

AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER
Carey Perloff, Artistic Director Heather Kitchen, Executive Director

PRESENTS

WORDS ^{on} PLAYS

INSIGHT INTO THE PLAY, THE PLAYWRIGHT, AND THE PRODUCTION

Rich and Famous

BY JOHN GUARE

DIRECTED BY JOHN RANDO

AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER

JANUARY 8—FEBRUARY 8, 2009

WORDS ON PLAYS PREPARED BY

ELIZABETH BRODERSEN

PUBLICATIONS EDITOR

MICHAEL PALLER

RESIDENT DRAMATURG

DAN RUBIN

PUBLICATIONS & LITERARY ASSOCIATE

LESLEY GIBSON

PUBLICATIONS INTERN

MEGAN COHEN

DRAMATURGY INTERN

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why do you think *Rich and Famous* was written for a small cast of actors playing multiple roles? How do you think the production would be different if each of the 12 characters were played by a different actor?
2. John Guare incorporates music into *Rich and Famous*, yet it is not a musical. What is the difference between a musical and a play with music, and what is the purpose of music in each of these forms? What is the purpose of music in *Rich and Famous*?
3. How does the episodic structure of the play's scenes contribute to the phantasmagoric effect of the completed production? What do you think each vignette represents in the life of a playwright?
4. Director John Rando suggests that *Rich and Famous* could only have been written in the 1970s. Do you agree? What elements of this play are distinctly influenced by the culture of that decade? What elements transcend the period?
5. How is *Rich and Famous* a critique of America's culture of celebrity?
6. What do the Etruscans represent to John Guare? What do they represent to Bing Ringling?
7. How does the play stretch the boundaries of realism? In what ways is reality warped and in what ways does it completely disintegrate in *Rich and Famous*?
8. What role does Allison play in Bing's night, and what does she represent in Bing's life? How does her unhappy marriage bring Bing's failure into new perspective?
9. We meet Bing's parents in the second to last scene of the play. What influence did they have over their son, and how does your opinion of him change once you learn about his roots?
10. In the final moment of the play, The Actor and The Actress ask Bing, "What are you going to do now?" He proceeds to remove one of his R and F cufflinks, but cannot loosen the second. What is the significance of this final gesture? Which cufflink do you think he was unable to remove? What do *you* think Bing will do next?