



Rick Mayall in 'The Common Pursuit': 'Brilliant and unselfish as the asinine Nick, aspiring to media stardom, inflating and deflating with each triumph and reverse'

SIMON GRAY'S transformation of 'The Common Pursuit' from the play which made such a considerable and introversive impression at HammerSmith four years ago into the truthful and seductive comedy now at the Phoenix is a total success. Having partly re-written it for the Los Angeles firm and Off-Broadway, he is now directing it himself and in London crucially casts it with an ensemble of comedians and comic actors who have risen to fame and popularity in the present decade. There is all the difference in the world between young performers imagining where they will be in 20 years time and middle-aged actors remembering what it was like to be young.

The result is not only much funnier and more spontaneous, but touching where formerly it was sentimental, and open-hearted where it was vainly self-righteous. It has often seemed to make the assumption that male vanity is a subject less for comedy than for tragic and universal concern, but the resilient despair and ingenuously good humour of his own published diaries (last volume out next week) suggest that he does not really believe this, and the revived 'Common Pursuit' is a comedy that is a genuine pleasure to read a book.

Simon Gray's 'The Common Pursuit' is a comedy that is a genuine pleasure to read a book. The result is not only much funnier and more spontaneous, but touching where formerly it was sentimental, and open-hearted where it was vainly self-righteous. It has often seemed to make the assumption that male vanity is a subject less for comedy than for tragic and universal concern, but the resilient despair and ingenuously good humour of his own published diaries (last volume out next week) suggest that he does not really believe this, and the revived 'Common Pursuit' is a comedy that is a genuine pleasure to read a book.

Simon Gray's 'The Common Pursuit' is a comedy that is a genuine pleasure to read a book. The result is not only much funnier and more spontaneous, but touching where formerly it was sentimental, and open-hearted where it was vainly self-righteous. It has often seemed to make the assumption that male vanity is a subject less for comedy than for tragic and universal concern, but the resilient despair and ingenuously good humour of his own published diaries (last volume out next week) suggest that he does not really believe this, and the revived 'Common Pursuit' is a comedy that is a genuine pleasure to read a book.

Simon Gray's 'The Common Pursuit' is a comedy that is a genuine pleasure to read a book. The result is not only much funnier and more spontaneous, but touching where formerly it was sentimental, and open-hearted where it was vainly self-righteous. It has often seemed to make the assumption that male vanity is a subject less for comedy than for tragic and universal concern, but the resilient despair and ingenuously good humour of his own published diaries (last volume out next week) suggest that he does not really believe this, and the revived 'Common Pursuit' is a comedy that is a genuine pleasure to read a book.

Simon Gray's 'The Common Pursuit' is a comedy that is a genuine pleasure to read a book. The result is not only much funnier and more spontaneous, but touching where formerly it was sentimental, and open-hearted where it was vainly self-righteous. It has often seemed to make the assumption that male vanity is a subject less for comedy than for tragic and universal concern, but the resilient despair and ingenuously good humour of his own published diaries (last volume out next week) suggest that he does not really believe this, and the revived 'Common Pursuit' is a comedy that is a genuine pleasure to read a book.

# The glittering surprises

THEATRE ■ Michael Ratcliffe  
'The Common Pursuit' and 'Faust Part One'

able moments with concisely fat cigars and listening to Wagner with the agonised stare of one who, having received one caution from the biggest man in the room, is determined to behave well.

The big man is Stephen Fry, effortlessly grave and funny as Humphrey, the mandarin homosexual philosopher and connoisseur of them all, delivering a series of demolition jobs on badly formulated premises and poor taste. He leaves the sentiment to take care of itself, which it does.

Not being a chap, Miss Berger has little to do but look caring and sexy, but John Gordon Sinclair completes the male quartet with an interestingly stuffed performance of a man who places his prick where his brain should be and gives up scholarship for sex before the common pursuit of honest and profitable gain ever got underway.

David Fox's comic performance of Goethe's Faust Part One at the Lyric, Hammersmith, must be assessed in the interim since, for the first time in the British theatre, it is being presented in repertory with Part Two (open-

ing tomorrow night). A pity the Lyric could not have organised the whole enormous and ambitious enterprise from the start to show both parts on one day to the Fries, since they can be seen that way every Saturday starting this week.

## Ratcliffe On Common Pursuit & Faust Part One

Clipped By:



ianharris  
Sat, Feb 22, 2020