

Mercer University Theatre

presents

The Real Inspector Hound

by

Tom Stoppard

Directed by Paul Oppy*

Set, Costumes and Lighting
designed by Marian Zielinski*

CAST

(in order of appearance)

on (a critic) Christopher Kirby
boot (a critic) Mark Brunson*
Body/Radio Announcer Rhett Thomas
on Gascoyne Tony Weathers
s. Drudge Pam Webb*
city Susan Hatcher
nthia Shannon Prince
gnus Tom McKlin
ector Hound Roland Ochoa*

Setting

A theatre somewhere in England.

Production Crew

Stage Manager Suzette Grynewicz
Technical Director Marian Zielinski*
Stage Managing Consultant Erin Peitzo*
Master Carpenter Gregg Franklin
Set Construction Crew Shawn Bransky
Jerry Bridges, Christine Buel*
Sara Ewell, Suzette Grynewicz
Nandini Makrandi, Mary Kay McPherson
Eric O'Dell, Matt Olson
Kenley Raynor, John Ridley
Lyn Whitfield
Costume Construction Crew Christine Buel*
Sara Ewell, Mary Kay McPherson
Master Electrician Roland Ochoa*
Lighting Crew Shawn Bransky, Drew Brown
Gregg Franklin, Eric O'Dell
John Ridley, Lyn Whitfield
Matt Olson
Light Board Operator Drew Brown
Sound Operator Joseph Talmadge Stuckey
Poster/Program Designer Eric O'Dell
Program Layout Erin Peitso*
Publicity Lyn Whitfield
Box office Thelma Ross, Lyn Whitfield
Ushers Alpha Delta Pi

*Member of Alpha Psi Omega, National Honorary
Dramatic Fraternity

Notes for a Viewing of *The Real Inspector Hound*

Tom Stoppard, one of the most prolific and critically acclaimed playwrights of the modern English stage, was born Tomas Straussler in Zlin, Czechoslovakia on July 3, 1937. At the prospect of a Nazi invasion the Straussler family, who were of partially Jewish descent, moved to Singapore where Tomas' father continued in the employ of the Bata shoe manufacturing company as a staff physician. When the Japanese invaded Singapore in 1942, Mrs. Straussler and her two sons were evacuated; Dr. Straussler remained and was killed. At Darjeeling, India, Tomas attended an English-language school while his mother managed a Bata shoe shop. In 1945, Martha Straussler married Kenneth Stoppard, a major in the British Army, and her sons adopted his surname. In 1946 the Stoppard family returned to England where Stoppard attended prep and grammar (secondary) schools from 1946-54. Leaving school in 1954, Stoppard went to work as a reporter, a job he was to hold with several papers in Bristol until 1960 when he resigned to devote himself to writing full time. After moving to London in 1962, Stoppard secured production of his first play, *A Walk on the Water*, by British Independent Television. At the same time, Stoppard was writing drama reviews for the short-lived magazine *Scene*. While writing radio plays and weekly serial scripts for the BBC, Stoppard achieved some notoriety when his translation of Slawomir Mrozek's *Tango* was produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1966. His reputation was secured by the 1967 production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. An immediate success with both critics and theater audiences on both sides of the Atlantic, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* has been followed by a host of substantial pieces: *The Real Inspector Hound* (1968), *After Magritte* (1970), *Jumpers* (1972), *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* (1979) and *The Real Thing* (1982). Stoppard has also been active in Amnesty International, especially attempting to stop the harassment of Czech playwright and dissident Vaclav Havel.

In several ways *The Real Inspector Hound*, the one-act successor of the longer *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, is typical of Stoppard's drama as a whole. Set in a non-descript theatre, *Hound's* plot is extremely theatrical. Ostensibly the play rehearses the fates of two hack critics, Moon and Birdboot, sent to review a tediously derivative thriller of *The Mousetrap* school performed by an indifferently talented company. As the action progresses, the audience quickly realizes that neither critic is remotely interested in the play being performed. Moon is consumed with his desire to become the primary drama critic of his paper, while Birdboot reveals a penchant for using his position as a reviewer to coerce actresses into having liaisons with him. Though initially shunted to one side by the critics' reveries, *The Real Inspector Hound* inevitably draws our attention, for the "who-done-it" formula works even as we attempt to ignore its formulaic appeal and concentrate upon the two protagonists. We are not long troubled by trying to keep the two actions clearly separate. Instead, this double focus disquietingly dissolves as the tawdry lives of Moon and Birdboot merge with those of the characters on stage. It is at this juncture that we begin to realize that Stoppard is addressing perennial topics of interest to dramatists — the fragile distinctions between reality and illusion, and the manners in which we construct our own identities. What is new, however, is his use of the postmodernist dramatic device of pulling "real" people into the action of a "play". *Hound's* particular configuration of the question is reminiscent of the metadramatic concerns about the nature of theatrical "reality" that Stoppard had explored earlier in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Drawn ever deeper into the action of the play they are watching, Birdboot and Moon eventually give over completely their reality as reviewers and fully disappear into the action. At a greater remove, we seem to escape. Thus, the denouement is both extremely amusing and utterly terrifying, for a new mystery has displaced the original. While wrenchingly reconfiguring the thriller, the play leaves us to ask ourselves the disquieting question of whether a stage might exist somewhere on which a telephone rings for each of us.

G.A.R.

SPECIAL THANKS

Kendall Countryman
 Dr. Gary A. Richardson
 Mr. Robert Calloway and
 Middle Georgia Hospital

WINTER QUARTER

Backdoor Theatre

One-Act Festival of Student Written and Directed Plays

Touring

An Original Children's Play based on
 African and European Folk Tales

Mercer University Presents
 October 23-28, 8:00



The Real Inspector
 The Backdoor Theatre

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