

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

PRESENTS

# WORDS <sup>on</sup> PLAYS

INSIGHT INTO THE PLAY, THE PLAYWRIGHT, AND THE PRODUCTION

## *Rock 'n' Roll*

BY TOM STOPPARD  
DIRECTED BY CAREY PERLOFF  
AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER  
SEPTEMBER 11–OCTOBER 12, 2008

*WORDS ON PLAYS* PREPARED BY

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## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

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1. What is the role of music in *Rock 'n' Roll*? What does it indicate about Stoppard's views of the relationship between art and politics? What does music represent for Jan? For Ferdinand? For Esme?
2. Syd Barrett physically appears only once as The Piper. How does his presence affect the lives of each of the characters? What do you think Stoppard is trying to suggest by equating him with the Greek god Pan?
3. Does the play draw a definitive conclusion about communism as an ideology? Does the play alter your own views of communism? Why or why not?
4. A major theme of *Rock 'n' Roll* seems to be the inexorable alteration of an individual's ideals. How do the ideals of Max, Esme, Jan, Ferdinand, and Lenka evolve and change over the course of the play?
5. How does the physical appearance of the characters change throughout the course of the play? In what way do the evolving costumes and hair styles help illustrate each character's personal or political progression over the years?
6. What is the role of the women in the play? How does Stoppard integrate the characters of Esme, Eleanor, Lenka, Magda, and Alice into the greater political discussion? Is it different from the way he uses the male characters?
7. Consider the major romantic relationships that occur in the play: Max and Eleanor, Jan and Esme, Max and Lenka. What do they tell you about each of the characters? How does Stoppard reconcile each character's political passions with their personal relationships?
8. Do you think a solid understanding of the sociopolitical issues discussed in *Rock 'n' Roll* is essential to your appreciation of the play?
9. Jan and Ferdinand initially disagree on the most effective means of protesting the government, but they eventually end up in agreement. What pushes each character to that point?
10. How does Stoppard integrate the discussion of language into the story? What role does the poetry of Sappho play in *Rock 'n' Roll*?