

DANGEROUS CORNER

MAY 1-22, 2010

By J.B. Priestley

Starring Starring Jennifer Clement, Anastasia Phillips, Vincent Gale, Charlie Gallant, Anna Galvin, Tom Scholte, Christine Willes

Directed by Bill Dow | A Playhouse Theatre Company production

PLAY GUIDE

PART 1: STORY, CREATORS...

CREATED BY THE PLAYHOUSE TEACHERS ADVISORY BOARD (PTAB) AND PLAYHOUSE STAFF

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Created to provide you with explorations and insights into this production beyond the actual performance, this Play Guide includes information on its creators and characters, notable quotables and more:

Download suggested practical lessons and activities at vancouverplayhouse.com! **As a teacher**, you can adapt these to your classroom activities before or after your performance. **As a parent**, you can draw on some activities to enhance your child's theatre experience. And, **as a patron at large**, these activities might stimulate your own exploration or offer a new insight into the play. We hope you have fun playing with the facts and ideas presented!

**"J.B. Priestley is one of our literary icons of the 20th Century.
And it is time that we all became re-acquainted with his genius."**

Dame Judi Dench

THE STORY

Robert and Freda Caplan are entertaining guests, all of whom are associated in the same publishing company for whom Robert works. A chance remark by one of the guests ignites a series of devastating revelations, revealing a hitherto undiscovered tangle of clandestine relationships and dark secrets, the disclosures of which have tragic consequences. The play ends with time slipping back to the beginning of the evening and the chance remark not being made, the secrets remaining hidden and the "dangerous corner" avoided.

IT'S ABOUT TIME

"Time Plays" are a series of dramas written by British author J. B. Priestley during the 1930s and 40s. They are so called because each plays with a different concept of time. In each play an alternative theory of time becomes the central metaphor or theatrical device of the play, the characters' lives being affected by how they react to the unusual temporal landscape they encounter.

"Time Plays" are usually thought of as including *Dangerous Corner*, in which exposure of a group of characters' dark secrets is wiped out when the play returns to the beginning at the fall of the curtain; *Time and the Conways*, which explores J. W. Dunne's theory of simultaneous time expounded in the book *An Experiment with Time*; *I Have Been Here Before*, which is inspired by P. D. Ouspensky's theory of eternal recurrence from *A New Model of the Universe*; *Johnson Over Jordan*, in which a man encounters a series of trials in the afterlife and, most famously, *An Inspector Calls*, in which a family undergo a police investigation into a suicide which they later discover has not happened yet.

Of all the theories of time employed in the plays Priestley professed to believe only in one: that of J. W. Dunne. Although these plays are still popular with audiences and regularly undergo revivals, critical opinion remains divided about their literary worth and the validity, or not, of the use of the time theories as theatrical devices

References: wikipedia.com, jbpriestley-society.com, jbpriestley.co.uk.

FAST FACTS

UK First Performance:
May 17, 1932 at the Lyric
theatre, London, England.

SUGGESTED PLAY ACTIVITY [A SAMPLER]

FOR DISCUSSION

Type: post-viewing | **Suitability:** grade 10-12+

Suggested by: Warren McKinnon, UBC Continuing Studies, PTAB Member

In Script Segment #3 (see the Playhouse website, under vancouverplayhouse.com/education-outreach/), Stanton defends his decision to keep quiet about the missing money. He believes that no one is “better off” as a result of his confession. An exasperated Freda counters his defensive position by pointing to “such a thing as common honesty and decency.”

- (a) List recent corporate or individual financial frauds that made the news.
- (b) In your experience, explain how knowing the truth about corporate or individual fraud leaves or doesn't leave you and your community better off or inspires or doesn't inspire you to behave with common honesty and decency?
- (c) Describe the way the following measure truth and why their truth might be incomplete: a court lawyer, a book publisher, an employee, a marital partner, a lover, a brother/sister, an in-law.

FOR A FULL VERSION AND MORE PLAY ACTIVITIES VISIT
VANCOUVERPLAYHOUSE.COM/ EDUCATION-OUTREACH

THANK YOU TO

our PTAB Members: CHERYL Causley / Crofton House School, CHRISTINA Cuk / Crofton House School, DAN Adrian / Moscrop Secondary, ERIN McGinley/ Moscrop Secondary, HEATHER Robbie / David Thompson Secondary, JOSH Weiss / Tamanawis Secondary, KIM Bothen / Capilano University, WARREN McKinnon / UBC, Continuing Studies, YVONNE Price / Cloverdale Learning Centre, MEREDITH Elliott, JOHN McHenry and STASA Andric / Playhouse Theatre Company who play an integral role in the creation of our 2009/2010 Play Guides. Interested in joining our PTAB? Call 604 637 3094.

PLAYWRIGHT: J.B. PRIESTLEY (1894-1984)

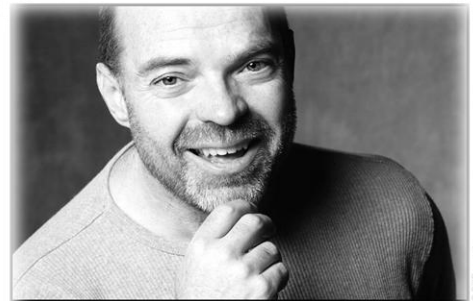


J. B. Priestley was an English novelist, playwright and broadcaster. He left school at sixteen to work as a junior clerk at Helm & Co., a wool firm. It was during his years at Helm & Co. that he started writing at night and had articles published in local and London newspapers. After his military service during the First World War he received a university education at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. By the age of 30 he had established a reputation as an essayist and critic.

Priestley's first major success came with a novel, *The Good Companions*, which earned him the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction and made him a national figure. His next novel, *Angel Pavement*, further established him as a successful novelist. He moved into a new genre and became equally well known as a dramatist. *Dangerous Corner* was the first of a series of plays that enthralled West End theatre audiences. His plays are more varied in tone than his novels, several being influenced by the theory of time, which plays a part in the plots of *Dangerous Corner*, *Time and the Conways* and his best-known play, *An Inspector Calls*. He had a deep love of classical music, and in 1949 he wrote the libretto to the opera, *The Olympians*, by Arthur Bliss.

DIRECTOR: BILL DOW

Bill Dow is an award-winning actor and director (and occasional writer) in theatre, film, and television, with scores of credits over a long and varied career. He has directed several award-winning productions for the Vancouver Playhouse (where he was Artistic Associate for many years) including an innovative and moving production of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. He has performed many lead roles, including Oleanna, Martin Dysart in *Equus* (Jessie Award), Vindice in *Revenge* (Jessie nomination), and Shelly Levene in *Glengarry Glen Ross*. He served as Associate Artistic Director at the Blyth Festival and the Belfry Theatre, and resident dramaturg at the Banff Playwrights Colony. Bill has performed recurring roles in several popular television series: *Stargate –SG1*, *Atlantis*, *Da Vinci's Inquest*, *X-Files*, *Pasadena*, *Nothing Too Good for a Cowboy*; and many other guest star and recurring roles in a variety of television series, *MOW's*, and feature films. Bill recently completed his M.A. in Liberal Studies at Simon Fraser University through an examination of Greek tragedy and the writing of a 'new' tragedy, *Cupid's Arrow*, the prequel to Euripides' *Medea*. He is currently involved in research toward his PhD (at SFU) and an instructor of Classical Mythology (SFU) and Theatre (UBC).



FAST FACTS

US First Performance:
October 27, 1932 at the Empire
Theatre, New York, NY

GLOSSARY



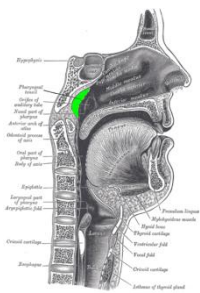
Pan | A Greek deity with the head and torso of a human and the legs, horns and ears of a goat, Pan was the god of fields, woods, and flocks. He was believed to cause sudden, groundless fears, or "panic."

Sir Roger de Coverley | The name of a character in *The Spectator*, one of members of the Spectator Club, the fictional narrator's friends. Sir Roger was an English squire, exemplifying the values of an old country gentleman, "rather beloved than esteemed."



Tintagel | A small town in Cornwall, Tintagel is the site of a ruined castle on a 300-foot cliff made famous in legend as the place where King Arthur was conceived. In

fact, the castle dates to the 12th century, but was built on the site of a Celtic monastery or fortress from the 5th or 6th century AD.



Adenoids | Lymphoid tissue located at the junction of the nose and throat that act to filter out harmful microorganisms. When they become swollen, they can obstruct breathing or make speech difficult and may be surgically removed like tonsils.

BBC | The British Broadcasting Corporation was formed as a private company in 1922, but was replaced by a public corporation under royal charter in 1927. Its primary responsibility is to provide public service radio, television and internet broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands, and Isle of Man, but it also broadcasts to 120 million people worldwide through BBC World Service.

Bearer cheque | A cheque that is payable to any person who presents it to the bank, not just the person named on the cheque.

Ether | An invisible medium through which all light, heat and electromagnetic waves propagate, it was postulated from the 1600s to the 1800s, but no experiment could demonstrate existence. Einstein's special theory of relativity eliminated the need for a medium to transmit waves.

"Wedding March" | The cigarette box plays the traditional recessional for a wedding, Felix Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The piece, along with the traditional procession "Bridal Chorus" from *Lohengrin* by Richard Wagner, were popularized when they were played at the wedding of Princess Victoria, the daughter of Queen Victoria, in 1858.

"It's Only a Paper Moon" | Written by Harold Arlen, E.Y. Harburg and Billy Rose, "It's Only a Paper Moon" was first written for a Broadway play called *The Great Magoo*, but it has been recorded by dozens of artists, including Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole, and James Taylor.

"Let sleeping dogs lie" | An English proverb warning that it would be better to leave things the way they are, advice Robert Caplan does not heed.

WORDS TO REMEMBER

"Let sleeping dogs lie." **Proverb**

"There are no whole truths: All truths are half-truths." **Alfred North Whitehead, *Dialogues: Recorded by Lucien***

"Truthiness is what you want the facts to be, as opposed to what the facts are. What feels like the right answer as opposed to what reality will support." **Stephen Colbert**

"The national argument right now is, one, who's got the truth and, two, who's got the facts... Until we can manage to get the two of them back together again, we're not going to make much progress." **Michael Adams of North Carolina State University on the subject of "truthiness."**

"O, what a tangled web we weave,/When first we practice to deceive!" **Sir Walter Scott, *Marmion***

"Physical infidelity is the signal, the notice given, that all fidelities are undermined." **Katherine Anne Porter**

"Don't part with your illusions. When they are gone you may still exist, but you have ceased to live." **Mark Twain**

"It is only a step from boredom to disillusionment, which leads naturally to self-pity, which in turn ends in chaos." **Manly Hall**

"The truth. It is a beautiful and terrible thing, and should therefore be treated with great caution." **J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone***

"You can't handle the truth." **Aaron Sorkin, *A Few Good Men***

"How can I tell that the past isn't a fiction designed to account for the discrepancy between my immediate physical sensations and my state of mind?" **Douglas Adams, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe***

"What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened"
T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton (No. 1 of Four Quartets)"

FROM THE PLAY

"I think telling the truth is about as healthy as skidding round a corner at sixty." **Stanton**

"Well – the real truth – that is, every single little thing, with nothing missing at all, wouldn't be dangerous. I suppose that's God's truth. But what most people mean by truth, what that man meant in the wireless play, is only half the real truth. It doesn't tell you all that went on inside everybody. It simply gives you a lot of facts that happened to have been hidden away and were perhaps a lot better hidden away. It's rather treacherous stuff." **Olwen**

ABOUT THE COMPANY

The Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company is British Columbia's premier regional theatre company, producing engaging plays of the highest calibre since 1962. Our mandate, as it has evolved with the region's cultural needs, is to be a vital cultural leader in the theatre ecology, describing and shaping our community's perspectives by engaging a wider audience in significant theatre experiences. Our repertoire is contemporary and classic, Canadian and international, reaching deep into our community, across our country and beyond.

We ask that you note the following guidelines to help keep the theatre experience an enjoyable one for all.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE FOR ALL AGES

Thou shalt not arrive late.

This is an insult to performers and annoying to those on time.

Thou shall sit in an assigned seat.

When in doubt, speak with an usher or refer to your admission ticket.

Thou shalt not talk during the performance.

You're not at home watching television.

Thou shalt not rattle candy wrappers.

Sound effects for this production have been chosen by the designers.

Thou shalt not "sing along" with the performers.

Save that for after the show.

Thou shalt not consume food or drinks inside the auditorium.

Performers can hear you just as much as you can hear them.

Thou shalt not place feet on the seat in front, or tap out a rhythm.

The back of the seat in front does not belong to you.

Thou shalt not go "to and fro" from thy seat during the performance.

This disrupts the show for everyone.

Thou shall turn off all that goes beep, ring or buzz.

Accompaniment provided by orchestra only.

Thou shall turn off all texting devices.

We love to twitter, facebook or blog, too, but save it for before or after the performance.

FOLLOW US ON VANCOUVERPLAYHOUSE.COM/BLOG
[BEFORE OR AFTER THE PERFORMANCE]

facebook

FAST FACTS

Dangerous Corner is also a 1934 black-and-white film, based on the play.

PLAYHOUSE EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

PRODUCTION CENTRE TOURS As a group, you can book a complimentary guided tour of the 25,000 square foot Production Centre and explore scenery and prop shops, the wardrobe department and rehearsal halls. We recently moved into a new facility on East 2nd Ave., which will be our home until 2011. **Call 604 637 3094.**

E-STAGE: PLAYHOUSE YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS 2010 High school students from across British Columbia collaborate with professional directors and playwrights to develop an eight-minute scene, which is then performed by professional actors on the Playhouse stage. 2010 submission: Oct. 18-Dec. 17, 2010. Email submissions are preferred. **Contact Meredith Elliott at 604 629 2097 or melliott@vancouverplayhouse.com.**

TALKBACKS An excellent way to enhance your experience as actors return to stage to offer insights on the show and their work. Select Monday and Tuesday evening performances. ***Dangerous Corner: May. 10 and 18, 2010.***

SALON SATURDAY Informative and fun, Salon Saturday is presented in the Playhouse Salon at 1pm (show at 2pm). This series brings the audience together with a notable speaker to explore some of the underlying themes of the play that follows. Held on the third Saturday of each production. ***Dangerous Corner: May. 15, 2010.***

PAY-WHAT-YOU-CAN MATINEE This matinee is instrumental in bringing live, professional theatre to everyone in our community regardless of income level. ***Dangerous Corner: May 8, 2010.***

RUSH TICKETS Available 15 minutes before show time and subject to availability, rush tickets are only \$20 for regular performances and \$30 for the season's musical (*Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*).

PREVIEWS Be the first! We stage four preview performances (not yet media-reviewed), which offer dramatic savings on regular tickets (preview tickets: \$30-38). ***Dangerous Corner: May 1, 3, 4 and 5, 2010.***

TEA MATINEES These lively, social matinees are extremely popular with our audiences (especially seniors and students) and provide a unique afternoon theatre experience. Complimentary tea, coffee and biscuits are served at 1pm, show at 2pm. ***Dangerous Corner: May 12, 19 and 20, 2010.***

RENTALS In addition to our own production work, we share our rehearsal halls, production workshops and props and costume inventory with the community as a whole, providing badly needed resources to other arts organizations and community groups that otherwise wouldn't have access to a venue, shop space or heavily subsidized props and costume rentals. **Call 604 872 6622. Rehearsal: x 224. Prop: x 250. Costume: x 320.**

VISIT VANCOUVERPLAYHOUSE.COM

We welcome your feedback and questions regarding our Play Guides!

You can also request a copy of a script (for educational purposes).

Contact: Stasa Andric at **604 637 3094** / sandric@vancouverplayhouse.com
or Meredith Elliott at **604 629 2097** / melliott@vancouverplayhouse.com.

SEE YOU AT THE PLAYHOUSE!