SLUMP TO THE NEXT WAR

While the English did not feel the impact of the Depression as severely as Americans and Germans, unemployment rose to 25% in 1933. The northern industries—coal, iron, and steel—had failed to modernize and were hit the hardest. Southern England fared better in these years. Many English saw their quality of life improve, due to increased new housing and conveniences like radios, vacuum cleaners, and washing machines. Looking abroad, the British watched carefully as Hitler gained power in Germany and seized territory throughout Europe. Throughout the ‘30s, politicians followed a policy of appeasement—giving Hitler what he wanted in the hopes of avoiding war, but by 1939, Germany’s invasion of Poland made the next World War inevitable. •



IMPORTANT EVENTS IN THE CONWAYS' TIMES

- 1918** World War I concludes on November 11, with Germany's agreement to stop fighting.
- 1918** The Representation of the People Act gives the vote to married women over 30 and reduces most property qualifications for men.
- 1919** Treaty of Versailles, led by England, U.S. and France, imposes harsh punishments and severe financial penalties on Germany.
- 1919** Widespread strikes in England by miners, railroad workers, and police lead to military force used against mobs.
- 1920-1921** Greatest recession experienced in England, caused by war costs and decline in trade.
- 1926** General Strike by over 2 million English workers lasts 9 days but ends with no gains for labor.
- 1927** The Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act makes widespread general strikes illegal.
- 1928** Representation of the People/Equal Franchise Act lowers the voting age for women to 21 and removes remaining property qualifications for men to vote.
- 1929** Stock Market Crash destroys not only the U.S. but also England and European countries dependent on American loans.
- 1930-1931** The Great Slump (England's term for The Great Depression) hits England's economy the hardest, although it begins to recover a year later.
- 1933** Adolf Hitler comes to power in Germany, with a program to reverse the Versailles Treaty.
- 1936** Abdication of King Edward VIII, who gives the crown to his brother George VI in order to marry his American mistress Wallis Simpson.
- 1936** Hitler's Germany re-militarizes the Rhineland. England tries to cooperate with the Germans, hoping to delay armed conflict.



Unemployed people in front of a workhouse in London (1930)

INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR CHARLOTTE PARRY

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with actor Charlotte Parry about her role as Kay in *Time and the Conways*.

Ted Sod: Where were you born and educated? How and when did you realize you wanted to become an actress?

Charlotte Parry: I was born in Birmingham, England, to a British father and American mother. I mostly grew up there, but we bounced about during my childhood a little—so I spent kindergarten in Massachusetts (no one understood me with my English accent, added to which I was terribly shy!) and several years at an International school in Vienna, Austria. We then moved to Oxford, where I completed high school, and then I went off to the University of East Anglia, studying drama with creative writing, followed by Drama School at LAMDA in London. I had spent most of my childhood making up little plays and trying to make people laugh, but I'm not sure I really decided to be an actress until 15, when I did National Youth Theatre and National Youth Music Theatre in London. Art was also a huge part of my life, so it was actress or artist. Prior to that it was midwife, gymnast, pole vaulter or diver. Now it's patisserie chef or psychologist. We shall see...

TS: Why did you choose to play the role of Kay in J.B. Priestley's play *Time and the Conways*? What do you think the play is about? Does the play have personal resonance for you?

CP: I had done a reading of the play with Rebecca, our director, several years ago and fell in love with the play and character of Kay at that point, so I was thrilled to be asked to do the full production. Kay really resonates with me in her acute sensitivity (I'm always being told I'm too sensitive...but I think that's a good thing in many ways) and also in her desire to create something different, something true, something sincere. I find the world we live in now so insincere so often, and that can be very alienating. I think the play is about so many things, which makes it so brilliant—the endless possibility of youth, the reality of ageing, the disappointments and failures and “accidents” of life, how we survive them, grief and loss and how that takes shape in us, family and sibling rivalries and love, the list goes on... The play absolutely has a personal resonance for me...for all of the above reasons. I feel very similar to Kay in many ways—both when I was younger and as I am now.

TS: Can you give us some insight into your process as an actress? Did you do any specific research about the time period? What are the challenges in doing a period play in 2017?

CP: I usually try to get on top of the first stage of line learning before rehearsals start—this has always been my process, as I feel so much freer in playing around and trying things when I haven't got my head stuck in a script. Having said that, there's stages of “knowing” the lines—and they only truly go in fully, and feel completely natural, when we are deep into rehearsal and I've figured out why I'm saying what I do, and what's going on around me. Ideally, I know about my next job a good month beforehand and can just be thinking about the character for that period of time, and the world of the play, while learning the lines. I might do research online or read certain articles or books to help myself over the course of rehearsals, and when I'm feeling creative or stuck I sometimes write “diary entries” for them. I learned this at University as an exercise in creative writing and it always helps me to pad out a character that I'm having trouble relating to. If I decide on



little details about them, as obscure as “where was their first bee sting?” or “have they ever flown first class?” it starts making a distant character on a page human, suddenly. Funnily enough, I'm not someone who can ever sit down and learn lines. I have to be moving, so I'll walk around Manhattan or London or the English countryside when I visit my family, talking out loud to myself with the script in one hand. Usually, no one bats an eyelid, as most city dwellers are slightly bonkers anyway! Maybe the cows do. Regarding this being a period piece, to be honest, at least half of my work over the last twenty-five years has been classical, period pieces, so I'm very used to whipping on a corset and transporting myself to bygone eras...I love it. We are bringing to life characters that on paper may seem foreign to us as they lived so long ago, speak and dress differently, and perhaps aren't as sophisticated as we are today, but basically humanity never really changes much, and as soon as I start delving into the characters I find how “modern” they usually are. This will be my third show in the last few years set during the First World War—gorgeous costumes, usually!

TS: How do you understand the relationship between Kay and her brother Alan?

CP: The relationship between Kay and Alan is really sweet—I think she feels the closest to him of any of her siblings. They share similar traits in their sensitivity and honesty, and they really seem to care for each other and accept each other unconditionally in a way that their mother certainly doesn't. They also really seem to look out for and protect one another—both against Mrs. Conway, their other siblings, and the pain of the world around them. Alan is four years older than Kay and the



Anna Baryshnikov, Charlotte Parry and Anna Camp

eldest child—I wonder if when Kay lost her father, who I get the sense she was very close to, Alan took his place for Kay in some respects. She certainly looks to him to rescue her from her despair in Act Two. I'm excited to explore all this with Gabriel Ebert, who plays Alan (who I hear is a wonderful actor and all round great guy...).

TS: Do you see Act Two as Kay's premonition of the future? If so, have you personally ever had a premonition of the future? And, if not, what do you think is happening in Act Two?

CP: Funnily enough, I didn't think about the act in that way until reading this question—the idea that the whole act was simply a premonition. I love the idea of exploring that. So far, I had read Act Two as the actual future of the Conway family...which Kay gets a strange sense (premonition) of in Acts One and Three. It would be a lovely thought that Act Two was indeed only a premonition, that didn't actually come to pass that way. That in reality, things turned out so much happier for the family in 1938. I suppose that's the great thing about the play, and how Priestley writes and plays with Time—that the audience can go home, think about and decide for themselves whether act two is simply a premonition or actuality. Considering everything that is being laid in place in 1919, and the personalities and attitudes of the characters, everything that has come to pass by 1937 seems very believable, whether it's really the future or simply a premonition of what could

be (depressing as it is!). Personally, I've never had a premonition as clear as Kay's, if we were to read Act Two in that way, but I've certainly had a "sense" often that something is going to happen a certain way and then it does...that the phone is about to ring, or something bad or good is about to happen. I'm hyper-sensitive in that way. It's weird and a bit freaky sometimes!

TS: What do you look for from a director when working on a revival of a play?

CP: What I love about strong directors of revivals that I have worked with so far is their ability to see the play in a fresh and contemporary way. I know that Rebecca is excellent at this, so I'm excited to get started and understand how she sees this world of the Conways in 1919 and 1937. All the characters are so rich

and relatable, and the family as a whole so real and recognizable in their various fragilities and dysfunctions. I love working on plays that are about families, especially large ones like the Conways, as the company usually takes on a familial feel, which can feel really cozy and comforting. Especially as I'm living 2000 miles from my own family back in the UK... Also, I always wished I had come from a big family with lots of siblings, including brothers (which I never had), so it's at least nice to be part of one for a few months!

TS: How do you keep yourself inspired as an artist?

CP: If I was to consider myself an artist, it's definitely not just acting. I enjoy that very much, but that's just one part of what keeps me ticking. So, I suppose keeping myself inspired means making sure I continue to fill my life with variety—whether I'm working and doing the same show every night, or auditioning and every day is different. For me this means keeping busy being creative in other outlets...I trained as a patisserie chef at Le Cordon Bleu in London, so I'm constantly playing around at home baking, making chocolates and cakes and patisserie, packaging and selling them...making and selling hand painted cards, writing little stories, messing about with oil paints, and generally getting my hands (and clothes) dirty. I'm obsessed with baking the perfect French macaron at the moment....•

THE MIDDLE CLASS FAMILY IN A TIME OF CHANGE

The Conway family lives through a time of great change in Britain during the events of the play. Social values and traditional ways of life changed dramatically in the years following WWI, just as the Conway children reach adulthood. As the siblings make their way in the world, each faces what psychologists today call an inner conflict: a difference between their intrinsic desires and the cultural and family values they internalized in childhood. For this family, childhood, and adulthood took place in two very different eras.

"I don't want anybody to dress up and be funny in the coat Father wore just before he was drowned."

The Conway family dynamic is shaped by the death of the father just before start of WWI. At the time of the father's death, traditional mourning was still practiced in England, though customs were relaxed compared to those of the nineteenth century.

Family members wore mourning clothes, typically black crape, for a set number of months. These clothes were meant to represent spiritual darkness following a loss. The length of time one spent "in full mourning" depended on the relationship to the deceased. Family members would

then enter "half mourning" where they would transition to wearing lighter colors over time. These lighter colors signalled where they were in the grieving process to everyone they encountered.


Widows like Mrs. Conway were expected to remain "in mourning" the longest, up to two years. (Widowers would have remained in mourning for less than a year, suggesting the value the culture placed on women relative to that of men.) Those in mourning did not attend social events for several weeks and refrained from balls and dances for months.

Mourning customs allowed people to openly express their grief and provided a framework for the bereaved to return to normal activities. These social rituals made death a visible part of life.

Though mourning practices were already changing before WWI, the conflict marked a major shift. 700,000 British soldiers were killed. So many people were compelled to wear mourning clothes that it lowered the morale of the nation. Fabric shortages and women's employment in the war effort made mourning clothes impractical. "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag," one famous marching song of

A celebration of the end of World War I in London,
November 11, 1918





the era urges, “And smile, smile, smile.” Following WWI, grieving shifted from a public ritual to a private observance.

“Your job will be to find a very nice young man and marry him.”

The Conway children, born between 1895 and 1903, were raised with the expectation that the women would marry in their early twenties and settle into lives as middle class housewives. Men were to establish themselves in careers before marriage in order to provide for their wives and children.

Laws reflected these expectations. Women did not have the right to vote until 1918. Married women could not even own property until 1870, around the time Mrs. Conway was born.

Most members of Mrs. Conway’s generation believed that men and women were naturally fit for “separate spheres.” Men engaged in life outside the home, in paid work, politics, and leadership. Women were expected to manage the home, a strenuous undertaking in an era without modern conveniences. Homemaking was glorified in the press. Women who worked outside the home, even those who did so out of economic necessity, were accused of masculinity and weakening society through neglect of their families.

Popular magazines and social customs reinforced this image of ideal femininity. But educational reforms in the late nineteenth century changed the curriculum girls were taught. In addition to learning reading, writing, sewing, and the “ornamental arts” of French conversation, singing, drawing, and dancing, girls were taught literature, classics, science, history, political economy, and mathematics. While the goal was to prepare girls for lives as well-educated wives and mothers, the reforms actually created a critical mass of educated, ambitious women eager for careers and lives beyond their own doorstep. Many, like Madge Conway, went on to higher education at places like Girton College, part of the University of Cambridge.

“I was doing the modern working woman— a cigarette and a whiskey and soda . . .”

During WWI, women were recruited to work in jobs previously open only to men, though they were paid less. The percentage of women in the workforce jumped from

24% before the war in 1914 to between 38% and 47% in 1918, not including domestic servants.

After the war, the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act forced women to vacate their jobs so they could be given to returning soldiers. The “marriage bar” banned married women from working in many fields. But at the same time, a law was passed preventing the disqualification of women from certain professions on the basis of gender. Women over 30 won the right to vote in 1918, and all adult women gained the right in 1928. Many war widows and women whose husbands had been badly injured during the war remained in the workforce. Low wages and discrimination ensured that marriage remained the most financially secure option for women. Divorce law favored the husband in child custody matters, making it a difficult choice for women, even those in abusive situations.

The portrayal of women in popular culture changed after the war. Film stars, romance and adventure novels, advice columns, and fashion magazines presented young women with a new vision of femininity. Modern girls partook of the new consumer culture. They socialized outside the home and had more freedom of movement. They wore less restrictive clothing. They aspired to the glamour of their favorite movie stars. Though only 10% of married women worked outside the home in the era between WWI and WWII, how women saw themselves was changing.

“Lord!—it’s grand to be back again, and not just on a filthy little leave!”

At the beginning of *Time and the Conways*, Alan and Robin have just returned from serving in the military in WWI. Those who served experienced the horrors of trench warfare: two armies, each living in mud trenches separated by only a few hundred yards, constantly shelling each other and engaging in small arms fire. 11.5% of British soldiers were killed. Army rations at the time included a portion of strong rum for each soldier serving in the trenches every day, in part to calm rattled nerves and improve morale.

Many soldiers who survived experienced “shell-shock,” the term given to what is now known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). While neither Alan nor Robin initially appear to have shell shock, their frontline experiences influence how they deal with stress, and how they perceive themselves as men, for the rest of their lives. •

DUNNE'S THEORY OF TIME

Time and the Conways playwright J.B. Priestley was famous for his fascination with theories of time and consciousness. *Conways* came to be known as one of Priestley's six "Time Plays," which also included *Johnson Over Jordan*, *Dangerous Corner*, and the international hit *An Inspector Calls*. In each "Time Play," Priestley explored a different philosophy of time, most notable among them John William Dunne's theory of Serialism, threads of which make an appearance in *Time and the Conways* itself. Serialism postulates that each person's consciousness exists in multiple dimensions of time simultaneously and, often during sleep, one can access the future and past, thereby unwittingly predicting events to come.

John William Dunne (1875–1949) was a British aeronautical engineer, philosopher, and soldier. His explorations of Serialism began one night in 1898, when he had a dream that his watch had stopped at half past four in the morning. Dunne awoke from this dream in the middle of the night to find that the time was, in fact, just minutes after 4:30 A.M., and that his watch, which was sitting on a dresser on the opposite side of the room, had quite literally stopped minutes earlier while he was asleep, at exactly half past four. In the months and years following, Dunne experienced further moments of "clairvoyance" in his dreams. One night in 1902, for example, Dunne dreamt that he was trying to save an island of people from a volcanic disaster; later that week, Dunne learned of the eruption of Martinique's Mount Pele, which buried the city of Saint Pierre. Dunne's dreams went on to seemingly foretell a factory fire in Paris, a train derailment in Scotland, and even an incident in which he and his brother, while on a fishing trip, had to outrun an erratic horse that had escaped its enclosure.

After years of observing these kinds of occurrences in himself and, anecdotally, in friends, Dunne decided to run tests to determine whether others shared this kind of foresight and whether "clairvoyance" was a property of only some dreams or of all dreams. In efforts to maximize the number of dreams that any given experimenter would remember, Dunne developed a precise method for recording dream activity in the moments immediately after waking. The process worked. With his dreams written down in notebooks, Dunne started matching daytime experiences not only to clairvoyant dreams that he remembered having, but also to dreams that he had forgotten but had made note of in the first seconds of his day. As the other subjects in his

experiment encountered many similar "psychic" incidents, Dunne became convinced that precognition during sleep was actually a normal human experience that was often just forgotten or dismissed as wild coincidence. It appeared that most, if not all, dreams provided windows to the future. Dunne then set out to determine what about our relationship to time made this kind of precognition possible.

The theory of time that Dunne developed out of these experiments rests on an understanding of the dimensions of space. Dimension zero, of course, is just a point; it has no length, width, or height. Each subsequent dimension "extends" at a right angle from all lower dimensions. The first dimension is a line with only length; the second dimension extends at a right angle from the first to form a plane. The third dimension, most familiar to us, extends at a right angle from the second to form a space with length, width, and height. The fourth dimension, then, in Dunne's hypothesis, extends at a right angle from the third. A fourth dimension is not something that we can exactly visualize, but Dunne, alongside many other theorists of the time, proposed that the fourth dimension is, in fact, time. In the same way that a 1-D line is a cross-section of a 2-D square and a 2-D square is a cross-section of a 3-D cube, a cube at any given instant in time, Dunne suggested, is only a cross-section of that cube's entire existence, from beginning to end, in time. A four-dimensional representation of a person, therefore, would be an entity that would encompass that person's entire life all at once (see figure below). A cross-section of that object would be a three-dimensional person at any instant in time, living as we do—instant to instant, with only a memory of the past and guesses about the future.

But this raises some questions: why does it seem that we move through time in only one direction? What is pushing us through time? And how fast are we moving? As a solution to these questions, Dunne theorized that there must be a fifth dimension, extending at a right angle from the fourth. A cross-section of this dimension would be a fourth-dimensional object—which, as Dunne already defined, represents the entire existence of that object in time. Just as a three-dimensional person can take a mental picture and observe a two-dimensional slice of their world, so can a four-dimensional person observe a three-dimensional cross-section of their world—i.e., one three-dimensional instant. Therefore, a fifth-dimensional person can observe their fourth-dimensional self (that is, their entire existence in time) as a single snapshot. (See Figure 2 for an analogy.) Dunne

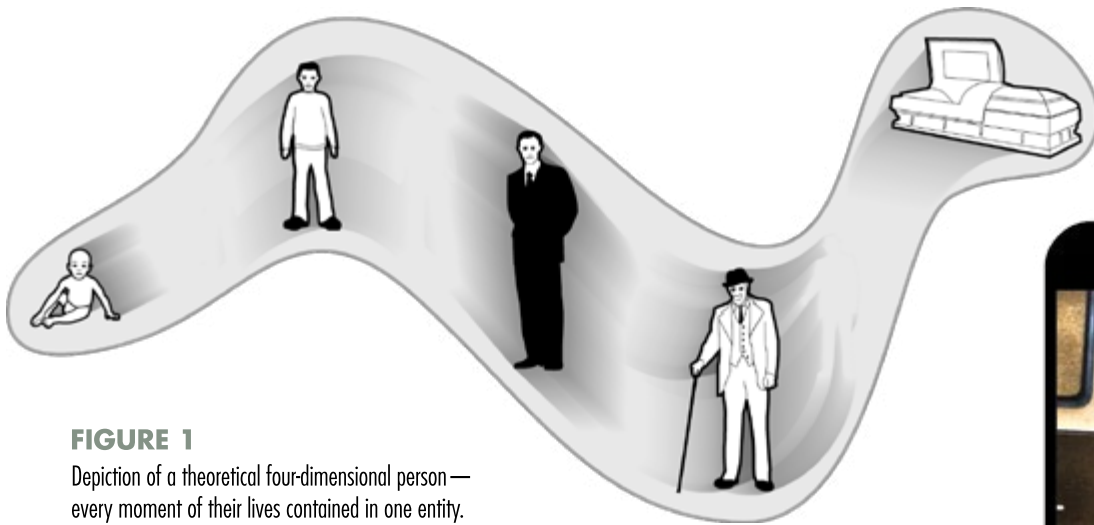


FIGURE 1

Depiction of a theoretical four-dimensional person—every moment of their lives contained in one entity.

went on to suggest that this “series” of time dimensions extends infinitely, and each person’s consciousness exists in this infinite series of dimensions at once—hence the term “Serialism.”

Even though, as Dunne postulated, each person has access to all of these dimensions at any time, he determined that a person’s consciousness habitually follows their third-dimensional perspective instant-to-instant through time while the third-dimensional self is awake. When the third-dimensional self is asleep, though, attention wanders, and the person’s consciousness in the fifth dimension (or higher) focuses on different moments in the fourth dimension—in other words, different moments in the entirety of a person’s lifetime. Dreams, then, according to Dunne, are our consciousnesses observing our lives from higher dimensions and exploring our past and future experiences. With this, Dunne had devised an explanation for his and his subjects’ nighttime “clairvoyance.”

Dunne’s theory was not ultimately embraced by the larger scientific community. In the time since Dunne proposed Serialism, Einstein’s theory of relativity has shown to be a much more accurate descriptor of the nature and behavior of spacetime. But Dunne’s theories surely sparked the imaginations of his contemporaries and served as an important step in the path toward a deeper understanding of our universe. •



FIGURE 2

The third, fourth, and fifth dimensions can be thought of as the different components of a Youtube video, like this one [HERE](#) that tracks across a computer keyboard. A third-dimensional observer is analogous to a still image captured at any instant that the video is paused. The fourth-dimensional observer is like the grey timeline bar at the bottom of the screen, which contains every moment of the video in one entity. The fifth-dimensional observer is akin to well, you, the viewer, who can jump between moments on the timeline bar and watch the video forwards or, in theory, backwards. The fifth-dimensional observer’s point of attention is symbolized by the location of the red bar, which tells the viewer where in the “life” of the video they are watching.

DESIGNER STATEMENTS

NEIL PATEL—SET DESIGN

The scenic design for *Time and the Conways* is a visualization of the change and the simultaneity of time that occurs in the play. To do this I created a perfect symmetry between Act 1 (1919) and Act 2 (1937) by stacking the rooms one on top of the other with transparency between the two to allow both moments in time to exist together for the audience. It's one of my favorite designs for its simplicity and clarity.

PALOMA YOUNG—COSTUME DESIGN

The envelope of *Time and the Conways*, especially in its setting and inhabitants, is deceptively realistic. The metaphysical philosophies explored in the play needed a strong naturalistic base from which to spring—something Rebecca and I both agreed on when we set out to design the costumes. When we meet the Conways in 1919, they're mid-party and living lushly. We gravitated towards more saturated colors that would tell the story of prized family—a glittering jewel box of beautiful, sparkling people—intoxicating to outsiders and even to each other. The style is current, if not even more hopeful and forward looking—their clothing should add to the atmosphere of mirth, hope, and new beginnings. Jumping forward to 1937, we use costume to reinforce the stories of how each of these lives has diverged. We desaturated the colors to strike a more somber tone and reflect the seriousness of the family's financial

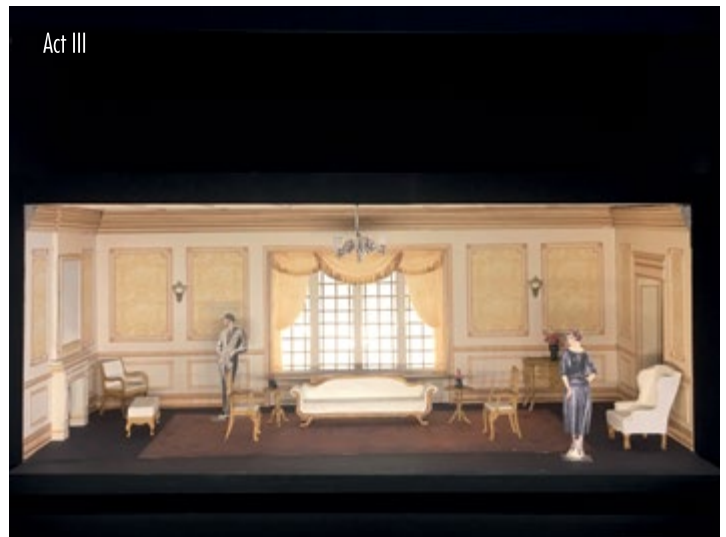
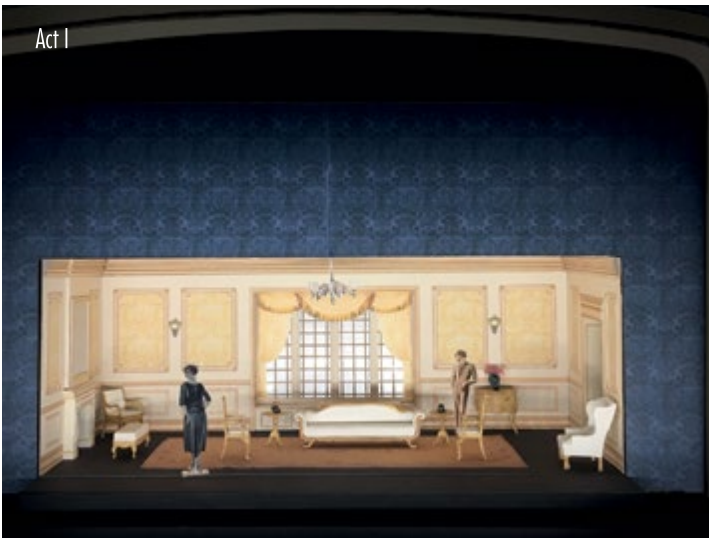
and personal woes. While the styles and materials of the 1919 costumes were very similar, here each Conway has become more individualized and shaped by their life experiences. Some wear old, worn clothes of the early twenties (a cessation of forward motion), while others are dressed very fashionably (but perhaps not living comfortably in their attire). When we return to 1919, we're hoping to play a subconscious trick of

the eye on the audience. After acclimating to the neutral, desaturated colors of 1937, we should see the original jewel-box costumes in a different light. What was, at first impression, joyful, can seem on a revisit more fragile and superficial, like beautiful wrapping paper.

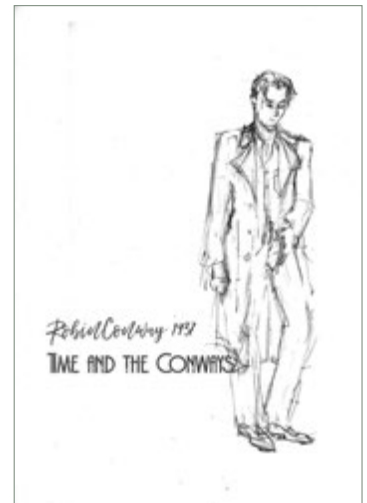
CHRISTOPHER AKERLIND—LIGHTING DESIGN

I saw this play at the Huntington Theatre Company in 1983 while a student at Boston University. Then and now, I was deeply moved by the idea of time contained within the question of how precognition might change or deepen our experience of the present. Would we be better at being or would we lose our minds? I love the play. I love working with Rebecca Taichman. At this point, given the improvisational way in which Rebecca and I work together, there are still questions to be answered before we know what the lighting of our production can and/or will be. Speaking of time as it relates to theatre process, I've always thought that the later the ideas come, or, in other words, the closer they're developed to the point at which director and designers hand the production to the actors and stage managers from opening night and onward, the more appropriate to the current moment they'd be. I like to wait. In this production, Rebecca and set designer Neil Patel have concocted an ingenious architectural device to effect the sense of changing time, forward and backward. Though my preparation, including determining the places the lighting fixtures will occupy, deciding their color or other effects, will happen months before we begin creating the various and necessary looks and how light moves over time, these elements can still be improvised as needed: changing colors, moving fixtures in space, changing the entire lighting geography as needed. •





Set models for *Time and the Conways*



Costume renderings for *Time and the Conways*

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

HOW DOES A PLAYWRIGHT WRITE A MONOLOGUE FROM A CHARACTER'S POINT-OF-VIEW?

(Common Core Code: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7)

Before watching *Time and the Conways*, students analyze a photograph to understand the historical and social context of the play.

DISCUSS Distribute copies of this image [HERE](#) of soldiers returning home at the conclusion of WWI. What is happening in the photo? When is it happening, and how do you know? What can we tell about the world of these people based on their clothing?

WRITE Ask students to choose one person in the photo and, working alone, write a monologue from the point of view of that character. You may want to put students in groups and have each member of a group choose a different person in the image. Questions to consider: How does the character feel about what's happening? How long have they been waiting for this reunion, and what did they do while they were apart from their loved one? What kind of language do they use?

PERFORM Set up a stage area and re-create the photo as a tableau. Ask students to step into the position of the person for whom they wrote the monologue. Have students read their monologues one at a time.

REFLECT How did the clothing influence what you wrote? What might happen later, when these people go home?

HOW DID YOUNG PEOPLE ENTERTAIN THEMSELVES BEFORE MODERN TECHNOLOGY?

(Common Core Code: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.B)

Time and the Conways, set in 1919, begins with a twenty-first birthday party. In this activity, students create their own parlor games.

DISCUSS As a group, generate a list of activities students might engage in at a birthday party. Ask students to determine which of the activities would not have been possible in 1919, and cross them off the list. Introduce the idea of *parlor games*, group games that could be played indoors at parties and required only simple objects.

CREATE Ask students to work in small groups to design their own parlor game. It can be based on a game they know or entirely new. Students should prepare to lead the class in the game.

PLAY Hold a 1919 party. Have each group lead the class in playing their parlor game.

REFLECT How was the way you interacted in the 1919 party different from how you interact at a modern party? What did you like about it? What was hard about it?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

HOW DOES A PLAYWRIGHT STRUCTURE TIME TO EXPRESS IDEAS?

(Common Core Code: CCSS. W11-12.3B)

After watching *Time and the Conways*, students explore the playwriting process with attention to time structure in storytelling.

- DISCUSS** Discuss how J.B. Priestley handles time in the play. What impact do the shifts in time (from 1919-1937-1919) have? Why do you think he chose to structure time this way? How do we perceive the Conways differently, by moving forward and back in time? What do you think J.B. Priestley is saying about how people change over time? (You may read or refer to the article on Disrupted Time on page 7 of this Upstage Guide)
- WRITE** Work individually or in groups to write a pair of scenes using a disrupted time structure. Choose a group of 3-5 characters (i.e., a family, co-workers, school friends, etc.) in a single setting. Create a situation for these characters in the present time, and write a short scene that explores their relationship today. Then, write a second scene that shows the same characters returning to the same setting 10 years in the future and reveals how their lives and relationships have changed.
- PERFORM** Allow a few groups to read their scenes to the class. Between scenes, you may ask the class to make predictions about what will happen to the characters in 10 years, before they hear the scene as written.
- REFLECT** What is challenging about telling a story this way? What are some other films, plays, or TV shows you've seen that use disrupted time structures? Why do audiences enjoy stories that use disrupted time structures?

HOW DOES COSTUME DESIGN REVEAL CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT ACROSS TIME IN A PLAY?

(Common Core Code: CCSS RL 9-10.3)

Students reflect on the impact of costume design to support storytelling and character development in the production they saw, then design their own costumes for different time periods.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Production images of costume examples from *Time and the Conways*.
- Download/copy PDFs of costume design templates. (2 per student)
- Colored pencils, pens, and/or crayons.

(Note: If you have your class do the above playwriting post-show activity, they can design for the characters they've created.)

- DISCUSS** Ask students their observations about how costumes provided information about the characters in the play. Students may use the production images throughout the guide and the costume renderings found on page 19 to compare how a character changed over time. What do the clothes tell you about the character? How did this character change over time, and how did the costume help us understand this change?
- DESIGN** Use the costumes templates [HERE](#) to design two costumes for a single character whose story spans multiple decades. (These can be original characters, characters from a book or play, or historical periods the class has studied.) Each costume should clearly be from a different time period, and the two costumes should show how this character changes over time. (For historical accuracy, you may have students research fashions over the decades.)
- GALLERY WALK** Have students mount **both** of their completed designs on the wall, and allow students to view them all. Select a couple of designs and ask students what changes they observe between the two time periods, and what inferences they could make about the character's development across time, based on the costumes.

GLOSSARY AND RESOURCES

- PUSSYFOOT:** to move cautiously or noncommittally
Kay says that the word being used for charades is "pussyfoot."
- SOCIALISM:** a political and economic theory characterized by the community as a whole owning the resources of the world, typically supported by the working class
Carol says that if Madge ever marries, it will be to a Socialist. Madge later advocates for Socialism, which she believes will bring about a happy society with equal opportunities for all.
- NATIONALIZATION:** the transfer of a business from private to government ownership
Madge says that the miners are asking for their business to be nationalized.
- PROFITEERING:** to make or seek an unfair profit, particularly illegally
Gerald says that there is still a lot of profiteering after the war.
- SOLICITOR:** a term for a legal worker, primarily used in the United Kingdom
Gerald says he is not present as a friend of the family, but as a solicitor.
- THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS UNION:** formed in October 1918 to promote justice, security, and peace worldwide, The League of Nations Union was a precursor to the United Nations
Madge says that a new branch of The League of Nations Union is opening soon in Newlingham, where the Conways live.
- COMMONWEALTH:** a community of several countries banded together for the greater good, and a term often used to refer to the British Empire
Madge says that, under The League of Nations Union, Britain will build a new commonwealth of all nations so they can live at peace forever.

RESOURCES

- "15 Crucial Events in the History of English Schools." Oxford Summer School from Oxford Royale Academy. Oxford Royale Academy, 22 Mar. 2017. Web.
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ABOUT ROUNDABOUT

ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY

Roundabout Theatre Company (Todd Haimes, Artistic Director/CEO) is committed to producing the highest-quality theatre with the finest artists, sharing stories that endure and providing accessibility to all audiences. A not-for-profit company founded in 1965, Roundabout fulfills its mission each season through the production of classic plays and musicals; development and production of new works by established and emerging writers; educational initiatives that enrich the lives of children and adults; and a subscription model and audience outreach programs that cultivate and engage all audiences. Roundabout presents this work on its five stages and across the country through national tours. Roundabout has been recognized with 36 Tonys[®], 51 Drama Desks, 62 Outer Critics Circle, 12 Obie and 18 Lucille Lortel Awards. More information on Roundabout's mission, history and programs can be found by visiting roundabouttheatre.org.

2017-2018 SEASON



STAFF SPOTLIGHT: INTERVIEW WITH AALIYAH STEWART, THEATRICAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FELLOW

Ted Sod: Where were you born, and where did you go to school? What were your favorite subjects to study?

Aaliyah Stewart: Born and raised in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, I grew up always being able to walk to school because I didn't have much of a choice as to where I went. So, high school was my chance to explore, and I found myself at Repertory Company High School for Theatre Arts. I've always been involved with performing and all things creative, and I was a huge history nerd. Class discussions about the book of the semester helped erupt inner discoveries in my mind. I loved delving into characters and asking myself hard questions that aren't spelled out in the books.

TS: When did you get involved in the programs for students offered at Roundabout?

AS: I graduated from High School in June of 2014. That was the year I made my presence known at Roundabout by becoming a student ambassador. I learned business management 101 and what it means to be a professional in this industry. At the same time, I met and collaborated with students from Roundabout's partner schools and on a published play that's being performed all over the country. I joined the Student Production Workshop (SPW), which gives students the opportunity to produce their own work: we build the sets, design the lights and costumes, write, direct, and market the play. I was working in retail when I received the email about the launch of the Theatrical Workforce Development Program (TWDP), and I applied and was accepted.

TS: Describe what you do as part of RTC's Theatrical Workforce Development Program.

AS: All the participants of TWDP spread out to theatres across the city, gaining hands on work experience this summer. I went to Dixon Place, where we built Q-lab show files from scratch, set up mics, and did live mixes. There isn't a day that goes by where I'm not challenged. Every two weeks, we submit a journal about who we met and what shows we're working on and whether or not we've been in contact with our IATSE (International Alliance for Theatrical Stage Employees) mentors.

TS: What do you like best about the Theatrical Workforce Development Program? What is most challenging about it?

AS: My favorite thing about TWDP is that I finally have a job I like and that I am proud of. As long as I'm working in someone's theatre, I'm happy. I love being a technician. There's always new gear to learn about. There's a whole energy that comes with being a theatre person. My biggest challenge is reminding myself that I am capable and convincing myself to take risks.

TS: What are your future goals and aspirations?

AS: I want to become a better programmer and learn from professional lighting designers. I want to get better at drafting for both lighting and carpentry. I want to take photography more seriously, and a dream is to shoot the season collections of my favorite brands. Hopefully, I will build my own theatre from the ground up and work as my own artistic and technical director. I want to make and be a part of theatre that engages all people. •

Learn more at roundabouttheatre.org. Find us on:



WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE



TICKET POLICY

As a student, 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 restroom 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 or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.



Rebecca Taichman is a Roundabout Resident Director—a position underwritten by Elizabeth Armstrong.

Roundabout Theatre Company is thankful to the following donors for their generous support of \$5,000 or more to Roundabout's education programs during the 2017-2018 fiscal years.

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The Walt Disney Company
Emily J. Zuckerman, Esq. and Dr. Edward H. Bonfield

Education programs at Roundabout are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

