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Arcadia: A Play

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PLAYS

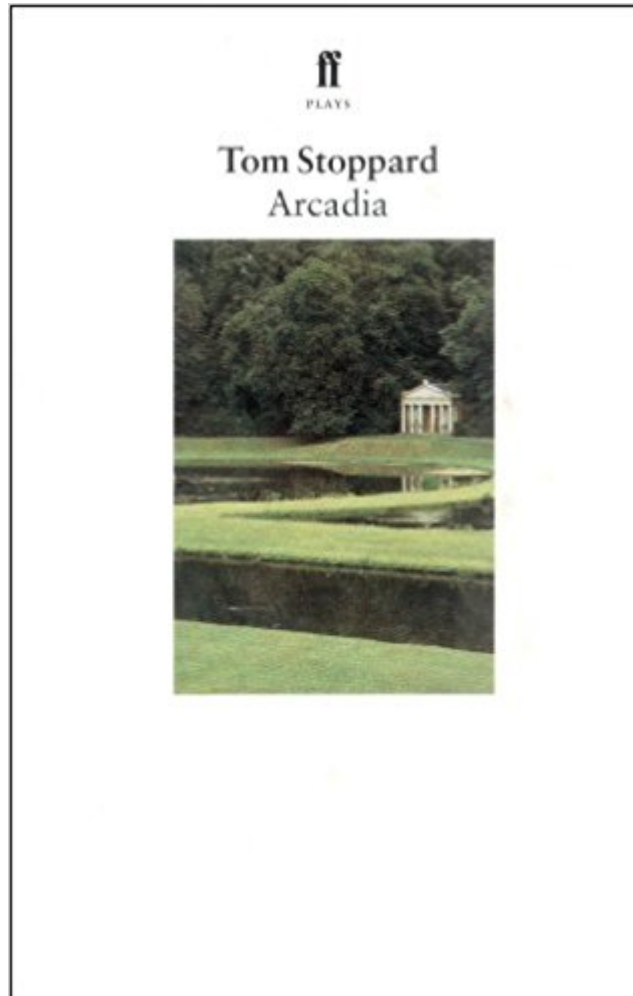Tom Stoppard
Arcadia

Synopsis

Arcadia takes us back and forth between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ranging over the nature of truth and time, the difference between the Classical and the Romantic temperament, and the disruptive influence of sex on our orbits in life. Focusing on the mysteriesÃ¢â¬â¢romantic, scientific, literaryÃ¢â¬â¢that engage the minds and hearts of characters whose passions and lives intersect across scientific planes and centuries, it is "Stoppard's richest, most ravishing comedy to date, a play of wit, intellect, language, brio and . . . emotion. It's like a dream of levitation: you're instantaneously aloft, soaring, banking, doing loop-the-loops and then, when you think you're about to plummet to earth, swooping to a gentle touchdown of not easily described sweetness and sorrow . . . Exhilarating" (Vincent Canby, The New York Times).

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â¬Å"There's no doubt about it. 'Arcadia' is Tom Stoppard's richest, most ravishing comedy to date, a play of wit, intellect, language, brio and ... emotion. It's like a dream of levitation: you're instantaneously aloft, soaring, banking, doing loop-the-loops and then, when you think you're about to plummet to earth, swooping to a gentle touchdown of not easily described sweetness and sorrow.Ã¢â¬Å¢ Ã¢â¬â¢Vincent Canby, The New York Times

Tom Stoppard's Arcadia merges science with human concerns and ideals, examining the universe's influence in our everyday lives and ultimate fates through relationship between past and present,

order and disorder and the certainty of knowledge. Set in an English country house in the year 1809-1812 and 1989, the play examines the lives of two modern scholars and the house's current residents with the lives of those who lived there 180 years earlier. The New York Times calls Arcadia: "Tom Stoppard's richest, most ravishing comedy to date. A play of wit, intellect, language, brio and emotion," and The Royal Institution of Great Britain calls it: "the best science book ever written." Includes an interview with Steven Strogatz, the author of Nonlinear Dynamics and Chaos and professor at the Cornell University School of Theoretical and Applied Mathematics. An L.A. Theatre Works full-cast performance featuring: Kate Burton, Mark Capri, Jennifer Dundas, Gregory Itzin, David Manis, Christopher Neame, Peter Paige, Darren Richardson, Kate Steele, Serena Scott Thomas, Douglas Weston. Directed by John Rubinstein. Recorded at the Invisible Studios, West Hollywood. Arcadia is part of L.A. Theatre Works' Relativity Series featuring science-themed plays. Major funding for the Relativity Series is provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to enhance public understanding of science and technology in the modern world. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Arcadia is a play that takes place at Sidley Park, a stately country home in Derbyshire. The play shifts back and forth between the early 19th century and modern day Sidley Park. The action in both time periods takes place in a bare room with a large table.In the 19th century, Thomasina, the daughter of the house, is working with her tutor, Septimus Hodge; there are books and HodgeÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s tortoise. In the modern time, Hannah Jarvis, an author, is working on a book about the history of the gardens ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â œ or, more precisely, about the hermit-genius who lived in the 19th century gardens like a ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Å"garden ornamentÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Â• or ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Å"pottery gnomeÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Â•. She is joined by, among others, Valentine, a son of the house, and his tortoise. In each time period, people come and go and dramas unfold. But the room and table remain constant. As the play proceeds, everything from both time periods remains on the table. The table and its contents are period neutral, and, by the end of the play, the table has become quite cluttered with objects.There are striking parallels between the two time periods. Early on, questioning her tutor whether God is a Newtonian, Thomasina asks ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Å"[a]m I the first person to have thought of this?ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Â• (p. 9). In the modern time, Chloe asks her brother ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Å"Valentine, do you think IÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢m the first person to think of this?ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Â• (p. 77). There is humor. Valentine explains to Hannah how her tea is getting cold ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â œ by itself. ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Å"Your tea will end up at room temperature. WhatÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s happening to your tea is happening to everything

everywhereÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Â|.ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢ll take a while but weÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢re all going to end up at room temperature.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Â• (p. 82). The modern day dramas involve the 19th century dramas ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â œ an attempt to sort out the past with meager historical evidence. There is poetry and duels; parks and a hermitage; heat exchange and Lord Byron. And, there is Entropy. As the play progresses, so does the chaos. Toward the end of the play, the distinct time periods begin to bleed into one another. They proceed at the same time and intertwine. Chaos ensues. The result is a fascinating, intellectual drama. Arcadia is a great read, and I hope one day to see it performed.HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Tom Stoppard's famous play Arcadia takes place in the same English country estate across two eras: the early Nineteenth Century and the present day. The story divides between Thomasina, the owner's young daughter and her tutor Septimus, and the academics Hannah and Bernard, investigating a possible scandal caused by Lord Byron when he stayed there. The present-day researchers discover, among other things, Thomasina's mathematical gifts, the rise of the picturesque in landscaping, and the Romantic temperament, especially concerning love.This is an extremely funny play, starting with Thomasina's opening line, "Septimus, what is carnal embrace?". At the same time, it also teaches us about science, math, and literature. It moves seamlessly between the two time periods, and gives all the information we need to understand the various topics in entertaining ways. It is a joy to read.

precise language you really have to pay attention but this is a great play. I have not yet seen int performed but hope to this fall

A witty exploration of the nature of life in the midst of two timelines (the same room, decades apart), a smattering of mathematical theories, and unrequited love. Well worth a read and a reread. It was reminiscent of plays like Proof by David Auburn.

We, at the book group, had a very good time reading this book and sharing our thoughts on it. It came in perfect condition and on time.

Bravo, Tom Stoppard! Easy to read -- at first; then the play becomes richer and richer as you re-read. Excellent! jdl

Another reviewer began the review with this: "Arcadia is one of the most touching and enlightening works of literature I have ever read. The interweaving of ideas from physics, fractals, literature, architecture, history, psychology and many other fields of knowledge hidden in the play is just perfect." I agree with the sentiment. I adored the live play; saw it twice! I also read the play afterwards -- now twice, too. The reviewer I quoted, though, got bogged down later in the review of whether Stoppard is brilliant enough as Einstein or is just showing off. The play is not a Philosophical Inquiry of Great Rigor. The ideas, to me anyway, are like the proverbial unicorn story: see one (wow! is it real?; a couple folks see it: super-wow; but once everyone sees it: "so what? it's a horse with a horn in its head."). The delight for me was not in the "novel" ideas, but in the way in which they are used as another means of entertainment: much as characters in an Eric Rohmer (French) Film might discuss Kant's Synthetic A Priori. The characters are IMMENSELY entertaining and that they discuss philosophy or math just adds to what is entertaining about them -- specifically it adds variety. So you have the usual drama subjects, but more too. The main thing then is this: ALL is WONDERFULLY done and you derive your pleasure from all the very well-done VARIETY of fun and drama and topics ALL NICELY WOVEN TOGETHER, not hodge-podged at all.

One of the best of contemporary plays, now a classic, at a great price--Used book in very good condition!

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