



SUPERB REVIVAL OF 'THE COMMON PURSUIT': (left to right) Jacob Fishel, Tim McGeever, Josh Cooke, Lucas Near-Verbrugge. Photo: Joan Marcus

Theater Review

The Common Pursuit:

Uncommonly good



THE COMMON PURSUIT

Written by Simon Gray

Directed by Moises Kaufman

Through July 29, 2012

Laura Pels Theatre

111 West 46th Street

(212-719-1300), www.RoundaboutTheatre.org

By David NouNou

Kudos to the Roundabout team for reviving Simon Gray's *The Common Pursuit*, last presented in New York in 1986 at the Promenade Theatre. This show has never had a formal Broadway presentation. With a stellar cast, this show could easily have a successful Broadway run. It is eloquent, very nicely written, and actually has interesting insights and ideas about people's ideals and aspirations.

Set at Cambridge and in Holburn, England over a span of 20 years, it brings together six college students: Stuart Thorne (Josh Cooke) and Marigold Watson (Kristen Bush), the lovers and the founding members of a new literary magazine, *The Common Pursuit*, for which Stuart is also the editor; Martin Musgrove (Jacob Fishel), the shy, awkward block with the money; Humphrey Taylor (Tim McGeever), an elitist poet; Nick Finchling (Lucas Near-Verbrugge), the chain-smoking poser; and Peter Whetworth (Kieran Campion), the successful, womanizing, pedestrian poet and hack writer

As expected, it probes into the lives of these same six people over the 20-year period at different intervals in their lives. Stuart keeps struggling to keep *The Common Pursuit* running; Martin keeps pouring money into it (due to his love for Stuart and Marigold); Humphrey, Nick, and

Peter are still contributing pieces to it. The uniqueness of the play is the playwright's perceptions of his characters and how they evolve. They all mature in different ways, some more successfully than others. Their relationships change; their status changes but ultimately they retain their own essence. Very much as real life does; our lives evolve, each of us grows and we try to fulfill our ambitions, but our essence is ingrained in us.

Handsomely mounted and directed thanks to set designer Derek McLane and director, Moises Kaufman, they have captured the time, mood, and feel of the piece. However, the same cannot be said of all the performances. Most of the cast members struggle with the British accent, which is essential to any show set in the United Kingdom, and most of them do not have a grasp of the characters they are portraying. They say the line, but do not have an actual feel of these people.

There is, however, one true standout performance, and also one very good one. Tim McGeever, as Humphrey, the elitist poet, has a genuine feel and understanding of his character, is wonderful, and his contempt of the mediocre and banal is superb. Jacob Fishel, as the tormented, rich orphan, Martin, delivers the good performance. His zeal in his eagerness and his awkwardness are touching. His love for the two people is genuine, a perfect blend of adolescence into maturity. Both Mr. McGeever and Mr. Fishel maintain the essence of their characters throughout the 20-year span.

I am glad to see The Roundabout offering a noteworthy production of this familiar but still well-constructed revival of such a delicate piece as *The Common Pursuit*.

Edited by Scott Harrah

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