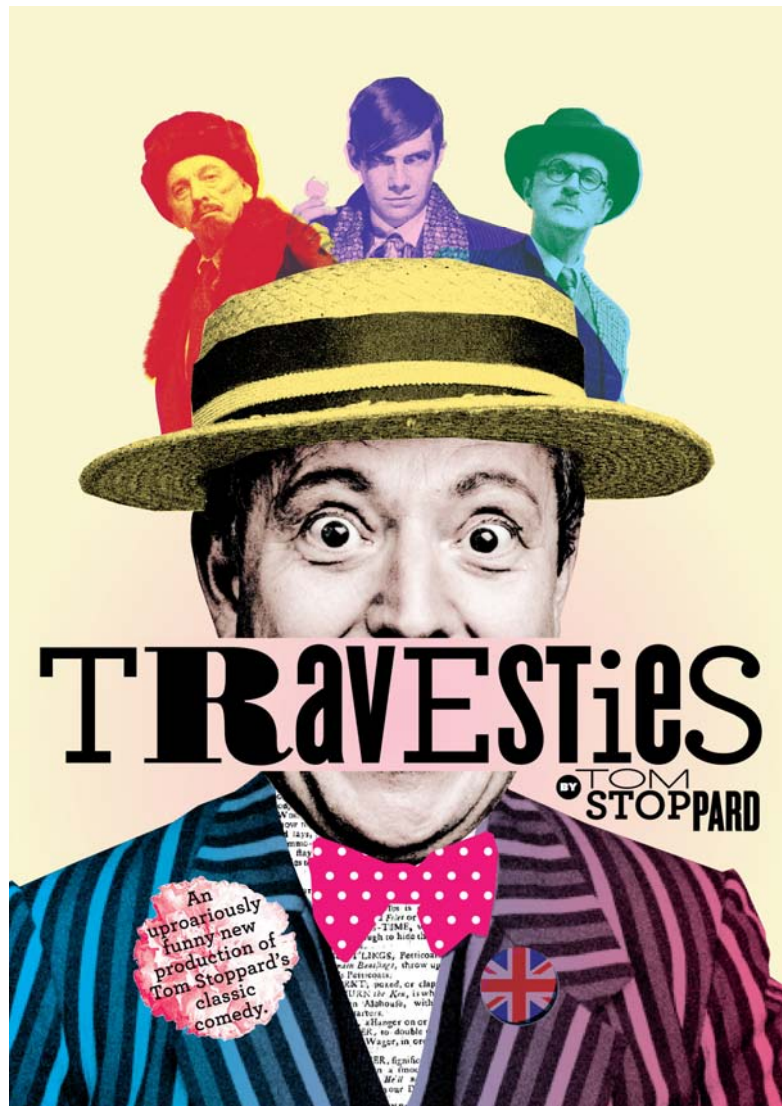


Sydney Theatre Company and HWL Ebsworth Lawyers present



Directed by Richard Cottrell

Teacher's Resource Kit

Written and compiled by Jeffrey Dawson

Acknowledgements

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In addition to what's contained in these notes, we encourage you and your students to access video interviews, images and reviews located on the Schools Day: Travesties page of the website.

About Sydney Theatre Company

Sydney Theatre Company (STC) produces theatre of the highest standard that consistently illuminates, entertains and challenges. It is committed to the engagement between the imagination of its artists and its audiences, to the development of the art form of theatre, and to excellence in all its endeavours.

STC has been a major force in Australian drama since its establishment in 1978. It was created by the New South Wales Government, following the demise of the Old Tote Theatre Company. The original intention was to better utilise the Drama Theatre of the Sydney Opera House and the new Company comprised a small central administration staff, technical staff, workshop and rehearsal facilities. Richard Wherrett was appointed Artistic Director from 1979 to 1990.

The Wharf opened on 13 December, 1984 by Premier Neville Wran, which allowed all departments of the Company to be housed under one roof for the first time. The venue was to become the envy of the theatre world. From 1985, the Company could perform in two locations throughout the year, the Drama Theatre and The Wharf. From 1990 to 1999, Wayne Harrison served as Artistic Director. A third regular venue, Sydney Theatre, administered and operated by STC, opened in 2004.

The predominant financial commitment to STC is made by its audience. Of this audience, the Company's subscribers make a crucial commitment. The Company is also assisted annually by grants from the Federal Government through the Australia Council and the New South Wales Government through the Ministry for the Arts. STC also actively seeks sponsorship and donations from the corporate sector and from private individuals.

Under the leadership of Artistic Directors Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton, STC's annual subscription season features up to 12 plays including: recent or new Australian works, interpretations of theatrical classics and contemporary foreign works. In addition STC regularly co-produces and tours productions throughout Australia, playing annually to audiences in excess of 300,000. STC actively fosters relationships and collaborations with international artists and companies. In 2006 STC began a new journey of artistic development with the inception of The Actors Company, the STC ensemble.

To access detailed information on Sydney Theatre Company, its history and productions please contact our Archivist Judith Seeff at jseeff@sydneytheatre.com.au

STC Ed

Sydney Theatre Company is committed to education by programming original **productions** and **workshops** that enthuse and engage the next generation of theatre-goers. Within the education programme Sydney Theatre Company produces its own season of plays as well as collaborates with leading theatre-for-young-people companies across Australia.

Often a young person's first experience of theatre is facilitated by teachers. STC ensures access to all of its mainstage productions through the **schools day** programme as well as produces and tours theatre specifically crafted to resonate with young people.

STC works to support educators in their Drama and English-teaching practices. Every year dynamic **workshops** are held by leading theatre practitioners to support curriculum content, detailed resources are provided for all productions and an extensive work-experience programme is available to students from across the state.

The annual Sydney Morning Herald and Sydney Theatre Company **Young Playwright's Residency** continues to develop and encourage young writers.

Sydney Theatre Company has an extensive **on-line resource** for teachers and students. Visit www.sydneytheatre.com.au/education.

We encourage teachers to subscribe to regular e-news to keep informed as well as access **heavily discounted** tickets and special offers/

For further information on STC Education programme, please contact the Education Manager Helen Hristofski at hristofski@sydneytheatre.com.au

Production Credits

CAST

Bennett	Robert Alexander
Gwendolen	Blazey Best
Henry Carr	Jonathan Biggins
James Joyce	Peter Houghton
Cecily	Rebecca Massey
Tristan Tzara	Toby Schmitz
Nadya	Wendy Strehlow
Lenin	William Zappa

Director	Richard Cottrell
Set Designer	Michael Scott-Mitchell
Costume Designer	Julie Lynch
Lighting Designer	Bernie Tan
Composer & Sound Designer	Paul Charlier
Choreographer	Pamela French
Assistant Director	Johann Walraven
Magic Consultant	Ross Skiffington
Voice Consultant	Charmian Gradwell
Production Manager	Janet Eades
Stage Manager	John Reid
Assistant Stage Manager	Sophie Mackay
Wardrobe Supervisor	Justine Haselton
Rehearsal & Production	
Photographer	Heidrun Lohr

Travesties Summary

Act 1

Most of the action in *Travesties* takes place in Zurich in 1917, during World War I, and focuses on three revolutionaries: the communist leader Lenin, the Dadaist poet Tristan Tzara, and the Modernist writer James Joyce. Henry Carr, a minor British official, relates the trio's actions and dialogue through his memories of that time period. Carr claims that he met Lenin at the Zurich Public Library and Tzara and Joyce during a production of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The play is set in two locations: the Zurich Public Library, where the principle characters interact, and Carr's apartment in Zurich, where the now-elderly man recalls the past.

The dialogue focuses on the revolutionaries' politics and philosophies at a turning point in each man's life: Joyce's writing of his novel *Ulysses*, published in 1922; Tzara's creation of the principles of Dada, a nihilistic movement in art and literature; and Lenin's decision to journey back to Russia to take part in the Russian Revolution.

The play opens at the Library as Gwen, Carr's younger sister, sits with Joyce, transcribing an early draft of what will become *Ulysses*. Lenin and Tzara are also present and writing. When Tzara finishes, he cuts up his paper "word by word," places the pieces into his hat, dumps them on the table, and begins randomly arranging them into nonsensical sentences, which he then reads. Joyce reads, from his manuscript, sentences that also appear to be nonsensical.

Cecily, a young, attractive librarian, who has been helping Lenin work on his book on imperialism, enters. She inadvertently picks up a folder containing Joyce's manuscript while Gwen does the same with Lenin's draft. Neither notices the mistake and both leave. Nadya, Lenin's wife, then arrives and talks to her husband "in an agitated state," telling him that a revolution in Russia has begun.

The play jumps ahead several years to an elderly Carr, reminiscing about the different characters. He refers to Joyce as an "Irish lout" due to litigation with the writer over financial matters concerning the production of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the play both had been involved in. Carr then turns his attention to Lenin and his desire to participate in the revolution. Carr explains that in 1917, he received orders from the British Foreign Minister to spy on Lenin to discover his plans.

The scene shifts back to the past as Tzara arrives at Carr's apartment, followed soon after by Joyce and Gwen. Joyce asks for Carr's official support and money for a production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The scene degenerates into a seemingly nonsensical conversation among the characters that is set in limerick form, which nonetheless provides a sense of the tenets of Dadaism. Tzara and Carr then appear to become characters, from *The Importance of Being Earnest*, who discuss two literary schools: aestheticism (devotion to and pursuit of the beautiful), practiced by Wilde, and Dadaism, as their dialogue devolves into "clever nonsense." Tzara insists that artists should "jeer and howl... at the delusion that infinite generations of real effects can be inferred from the gross expression of apparent cause." Carr counters, "it is the duty of the artist to beautify existence."

Later, Tzara explains that to avoid a conflict with Lenin, who holds Dadaists in contempt, he identified himself as Jack Tzara, Tristan's older brother. When Gwen and Joyce arrive, Joyce

asks Carr for financial support for the production of *Earnest* and asks him to play the leading role, “not Ernest, the other one.” Tzara then cuts up one of Shakespeare’s sonnets, puts the words randomly into poetic lines, and gives the results to Gwen, saying, “I offer you a Shakespeare sonnet, but it is no longer his. It comes from the wellspring where my atoms are uniquely organised, and my signature is written in the hand of chance.” When he tells her he loves her, she says she was destined to love a poet, and so she will love him.

As Joyce begins to do magic tricks with his hat, he and Tzara discuss dada. Soon the two argue about art and artists. Jumping into the future, Carr remembers the suits he and Joyce brought against each other for alleged nonpayment of monies involved in the play. He notes that Joyce left Zurich after the war, went to Paris for twenty years, and then returned to Zurich in 1940. He died the following January.

Act 2

Back in the library, Nadya writes in her journal. Carr explains that at the outbreak of the war, Lenin and his wife were briefly interned in Austro-Hungary. After arriving in Switzerland, they came to Zurich so Lenin could use the library as he worked on his book on imperialism. Carr explains, “Zurich during the war was a magnet for refugees, exiles, spies, anarchists, artists and radicals of all kinds.” Nadya’s journal, which is an early draft of her *Memories of Lenin*, records, “from the moment the news of the February revolution came, Ilyich burned with eagerness to go to Russia ... but this was easier said than done.” She notes that Russia was currently at war with Germany, “and Lenin was no friend of the Allied countries. His war policy made him a positive danger to them.”

When Carr arrives in his role as spy, Cecily misidentifies him as Tristan Tzara, and he plays along with the ruse. He insists to her that he is not “a decadent nihilist” but asks her to reform him nonetheless because he is ready to renounce his beliefs in dada. **The two then argue about the role of art.** Tzara appears and joins in the argument, insisting that “artists and intellectuals will be the conscience of the revolution.” Lenin and his wife leave.

The elderly Carr explains that he got a good idea of Lenin’s intentions through his association with Cecily. However, he claims that he did not act on the information, noting, “I might have stopped the whole Bolshevik thing in its tracks, but... I was torn. On the one hand, the future of the civilized world. On the other hand, my feelings for Cecily.” After noting Lenin’s dismissal of modern art, Carr argues “there was nothing wrong with Lenin except his politics” and decides that they are of the same mind.

After Gwen arrives, she and Cecily sing a conversation with each other to the tune of a popular song. Eventually they clear up the mistaken identities of Jack and Tristan Tzara. When Joyce arrives, asking Carr for money, the two men argue. Later, the switched folders are exchanged, and the scene dissolves into a dance.

In the final scene, Old Carr and his wife, Cecily, discuss the court case involving Joyce. Cecily tries to correct her husband’s faulty memory, insisting that Carr “never got close to” Lenin and that she does not remember Tzara. She admits Carr had contact with Joyce, but that she never helped Lenin write his book on imperialism. The scene ends with Carr refusing to acknowledge his unreliable memory. He notes that he learned three things during the war: first, “you’re either a revolutionary or you’re not, and if you’re not you might as well be an artist as anything else”; secondly, “if you can’t be an artist, you might as well be a revolutionary.” He forgets, though, the final thing he learned.

Tom Stoppard, Playwright

Tom Stoppard wrote his first play *Enter a Free Man*, whilst working as a journalist in Bristol. He continued as a freelance journalist, at the same time writing radio plays, a novel, (*Lord Malquist and Mr. Moon*), and the first of his plays to be staged, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. His subsequent plays include *The Real Inspector Hound*, *After Magritte*, *Jumpers*, *Travesties*, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (a play for actors and orchestra written with Andre Previn), *Night and Day*, *The Real Thing*, *Hapgood*, *Arcadia*, *Indian Ink*, *The Invention Of Love*, *The Coast Of Utopia* and *Rock 'N' Roll*.

The above is a only a brief snap-shot of Stoppard's plays. Students can further research his expansive body of work via the web.

When *Travesties* appeared on the London stage in 1974, it soon reinforced Tom Stoppard's reputation as one of the twentieth century's most innovative and clever playwrights. The play focuses on the fictional meeting of three important revolutionary figures in Zurich in 1917: the Communist leader Lenin, the Dadaist poet Tristan Tzara, and the Modernist author James Joyce. Henry Carr, who in real life knew Joyce, relates the trio's interactions through his unreliable memory.

The play takes the form of a witty farce as it showcases, through comic wordplay, the political and philosophical point of view of these three men, who all had a profound influence on their times. Humorous complications spring from misunderstandings, mistaken identity, and plot twists that Stoppard borrows from Oscar Wilde's farcical masterpiece, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. As Stoppard cleverly juxtaposes his three central figures' theories on Marxism, Dadaism, and Modernism, he addresses complex questions on the nature and function of politics and art and the role of the artist.

Anne Wright, in her article on Stoppard for the Dictionary of Literary Biography, suggests that *Travesties*, along with his other plays, proves Stoppard to be "a skilled craftsman, handling with great dexterity and precision plots of extreme ingenuity and intricacy." Prolific British playwright yet with a Czech born/Jewish background. Stoppard spoke Czech during the first four years of his life, later forgotten. Moved to Britain as a baby and remained there; he went to a minor prep school and took up cricket.

Stoppard, who was born Tomáš Straüssler, in Zlín, Czechoslovakia, arrived in England, via Singapore and India, in 1946, a nine-year-old refugee from the Nazis. "I put on Englishness like a coat," he told the Independent recently. "It fitted me and it suited me." Now a knight of the realm, and revered as one of his generation's most important playwrights, Stoppard has been amply rewarded by the culture he adopted. He has written more than twenty plays and numerous scripts for film and television.

Stoppard has become almost a genre unto himself, taking intellectual, often abstruse subject matter and turning it into challenging yet playful drama. His game frequently is the oddball juxtaposition –

British Director Trevor Nunn said that Stoppard told him that he decides on one play, and then shortly after decides on a different one."... Stoppard describes his politics as "timid libertarian."

When a new play is bedded down Stoppard, who has been divorced twice and lives alone in Chelsea, reads voraciously and waits for inspiration.

"In the last 10 years I probably spent only a year or maybe 18 months actually writing what gets performed, and the rest of the time is either looking for stuff or having a great time reading it up," he says. "A play doesn't take that long to write. If you think of a play as a book, it's like 100 pages at most, and a lot of the pages are quite white. If you can write a couple of pages a day, you only need a couple of months. Getting the ideas and getting to the top of page, one probably takes 90 per cent of the time."

He does not begin a play because he has "certain rather interesting ideas I really would like to communicate to people".

"You just don't do that," he says. "The primary impulse is not a social-external-political sense of oneself in a society with comments to make. The primary impulse is much more to do with being part of this wonderful form of recreation and I do believe theatre is a recreation. That is what unites different sorts of theatre, it's what they have in common. Otherwise why are they called plays? I happen to be the sort of person who gets turned on by ideas, so when it comes to finding a play, mostly I am looking for a story and characters to embody, convey some abstract thing I have got obsessed with."

In the 1960s Stoppard declared he was not interested in pursuing any causes through his writing. "I burn with no causes," he wrote in *The Sunday Times* back then. "I cannot say that I write with any social objective. One writes because one loves writing, really."

That view quickly faded, says the dramatist who has written vehemently since the 1970s about communist oppression in Eastern Europe.

"First of all, almost nothing I said and possibly say is entirely sincere," he says. "It is the sincerity of the moment, it's a kind of ephemeral sincerity."

"In any case, it is very hard to name any work of art (that) is incapable of being spun in a political way. Samuel Beckett was not a political writer in most senses and yet writing about human existence at that level is some kind of statement beyond literature and beyond mere observation of human behaviour."

"I think that drama works in the long term, it lays down some kind of template of moralities: moral values, which can teach and influence. But in terms of trying to change something out on the streets, or change it by next Tuesday, I think print journalism but even more so television journalism is far more powerful than fiction."

Context

STRUCTURALISM

In the 1970s, Structuralism, a type of literary criticism concerned with the structures of language, became popular in academic scholarship. Structuralism began in the science of linguistics, especially in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure. This theory depends on a theory of language as a sign system whose individual components can be understood only in relation to each other and to the system as a whole. Meaning is determined by how language fits within literary conventions. Structuralism challenges the view that a literary work reflects a given reality or that it reflects the emotions of its author. Stoppard's continuous and witty word play in *Travesties* reflects the Structuralists' attention to the constructs and the effects of language.

MARXIST CRITICISM

Marxist criticism is another literary school that was popular at the time *Travesties* was published. This theory is based on the economic and political doctrines of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marxist literary scholars examine the economic and social pressures on authors and how those pressures are reflected in their works. The literature most highly regarded by this school mirrors and critiques social realities. Extreme Marxist critics call on authors to construct their works to express and promote party doctrine. Less strident followers of this school, however, focus their attention on how authors show their characters suffering under rigid social and economic ideologies, especially those produced under a capitalistic system. The Hungarian Georg Lukacs was the most widely influential Marxist critic in the twentieth century, especially after his *Writer and Critic and Other Essays* was translated into English in 1970.

The Lenin in the play represents the extremist Marxist view in his essay, "Literature and Art," written during the first Russian Revolution in 1905. In this essay, Lenin insists that contemporary literature "must become party literature" by becoming "a part of the common cause of the proletariat, a cog in the Social democratic mechanism."

Cecily supports and extends Lenin's point of view in her conversation with Carr. She tells him "the sole duty and justification for art is social criticism." When Carr disagrees, Cecily counters by insisting that since society is governed by economics, the people must take responsibility for change, and that change can be promoted through party literature. She ends the arguments with Carr by stating, "Art is a critique of society or it is nothing."

DADA

Dada was a nihilistic movement in art and literature started in Zurich in 1916 by the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara along with Hans Arp, Hugo Ball, and Richard Huelsenbeck in response to the widespread disillusionment engendered by World War I. The founders meant Dadaism to signify total freedom from ideals and traditions concerning aesthetics and behavior. The most important concept of Dada is the word *nothing*. In art, Dadaism produced collage effects as artists arranged unrelated objects in a random fashion. Dadaism in literature produced mostly nonsense poems consisting of meaningless, random combinations of words, which were read in public cafes and bars. These constructions in art and literature stressed absurdity and the role of the unpredictable in the creative process.

This group came into vogue in Paris immediately after the World War I. Tzara carried the school to England and America where its influence became apparent in the poetry of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot and in the art of Ernst and Magritte. By 1921, Dadaism, as a movement, was modified into surrealism. However, its influence continued for many years in literature and art.

During his conversations with Carr in the play, Tzara explains the tenets of Dadaism. He insists that artists should “jeer and howl... at the delusion that infinite generations of real effects can be inferred from the gross expression of apparent cause.” After Carr criticizes him for speaking “nonsense,” Tzara argues, “it may be nonsense, but at least it’s not clever nonsense. Cleverness has been exploded, along with so much else, by the war.” During a discussion of the role of the artist, Tzara insists that art was corrupted as “it began to celebrate the ambitions and acquisitions of the pay-master.” He claims that now with or without art, man is a “coffee-mill,” following a daily pattern of monotony, which is the message of dada. Carr describes dada as a “historical halfway house between Futurism and Surrealism . . . ’tween the before-the-war-to-end-all-wars years and the between-the-wars years.” He suggests that dadaists cry “down with reason, logic, causality, coherence, tradition, proportion, sense and consequence.”

AESTHETICISM

Another literary school of thought that was popular during the later part of the nineteenth century, aestheticism focuses on the analysis of the beautiful or tasteful. An aesthete appreciates the beautiful in art, music, and literature. Its tenets included the point of view that art is self-sufficient and should serve no other purpose than its own ends. One of the catchphrases of the movement was “art for art’s sake.” Thus art should not endorse any political or moral position. Followers devoted themselves to a search for beauty and a promotion of the idea that beauty has independent value.

The movement originated in the work of several German writers of the Romantic period, including Kant, Schelling, Goethe, and Schiller. They all advanced the philosophy that art and the artist must be autonomous and therefore should be considered superior. The movement became a reaction against the materialism and capitalism of the late Victorian period. Oscar Wilde became the aesthetes’ “cult hero.”

Carr voices the aesthetes’ position in *Travesties*. In a conversation with Tzara, he claims, “revolution in art is in no way connected with class revolution. Artists are members of a privileged class,” and “an artist is someone who is gifted in some way that enables him to do something more or less well which can only be done badly or not at all by someone who is not thus gifted.” Later he insists “it is the duty of the artist to beautify existence.”

Compare & Contrast

- **1917:** On November 6, the Bolshevik revolution begins in Petrograd, Russia. Government offices are seized, and the revolutionaries take over the Romanovs' Winter Palace.

1991: On December 17, President Mikhail Gorbachev orders the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and a new Commonwealth of Independent States is formed by the countries that formerly made up the U.S.S.R.

- **1914:** World War I begins and lasts until 1918, the largest war to date. Approximately ten million are killed and twenty million are wounded.

1973: The United States signs a peace agreement with North and South Vietnam ending the Vietnam War. The United States faces worldwide protest over its involvement in the war.

2001: The conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians heightens in the Middle East.

- **1922:** James Joyce has a difficult time finding a publisher for his novel *Ulysses* due to its sexuality explicit passages and what many consider to be its vulgarity. The novel is eventually published by a small Parisian press.

1973: Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* provides an explicit exploration of a woman's sexual experiences, which shocks the reading public. Nevertheless, the book becomes a bestseller.

Today: Sexually explicit novels are published on a regular basis.

THE DIRECTOR

Seasoned theatre critic Diana Simmonds says it all regarding the taut direction of Richard Cottrell in the following review from her comprehensive website [stagenoise.com.au](http://www.stagenoise.com.au). The link is <http://www.stagenoise.com/reviewsdisplay.php?id=313>

It's a joy and a privilege to watch it

Travesties

March 14th 2009 12:01 pm | Theatre | Review

By [Diana Simmonds](#)

O lucky people! Watching Richard Cottrell's new production of *Travesties* is like body-surfing a huge, bubbling, boisterous, unpredictable, possibly dangerous and always exhilarating rolling wave for two unforgettable hours. It threatens at any moment to break and overwhelm with myriad words, ideas and comedic challenges, but it never does. At the end, you're deposited on the beach, safe, spluttering with laughter, wonder and delight. It's one hell of a ride.



The key to this revival of Tom Stoppard's 1978 masterpiece of unreliable memoir, comedy and language is, in this instance, its director Richard Cottrell. If ever a play and director were meant to be together it's he and *Travesties*. Cottrell's career in theatre is immense and not merely in terms of longevity. He has directed, at the highest level, virtually every play of merit either in the UK, Australia or north America, since his name began appearing in programs in the mid-60s, and his successes are legendary.

He has brought this wealth of lightly-worn knowledge and a treasury of experience to one of the most difficult - but therefore potentially most rewarding - works of the 20th century. To pull off the dense laugh-leviathan known as *Travesties* the cast and director must have an acute understanding and awareness of its complex layers and how they must mesh perfectly. The layers are the text, movement, physical nuance, the playing space and that thing so easily called "comic timing" but which is the difference between laughter and silence.

Although these elements are the basic stuff of all theatre, for the cast of *Travesties*, they are heightened to the point of existential terror. Get a step or an eyebrow wrong, pause in the wrong place, or try a new bit of unplanned business, and the house of cards collapses into a melange of incomprehensible verbiage known as failure.

This production does none of that. The cast is impeccable, the set and costumes are splendid and the whole is even greater than the sum of its considerable parts. (Choreographer Pamela French, Designer Michael Scott Mitchell, Lighting Designer Bernie Tan and Costume Designer Julie Lynch.)

Apparently Stoppard saw Jonathan Biggins in *Ying Tong* last year (also beautifully directed by Cottrell). He must have breathed a sigh of relief that our most brilliant comic goose was going to play Henry Carr, the minor British consular functionary whose grandiose memories are at the centre of *Travesties*.

Stoppard would be as thrilled by the other actors too: Robert Alexander, Blazey Best, Peter Houghton, Rebecca Massey, Toby Schmitz, Wendy Strehlow and William Zappa. They are among Australia's very best and they're all at the top of their form - possibly higher than they've been before, under Cottrell's influence.

Stoppard was already a major star when *Travesties* opened at the Aldwych Theatre in London in 1974. Audiences in the UK and around the world had already been dazzled by *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *The Real Inspector Hound* and *Jumpers*. That he might conjure up yet another play of originality and brilliance didn't seem possible, but it was and more than 30 years later, it still is.

Stoppard loves playing around with history, memory and the mesh of lies in between. He also loves comedy, literature, games and the intoxicating effect of mixing the whole lot together - at his best he's an alchemist. The ingredients of *Travesties* are Henry Carr, a minor British consular official in Zurich in 1917. There he met James Joyce who was working in the local library on what would become *Ulysses*; also in the library the Dadaist poet Tristan Tzara was falling in love with Carr's younger sister Gwendolen, while in another part of the library Lenin was writing a revolutionary polemic aided by the passionately infatuated librarian Cecily. And Carr's long-suffering butler Bennett was a Bolshevik spy when not serving tea and muffins to his master.

Joyce was also the manager of the local expat amateur theatricals; when the company staged *The Importance of Being Earnest* Carr was called upon to play Algernon. If you're bemused it is as nought compared with the hock-addled and sliding-towards-senility reminiscences of the memoirist, Henry Carr.

"Zurich during the war," muses Carr with utmost pomposity. "Refugees, spies, exiles, painters, poets, writers, radicals of all kinds - I knew them all - I learned three things in Zurich during the war. I wrote them down. Firstly, you're either a revolutionary or you're not, and if you're not you might as well be an artist as anything else. Secondly, if you can't be an artist, you might as well be a revolutionary. I forget the third thing."

Long before it became fashionable, Stoppard had caught on to the unreliability of memory: Carr was indeed a consular official in Zurich and Joyce, Lenin and Tzara were also trapped there for various reasons of war and history. But not all at the same time and never in the same place! And the misses Gwendolen and Cecily did not exist outside Wilde's play, while the butler Bennett was actually the British consul and probably not waiting for the revolution.

Travesties is a marvellous flummery and the Sydney Theatre Company has caused it to be marvellously done. It's a joy and a privilege to watch it.

STYLE

Stoppard constructs *Travesties* as a farce that focuses on a travesty of the main characters' style with the exception of Lenin's monologues. He parodies the modernist, fragmented, and obscure style of Joyce's *Ulysses*, the randomness of Dadaist verse in Tzara's poetry, and the aesthetic wit and comedy of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Nonsense dialogue, limerick form, and two musical numbers also add to the comic effect.

STRUCTURE

Stoppard borrows the structure and plot devices from *The Importance of Being Earnest* while he raises complex questions on the relationship between art and politics. Characters in the two plays share the same names, the same conflicts, including mistaken identities and misunderstandings, and pieces of the same dialogue. As a result of this comic interplay, no one point of view becomes dominant.

POINT OF VIEW

The play's action is related through the sometimes faulty memory of Henry Carr. Often "time slips" occur as Carr recalls incidents from his past, and as a result, he "drops a scene and then picks it up again." These time slips take place during Carr's conversations with his manservant Bennett and reveal his "prejudices and delusions." Stoppard notes that in these instances the story "jumps the rails and has to be restarted at the point where it goes wild."

Character Summaries

The play is about four groups of people.

Henry Carr

The play's main character, Carr, Stoppard tells us, "appears as a shabby and very old man [at first] and also as his youthful, elegant self." He is a minor British government official assigned to Zurich during the First World War. The action of the play is presented through Carr's sometimes-unreliable memory. At the end of the play, Cecily, his wife, expresses her doubts over whether Carr actually ever met Tzara or Lenin. Carr did, however, meet Joyce when he played Algernon Moncrieff in a production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. In his memory, Carr engages in discussions that sometimes degenerate into arguments with Lenin, Joyce, and Tzara about the war, politics, and art. Carr's memory confuses the story of his life with that of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Some of the dialogue he recalls are quotes from the play, and two of his characters have the same names.

In "Stoppard's Theatre of Unknowing," Mary A. Doll notes that Carr "is the improbable fringe catalyst of chaos who remembers his time in war chiefly through recollecting what he wore (war/ wore) twill jodhpurs, silk cravats [presenting] war [as] a metaphor for fashion." C. W. E. Bigsby in his article on Tom Stoppard for *British Writers* comments on Carr's role as narrator, insisting "this clash of ideas loses much of its urgency seen from the perspective of a deluded, prejudiced, and erratic minor functionary." Bigsby notes that Carr "wants to believe in a world in which he can play a central role." As a result, Carr "resists reality with as much dedication as either Joyce or Tzara. He is, of course, in a real sense a playwright. He 'creates' the drama in which he casts himself as the central character."

Tristan Tzara

A poet who created Dada — a nihilistic movement in art and literature in the early part of the twentieth century. Tzara claims he is “the natural enemy of bourgeois art and the natural ally of the political left.” Often, during his arguments about art and politics, he gets highly emotional and lashes out at the other characters. Joyce calls him “an overexcited little man, with a need for self-expression far beyond the scope of [his] natural gifts.” Stoppard tells us that Tzara was “a short, dark-haired, very boyish-looking young man and charming, his word. He wears a monocle.

Doll argues that Tzara “becomes perhaps the first Stoppard mouthpiece to articulate a clear position on the seriousness of play.” She continues that through his discussions with the other characters, Tzara’s opinions on the nature of art and the artist become clear: “Not only does he insist on the right of the artist to delude audience expectation but he insists on the ethical function of such denunciation.” Tzara explains that wars are fought for economic realities rather than ideologies, fought for words like *oil* and *coal* rather than *freedom* and *patriotism*.

Bigsby comments on Tzara’s sometimes contradictory stance. The critic insists Tzara is “drawn simultaneously in both directions” between the philosophies of Joyce and of Lenin. Tzara, he concludes, sometimes spins “neologisms and cascades of words like Joyce, convinced that the artist constitutes the difference between brute existence and any sense of transcendence,” and at other times sees the writer “as the conscience of the revolution and justifying the brutality of its servants.”

James Joyce

Stoppard tells us that this is Joyce “in 1917/18, aged 36. He wears a jacket and trousers from two different suits.” Carr’s decidedly subjective opinion of Joyce is sometimes contradictory but usually shows the effects of Carr’s anger over the litigation with the writer over money matters concerning the production of Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the play in which both of them had been involved. Carr describes Joyce as paradoxical, having both positive and negative qualities. He is “a complex personality, an enigma, a contradictory spokesman for the truth, an obsessive litigant and yet an essentially private man who wished his total indifference to public notice to be universally recognized.”

At one point, Carr determines that Joyce is “a prudish, prudent man ... in no way profligate or vulgar, and yet convivial, without being spendthrift.” On the one hand, Joyce shows “a monkish unconcern for worldly and bodily comforts” and “shut[s] himself off from the richness of human society, whose temptations, on the other hand, he met with an ascetic disregard tempered only by sudden and catastrophic aberrations.” Later, however, Carr insists that Joyce is an “Irish lout” and “a liar and a hypocrite, a tight-fisted, sponging, fornicating drunk not worth the paper.”

Carr explains that he met Joyce when “his genius [was] in full flood in the making of *Ulysses*, before publication and fame turned him into a public monument for pilgrim cameras.” At that time, “to be in his presence was to be aware of an amazing intellect bent on shaping itself into the permanent form of its own monument — the book the world now knows as *Ulysses*.” Joyce detaches himself from the political tensions of the age, admitting, “as an artist.... I attach no importance to the swings and roundabout of political history.”

Lenin

Lenin has little interaction with the other characters. Most of what the reader discovers from him is taken from his writings. Bigsby notes that Lenin is the only character “who is not controlled by Carr’s distorting imagination.” Lenin has been in exile since the abortive 1905 revolution in Zurich. During the outbreak of the war, he and his wife were briefly interned in Austro-Hungary. After arriving in Switzerland, they came to Zurich so he could use the library as he worked on his book on imperialism. Carr notes Lenin’s “complex personality, enigmatic, magnetic.” He calls him “an essentially simple man, and yet an intellectual theoretician, bent ... on the seemingly impossible task of reshaping the civilized world into a federation of standing committees of workers’ deputies.” Even though Carr agrees to spy on him, he declares, “to those of us who knew him, Lenin’s greatness was never in doubt.” Lenin’s beliefs on the function of art are illustrated in his essay “Literature and Art,” which Carr reads. In that essay Lenin insists “today literature must become party literature. . . . Literature must become a part of the common cause of the proletariat, a cog in the Social democratic mechanism.”

Bennett

Stoppard tells us that Bennett, Carr’s enigmatic manservant, has “quite a weighty presence.” When he relates the current news to his employer, he often expresses definite opinions about world affairs. Tzara claims Bennett “has radical sympathies,” while Carr notes that he “seems to be showing alarming signs of irony.” In her article on Tom Stoppard for *Twayne’s English Authors Series Online*, Susan Rusinko suggests that Stoppard included Bennett in the play “to emphasise, by means of [his] keen knowledge and intelligence, the indifference of Carr to the events swirling about them.” Rusinko notes that Bennett’s comments are “wide-ranging, from the political events exploding in Russia to the revolutions occurring in the art world.”

Gwendolen

Gwendolen, Carr’s younger sister, works for Joyce, researching and transcribing the manuscript of *Ulysses*. She reveals her superficiality when she decides that she loves Tzara because she is destined to love a poet. Stoppard tells us that Gwendolen is “young and attractive but also a personality to be reckoned with.”

Cecily

A librarian in the Zurich Library, Cecily eventually marries Carr. She epitomises the shallow pedant, as she studies poets based on alphabetical precedence and translates emphatically every word Lenin speaks in Russian. At the beginning of the play, she works with Lenin on his book on imperialism. She firmly believes that art should have a political purpose. She later appears as her old self.

Nadya

Nadya is Lenin’s solemn wife. She becomes extremely agitated when she learns that the revolution in Russia has begun.

Before seeing the production, explore these questions:

Questions for students who haven't read the play

1. Research **1917/1918** – the timeline of the play; i.e. the temporal setting of the play. Like today, it was a time of upheaval in society.
2. Read the following background on **Dada founder, Tristan Tzara**.

“Tzara likes glory”

Tristan Tzara was born in Romania in 1816 and was an influential avant-garde poet, essayist and performance artist. Tzara is best known as one of the founders and a central figure in the Dadaist movement. Tzara claimed that along with his friend Marcel Janco, he coined the term Dada. However, other Dadaist such as Hugo Ball and Richard Huelsenbeck also claimed to have named the movement. Moving to Zurich during World War 1, Tzara performed at the original Cabaret Voltaire; his poems, performances and art manifestos becoming one of the defining features of early Dadaism. At the first Cabaret Voltaire he read his *Manifesto of Mr Fire Extinguisher*. Tzara was known as a fabulous publicist and became Dada's greatest promoter. After the war Tzara left Europe for Paris on the invitation of French poet Andre Breton. Whilst in Paris Breton and Tzara quarrelled violently and publically, causing Breton to forsake Dadaism and begin a new movement: Surrealism. Tzara spent his last years in Paris and died in 1967.

Dada

From *The Age of Extremes* by Eric Hobsbawn

“Dadaism took shape amongst a mixed group of exiles in Zurich (where another group of exiles under Lenin awaited revolution) in 1916, as an anguished but ironic nihilist protest against world war and society that had incubated it: including its art. Since it rejected all art, it has no formal characteristics, although it borrowed a few tricks from the pre-1914 cubist and futurist avant-gardes, including notably collages, or sticking together bits and pieces, including parts of pictures. Basically anything that might cause apoplexy amongst conventional bourgeois art-lovers was acceptable Dada. Scandal was its principal of cohesion. Thus Marcel Duchamps' exhibition of a public urinal as 'ready-made art' in New York in 1917 was entirely in the spirit of Dada, which he joined on his return from the USA; but his subsequent quiet refusal to have anything further to do with art – he preferred to play chess – was not. For there was nothing quiet about Dada.

From *Dada Fragments 1916-1917* by Hugo Ball

The Dadaist love the extraordinary, the absurd even. He knows that life asserts itself in contradictions, and that his age, more than any preceding, aims at the destruction of all generous impulses. Every kind of mask is therefore welcome to him, every play at hide and seek in which there is inherent power of deception. The direct and primitive appear to him in the midst of this huge anti-nature, as being the supernatural itself...the Dadaist fights against the drunkenness and death throes of his time...He knows that this world of systems has gone to pieces, and that the age which demanded cash has organised a system of godless philosophies.

Read the following examples of cut up poetry to familiarise yourself with the Dadaist style in poetry.

Dada Poems

From *Calendar* by Tristan Tzara

bottle with wings of red wax in bloom
my calendar leaps medicinally
astral of futile improvement
dissolves by the lit candle of
my principal nerve
I love office accessories
for example
fishing for little gods
gifts of colour and farce
for the odourous chapter where nothing
matters at all
on the track comfort of the soul
and the muscle
bird screeches

From *gadji beri bimba* by Hugo Ball

Gadji beri bimba glandridi laula looni
Cadori
Gadjama gramma berida bimbala
Glandri
Glassassa beri bin blassa glassala laula
Lonni
Cadorsu sassala bim
Gadjama tuffm I zinzalla binban ggl
Wowolimai bin beri ban
O katalominari rhinozerossola
Hopsamen
Laulitomini hooo
Gadjama rhinozerossola hopsamen
Bluku terullala blaulala loooo

3. To familiarise students with the real-life figure of **Henry Carr** who is the protagonist of *Travesties*, read the following note by **Tom Stoppard**.

“The [audience] of a play whose principal characters include Lenin, James Joyce and Tristan Tzara may not realise that the figure of Henry Carr is likewise taken from history. But this is so.

In March 1918 (I take the following information from Richard Ellmann’s James Joyce), Claud Sykes, and actor temporarily living in Zurich, suggested to Joyce that they form a theatrical company to put on plays in English. Joyce agreed, and became the business manager of The English Players, the first production to be that of The Importance of Being Earnest. Actors were sought.

Professionals were to receive a token fee of 30 francs and amateurs to make do with 10 francs for tram fare to rehearsals. Joyce became very active and visited the Consul General, A. Percy Bennett, in order to procure official approval for the Players. He succeeded in this, despite the fact that Bennett was ‘annoyed with Joyce for not having reported to the Consulate officially to offer his services in wartime, and was perhaps aware of Joyce’s work for the neutralist International Review and of his open indifference to the war’s outcome. He may even have heard of Joyce’s version of Mr Dooley, written about this time...’ – I quote from Ellmann’s superb biography, whose companionship was not the least pleasure in the writing of Travesties.

Meanwhile, Sykes was piecing together a cast... ‘An important find was Tristan Rawson, a handsome man who had sung baritone roles for four years in the Cologne Opera House but has never acted in a play. After much coaxing Rawson agreed to take on the role of John Worthing. Sykes recruited Cecil Palmer as the butler and found a woman named Ethel Turner to play Miss Prism...As yet, however, there was no one to take the role of Algernon Moncrieff. In an unlucky moment Joyce nominated a tall good looking young

man named Henry Carr, whom he had seen in the consulate. Carr, invalided from the service, has a small job there. Sykes learned he has acted in some amateur plays in Canada and decided to risk him.'

Carr's performance turned out to be a small triumph. He had even, in his enthusiasm, bought some trousers, a hat and a pair of gloves to wear as Algernon. But immediately after the performance the actor and business manager quarrelled. Joyce handed each member of the cast 10 or 30 francs, a pre-arranged but succeeded in piquing Carr who later complained to Sykes that Joyce had handed over the money like a tip.

The upshot was disproportionate and drawn out. Joyce and Carr ended up going to law, in two separate actions, Carr claiming reimbursement for the cost of the trousers, etc., or alternatively a share in the profits, and Joyce counter claiming for the price of five tickets sold by Carr, and also suing for slander. These matters were not settled until 1919. Joyce won on the money and lost on the slander, but he reserved his full retribution for Ulysses where 'he allotted punishments as scrupulously and inexorably as Dante...Originally Joyce intended to make Consul General Bennett and Henry Carr the two drunken, blasphemous and obscene soldiers who knock Stephen Dedalus down in the "Circe" episode; but he eventually decided that Bennett should be the sergeant major, with authority over Private Carr who, however, refers to him with utter disrespect.'

From these meagre facts about Henry Carr – and still being able to discover no others – I conjured up an elderly gentleman still living in Zurich, married to a girl he met in the Library during the Lenin years, and recollecting, perhaps not with entire accuracy, his encounters with Joyce and the Dadaist Tzara.

Soon after the play opened in London I was excited and somewhat alarmed to receive a letter beginning, "I was totally fascinated by the reviews of your play – the chief reason being that Henry Carr was my husband until he died in 1962.' The letter was from Mrs Noël Carr, his second wife.

From her I learned that Henry Wilfred Carr was born in Sunderland in 1894 and brought up in County Durham. He was one of four sons, including his twin Walter, now also dead. At 17, Henry went to Canada where he worked for a time in a bank. In 1915 he volunteered for military service and went to France with the Canadian Black Watch. He was badly wounded the following year and – after lying five days in no-man's-land – was taken prisoner. Because of his wounds, Henry was sent by the Germans to stay at monastery where the monks tended him to a partial recovery, and then as an 'exchange prisoner' he was one of a group who were sent to Switzerland.

Thus Henry Carr arrived in Zurich where he was to cross the path of James Joyce and find himself a leading actor in both onstage and offstage dramas, leading to immortality of a kind as a minor character in Ulysses.

It was in Zurich, too, that he met his first wife, Nora Tulloch. They married in England after the war and later he took her back to Canada where he found a job in a department store in Montreal. He rose within the organisation to become company secretary.

In 1928, while in Montreal, he met Noël Bach and after his divorce they were married there in 1933. The following year they returned to England. Henry ultimately joined a foundry company and when the next war came he and his wife were living in Sheffield.

They were bombed out, and moved to a Warwickshire village, where Henry commanded the Home Guard, and they stayed in Warwickshire in the post war years.

In 1962 , while he was on a visit to London, Henry has a heart attack, and he died in St Mary Abbot Hospital in Kensington. He had no children.

I am indebted to Mrs Noël Carr for these biographical details, and, particularly, for her benevolence towards me and towards what must seem to her peculiarly well-named play.”

4. .A photograph of actor Jonathan Biggins in role as Henry Carr, topped by colourful inserts of actors as Lenin, Tzara and Joyce, features on the STC flyer and promotional bookmark for the play in the style of a collage (see front cover of these notes). The text is written in a pastiche of styles from the early 20th Century in Russian Constructivist-type fonts, Futurist etc. Why is the collage featuring many textual motifs an effective image to market *Travesties* and why?

Clip the ad for *Travesties* from the Amusement Section of The Sydney Morning Herald. What can you tell about the publicity campaign for the play from this image of the play?

5. Here is some research on the Communist leader Lenin who also happened to be living in Zurich in 1917.

“One can never be radical enough; that is, one must always try to be as radical as reality itself” Lenin

Vladimir Lenin was born in 1870 in the Russian Empire. Lenin was a Russian revolutionary, communist and principal leader of the October Revolution that led to the overthrow of the provisional government and the beginning of soviet rule. During World War 1, Lenin was in exile in Zurich where he wrote important theoretical work such as *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. In 1917, after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas, Lenin was desperate to return to Russia to support the revolution. However, he was isolated in neutral Switzerland while War raged around him. The Allies were keen to keep Lenin isolated as they believed revolution and political unrest in Russia would give the Germans the upper hand on the Eastern Front. The German’s were equally keen to see Lenin return for much the same reasons. In *the History of the Russian Revolution* Trotsky described the difficulty in getting Lenin back to Russia: “Various schemes – disguises, false whiskers, foreign or false passports – were cast aside one after the other as impossible. And meanwhile the idea of travelling through Germany became more and more concrete... The conditions of the journey through Germany were worked out with extraordinary care in this unique international treaty between the editorial staff of a revolutionary paper and the empire of Hohenzollerns. Lenin demanded complete extra-territoriality during the transit: no supervision of the personnel of the passengers, their passports or baggage. No single person should have the right to enter the train throughout the journey (hence the legend of the sealed train).”

Upon his return to Russia, Lenin inspired the October Revolution and after the dissolving of the provisional government was elected Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissioners by the Russian Congress of Soviets. Lenin died in 1953 following a series of strokes. His body was visited by over 900,000 people whilst lying in state. Lenin preserved body is on permanent display at the Lenin Mausoleum.

Questions for students who have read the play

1. Here is some research on the Irish writer James Joyce who also happened to be living in Zurich in 1917.

He had no taste, only genius

James Joyce was born in 1882 in Dublin Ireland. As early as 1891, Joyce began to write poetry and by the time he was 14 he delighted in verbal slips and clever limericks. In 1898, Joyce enrolled in the University College Dublin, where he studied modern languages, including English, French and Italian. After University, Joyce travelled to Paris, supposedly to study Medicine, however he squandered much of his money and returned home after learning his mother was dying of cancer. In the years her death, Joyce drank heavily, failing in attempts to have *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* published. During this time he met Nora Barnacle and they eloped not long after.

In 1906, Grant Richards agreed to publish, *Dubliners*, a collection of stories by Joyce. However, he failed to read all the stories and sent them straight to the printer. The printer objected to them as 'objectionable material' and refused to publish them on the grounds he would be liable. Subsequently, *Dubliners* was not published until nearly nine years later in 1914.

During the war, Joyce and Nora maintained a self-imposed exile in Trieste and Zurich. Whilst in Zurich and spending time at Café Odeon, it is said that Joyce met Lenin. He was also in Zurich during the time of the Cabaret Voltaire and the Dadaist and Surrealist movements.

Joyce's literary supporters included W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound who convinced the Royal Literary Fund to give him 75 pounds in 1916. During this time he began to write *Ulysses*. Despite experiencing censorship (which wasn't lifted in the United States until 1933), the novel version was published in 1922 and is regarded as one of the key works of English-language literary modernism.

Find a copy of *Ulysses* and read why this acclaimed text is celebrated every year as Bloomsday: a commemoration observed annually on 16 June in Dublin, Ireland and elsewhere to celebrate the life of Joyce and relive the events in his novel *Ulysses*, all of which took place on the same day in Dublin in 1904. The name derives from Leopold Bloom, the protagonist of *Ulysses*, and 16 June was the date of Joyce's first outing with his wife-to-be, Nora Barnacle, when they walked to the Dublin village of Ringsend.....

2. Playwright Tom Stoppard has said (“Here’s Looking at You, Syd” in *Letter From London* in **Vanity Fair**, November 2007,) “Partly how drama works (is) through constant adjustment of our idea of who people really are under their labels,” these three of the most acute minds of the 20th Century – the poster boy of the Dadaists, the future mastermind of the Russian Revolution and an Irish expatriate author and poet. Discuss the public and private images of these three characters, **Tzara, Lenin and Joyce**.
3. What expectations do you have for Tom Stoppard’s play in production now you have read scenes from the play?
4. **Travesties** is set in 1917 as WWI raged throughout Europe and the characters represented in the play sought sanctuary in Zurich. What have you learned about Henry Carr’s milieu (physical and psychological surroundings) having read the play?
5. Comment on Stoppard’s use of puns, limericks, wit and other wordplay to express his absurdist view of life.
6. Ask students to read actor Jonathan Biggin’s brilliant article: “Dazzling wordplay in a master linguist’s timely reminder” on the *Travesties* page of STC Ed’s website.

After seeing the production, explore these questions:

Questions for students who hadn't read the play

1. **Travesties** uses the techniques of play within a play and direct address to the audience (particularly by Henry Carr) to engage the audience. Did these ideas work for you? Or was it a case of **Travesties**: too wordy? Too polemical? Too intellectual? Any other comments?
2. One Australian critic has said of Stoppard's last play, produced last year by Sydney Theatre Company, "**Rock'n'Roll** is first simple, then difficult." Do you think this assertion applies to **Travesties**? What expectations did you have before seeing this production? What changed for you after seeing it?
3. What do you think of the use of the revolve in this production? How does the setting change/adapt throughout the production? How does this change from the Zurich Library to a highly decorative Victorian drawing room particularly suit the scenes which are appropriated from Oscar Wilde's play, **The Importance of Being Earnest**? What mood does the set evoke from the out-set of the play with its Miro-esque front cloth?
4. **Direction** – What do you think was the vision of the director and his interpretation of the play, particularly the use of highly stylised comic movement?
5. **Lighting** - What moods does the lighting evoke at different points in the play? How does this alter at different times in the production, such as instant replay of scenes?

Questions for students who had read the play

1. **Sketch** Michael Scott Mitchell's dual set: Carr's drawing room and the Zurich Library - and list all the props; e.g. 5 cuckoo clocks, chairs, tables, parquet floor, William Morris wallpaper, Dadaist, Joycean (typewriter) and Lenin's handwriting text, lamps, etc. Look back at Stoppard's recommendations for the set, such as the use of double-doors, in his stage directions at the state of Act One, and see how Scott Mitchell has used this advice. Remember, the play takes place in Henry Carr's unreliable memory. Hence we filtered views at times of the other space on stage.
2. **Discuss** the impact the age changes of the Henry Carr character – the minor British consul official, dedicated follower of fashion and performer in Joyce's amateur production of **The Importance of Being Earnest** - had on the audience's experience of the play.

3. Create an oral presentation [interview or hot-seat] that demonstrates understanding and empathy for one of the characters in *Travesties*.

In 3 minutes you will need to respond to scripted character questions and explain your character's situation and concerns as depicted in the story of the play. You will then be asked 2-3 impromptu questions. This is like a "life offstage" exercise by famed Russian acting practitioner, Konstantin Stanislavsky. You need to answer these questions based on the facts of the play and your interpretation of the character's motivation and relationships in the context of the plotline.

Here are some guideline questions:

- 1) State your name.
- 2) How old are you?
- 3) To which social group do you belong and what job do you hold?
- 4) Where do you usually live?
- 5) Who are your friends and who are your enemies?
- 6) How do you fit into the story of the play?
- 7) Do you consider yourself to be a good or bad person – why?
- 8) At the end of the play, what do you think people might say they know about you?

These are simple questions to 'break the ice.' You should then be able to respond to your chosen character in greater depth.

4. Did you expect Stoppard's play to focus so much on wordplay? Look at the video interview with actor Jonathan Biggins on this STC Education website. Also look at Frances Simmonds' analysis of these comic techniques also on this site: "Stoppardian Sport – play with ideas in *Travesties*."

5. How is music incorporated into the production, like the stripper music for Cecily and the waltz at the end of the play? To bridge and underscore some scenes? Also comment on other sound design such as the cuckoo clocks sounding in the play and how does it contribute to the production? Give at least 3 examples of these scene changes involving a cuckoo clock from the production. There is also a musicality to Stoppard's language.

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Lenin by Michael C. Morgan
Lenin by Robert Payne
Lenin and the Bolsheviks by Adam B. Ulam
To the Finland Station by Edmund Wilson
Days with Lenin by Maxim Gorki
The First World War, an Illustrated History by A.J.P. Taylor
James Joyce by Richard Ellmann
Joyce by John Gross
Dada, Art and Anti-art by Hans Richter
The Dada Painters and Poets edited by Robert Motherwell

WEB SITES

<<www.sydneytheatre.com.au>> - Sydney Theatre Company

You can also send us your feedback on the productions you have seen, e-mail our archivist for specific information you may be searching for or check the date and time of a performance.

<<www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au>> - Here you'll find full information about subject syllabi and past examination papers. – Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound* is studied in HSC Extension English as a crime fiction text – as a parody.

<<<http://encarta.msn.com>>> - Encarta Encyclopedia Article on Tom Stoppard

The following sites provide additional insight into the characters and themes of *Travesties*:

[The Marxism/Leninism Project](#) -- Biography, chronology of V.I. Lenin, plus many of his major writings.

[Dadaism](#) -- A manifesto by Tzara, translated by Robert Motherwell.

[Ulysses for Dummies](#)-- The "Classics Illustrated" version of the classic. A hoot.

[The Importance of Being Earnest](#)-- The full text of the play.

[Oscariana](#) -- Quotes by and about Mr. Wilde.

[The James Joyce Centre](#) -- A celebration of all things Joycean.

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John McCallum's glowing review of this STC production of *Travesties* – "Stoppard's confection reclaimed."

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