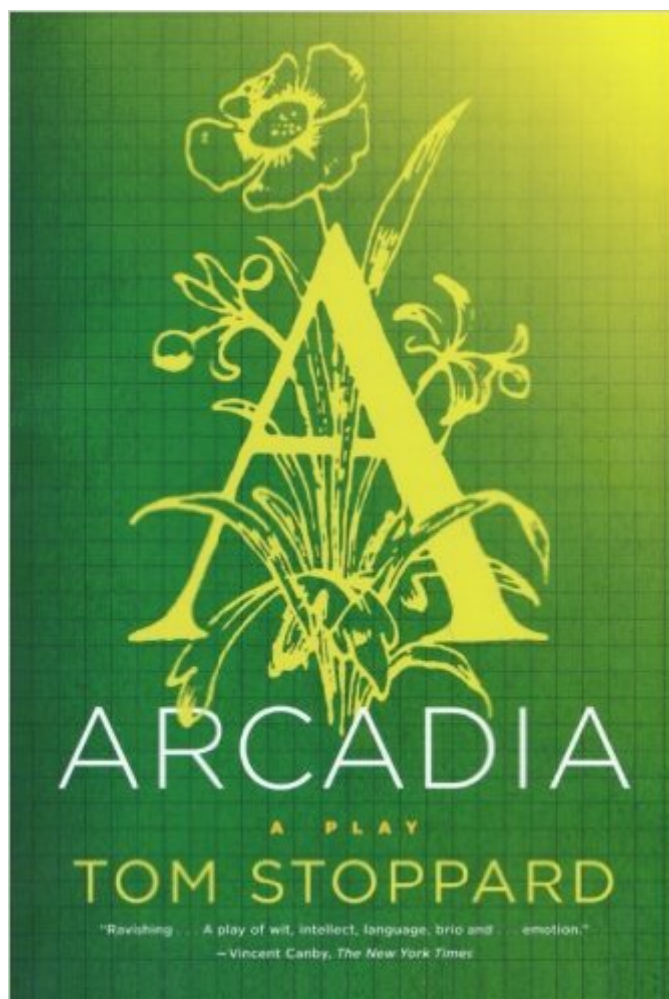


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Arcadia: A Play



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 mysteriesâ••romantic, scientific, literaryâ••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).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I just recently attended a performance of this play by a local theater group. During the intermission, I overheard many people talking about how badly this play was written and how it was completely unrepresentative of Stoppard, and it wasn't even funny at all. I thought about explaining the concept of "thoughtful laughter" to these people, but refrained, because my age is approximately one-third to one-fourth of theirs. I don't agree. I found this play exceedingly entertaining, if I listened only for the puns, jokes, double entendres, and other language manipulations. On a level beyond that, the stories of the characters themselves can be wittily playful one minute and poignantly touching the next. Deeper still were the philosophical implications of what Stoppard said, how the intellectual and the emotional have to meet (as they did, in one character). Basically, the play is about two groups of

people, one in 1809, and one in the present. Those in 1809 are dealing with scandals, schoolwork, and sitting rooms, while those in the present are researching the characters that appear in the other part. It is nice to know a bit about chaos theory, thermodynamics, Lord Byron, and botany (can you recognize a dahlia on sight?) when reading or seeing this play, but it's not necessary. (I.E., if you've read Jurassic Park, that's all you need to know about chaos theory. If you know what a reversible equation is, then you're fine there, and, well, Lord Byron was a English Romantic poet.) The person with whom I attended this play made a very cogent comment about the play: "If you only get one joke in five, then that's enough to think it's funny."

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