

# ***The Real Thing***

by Tom Stoppard

an NAC English Theatre / Soupepper Theatre (Toronto) coproduction

## Study Guide

**THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ENGLISH THEATRE  
PROGRAMMES FOR STUDENT AUDIENCES  
2005-2006 SEASON**

**Peter Hinton  
Artistic Director, English Theatre**



NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE  
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS

This Study Guide was written and researched by **Jim McNabb** for the National Arts Centre, English Theatre, March 2006. It may be used solely for educational purposes.

**The National Arts Centre English Theatre** values the feedback of teachers on the content and format of its Study Guides. We would appreciate **your** comments on past Study Guides, on this current one, or suggestions on ways to improve future Study Guides. Comments may be directed to **Martina Kuska** either by email at [mkuska@nac-cna.ca](mailto:mkuska@nac-cna.ca) or by fax to Martina Kuska at the NAC, (613) 943-1401.



**OTTAWA  
CITIZEN**

Main Stage Media Partner

## About This Guide

This study guide is formatted in easy-to-copy single pages. They may be used separately or in any combination that works for your classes.

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>page(s)</b>
About the Play .....	1 - 5
Plot Synopsis .....	1 - 2
The Characters .....	3 - 4
Themes .....	4
Style .....	4
The Plays Within the Play .....	5
Who Helped Put the Production Together? .....	6 - 7
Selected Bios .....	6 - 7
A Biography of Tom Stoppard .....	8
Some of Stoppard's Other Plays .....	9
Clever Quotations from <i>The Real Thing</i> .....	10
Excerpt from <i>'Tis Pity She's A Whore</i> .....	11 - 12
Henry's Choice of Music – Pop vs. Classical.....	13 - 14
Some Background on the Period .....	15 - 16
The Cold War .....	15
The Sexual Revolution.....	16
Vocabulary .....	17 - 18
About The National Arts Centre.....	19
Suggested Movies, Books, and Websites.....	20
Activities Before and After Seeing the Play.....	21 - 23
Theatre Etiquette .....	24
Acknowledgements .....	25

## About the Play (page 1 of 5)

### PLOT SYNOPSIS (page 1 of 2)

*The Real Thing*, set in the early 1980s, is about marriage and writing, emotional fidelity and intellectual integrity, high art and pop culture.

The play opens with Max, an English architect, sitting at home, drinking and building a house of cards while awaiting the return of his wife, Charlotte, from a trip to Switzerland. When she arrives, Max accuses her of adultery, based on the fact that he found her passport in her drawer at home. Even when he is most certain of her infidelity, Max is able to toss off literary quips and well-constructed bon mots.

The second scene reveals that what we've seen is actually a play within a play. Henry, the playwright, and his wife, Charlotte, are at home. Henry is to appear on "Desert Island Discs", and is trying to select eight songs he would like with him if stranded in the middle of the ocean. Part of him wants to choose something relatively highbrow, while another part admits that what he really loves is silly pop songs like "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" by the Righteous Brothers. Max, the actor starring with Charlotte in Henry's play *House of Cards*, arrives and gets caught in the middle of a marital spat. Charlotte is annoyed by her husband's latest play; she feels the dialogue does not accurately reflect what real people would say when under marital stress. Max's wife Annie drops by, ostensibly on her way to a committee meeting in support of a soldier unjustly jailed for vandalism. It quickly becomes clear that she and Henry are having an affair. While whipping up a batch of Hawaiian dip, Max cuts his finger and staunches the flow of blood with Henry's handkerchief, which he promptly gives back to him.

In the third scene, Max confronts Annie with Henry's bloody handkerchief, found in her car. Annie admits that she's in love with Henry, and Max falls apart, inarticulately proving Charlotte's point in the previous scene.

Scene Four portrays Henry and Annie in his new flat, after both their marriages have come apart. They read from August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, the title role of which Annie will soon perform, and Henry muses that he can never write convincing romantic dialogue. Annie mentions that one of her fellow actors has been flirting with her and then expresses annoyance at Henry's alleged interest in another actress. What really bothers her, however, is that Henry doesn't seem to care enough ever to be jealous.

Act Two resumes the action two years later. Before going off to perform in Glasgow, Annie is trying to interest Henry in a play written by Brodie, the young soldier serving time for vandalism and arson. He finds it boring and poorly written, and she tells him he's a snob. She thinks what Brodie has to say is important, considering how he's been treated, but Henry is appalled by the play's loutish language. At which point, Annie rips from the typewriter Henry's banal script for a horrible sci-fi movie. She then declares that *she* wants to do Brodie's play, and shouldn't that be reason enough? Henry asks, "Why Brodie? Do you fancy him or what?", and instantly knows he's made a terrible mistake.

## About the Play (page 2 of 5)

### PLOT SYNOPSIS (page 2 of 2)

The next scene finds Annie on the train to Glasgow, flirting with Billie, a young actor in rehearsal with her for John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Billie also thinks Brodie's play is rubbish, but wants to do it in order to be with Annie. They end up proclaiming their attraction to each other using the language of Giovanni and Annabella from this Jacobean play.

In Scene Seven, Henry is visiting his former wife Charlotte and their 17-year-old daughter Debbie who is about to go on a road trip with her fairground-worker boyfriend. Henry and Debbie discuss first love and marital fidelity. After she leaves, Charlotte and Henry reminisce about their marriage, and Henry learns that Charlotte had nine affairs during their time together. She chides him on his naïve belief in commitment, calling him an idiot. Henry replies that he would rather be an idiot than believe that there are no commitments, only bargains. "It's no trick loving somebody at their *best*. Love is loving them at their worst."

Scene Eight is a rehearsal of the scene from *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* where the two lovers have just consummated their love. The suggestion is that perhaps Billy and Annie are living Giovanni and Annabella's affair.

Henry is given the chance to prove his theory of love in Scene Nine, when he learns that Annie is involved with another man. In a scene that reflects the fictitious opening scene, she returns from Glasgow to discover that he has ransacked her room in search of damning evidence. When she asks whether he's completely lost his dignity, he says, "I don't believe in behaving well. ... I believe in mess, tears, self-abasement, loss of self-respect, nakedness. Not caring doesn't seem much different from not loving." Somehow, though, Henry manages the difficult trick of "dignified cuckoldry," allowing Annie's affair to run its course.

Scene Ten involving a meeting on a train sounds vaguely familiar until we realize it's a take for a TV movie depicting Annie and Brodie's original encounter and is an adaptation of Brodie's script.

In the final scene, we see the much-talked-about Brodie, now free from prison, watching a videotape of the teleplay Henry adapted from his original script. An ungracious lout, Brodie insults Henry for being "clever" in the rewrites of his play. Eventually, Annie kicks Brodie out and pushes a bowl of dip in his face for good measure. Annie and Henry seem to have come to a deeper understanding of the meaning of commitment in a marriage. The play ends with Henry receiving a call from Max, Annie's ex. Max is getting re-married, and Henry offers his congratulations, saying, "I'm delighted, Max. Isn't love wonderful?"

## About the Play (page 3 of 5)

### **THE CHARACTERS** (*in order of appearance*) (page 1 of 2)

**Max** – He is the lead actor in Henry's new play *The House of Cards* where he plays an architect who confronts his wife (played by Charlotte) with having an affair. Offstage he is Annie's husband. In Scene Two he shows himself to be somewhat self-absorbed, lacking a sense of humour and not terribly bright. When he discovers that his real life wife is having an affair with Henry he becomes thoroughly distraught, unable to believe that Annie could possibly leave him for another man. In the final scene he telephones to tell that he plans to remarry and is ecstatically happy, contrasting nicely with Henry's now sobered love for Annie.

**Charlotte** – She is an actress and Henry's first wife and the mother of their teenage daughter, Debbie. She is not pleased to be in Henry's play, suggesting that he cannot write good female characters or believable dialogue. She is tired of Henry's flippant wit and lack of emotional connection and the two have become somewhat distant over the years. After it is discovered that Henry and Annie are having an affair, their marriage breaks up and Henry moves out. Two years later when Henry visits to see Debbie off on a trip, Charlotte tells him that while they were married she had had nine affairs to Henry's one. She considers that the reason for their marital breakdown was Henry's naïve trust that a marriage needs no maintenance after the initial commitment.

**Henry** – Henry, the play's protagonist, is a successful London playwright. When his affair with Annie is discovered, the two leave their respective spouses and begin their life together. Their relationship is threatened, however, when they disagree over Brodie's play and he learns of Annie's unfaithfulness. He has a remarkable verbal dexterity with wit and humour but is also impatient with other people's flawed logic and imprecise expression. He is so immersed in being a writer that he often speaks like a character from one of his plays, a characteristic that sometimes gets in the way of his expression of true emotion. He undergoes a profound change during the course of the play. As a result of the crisis in his relationship with Annie he learns to express love and passion in real language, and his understanding of love also changes. We might suspect that Henry is Tom Stoppard's alter ego with so many parallels – the clever playwright with a love for wordplay, for cricket and for pop music over classical. Stoppard's theme that art reflects - and anticipates – life is illustrated strongly in this character. (See THEMES (page 4) and A Biography of Tom Stoppard (page 8)).

**Annie** – Annie is an actress initially married to Max but who leaves him to take up a relationship with Henry. When she lands a part in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* in Glasgow she begins an affair with her co-star Billy. Before she left her former marriage she became involved with Brodie, a young soldier who worked on a missile base in Norfolk in the eastern part of England. Their encounter led to his being arrested as a political activist. Through Annie's encouragement, Brodie has written an autobiographical play in the hopes of turning his imprisonment into a political cause. Annie is obsessed about having the play broadcast and insists that Henry, against his better judgment, make some rewrites on it. We eventually come to realize that Annie's interest in Brodie is largely one of guilt over getting him into trouble rather than a commitment to political activism. Annie matures greatly over the course of the play learning to take the responsibilities of a relationship more seriously and accept the consequences of her actions.

## About the Play (page 4 of 5)

### THE CHARACTERS (*in order of appearance*) (page 2 of 2)

**Billy** - Billy is a young actor who falls in love with Annie. He manages to sweep her off her feet with his enthusiasm and honesty, which she finds a refreshing contrast to Henry's tight-lipped expressions of love.

**Brodie** - The subject of much discussion and debate throughout the play, Brodie only appears onstage in the final scene. All of Annie's claims about his idealism are finally revealed to be false. When he sets fire to the wreath of the Unknown Soldier, Brodie was not seeking to make a political statement; rather, he was foolishly trying to impress Annie, whom he had just met. He is also revealed to be ungrateful and chauvinistic.

### THEMES

In *The Real Thing* Stoppard investigates an ethical issue (adultery) and the philosophical nature of true love, and in the process also explores the nature of reality and perception. Although he is sarcastic and flippant, Henry is naïvely idealist and romantic about marriage - when he says "I do" he means it. However, he isn't aware of the doubt or insecurity in his partner's heart and so does not give the reassurance of his commitment that is needed. Even though he writes about how imaginary fears of adultery can be destructive he is not aware of it happening in his own relationship. Charlotte has moved into a series of affairs because she assumes that Henry, showing no signs of jealousy at her suggestions of such a thing, is already engaged in extra-marital affairs. Charlotte's character in *House of Cards* is too stung by "Max's" assumption that she is unfaithful to deny it. For all Henry's dexterity with words, the lack of clear communication resulted in the breakdown of his marriage. Henry learns that despite his insistence on the accurate use of language, unspoken gestures may indeed mean more to loved ones. Exploring further the nature of love and reality is Stoppard's use of fictional scenes and scenes from other plays. The audience is continually off guard as to what is real dialogue in the play and when a character is playing a parallel scene. Intensifying that is the nature of each character's occupation. Henry is accused of speaking like one of the characters in his plays and both Annie and Charlotte are consummate actors in that they are able to conceal their adultery from Henry. Reality does catch up with Henry: he learns that art is not just his imaginings but rather the mirror that reflects reality. Stoppard's repetition of certain scenes suggests that life can imitate art, and confirms the theme of Henry's painful realization that art and reality cannot be kept separate from each other.

### STYLE

With *The Real Thing* Stoppard abandons the Absurdist style of his earlier works for an exploration of Realist techniques. "Realism" is the artistic attempt to recreate life as accurately, honestly and objectively as possible. Even though we are sometimes confused as to whether we are in the world of another play or not, Stoppard's characters are essentially grounded in a real, understandable world in which the inhabitants can come to terms with their existence. The characters are concerned with "real life" dramas, such as adultery, money, and family trouble, and the action takes place in living rooms and train carriages, not courtyards and throne rooms. The language is also realistic and contemporary. Real contemporary language can express universal dilemmas as eloquently as elevated Shakespearean verse, and real life can be as powerful an experience as exaggerated poetic representations of it in art.

## About the Play (page 5 of 5)

### THE PLAYS WITHIN THE PLAY

Of the seven characters in *The Real Thing*, four are actors and two are playwrights (albeit, one a very bad playwright). It is not surprising therefore that one of the major themes of the play is that art (theatre) imitates life and life imitates art. Lines are often blurred between the real thing and scenes from scripts. The play opens with a scene from Henry's successful *House of Cards* currently playing in the West End (London, England) starring Henry's wife Charlotte (although we don't know it was a scene from a "play" until we are well into Scene Two). It ends with a telecast of Brodie's autobiographical diatribe, a script which started its life as almost inarticulate trash until Henry was coerced into giving it some polish. In between, along with some discussion on the power of language and the difficulty of expressing real emotions like love and anguish on the page, we also see scenes from Renaissance British playwright John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and 19<sup>th</sup> century Swedish playwright August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*. Each of these excerpts bears relevance to Stoppard's themes and the events in the "real" play.

**John Ford** (1586-1640) was the most important British playwright during the reign of Charles I (r. 1625-49). His three major tragedies, all of which deal with forbidden love - *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, *Love's Sacrifice*, and *The Broken Heart* - appeared around 1630. He lived at the time of Shakespeare, John Webster, Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson. His apparent disregard for the orthodox moral code of his time made him a controversial and shocking, yet popular, spokesperson. These plays stress the conflict between the power of human passion and the laws of conscience and society. They are melancholy, intense and violent and reveal his interest in abnormal psychology and taboo subjects. *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* deals with incest between Giovanni and his beautiful sister Annabella. When it is discovered that she is pregnant, she is quickly married to Soranzo, a man she despises. When the truth that Giovanni is the father is revealed, Soranzo plans to murder them both at a party. However, Giovanni kills Annabella first so that her husband cannot do it and presents Soranzo with her heart on a dagger, after which Giovanni is quickly slain. The two actors playing Annabella and Giovanni are Annie and Billy and their secret affair mirrors to some extent the illicit love of the characters they portray. Henry's jealousy upon learning of Annie's infidelity, however, does not lead to such a bloody finale.

**August Strindberg** (1849-1912), a Swedish dramatist writing in a naturalist or expressionist style, used his psychological drama *Miss Julie* to put forward his misogynistic views of women and his obsession with the war between the sexes. Marriage is a battlefield and women are predators. In the above play, the title character, having been badly influenced by a tyrannical mother and rebuffed by her fiancé, enters into an affair with a servant in her household, a man beneath her class. The seduction scene included here could be used by Stoppard to imply that Annie, lacking the confidence in her relationship with Henry, will be debased by her affair with Billy.

## Who Helped Put the Production Together? (page 1 of 2)

Director: **Diana Leblanc**  
Set and Costume Design: **Douglas Paraschuk**  
Lighting Design: **Leigh Ann Vardy**  
Sound Designer: **Peter McBoyle**  
Assistant Director: **Natalie Joy Quesnel**  
Stage Manager: **Nancy Dryden**  
Assistant Stage Manager: **Janet Gregor**

### Cast Members (in order of appearance)

Max: **C. David Johnson**  
Charlotte: **Kristina Nicoll**  
Henry: **Albert Schultz**  
Annie: **Megan Follows**  
Billy: **Matthew Edison**  
Debbie: **Krystin Pellerin**  
Brodie: **Jeff Lillico**

### SELECTED BIOS (page 1 of 2)

**Diana Leblanc** (director) is an Ontario-based actor/director who has worked in many of Canada's major theatres. As a 17-year-old dancer, she was among the first class of students entering the French acting class of the newly established National Theatre School in Montreal in 1960. After the first year, however, she transferred to the English Section feeling that she was better suited to the more introverted style of acting there. She now splits her time between working in French and English, as well as between opera



and theatre – and acting and directing. Diana has worked extensively as a director for The Stratford Festival, Canadian Opera Company, Théâtre Français de Toronto, Soulpepper Theatre and Opera Lyra. Her directing credits at the Stratford Festival which include: Tennessee Williams' *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, and the highly acclaimed production of Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, established her as one of Canada's greatest directors. For Soulpepper she has directed *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Zoo Story*, and *The Maids*. She also has found time to act – at the Stratford Festival in *The Little Foxes* and *The Measure of Love*, and in *La Voix Humaine* for Théâtre Français de Toronto.



## Who Helped Put the Production Together? (page 2 of 2)

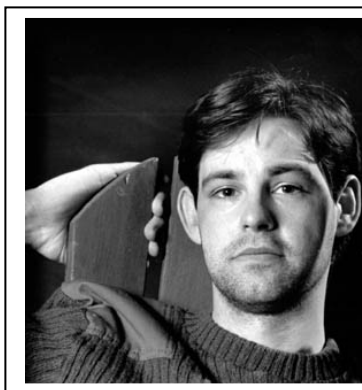
### SELECTED BIOS (page 2 of 2)



**Albert Schultz** (Henry) is one of Canada's busiest and most versatile artists - an award-winning actor, singer, writer, director and producer. He is the founding Artistic Director and producer of the Soulpepper Theatre Company in Toronto. Born in Port Hope, Ontario in 1963, he was drawn to acting by his mother's community theatre work, landing the role of Sherlock Holmes at age 12. He attended Toronto's York University theatre program and then the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. While performing as Romeo with the Stratford Festival Young Company he met actress Susan Coyne playing Juliet. They were later married and now live in Toronto. He has carved out a rich and varied career in television, film and stage, starring in leading roles in *Street Legal*, *Side Effects*, and *Shades of Black* – and also plays Arnie Dogan

on *The Red Green Show*. Onstage he's appeared in *Hamlet*, *Oedipus*, *King Lear* and *Twelfth Night*. As the Artistic Director of Soulpepper Theatre he has received two Dora Mavor Moore Awards, two Lieutenant Governor's Awards, and the Joan Chalmers National Award for Artistic Direction.

**Megan Follows** (Annie) Born in Toronto in 1968 into a theatrical family of actors and writers, Megan got her start at age three in TV commercials. By her mid-teens when she auditioned for the title role in *Anne of Green Gables* she was already a leading actor in television. This role, however, made her world-famous and earned her a Gemini Award as best actress when it became one of the highest-grossing TV movies in Canadian history. Megan has continued to work non-stop in front of the cameras in both United States and Canada in such movies or series as *CSI*, *Cold Case*, *Crossing Jordan*, *Open Heart*, *Silver Bullet* and, of course, the two sequels to *Anne* - *Anne of Avonlea* and *The Continuing Story*. Onstage she has appeared in such plays as *The Doll's House* (Atlantic Theatre Festival), *Romeo and Juliet* (Stratford Festival), *Othello* (NAC), and *Uncle Vanya* (Geffen Playhouse, Los Angeles). She lives in Toronto with her two children.

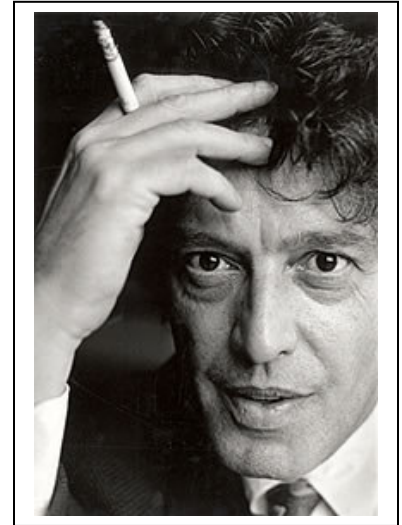


**Matthew Edison** (Billy) An actor and professional playwright, Matthew (great, great, great grandnephew of Thomas Edison) is an Ottawa native, a graduate of Arts Canterbury and the award-winning BOFA Improv team, where he worked with Jessica Holmes, Raoul Bhaneja, and Martin Gero. He graduated from the Stella Adler Conservatory in New York and has been acting across Canada ever since in such plays as *Amadeus* and *Proof* for CanStage (Toronto), and *The School for Wives* and *Midnight Sun* for the NAC. Matthew's play *The Domino Heart* was recently produced at the Tarragon Theatre (Toronto).

## A Biography of Tom Stoppard

Tom Stoppard is one of the world's foremost playwrights of the past half-century and arguably the greatest English-speaking one. From his early triumph in the 1960s' *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, he has continued to present plays decade after decade that have been greeted with both critical and popular acclaim. Many of his plays have won "Best Play" awards, and most are also frequently revived. He has also enjoyed success with his screenplays, most notably *Shakespeare in Love*.

Born to Jewish parents in Czechoslovakia in 1937, Tomas spent his very early years as a refugee from the Nazis in Singapore. However, when the Japanese invaded Singapore, Tom's father was killed and his mother fled to India. She later remarried British army major Kenneth Stoppard and the family relocated in England where Tom took his stepfather's name. He left high school at 17, took a job as a journalist, and began writing television and radio plays, and short stories.



Stoppard's absurdist play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966) made him famous. The play was originally produced at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe but later moved to a professional run in London. Stoppard's first plays were in the Absurdist style along with such other writers as Albert Camus (*The Plague*), Eugene Ionesco (*The Chairs*), and Samuel Beckett (*Waiting for Godot*). Absurdist writers see the world as mysterious and incomprehensible, and this perception often brings out feelings of purposelessness and bafflement. Much of the great Absurdist theatre is comedy, or tragi-comedy, and it is in this vein that Stoppard's metaphysical wit and passion for ideas found full expression.

*The Real Thing*, Stoppard's 20<sup>th</sup> play and the winner of the New York Tony Award for Best Play of 1984, marked a major departure for him. (It also earned Tonys for Glenn Close and Jeremy Irons who starred in it.) It was Stoppard's first play to focus upon love. Critics had previously complained that he was all flash and no substance, but *The Real Thing* proved that Stoppard could examine human themes such as love and passion with genuine sensitivity and insight. It contains Stoppard's characteristic investigation of an ethical problem, in this case the effects of adultery upon the vulnerable human heart. But when writing *The Real Thing*, Stoppard avoided the Absurdist style for the principles of Realist drama.

Stoppard's plays are plays of ideas that deal with philosophical issues; yet he combines the philosophical ideas he presents with verbal wit and visual humor. His linguistic complexity, with its puns, jokes, innuendo and other wordplay, is a chief characteristic of his work. Many of his plays, such as *Arcadia*, also feature multiple timelines.

Stoppard's dramas are, above all else, clever. He uses dramatic form as well as words and language very effectively and therefore the plays not only perform well, they also read very well. There is a great deal of artifice in Stoppard's works, but for all the trickery and cleverness, the plays remain very understandable. The devices Stoppard uses and the tricks he plays all serve some end in achieving the impact of his themes.

Art can indeed anticipate life. During the initial run of *The Real Thing* in London, Stoppard left his wife of several years and entered into a relationship with the actress playing Annie.

## Some of Stoppard's Other Plays

***Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*** (1967), written in an absurdist style somewhat like Samuel Becket's *Waiting For Godot*, features two of the minor characters from *Hamlet* passing the time with witty word games and pondering the hows, whys, wheres and whos of their predicament rather than trying to shape events and change their destiny.

***The Real Inspector Hound*** (1968) is one of his best-known short plays. In it, two theatre critics are watching a Country House Murder Mystery and become intimately involved in the action by accident. The viewer is watching a play within a play.

***Travesties*** (1974) is a parody of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. It deals with a fictional meeting between Tristan Tzara (a Dadaist painter), Vladimir Lenin (Russian revolutionary and first dictator of the Soviet Union) and James Joyce (an Irish author) in Zurich, Switzerland in 1917. All three men, incidentally, were fascinated by the use and abuse of language. The story is told through the memory of a confused old man, Henry Carr, who is performing in *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the time.

***Arcadia*** (1993) takes place in a room in a country house in two different time periods – the present and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It follows the fortunes of a pair of researchers investigating a literary and mathematical mystery while simultaneously showing what really happened during the incident they are investigating.

***Indian Ink*** (1995) is an affectionate look at the love-hate relationship between Britain and India during the Raj period as reflected through the eyes of individuals, both past and present. The play uses the device of alternating past and present action, with the present characters attempting to comprehend the past.

“A Stoppard play tends to overflow with ideas – philosophical, scientific, literary – all the subjects that engage the playwright's fertile and ever curious mind. The plots tend to be difficult to pin down in terms of beginning-middle-end summations. In fact he's admitted that he has problems thinking of stories. ‘Every one of my plays is flawed by this. I have to exert myself enormously to construct a story and then tell it properly.’ With plot or without, all are dished up with enormous wit. Puns, allusion, wordplay of all kinds keep audiences alert and amused. As Stoppard himself once said about his love for words: ‘I really dig words more than I can speak them. There are no words to say how much I love [words].’”

(Elyse Sommer in *An Overview of Tom Stoppard's Career*. <http://www.curtainup.com/stoppard.html>)

### **Clever Quotations from *The Real Thing*** (page 1 of 1)

“The days of the digital are numbered. The metaphor is built into them like a self-destruct mechanism.”

“Public postures have the configuration of private derangement.”

“Loving and being loved is very unliterary. It’s happiness expressed in banality and lust.”

“Gallons of ink and miles of typewriter ribbon expended on the misery of the unrequited lover; not a word about the utter tedium of the unrequiting.”

“If Beethoven had been killed in a plane crash at 22, the history of music would have been very different. As would the history of aviation, of course.”

“This thing here [a cricket bat], 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. 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.”

“I don’t think writers are sacred, but words are. They deserve respect. If you get the right ones in the right order, you can nudge the world a little or make a poem which children will speak for you when you’re dead.”

“Exclusive rights isn’t love, it’s colonization.”

“It’s no trick loving somebody at their best. Love is loving them at their worst.”

“Dignified cuckoldry is a difficult trick, but it can be done. Think of it as modern marriage.”



**Excerpt from 'Tis Pity She's a Whore by John Ford – Act 1, Sc. 2**

(page 1 of 2)

[On two occasions Annie and Billy rehearse scenes from this Renaissance play. The following excerpt is from Act I Sc. ii of Ford's play and parallels the growing relationship between the two actors.]

Giovanni:	Come, sister, lend me your hand, let's walk together. I hope you need not blush to walk with me; Here's none but you and I.		185
Annabella:	How's this?		
Giovanni:	Faith, I mean no harm.		
Annabella:	Harm?		
Giovanni:	No, good faith; how is't with 'ee*?	* <i>ye, you</i>	
Annabella:	[Aside] I trust he be not frantic*. – I am very well, brother.	* <i>mad</i>	190
Giovanni:	Trust me, but I am sick, I fear so sick, 'Twill cost me my life.		
Annabella:	Mercy forbid it. 'Tis not so, I hope.		
Giovanni:	I think you love me, sister.		195
Annabella:	Yes, you know I do.		
Giovanni:	I know't indeed – Y'are very fair.		
Annabella:	Nay, then, I see you have a merry sickness.		
Giovanni:	That's as it proves. The poets feign*, I read, That Juno* for her forehead did exceed All other goddesses: but I durst* swear Your forehead exceeds hers, as hers did theirs.	* <i>imagine</i> * <i>wife and sister of Jupiter</i> * <i>dare</i>	200
Annabella:	Troth*, this is pretty.	* <i>truth; mild exclamation</i>	
Giovanni:	Such a pair of stars As are thine eyes would, like Promethean* fire,  If gently glanced, give life to senseless stones.	* <i>Greek demigod who created man from clay and gave him the use of fire</i>	205
Annabella:	Fie upon 'ee.		
Giovanni:	The lily and the rose, most sweetly strange, Upon your dimpled cheeks do strive for change. Such lips would tempt a saint; such hands as those Would make an anchorite* lascivious**.	* <i>hermit</i> ** <i>lustful</i>	210

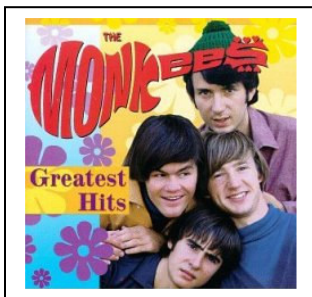
**Excerpt from `Tis Pity She's a Whore by John Ford – Act 1, Sc. 2**

(page 2 of 2)

Annabella:	D'ee mock me, or flatter me?		
Giovanni:	If you would see a beauty more exact* Than art can counterfeit, or nature frame, Look in your glass*, and there behold your own.	<i>*perfect</i> <i>*mirror</i>	
Annabella:	O you are a trim* youth.	<i>*pretty; sweet talking</i>	215
Giovanni:	[Offers his dagger to her.] Here.		
Annabella:	What to do?		
Giovanni:	And here's my breast, strike home. Rip up my bosom, there thou shalt behold A heart in which is writ the truth I speak. Why stand 'ee?		220
Annabella:	Are you earnest?		
Giovanni:	Yes, most earnest. You cannot love?		
Annabella:	Whom?		
Giovanni:	Me. My tortured soul Hath felt affliction in the heat of death. O Annabella, I am quite undone. The love of thee, my sister, and the view Of thy immortal beauty hath untuned All harmony both of my rest and life. Why d'ee not strike?		225
Annabella:	Forbid it, my just fears. If this be true, 'twere fitter I were dead.		230
Giovanni:	True, Annabella; 'tis no time to jest. I have too long suppressed the hidden flames That almost have consumed me; I have spent Many a silent night in sighs and groans, Ran over all my thoughts, despised my fate, Reasoned against the reasons of my love, Done all that smoothed-cheek virtue could advise, But found all bootless*; 'tis my destiny That you must either love, or I must die.	<i>*to no avail</i>	235 240

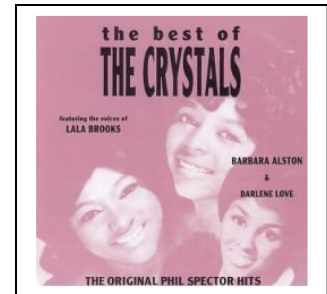
## Henry's Choice of Music – Pop versus Classical (page 1 of 2)

One of the themes Stoppard explores in this play is Henry's choice of pop music over classical. An ongoing argument between Henry and Annie (who insists that he become educated to appreciate opera and classical music) is his devotion to the often mindless music of the singing groups of the 60s and 70s such as Herman's Hermits or the Kinks. To hear samples of the music Henry listens to go to <http://amazon.com>, click on Music, then type in the artists shown below.



The Monkees. Try "I'm A Believer" [sic]. This boy band stemmed from a TV comedy series of 1966 patterned after the Beatles, but went on to become famous in its own right. <http://www.monkees.net>

The Crystals. Listen to "Da Doo Ron Ron" recorded in 1963. Based in Brooklyn they became one of the most popular girl groups. <http://www.history-of-rock.com/crystals.htm>



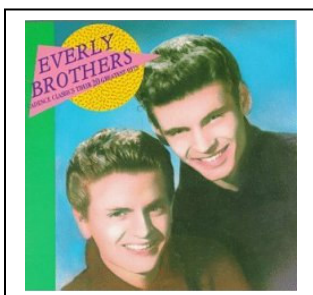
Pink Floyd. Try "Interstellar Overdrive" from their *Piper at the Gates of Dawn* album of 1967. This English rock band formed in 1965 and was noted for its progressive compositions and philosophical lyrics. One of the most successful in rock history. [www.pinkfloyd-co.com](http://www.pinkfloyd-co.com)



The Supremes. The most successful Motown all-female singing group, active from 1959 until 1977, performed at various times doo-wop, pop, soul, psychedelia and disco. Listen to "Stop In The Name of Love". <http://www.history-of-rock.com/supremes.htm>.

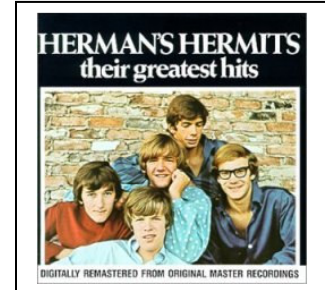


The Everly Brothers. "Bye Bye Love" was Don and Phil Everly's first hit, recorded in 1957. They started singing with their Kentucky parents at a very early age. <http://www.history-of-rock.com/everlybros.htm>

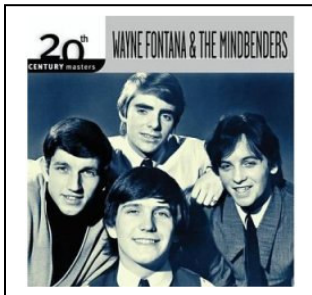


## Henry's Choice of Music – Pop versus Classical (page 2 of 2)

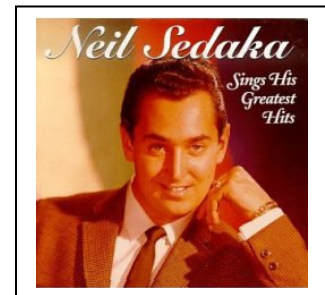
Herman's Hermits: Try "I'm Into Something Good." One of the three biggest British rock groups of the 60s, the quartet is still recording and playing. [www.hermanshermits.co.uk](http://www.hermanshermits.co.uk)



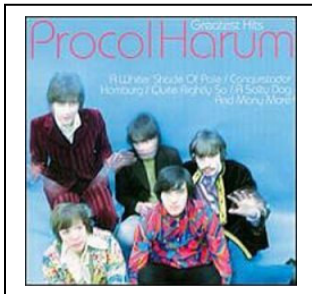
Wayne Fontana and the Mindbenders was founded in 1963 with its first hit in Britain being "Um Um Um Um Um Um" followed by a number one hit in the United States, "The Game of Love". Hear a couple of samples of their songs at [http://www.cduniverse.com/productinfo.asp?pid=6670449&style=music&frm=lk\\_all4oldies](http://www.cduniverse.com/productinfo.asp?pid=6670449&style=music&frm=lk_all4oldies)



Neil Sedaka was born and raised in Brooklyn, trained as a classical pianist but began performing and recording pop music while still in high school. Listen to a sample of Henry's pick, "Oh, Carol" on the Amazon.com website. Read about him at <http://www.classicbands.com/sedaka.html>



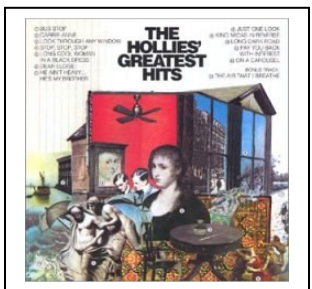
Procul Harum: Listen to "Whiter Shade of Pale". This British rock group formed in the early 60s hit it big with this number, their first song. The theme melody is from Bach's "Air on a G String" [www.proculharum.com](http://www.proculharum.com)



Listen to Annie's preferred version of the above melody by J. S. Bach by searching on the Amazon.com website. You can hear it on the Naxos recording shown at right.



The Hollies were one of the most popular acts of the British Invasion, rivaling the Beatles and the Rolling Stones in chart success. Try listening to "Long Cool Woman in a Black Dress". <http://www.hollies.co.uk>





## Some Background on the Period (page 1 of 2)

In the 1970s Britain had been torn apart by strikes and economic depression. British industry was in decline, the price of gas skyrocketed, garbage piled up in the streets and people couldn't rely on the trains to run on time. In 1979, after a period of immense social and political turmoil, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's conservative Tory party took power in Britain. Mrs. Thatcher promised to end social disruption and to improve industry profitability, and did, in fact, bring about radical changes in society.

At first glance, *The Real Thing*, set in early 1980s, doesn't seem to deal with contemporary controversy. However, when we look deeper, it becomes clear that the play takes issue with two pressing social items. In his presentation of Henry and Annie's relationship, Stoppard touches upon the changing status of marriage, and in the sub-plot about Brodie's imprisonment, he attacks segments of the anti-war movement which result from the Cold War.

### THE COLD WAR

The other important social issue Stoppard explores in *The Real Thing* is the British anti-war movement, which focused on the presence of American military bases on British soil and upon Britain's involvement in the manufacturing and sale of nuclear missiles. The Cold War was the lengthy struggle that started shortly after World War II between the global superpowers of the Soviet Union (and its allies) and the United States (and its allies which included the United Kingdom and other members of NATO). The Cold War lasted over four decades until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.



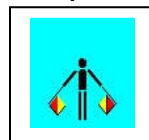
The Cold War did not involve outright armed conflict – although the Korean War and the Vietnamese War probably count - but was instead a stand-off characterized by diplomatic posturing and propaganda, economic pressure, and it saw the largest arms race – both conventional and nuclear – ever seen in history. There was great concern over the chance of all-out nuclear war, with bomb shelters being built all over the world. Anti-nuclear and anti-war protests were common in United States as well as Britain where US nuclear missiles had been installed aimed at the USSR.

In *The Real Thing*, Annie is active in the anti-missile movement. She meets Brodie, a soldier, when she is on her way to a demonstration. He tries to impress her by lighting a fire on the Cenotaph but is promptly arrested. Although Annie and Max champion Brodie's cause, Henry argues that Brodie is simply a mindless lout and that Annie's anti-war idealism is shallow and based largely on vanity and faddishness.

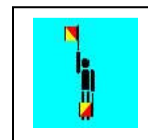


The International Peace Symbol is inspired by the semaphore symbols for N (nuclear) and D (disarmament).

N



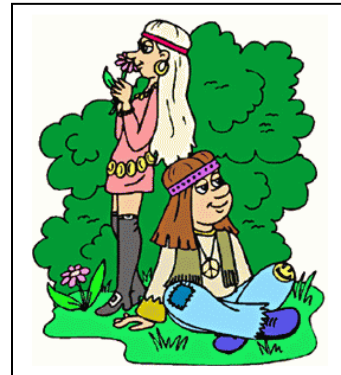
D



## Some Background on the Period (page 2 of 2)

### THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

The sexual revolution, generally occurring during the 1960s and 1970s, refers to a change in sexual morality and attitudes throughout the Western world, resulting in the behaviour of the two genders becoming more alike. One trigger that may have led to this revolution was the development of the birth control pill in 1960, which gave women access to easy and reliable contraception. Another factor might be the financial independence gained by many women who entered the workforce during and after World War II, making the revolution more about individual equality rather than biological independence. Whatever the roots, the sexual revolution resulted in a liberalization after the conservative period that existed between the 1930s and 1950s. Attitudes towards divorce changed greatly in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1950s and early-1960s, it was a social taboo to divorce one's spouse. Times had changed by 1980, and the audience of *The Real Thing* could accept Henry and Annie's decision to leave their respective spouses with a degree of understanding. But the price of such social change, Stoppard suggests, is that the post-divorce unions are frequently plagued by uncertainty and distrust. The 1960s were a time of rebellion against fashion (long hair and hippie clothes), music (Rock and Roll, the British Invasion), art (Op Art), as well as against the social mores of the previous generation. "Free love" was a movement begun in San Francisco which preached the power of love and the beauty of sex as part of ordinary life. Pre-marital sex became the norm along with warnings that the world was degenerating into an age of promiscuity.



## Vocabulary (page 1 of 2)

**approbation** – approval or consent

**apologia** – a formal defense of some idea or doctrine

**a priori** – based on theory instead of experience

**badinage** – playful talk

**bigot** – one who holds blindly and intolerantly to a particular opinion

**The Big Bopper** – deep-voiced 50s disc jockey and singer of “Chantilly Lace”

**Buddy Holly** – 50s Rock and Roll songwriter and singer of such hits as “Peggy Sue” and “That’ll Be the Day”

**carnal knowledge** – sexual relations

**Charlie Chaplin** – famous actor/comedian of silent films

**Chips Rafferty** – tall lanky Australian movie star of the 40s – 60s who was stereotyped as the adventurous outback Aussie

**Cortez, Fernando** – leader of the Spanish forces that conquered Mexico, destroyed the Aztec empire and claimed discovery of the Pacific Ocean

**Covent Garden** – name often given to the Royal Opera House in London

**crudités** – raw vegetables for dipping

**cuckoldry** – the position of having an unfaithful wife

**Das Kapital** – a very long treatise of political economy written by Karl Marx outlining his critical analysis of capitalism

**de facto** – actually existing but not officially approved

**diaphragm** – a vaginal contractive device

**dilettante** – one who dabbles in art, literature, etc. in a superficial way

**emancipation** – the freeing from slavery or restraint

**Eton** – a highly prestigious college for boys in England

**ersatz** – substitute or synthetic and inferior

**Fascism** – an authoritarian form of government which imposes state control over all aspects of life – political, social, economic and cultural – and is linked with extreme nationalism

**Finnegans Wake** – fanciful novel by James Joyce filled with obscure allusions, complex wordplay and puns in many different languages making it a major challenge for a reader

**in extremis** – at the point of death

**insularity** – the state of being isolated like an island

**hapless** – unlucky

**Jean-Paul Sartre** – French existentialist philosopher, dramatist and novelist

**jodhpurs** – riding breeches made loose above the knees and closefitting below

**lacuna** – a blank space, especially a missing portion of a text

**Lourdes** – a popular religious pilgrimage spot in France associated with numerous healing miracles

## Vocabulary (page 2 of 2)

- Ku Klux Klan** – a secretive American organization devoted to white supremacy, anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism and nativism
- malarkey** – nonsensical talk
- Marx Brothers** – team of comedians (Groucho, Harpo, Chico, Zeppo, and Gummo) who began in Vaudeville and went on to perform in films and television
- maidenhead** – hymen; thin membrane that closes part of the vagina in a virgin
- meretricious** – (of literary style) artificially and vulgarly attractive; derived from Latin *meretrix*, the word for harlot or prostitute
- Mussolini** – dictator who led Italy from 1923 to 1943; he did away with democracy, set up a Fascist state, and brought Italy into World War Two against the Allies
- Norfolk** – eastern county of England with large military bases and missile installations around the port city of Yarmouth
- petard** – an explosive device used to break down doors or walls; “hoist with one’s own petard” – to be destroyed by the thing one meant to destroy others
- Rembrandt** – Dutch painter of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century considered one of the greatest European painters; landscapes, portraits and religious works were among his masterpieces
- Saint Augustine** – a Fourth Century theologian and philosopher who greatly influenced Christianity and Western thought; taught views on ethics, original sin and holy wars
- scapegoat** – one who bears the blame for the mistakes of others
- sophistry** – misleading but clever reasoning
- Strauss, Richard** – German composer of tone poems and operas in the Romantic style
- subtext** – the unspoken inner thoughts of a character in a play which the audience senses or infers
- Verdi, Giuseppe** – 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian composer of melodramatic operas, *Aida*, *La Traviata*, and *Rigoletto* being some of his better known
- virgo syntacta** – a wordplay on “*virgo intacta*” meaning a true virgin and “syntax” meaning the proper use and arrangement of words in a sentence
- voracity** – extreme hunger or eagerness
- Whitehall** – street in London in the heart of the government district

## About the National Arts Centre

Situated in the heart of Canada's capital across from Parliament Hill, the National Arts Centre is among the largest performing arts complexes in Canada. It is the only multidisciplinary, bilingual performing arts centre in North America and features one of the largest stages on the continent, second only to that of the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

Officially opened on June 2, 1969, the National Arts Centre was one of the key institutions created by Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson as the principal centennial project of the federal government. It was designed to promote and showcase cultural achievements from across Canada. There are over 650 performances of music, dance, theatre and variety shows each year, with an annual attendance of close to 500,000.

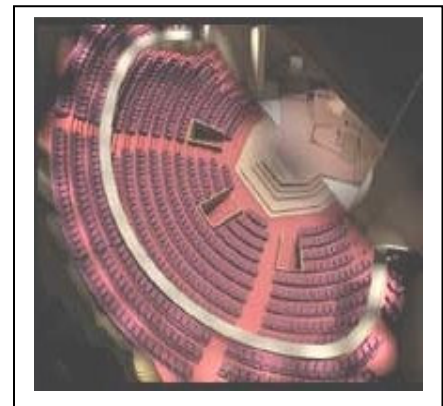
There are four performance spaces – Southam Hall, the largest with seating for 2323; the Theatre (897 seats); the Studio (300 seats), and the Fourth Stage (150 seats). With this wide variety of spaces any kind of event from grand opera to intimate cabaret can be satisfied.

As well as the performance areas the National Arts Centre is home for a wealth of other treasures. In Southam Hall hangs an immense tapestry, when not hidden from view, made of multi-coloured overlapping loops of nylon fibres; it is occasionally used as a spectacular front curtain for the opera stage. Also in Southam Hall is an elaborate Flentrop pipe organ, a gift from the Dutch-Canadian community. Visual art abounds throughout the building: five glass and steel stairwell sculptures ranging in height from 5 to 10 metres; the Jordi Bonet sculpted doors leading to the Salon, each of which is 2.5 x 7 metres and weighing one ton; the 30 individually designed and sculpted chairs found in the Oasis outside the Studio; as well as numerous paintings and murals arranged throughout the foyer.

The Theatre where *The Real Thing* will be presented was recently renovated to improve the seating and technical facilities. This space can be altered to form either a Proscenium style stage or a Thrust stage. In the Thrust arrangement the stage extends out into the audience area and "vomitoriums" allow the actors to enter from under the seating area. A complete reproduction of the Stratford Festival thrust stage set is in storage to be used whenever that company travels to perform at the NAC.



Proscenium Stage



Thrust Stage

To learn more about the NAC visit its website <http://www.nac-cna.ca/en/index.cfm> and that of ArtsAlive <http://www.artsalive.ca/> .

## Suggested Movies/Books/Websites

### Movies



*Empire of the Sun* (1987). Director: Steven Spielberg, Written by: Tom Stoppard. Stars Christian Bale (*Batman Begins*) as a young British boy and John Malkovich as an American opportunist caught in Japanese-occupied China during the Second World War. While interned in a prison camp the boy becomes obsessed with the grace and daring of the Japanese fighter pilots. Stoppard adapted the sensitive and emotionally moving script from the autobiographical novel by J.G. Ballard.

***Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*** (1990). Dir: Tom Stoppard, Written by: Tom Stoppard. Stars Gary Oldman and Tim Roth as Guildenstern and Rosencrantz (or is it the other way around?), two minor characters in the Hamlet story who have no idea of the magnitude of the events taking place around them and who stumble through the entire comedy trying to come to terms with their own existence and destiny. The screenplay is an adaptation of Stoppard's play of the same name.

***Shakespeare in Love*** (1998). Dir: John Madden. Written by Tom Stoppard and Marc Norman. Stars Gwyneth Paltrow, Joseph Fiennes, Ben Affleck and Judi Dench. Stoppard shared a Best Writing Academy Award for his original screenplay about a young Will Shakespeare whose writer's block is broken when he falls for a young lady who has disguised herself as a boy to play the part of Romeo in his latest work *Romeo and Ethel, the Pirate's Daughter*.

### Books



***The Cambridge Companion to Tom Stoppard***, edited by Katherine E. Kelly. This collection of 15 essays offers a guide to the work of Tom Stoppard and addresses all of his major stage and screen plays. It also includes photographs from key productions, a biography and chronology.

***The Theatre of Tom Stoppard***, by Anthony Jenkins. This study examines Stoppard's use of humour and games in conveying serious ideas. The book is useful to actors and directors as well as the viewing audience.

### Web-sites



[http://geocities.com/movie\\_starzz/BenandMatt/shakespeareinlove.txt](http://geocities.com/movie_starzz/BenandMatt/shakespeareinlove.txt). The screenplay for *Shakespeare in Love*.

[http://www.salon.com/people/bc/2001/11/13/tom\\_stoppard/index.html](http://www.salon.com/people/bc/2001/11/13/tom_stoppard/index.html). A brilliant commentary by Amy Reiter on Stoppard's writings.

<http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/stoppt/therealt.htm>. A review and commentary on Stoppard's *The Real Thing*.

<http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/research/fa/stoppard.hp.html>. An extensive website containing a biography, comments on Stoppard and Stoppard's personal papers.

## Activities (page 1 of 3)

### Before Seeing the Play:

1. Before seeing the play teachers might like to distribute copies of pages 1 through 5 (About the Play) of this Study Guide which include a synopsis, character descriptions, discussion of themes and style, and a description of the plays within the play. There is a surprise concerning Scene 1 of the play which will be given away, however. The ideas included on these pages could be a starting point for discussion on themes and production aspects after attending the production. Teachers will want to individually make the choice as to when to make the material on these pages available to their students. However, copies of Vocabulary (pages 17 and 18), if given out before the play, will certainly help the students appreciate the play more fully. The play is set in England during the early part of the 1980s. The section Some Background on the Period (pages 15 and 16), if read before seeing the play, will give a clearer meaning to some of the issues.
2. Page 9 of the Study Guide (Some of Stoppard's Other Plays) might inspire some senior students to read additional works by this master playwright. A comparative study could be done to link themes and styles seen in his work. An examination of his biography (page 8) will give some insight into the inspiration for many of these pieces.
3. Distribute copies of an Excerpt from 'Tis Pity She's a Whore (pages 11 and 12), a play by the Renaissance writer John Ford born during the time of Shakespeare. Most students have read or seen several of Shakespeare's works and would like to compare the language and scene development in this piece. Have the scene read aloud one or more times by teams of students. If time allows, pairs could rehearse the scene and present it in class the next day.
4. Distribute copies of Henry's Choice of Music (pages 13 and 14) and/or Suggested Movies, Books and Websites (pages 20). These pages will allow the students to research and enrich the theatregoing experience.
5. Distribute Clever Quotations from The Real Thing (page 10). Have the students choose one or more of the quotations and do a search on the internet to see what other writers such as Shakespeare or George Bernard Shaw have had to say on similar topics, eg. marriage or the nature of love. Examine the quotation concerning the cricket bat. Have the students do a short creative writing exercise by selecting an inanimate object and using it to create a metaphor for a more complex idea.
6. The pages About the National Arts Centre (page 19) and Theatre Etiquette (page 24) may be useful to students who have not visited the NAC before. Younger students in particular should be instructed on how to behave while attending a theatre performance. Visiting the NAC's ArtsAlive website [http://www.artsalive.ca/site\\_en.html](http://www.artsalive.ca/site_en.html) can be an exciting learning experience for students.

## Activities (page 2 of 3)

### After Seeing the Play (page 1 of 2):

**1.** Hold a class discussion on points made in pages 1 through 5 (About The Play: Plot Synopsis; Characters; Themes; Style; The Plays Within the Play).

For students who had been given this material before seeing the play: Did having certain things to watch for in the production make it more meaningful or did it ruin the surprises?

For students who received these pages after viewing the play: When did you realize that the first scene had been a play within a play, and what is the value of creating confusion in the minds of the audience?

A “play within a play” is a device used on occasion by a playwright, an example being Shakespeare in *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Have the class discuss the purpose of this device in these plays and whether or not it corresponds to Stoppard’s purpose in *The Real Thing*.

What do you think is the theme of the play and does this theme have meaning for today’s audience?

**2.** While the play is still fresh in their minds, give students the assignment of writing a review of the production of *The Real Thing*. Have them read reviews of other plays in *The Citizen* or *Xpress* to give them an idea of the standard approach to theatrical criticism. A suggested outline for writing a review can also be found online on page 12 of the Study Guide for *The “Vaudevilles” of Chekhov* found in the NAC’s website <http://www.artsalive.ca/en/eth/activities/>. Another excellent guide to writing a review can be found on the Theatre Ontario website [http://theatreontario.org/content/play\\_reviews.htm](http://theatreontario.org/content/play_reviews.htm).

Students may have received programs at the matinée, or may refer to page 6 of this Study Guide (Who Helped Put the Production Together?) for the correct information about the production in their reviews. The areas the review should cover, in general and more specifically when merited, are: all design elements (lighting, sound, set and costumes), the performance of the actors, the direction, the basic narrative, dialogue and the central theme(s) of the script.

**3.** On numerous occasions in *The Real Thing* it’s not what the characters say, it’s what they think (subtext) that holds important information. Visit the page “What Lies Beneath” in the NAC’s ArtsAlive website: <http://www.artsalive.ca/en/eth/activities/acting.html> and try the activity on making subtext work for you.

**4.** Some Background on the Period (pages 15 and 16) includes some information on the Cold War and the Sexual Revolution, two far-reaching and long-lasting events which affected many parts of the world. After reading these pages students might want to ask parents and grandparents about their memories of these events and the period in general. For instance, the “Diefenbunker” in Karp, now a museum, was constructed as a bomb shelter for Canadian government officials in case of a nuclear attack on Ottawa.



## **Activities** (page 3 of 3)

### **After Seeing the Play** (page 2 of 2):

#### **5. Topics for Further Discussion:**

There are several possible ways to interpret the conclusion of *The Real Thing*. Do you believe that Annie and Henry will be happy together? Or is their relationship, like their first marriages, doomed to failure?

Discuss the relationship between the main play and one or two of the other plays Stoppard refers to in *The Real Thing*. What do these extracts suggest to the audience about Henry and Annie?

What was your response to the character of Henry? Did you feel alienated by him, or did you empathize with him? Focus your response by discussing two scenes in which he appears and using his behavior in them to illustrate your argument.

Does this play, written in 1982, have anything to say to modern society?

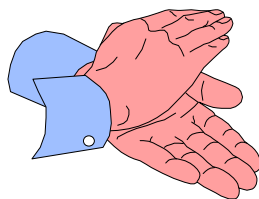
Discuss the use of repetition of scenes and topics of scenes and how this device achieves Stoppard's intent.



## ***Theatre Etiquette***

Please take a moment to prepare the students for their visit to the National Arts Centre by explaining good **Theatre Etiquette** which will enhance the enjoyment of the play by all audience members:

- 1.** *The Real Thing* will be performed in the Theatre of the NAC. Matinées at the NAC are for students and the general public. It is important for everyone to be quiet (no talking or rustling of materials) during the performance so others do not lose their immersion in the “world of the play”. Unlike movies, the actors in live theatre can hear disturbances in the audience and will give their best performances when they feel the positive involvement of the audience members. The appropriate way of showing approval for the actors’ performances is through laughter and applause. For the enjoyment of all, people who disturb others during the show may be asked to leave the Theatre.
- 2.** It is important that there be no electronic devices used in the Theatre so that the atmosphere of the play is not interrupted and others are not disturbed. Cell phones, pagers and anything that beeps must be turned off. Cameras and all other recording devices are not permitted in the Theatre.
- 3.** You will be seeing *The Real Thing* in the Theatre of the NAC. Tickets with assigned seats will be distributed by your teacher and to avoid confusion it is important to sit in the designated seat. All even numbered seats are on the left side of the theatre and all odd numbered seats are on the right. This means that seats 10 and 12, for example, are actually side by side.
- 4.** Programs may or may not be distributed at this student matinée. Information on the artists who put this play together, however, can be found in this Study Guide for those who wish to use it in writing a review. Some programs can be made available to teachers if desired as a teaching aid to show how a program is put together.
- 5.** The play is performed in 12 scenes with one 15-minute intermission. Anyone leaving while the play is in progress may unfortunately not be allowed back into the Theatre.





NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE  
CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS



**Imperial Oil  
Foundation**

*NAC English Theatre High School Matinées are  
supported by  
the Imperial Oil Foundation*

*NAC Study Guides are supported by  
the National Youth and Education Trust  
with special thanks to Founding Partner TELUS,  
CGI, SunLife Financial,  
Bruce Power, Michael Potter, and Véronique Dhieux,  
supporters and patrons of the NAC Gala  
and the NAC Foundation Donors' Circle*