

Jumpers

Tom Stoppard

Jumpers, which was Tom Stoppard's first full length play after Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, has a Professor of Moral Philosophy for its hero and is a serious attempt to debate the existence of a moral absolute, of metaphysical reality, of God ... but, most unfortunately, the attempt does not get as far as it might for among the setbacks and interruptions with which George Moore has to cope one might mention the disappearance of his specially trained hare, Thumper, and also the appearance of Inspector Bones investigating the rumour (alas, all too true) that one of a team of gymnasts, namely the Professor of Logic, has been shot dead while performing in George's sitting room, 'The close association between gymnastics and philosophy is, I believe, unique to this university,' George observes to the Inspector, who, however is rather more interested in George's beautiful young wife Dotty, a musical-comedy star who retired prematurely for reasons that seem not entirely unconnected with Man's landing on the Moon. And then there is Archie, a man of many parts, doctor, lawyer, philosopher, and, of course, gymnast, though in which of these capacities he closets himself with Dotty is by no means clear

Like no other play by him or anyone else, this could nevertheless only have been written by Tom Stoppard, revealing his brilliant gift for comedy and his unique sense of theatre. *Jumpers* first opened at the National Theatre in February 1972 with Michael Hordern, Diana Rigg and Graham Crowden, and was returned to its repertory in autumn 1976.

Faber Paperbacks

JUMPERS

by the same author

Plays

ENTER A FREE MAN

ALBERT'S BRIDGE

and IF YOU'RE GLAD I'LL BE FRANK

THE REAL INSPECTOR HOUND

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD

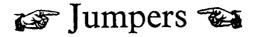
AFTER MAGRITTE

ALBERT'S BRIDGE

TRAVESTIES

Novel LORD MALQUIST AND MR. MOON (Blond)

TOM STOPPARD



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For Miriam

Characters

GEORGE

DOROTHY

ARCHIE

BONES

CROUCH

SECRETARY

8 JUMPERS who also play:

SCOTT

CLEGTHORPE

and

USHERS

CHAPLAINS

DANCERS

The play is in two Acts and a Coda which follows the second act without interruption.

Jumpers was first performed by the National Theatre Company at the Old Vic Theatre, London, on 2nd February 1972, when the cast was as follows:

GEORGE Michael Hordern

DOROTHY Diana Rigg

ARCHIE Graham Crowden

BONES David Ryall
CROUCH Paul Curran
SECRETARY Anna Carteret

JUMPERS, etc Ray Callaghan

Tom Dickinson Michael Edgar Tom Georgeson Lionel Guyett William Hobbs

David Howey Barry James

Brian Jameson

Desmond McNamara

Riggs O'Hara

Howard Southern

Harry Waters

Directed by Peter Wood Designed by Patrick Robertson

Author's note

In preparing previous plays for publication I have tried with some difficulty to arrive at something called a 'definitive text', but I now believe that in the case of plays there is no such animal. Each production will throw up its own problems and very often the solution will lie in some minor change to the text, either in the dialogue or in the author's directions, or both. What follows is a basic version of *Jumpers*. The National Theatre production was mounted on a revolve stage and this fact alone was responsible for various small changes to the links between scenes. I have also included here the stage directions relating to the wall-sized television screen which the National Theatre was able to provide, but such a screen is not intended to be essential to the play's workability. I also shortened the play slightly in ways which are not shown here.

T.S.

Postscript (February 1973): . . . And indeed, after some months' absence *Jumpers* returned to the National Theatre in a slightly altered form. This edition incorporates the changes because they seem to me an improvement on the original. The main alteration consists of having the screens placed round the bed for the *first* bedroom scene in Act Two, rather than for the final bedroom scene, with a consequent adjustment of the dialogue. This gives a better shape to the Act, and I gratefully record that for this idea, and for much else, I am indebted to Peter Wood whose insight and inventiveness were a crucial influence on *Jumpers* throughout rehearsals. The other most noticeable change is the disappearance of Scott from the Coda, a more difficult decision but I think on balance the right one; he added little and delayed much.

There are three playing areas, the STUDY, the BEDROOM, and the HALL.

There is also a SCREEN, hopefully forming a backdrop to the whole stage. Film and slides are to be back-projected on to this Screen on a scale big enough to allow actors and furniture to mask the images without significantly obscuring them.

It is an essential requirement of the play that the Bedroom can be blacked out completely while the action continues elsewhere. Where this cannot be achieved by lighting alone, it might be an idea to put the Bedroom in a permanent gauze box; but raising and lowering a gauze screen is not encouraged. Another possibility, where the facility exists, would be to put the Bedroom on a revolve.

For the purpose of the stage directions given hereafter, I am assuming the following layout.

The FRONT DOOR is Upstage Centre. The HALL is right-angled, a passage coming downstage from the Front Door to the footlights, turning Stage Right along the front of the stage and disappearing into the wing at Downstage Right, where it leads to unseen Kitchen, Living Room, etc.

The STUDY occupies the whole area stage Left of the Hall and Front Door.

The BEDROOM occupies the rest of the stage, i.e., the area inside the reverse-L-shape of the Hall.

The apartment belongs to GEORGE, a Professor of Moral Philosophy, married to a prematurely-retired musical-comedy actress of some renown, DOROTHY. The general standard of living suggested by the flat owes more, one would guess, to musical comedy than moral philosophy, and this is especially true of the Bedroom which is lushly carpeted and

includes among its furnishings a television set remotely-controlled by an electronic portable switch; a record player; two elegant straight-backed chairs and one comfortable upholstered chair; a globular gold-fish-bowl containing one goldfish; and a four-poster bed which can be enclosed at will by the drapes adorning its corners. The effect is elegant, feminine, expensive. The Bedroom has two doors, one leading into the wings at Stage Left (the unseen Bathroom), and the second into the Hall. This latter door must be sturdily fixed. It opens inwards, the hinges upstage, so that when this door is wide open the inside of it is hidden from the audience. The room also has a french window, guarded on the exterior by a mock-balcony or balustrade; it overlooks streets and sky, for the flat is in an upper floor of big old-fashioned but newly redecorated and converted mansion.

The STUDY contains a day-bed against the upstage wall, book-shelves above the bed, a desk and chair for the Secretary, and a bigger desk for George placed against the footlights. On the wings-side of the room is a tall cupboard or wardrobe, and a small wash-basin with mirror. The room contains, somewhere, a tape-recorder; a bow and quiver of arrows, together with an archery target about a yard in diameter; an electric typewriter for the Secretary to use; a smallish wooden box such as a small tortoise might live in, and a large wooden box such as a rabbit might live in. There is a door into the Hall. The window would be in the fourth wall, but not above the desk for that space is occupied by a large (though imaginary) mirror. George's desk, when we discover it, is a clutter of books and manuscript, and a tumbler containing pencils.

However, none of the above is visible for the first few minutes of the play, for which is required an empty space. . . .

THE CHARACTERS

GEORGE is between 40 and 50, and still attractive enough to make it perfectly plausible that he should be married to DOTTY who is ten to fifteen years younger and very beautiful indeed.

ARCHIE is a dandy, as old as George or older.

INSPECTOR BONES is middle-aged and carelessly dressed.

CROUCH is old and small and a bit stooped.

The SECRETARY is young and attractive but poker-faced, almost grim, even on her first appearance, in which she performs as a stripper.

The JUMPERS are dressed in yellow uniforms—tracksuit trousers and singlets—and although they pass muster at first glance, they are not as universally youthful or athletic-looking as one might expect.