



By Steven Dietz

Directed by Dawne Swearingen



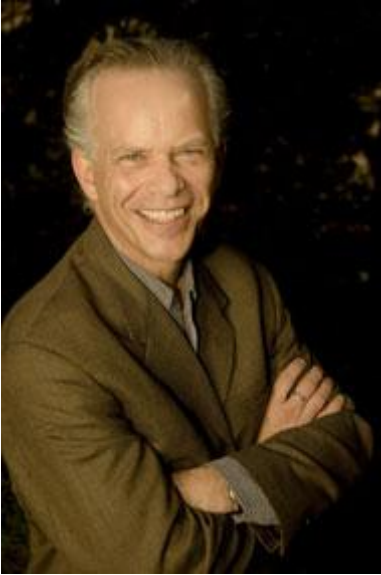
cornerstone production

Study Guide

by Amanda Jarufe and Caroline Marolf

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Steven Dietz



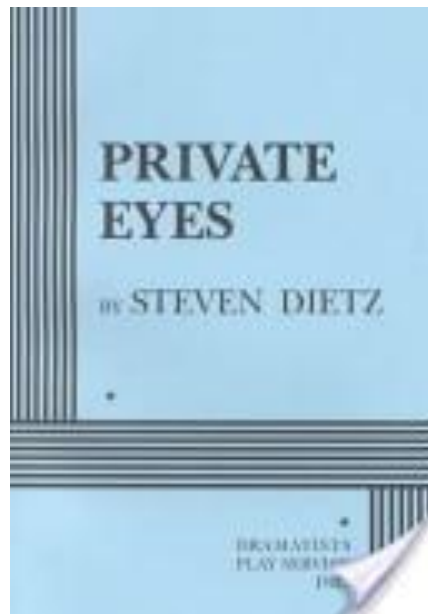
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- Born on June 23rd, 1958 in Denver, Colorado and grew up there.
- Graduated in 1980 with BA in Theatre Arts from the University of Northern Colorado
- Formed a small theatre company, Quicksilver Stage in Minneapolis
- Teaches playwriting and directing at University of Texas in Austin
- Places at #8 on the list of Top Ten Most Produced Playwrights in America
- His works have been translated into 7 different languages
- His play *Brothers and Sisters* was the first to be produced (1981)

HISTORY OF THE PLAY

- *Private Eyes* was first produced at the Arizona Theatre Company in March of 1996
- It is considered an homage to Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*
- Dietz wanted the theme of this play to be "a scene in which two lovers fail to speak the truth" ¹².

When Dietz began to write the play in the 1990s, his original title was, *The Usual Suspects*. This version had a stage reading by the Arizona Theatre Company in 1992. However a movie was later written and produced with that same title and Dietz "begrudgingly" changed his title to *Private Eyes* ¹².



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THEMES OF THE PLAY

As you watch *Private Eyes*, look for the following themes:

- The question of truth
- Authority and power struggles in relationships
- Control
- The power of gender roles
- Deception
- The nature of reality
- Implications of our decisions and consequences of our actions
- Fidelity
- Identity

Consider how Dietz used these themes in his written work and then how the director, Dawne Swearingen, and cast use the themes in the actual production:

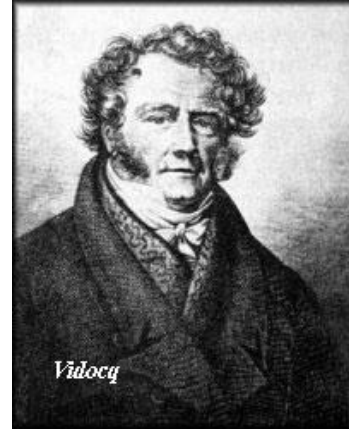
- Does the performance seem to focus more on one theme rather than another?
- Which theme resonates the most with you?
- Do you see any of these themes in our culture today? How?
- What other piece of current art (visual art including paintings, and sculpture, music, film, dance etc.) do you see investigating these themes in our society?

REAL-WORLD INFORMATION

Private Eye Investigators

Who started private eye investigations?

- In 1833, Eugene Francois Vidocq, a French soldier, criminal, and a privateer, founded the first known private detective agency.
- His team included several ex-convicts and criminals.
- He created the first plaster casts of shoe impressions, as well as the indelible ink and bond paper with his printing company.
- His ideas and techniques are stills used within the French police force.



Private Eyes Today:



- Advanced Surveillance Group Inc. is a company that uses Private Eyes to investigate suspected adulterers.
- If someone feels their significant other is being unfaithful, they can hire private investigators to watch and follow their significant other.
- High tech computers allow private eyes to quickly obtain massive amounts of information. May private eyes have a great work ethic, finding information quickly, and often end up testifying against the suspected adulterer in court.

Statistics

Statistics on Affairs

- According to the Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy, approximately 50 percent married women and 60 percent of married men will have an extramarital affair at some time in their marriage¹¹.
- In 1998, 24% of men and 14% of women living in California had sex outside of marriage. Ten years later, those numbers had more than doubled¹¹.
- 90 percent of Americans marry, and approximately 50 percent get divorced⁷.
- The average marriage in California lasts just seven years⁷.
- Two years after ending counseling, studies find, 25 percent of couples are worse off than they were when they started, and after four years, up to 38 percent are divorced⁷.

Statistics on Lying¹⁴

- One study showed that people tell 2 to 3 lies every minute.
- By the age of 3, most children know how to fib, and by the age of 6, most children lie a few times a day.
- Studies show that people who lie frequently are seen as friendlier than people who are more truthful.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES: **BRITAIN AND THE US**⁶

Miscellaneous

	USA	England
Legal Driving Age	16	17
Legal Drinking Age	21	18
Legal Age of Sexual Consent	18	16
Legal Gambling Age	21	18
Temperature measured in	Fahrenheit	Celsius
Drives on the	Right	Left
Car transmission mostly	Automatic	Manual
Most popular winter sports	Football, Hockey	Soccer, Rugby
Most popular summer sport	Baseball	Cricket
Expected % of tips	15%	10%
Prefix for dialing long distance	1	0

Other Differences

- Light switches are opposite. Down is off in the United States, while down is on in England
- In Britain, most shoppers bag their own groceries.
- In the USA in sporting events such as gymnastics, it is possible to get a perfect 10 score. In the Britain the highest possible score given is normally a 9.9 - the thought being that you cannot give a perfect 10 score because there could always be someone who could do it better than you!
- In schools in England, a "time-out" is called "isolation". Uniforms are common in British schools, whereas in the US, they are only common in private schools.

Eating Differences

- In the US, we have an "eat, pay, and get out" policy, whereas in England, a meal can last from 4-6 hours in a restaurant.
- US Citizens are all about their coffee and Brits are all about the tea.
- In the US, it is common to substitute items when ordering, whereas in England, it is considered rude and unacceptable.
- In the US, dining is more casual, but in England, there is a dress code unless you are eating in a pub or street café.

- The English usually dine at later times than do US citizens. They begin dinner at 7:30 or 8pm and lunch is often eaten in the afternoon.
- In England, they often eat hamburgers by opening the bun and using a fork and knife to eat the burger and sometimes even throwing the bun away.

British Behavior

- Always be punctual in England. Arriving a few minutes early for safety is acceptable.
- Decision-making is slower in England than in the United States; therefore it is unwise to rush the English into making a decision.
- A simple handshake is the standard greeting (for both men and women) for business occasions and for visiting a home.
- Privacy is very important to the English. Therefore asking personal questions or intensely staring at another person should be avoided.
- Eye contact is seldom kept during British conversations.
- To signal that something is to be kept confidential or secret, tap your nose.
- Personal space is important in England, and one should maintain a wide physical space when conversing. Furthermore, it is considered inappropriate to touch others in public.
- Gifts are generally not part of doing business in England.
- A business lunch will often be conducted in a pub and will consist of a light meal and perhaps a pint of ale.
- When socializing after work hours, do not bring up the subject of work.
- When dining out, it is not considered polite to toast those who are older than yourself.

Misunderstandings

- There are phrases that are the same but have totally different meanings resulting in severe misunderstandings. Take for instance the phrase "knock up". In the USA this means get a girl pregnant while in the UK it means knock on someone's door!
- Ever wondered why Wendy's Hamburgers never took off in Britain? Well, who would want to order "Biggie Fries" when a biggie is what a child calls his pool!

*Therapists*¹²

- Approximately 5 million people seek help from Marriage & Family Therapists annually.

Why do they want to become therapists?

- So they can genuinely help people and enrich their lives. Some therapists want to become psychologists to feel noble and help people make the right decision. The common misconception about therapists is that they come up with a solution or conclusion for their client, but in reality the appropriate thing to do is let the client lead themselves to their own conclusion. Therapists should mainly keep their opinions to themselves. If there is a situation where the counselor feels too biased to one side of the situation, they should refer them to another counselor who can help them.
- Psychologist gets doctorate. 6-8 extra years
- Counselor goes through Grad school. 3-4 extra years.

THINKING CRITICALLY

ABOUT *PRIVATE EYES*

The arts are important, in part, because they often persuade a society to examine the mores it adheres to. The theatre can be entertaining, a form of escapism, or a source of beauty. It can also question cultural understandings, challenge the status quo, and reveal both evils and good deeds within a particular society. The ACU Theatre Department chose to produce *Private Eyes* for many of those reasons.

Indeed, *Private Eyes* leads us to ask many questions, including:

- Why do people lie?
- How does culture impact identity? How do we see that in the play?
 - Do the characters act upon evidence or assumptions?
- What are the implications of the decisions the characters make?
 - Do these seem true to life?
- What is absolute truth? Is there such a thing?
 - What is reality and what ties us to it?

ATTENDING A PLAY

The ACU Theatre Department is thrilled that you're coming to see our production. We produce an average of 8 shows a year, and they're all open to students. As you prepare to attend *Private Eyes*, remember that there are certain etiquette appropriate for live theatre performances.

A live play is different than a movie. It is inappropriate to talk, text, or use any mobile device during the show. It is inappropriate to bring food or drink into the theatre or make loud noises (chomping on gum, crumpling paper, etc.). Not only is that kind of behavior distracting to your fellow audience members, but it is also distracting to the actors. They *do* "feel" your energy, so it's appropriate to laugh when something is funny or clap at the end of a scene or when the entire play is done. Your focused attention actually makes the performance better for everyone.

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