

## Reviews of the original production:

"The one thing you cannot do when reviving a 98-year-old play is to recreate the shock of the new. Even Scotland Yard's vice squad is unlikely to mimic the Vienna police who closed down the first public performance in 1921 of Arthur Schnitzler's *Reigen*, here retitled *The Blue Room*, and prosecuted him for obscenity. If there is any unusual *frisson* to Sam Mendes's breathlessly chic new production it isn't because of the frank depiction of dangerous liaisons, but because of the casting. It is no surprise that this updated and very free adaptation comes from David Hare. Glenn plays Hare's men as increasingly removed and feckless or, as with the deliciously played romantic playwright, supremely self-absorbed. By contrast Kidman's superbly differentiated gallery of women -- from a mskittish, deerlike prostitute to an hilariously grand, throaty actress -- all turn out to be victims. For all the production's sheer wit and beautifully played brio you cannot escape the sensation that we've been here before." -- David Benedict, *The Independent*

"Hare has played loose and clever with a famous old Austrian play: in Arthur Schnitzler's *La Ronde*, 10 couples guiltily find pleasure in each other before they separate and are linked in a sexual daisy-chain. So Hare's gentle comedy of sexual manners displaces Schnitzler's serious drama of sex and betrayal. The change is not always for the theatrical better." -- Nicholas de Jongh, *The London Evening Standard*

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## A Playgoer's Guide to



by David Hare

*The Blue Room* is a modern adaptation of Arthur Schnitzler's *La Ronde*. David Hare, one of England's most celebrated living playwrights, has re-set these circular scenes of love and betrayal in the present day. With just two actors playing all the parts, he has created a fascinating landscape of dream and longing that is as eternal as Schnitzler's original series of sketches, written over a century ago.

When *La Ronde* premiered in Vienna in 1921 the play was closed down by the police, and the actors in its first Berlin production the same year had to endure a six-day trial on charges of obscenity.

*The Blue Room* was first performed at the Donmar Warehouse in London, England in September 1998 and starred Nicole Kidman and Iain Glen. This duo put on a stellar performance, as the reviews would state, but partly due to the play's sexually explicit content, the overall performance was criticized heavily.

It was directed by Academy Award Winner Sam Mendes (director of the film *American Beauty*). The production garnered international attention and was later brought to Broadway, where it played to sold out audiences.

A series of sexual encounters -- erotic, illegal, vulgar, gentle, corrupt, dishonest -- with all the parts played by two actors, *The Blue Room* promises an unforgettable evening of thought provoking and challenging theatre. It is not to be missed.

## La Ronde:



*DER REIGEN* (1900, *Hands Around*, also known as *La Ronde*) is among Schnitzler's best-known works. It is a skilfully constructed play in ten dialogues, in which the characters are seen after coitus as well as before -- lovemaking is marked by asterisks in the written text. Beginning with the seduction of a Soldier by a Prostitute, each subsequent dialogue is related to its predecessor to form a cycle. Character number ten; the Count, makes love to the Prostitute, and closes the circle.

*Hands Around* was not actually performed until 1920. The play caused one of the greatest

scandals in the history of the German theatre. It provoked anti-Semitic riots in Berlin. During the six-day obscenity trial much was made by the prosecution of the lines of dashes in the script whereby Schnitzler denotes sex. The director interpreted these moments by lowering the curtains and playing a *valse triste*. There was nothing objectionable in the dialogue or the staging but the prosecution alleged that its rhythm suggested the rhythm of lovemaking. The trial resulted in an acquittal, but the author banned any performances of the play in Europe until after his death. The light-hearted juxtaposing of the love-and-death theme inspired Max Ophüls's film *La Ronde* (1950). It was the second time the director had adapted a play by Schnitzler, the first being *Liebelei* (1931). Ophüls used in the film a "master of ceremonies," played by Anton Walbrook, who keeps *La Ronde* "moving" and directly addresses the audience.

## About David Hare:

Hare was born in June 5, 1947 in St. Leonard's, Sussex, England, the only son of Clifford and Agnes Hare. He went to Lancing College, a public school (a British "public" school is equivalent to a "private" school in United States). He studied English at Cambridge University's Jesus College, receiving his M. A. degree with honors in 1968.

His writing career began when a playwright failed to deliver a play to the Portable Theatre, a traveling theatre group Hare had co-founded with Tony Bicat. With only four days left before the scheduled performance and no play in sight, Hare sat down and composed what he now calls "a primitive satire on the unlikelihood of revolution in Britain."

In 1969 he served as literary manager at the Royal Court Theatre, London and directed *How Brophy Made Good*. In 1970 Hare married theatrical agent Margaret Matheson, with whom he eventually had three children, and produced *Slang*, winning his first award – the *Evening Standard* Award for most promising playwright. Hare worked for the next 5 years for different theatres and in 1975 he won the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize. In 1980 Hare and Matheson divorced.

In 1983 he received the New York Critics Circle Award for the best foreign play. In 1985 *Wetherby*, a film directed by Hare, won the Golden Bear Award at the Berlin Film Festival. David Hare's many plays have been staged throughout the world. His best known works include *The Blue Room*, *Plenty*, *Amy's View*, *Skylight* and his latest play, *Breath of Life*.

Hare also wrote screenplays and adapted his plays for film and in 1998, he became an actor himself, something he hadn't attempted since he was 15 years old. In 2003 he won the best-adapted screenplay Oscar for the movie *The Hours*.

Hare distinguished himself during the 1970s as a playwright concerned with contemporary social and political issues. Considered one of the most literate of his generation of British dramatists, his works often reveal his attraction to socialism and frequently address such concerns as post-imperial Britain and the destructive nature of Britain's class system.

Hare's plays typically revolve around individuals who find themselves incapable of changing either society or themselves. As a playwright, Hare uses "subversive art" to compel audience members to examine their conventional beliefs. With more than 20 plays behind him, David Hare is widely regarded as one of Britain's small handful of great living playwrights, whose work attracts the biggest stars in theatre at the same time as it has stirred controversy with pungent social commentary.

Currently, Hare has borrowed Donald Rumsfeld's phrase "Freedom's untidy" as the title for an ambitious new drama that, according to the *Washington Post*, drills deep into the motives, morality and mental gyrations behind the decision to go to war in Iraq.

