



Rich Girl

SECOND STAGE

19 APR THRU 19 MAY

written by
VICTORIA STEWART

directed by
MICHAEL BLOOM

co-produced with
GEORGE STREETPLAYHOUSE



PLAYGUIDE

ABOUT THE PLAY

Eve, a hugely successful financial guru, controls every aspect of her surroundings — including the lives of her executive assistant Maggie and her sheltered daughter Claudine. But when Claudine falls head over heels for starving artist Henry, Eve has her doubts: Is Henry everything her daughter deserves or is he only after her money? *Rich Girl*, a modern-day take on the classic play and film *The Heiress*, is a clever new comedy about women and their relationships with men, mothers and money — and not necessarily in that order.

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May 2-11, 2013

ROE GREEN Honorary Producer

Rich Girl is the centerpiece production of the 2013 New Ground Theatre Festival.



Crystal Finn and Tony Roach in Rich Girl, performed at co-producing George Street Playhouse. Photo by T. Charles Erickson.

WHAT'S SO FUNNY ABOUT LOVE AND MONEY?

Victoria Stewart Finds the Humor in 19th Century Melodrama

When Henry James' *Washington Square* first appeared in serial form in 1880, it was a straightforward tale: Money and love collide as a wealthy Greenwich Village doctor butts heads with his daughter over a suitor's questionable motives. James himself didn't actually care much for his romantic melodrama, but something at the "heart" of the novel (pun intended) struck a chord.

James' story has been adapted multiple times: first, in 1947, as a very successful play, *The Heiress* (a star-studded Broadway revival just closed in February); Hollywood has adapted the story twice, with Olivia de Havilland and Montgomery Clift in a film version of the play in 1949, and in 1997 with Jennifer Jason Leigh, Albert Finney, Ben Chaplin, and Maggie Smith. Now CPH is proud to produce the premiere of a new play inspired by the tale: Victoria Stewart's *Rich Girl*. However, CPH Artistic Director (and director of the play) Michael Bloom notes that the ways in which this play differs from *The Heiress* are very telling.

Bloom says, "*Rich Girl* can be seen as a romantic comedy, especially as it diverges substantially from the source. Henry James' *Washington Square* and especially *The Heiress* are melodramas about a victim who winds up in the same prison as her father; *Rich Girl* is a comedy about a heroine who follows in her mother's footsteps and gains a substantial degree of purpose and independence."

“.....
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from *The Heiress* are very telling.
.....”

In both James' novel and *The Heiress*, the "dull but sweet" Catherine — often referred to as "poor Catherine" — lives with her wealthy father, Dr. Sloper, in a posh Greenwich Village residence. When "penniless adventurer" Morris Townsend begins to woo young Catherine, Dr. Sloper is suspicious: Catherine is so plain, Morris must be after the family's money. Lavinia Penniman, Catherine's spinster aunt, provides comic relief as she becomes overly interested in the young couple's relationship, manipulating the situation to mostly disastrous effect.

Fast-forward the story to 2013 and *Rich Girl* has a "wealth" of modern circumstances to mine. The overbearing father-figure is now a media-savvy — and female — financial planner *a la* Suze Orman. "Poor Catherine" is, according to the playwright, "gawky" Claudine, "an adolescent even at age 26" charged with oversight of her mother's charitable foundation, while her suitor is a vision-rich but cash-poor theatre artist named Henry.



From left: Judith Ivey, Dan Stevens, David Strathairn and Jessica Chastain in the recent Broadway revival of *The Heiress*.



"Penniless adventurer" Morris Townsend is introduced to "the plain heiress" Catherine Sloper in this illustration from *The Cornhill Magazine*.



Comic actress Thelma Ritter, seen here in the 1959 film *Pillow Talk*, inspired one of the many updates to *Rich Girl's* source material.

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APRIL 27 & MAY 11

When adults purchase a ticket to select CPH Mainstage shows, they can turn it into a **Play Date** with their child! While grown-ups watch the performance, children take part in a unique “playshop” that ties directly into the themes of the Mainstage show and is taught by experienced CPH teaching artists! At the end of the Play Date, families receive an “Art is Fun” kit with more activities to enjoy together at home.

All Play Dates take place during Saturday matinees, with child drop off at 2:15 in the Allen Theatre.

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LOVE AND MONEY... CONTINUED >>

And what would 21st century romance be without a prenuptial agreement? Says Bloom, “The action of a comedy turns on a clash between a child’s and a parent’s will. A comedy nearly always starts in a world created by the irrational obsession of a parental figure (Eve). It’s not surprising that the prenuptial is a key part of the play since the action of comedy in moving from one social center to another is not unlike the action of a lawsuit. Eve’s thinking may appear to be rational, but the playwright presents it as the irrational position of a blocking character.”

Also notable is that Stewart has replaced the old and scheming Aunt Lavinia with Maggie, who is Eve’s personal assistant and listed in the script as “in her 40s”. The script also describes Maggie as “a Thelma Ritter role” (Ritter was an American actress of stage and screen best known for playing comic, working class characters), and “a romantic in an unromantic world.”

And even though Victoria Stewart has done away with the corseting and velvet drapes of the original in favor of smart contemporary comedy with a dash of suspense, she knows for a fact we can learn from those before us. A quote on the first page of the script reads:

“
It’s just as easy to fall in love with a rich man as it is a poor one.

—My grandmother

”

HOW TO BUY HAPPINESS

When young theatre director Henry confronts *Rich Girl*'s financial guru character, Eve, about his flawed finances, he says statistics prove that money can indeed buy happiness. (Though, as the play's characters learn, it can complicate things as well.) Anyone who's imagined winning the lottery and living a life of tropical vacations, fancy cars, and new houses would probably agree. In fact, the surprising truth about happiness "bought" with money is that it has very little to do with Trumpesque excess.

Money certainly affords better nutrition and better medical care, more free time and more meaningful labor — more of just about every ingredient in the recipe for a happy life. That's a pretty good foundation. But the catch-22 is that humans are brilliant adapters. For example, when we get a raise, we really enjoy it — but only at first. We adapt at incredible speeds to our new wealth, and soon any sense of having "more money" is gone as our lifestyle scales to fit our checkbook. In fact, some studies have shown that in North America additional income beyond \$75,000 a year ceases to impact day-to-day happiness. According to a study published in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* in April of 2011, "buying happiness" is largely about *how* people spend their money, whether they have a little or a lot of it.

We don't know if a pair of Christian Louboutin heels will put a bigger smile on your face than a pair of Skechers, but it is known that buying shoes for someone else will. Studies show that those who spend their money on others simply feel happier. (Those who spend on themselves don't necessarily become *less* happy, but their "net happiness" is unchanged.) The same principle holds true for teams and organizations. One experiment showed that instead of



Credit: Randy Glasbergen, 2004. www.glasbergen.com

“
Do I like money? Sure. Money does, after all, buy happiness. They say it doesn't, but you and I both know the statistics. It does. —Henry, *RICH GIRL*
 ”

an organization writing a large check to a charity, dividing the amount up among employees and letting them donate to a charity of their choice increased job satisfaction. In another study, companies where staff spent small monetary incentives on each other experienced increased job satisfaction and sales performance.

Another major finding is that, when spending on oneself, paying for an experience—such as travel, a cooking class, a football game (or a night at the theatre!) — produces longer-lasting satisfaction than spending money on plain old stuff. Researcher Elizabeth Dunn, co-author of the book *Happy Money: The Science of Spending*, proposes some principles scientifically designed to help us get more happiness for our buck:

- Buy more experiences and fewer material goods
- Use your money to benefit others rather than yourself
- Buy many small pleasures rather than fewer large ones
- Pay close attention to the happiness of others

While money isn't likely to be the main source of joy in our daily lives, it can certainly make some things easier. Maybe money can buy happiness — if it's spent in the right way.

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THE “BUSINESS” OF SHOW

In *Rich Girl*, theatre director Henry is trying desperately to fund his Off-Off Broadway theatre company. But how much money does he actually need to produce one of his plays?



While the budget of Broadway productions can soar into the millions — the infamous *Spider-Man, the Musical* rang in at a cool \$65 million, while *The Book of Mormon* cost a mere \$11.5 million — Henry represents one of the thousands of New York theatre artists working “Off-Off-

Broadway” (OOB). But even when you’re OOB, there’s plenty of “business” in show business.

A recent study by the New York Innovative Theatre Foundation recorded approximately 1,700 unique OOB listings in a single season! Statistical analysis of OOB budgets reported an average of three productions, per company, per year, with an average production budget of \$18,000. But just where that money goes might surprise you. It’s probably no surprise that sets are expensive — but did you ever think that insurance costs would be a consideration? Or, maybe more startling, that a playwright might not get paid at all?

Take a look at this sample ledger of just some of the major expenses of a typical OOB production:

PRODUCTION EXPENSES	COST
Space rental (4 weeks, 14 performances)	\$6,600
Set and props	\$1,500
Lights	\$500
Costumes (includes hair and make-up)	\$710
Sound	\$220
Publicist (excludes respondents with no publicist)	\$1,790
Printing and advertising (postcards, posters, ads)	\$1,450
Insurance	\$430
Actor fees* (based on avg. 5 actor cast) *Includes 38% who didn't pay actors	\$270
Designer fees* (avg. 4 designers per production) *Includes 37% who didn't pay designers	\$200
Stage Manager/Crew	\$300
Director	\$500
Playwright* *Includes 52% who don't pay playwrights or royalties	\$460
TOTAL	\$14,930

* Note: In *Rich Girl*, Claudine’s mother, Eve, is planning a special trip to Africa to observe first hand all of the good work her foundation is doing overseas. With rates starting at \$142,000 per person for a twenty-one day luxury tour of the continent, Eve would drop the equivalent of a typical \$18,000 budget in the first three days of her trip.

“.....
Could you, yourself, Claudine, give me money to keep my theater going?

 —Henry, RICH GIRL
 ”



CPH supporters gather for a reception during the 2012 New Ground Theatre Festival

NEW PLAY “DEVELOPMENT”

Did you know that ticket sales account for less than 50% of Cleveland Play House’s annual budget? Much of the rest of the financial resources required to produce consistently high-quality work commensurate with a top-tier theatre come through the efforts of our Development Department staff.

“Devo” (as we call them in “the biz”) works to connect with philanthropic, corporate and individual donors who recognize CPH’s intrinsic impact on our community and want to ensure its strength and growth. Says CPH Director of Annual & Campaign Development, Jack Stinedurf, “Cleveland Play House has extraordinarily generous supporters. It is their commitment to the CPH mission, expressed through gifts both large and small, that makes our work possible, whether on the stage, in the classroom, or throughout the community.”

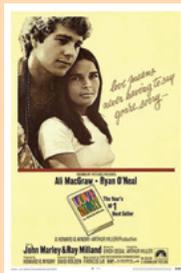
For more information on how you can support CPH, visit clevelandplayhouse.com/donate. And be sure to check out the last page of this Play Guide to see who made it possible!

BY THE NUMBERS



\$150 million

Estimated net worth of real-life rich girl Ivanka Trump. (Financial guru Suze Orman, the inspiration for the character Eve, is worth “just” \$35 million.)



7

Number of Academy Award nominations for the 1970 film *Love Story*, about a young man (played by Ryan O'Neil) who is disinherited by his father when he marries against his father's wishes.

1952

Year that “Secretary’s Day” — now known as Administrative Professionals Day — was first proclaimed by U.S. Secretary of Commerce Charles Sawyer. Eve had better buy Maggie something nice on April 24th!

5.1 million

Estimated number of millionaires in the U.S.

\$40,000

Price paid at a 2011 Christie's auction for “A LARGE FAMILLE VERTE ROULEAU VASE KANGXI PERIOD (17¾ in. high) — Finely painted with a group of soldiers gathered around a blue-skinned demon, all observed by an official and two attendants on a balcony above.” Eve's Kangxi vase probably cost twice that...



2,230,000

Approximate number of marriages in 2005. That's down from 2,279,000 the previous year. (Though the divorce rate was also at it's lowest point since 1970.)

39

Number of Off-Off-Broadway shows currently playing in New York (as listed by the New York Innovative Theatre Foundation). Maybe one of them is Henry's company?

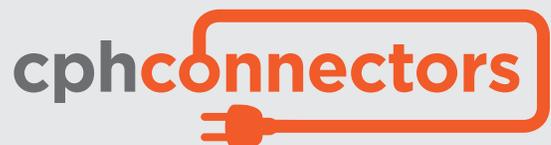


\$8,100

Difference between the median salary earned by women and men in the U.S. in 2010. You guessed it: men made more. (\$42,800 for men, \$34,700 for women.)

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INSIDE CPH



VICTORIA STEWART ON NEW PLAYS

Our *InsideCPH* interview is a companion piece to our free *InsideCPH* events, which give you insight into the people and processes behind the work on our stages. Here, the playwright of *Rich Girl* discusses the “outrageous fortune” of new plays and their writers.

Can you tell us how you came to playwriting? You started in theatre as a stage manager, right?

I was originally a stage manager. That’s what I did professionally for a series of years. Then I had an epiphany. I was working on this really difficult show, and I was touring Europe; it should’ve been the highpoint of my career. And I was like, “Wow. This is such a great job, and yet I’m really unhappy.” Right around this time my grandfather died and left me a little bit of money — not a ton, but enough to think, “Huh, what do you really want to do?” I’d been writing a lot on the side, but mostly prose. I decided right then and there to write a play and apply to grad school, because finally I had the money to afford it. And that became my life suddenly. And that was 15 years ago!

Now, 15 years on, are you starting to find themes or interests that recur in your writing? Where does that impulse come from?

The first impulse tends to be a character that I’m interested in. A lot of my plays start around one specific character and the play builds from there — what their environment is, who their friends are, who their lover is, etc. As for thematic things, a lot of times I’m interested — probably again because of my stage management background — in the difference between performance and reality, or just different levels of reality. In *Rich Girl* I think that’s expressed in how Eve says all this stuff about letting go of money, being very Zen about it, and yet when it comes to the reality of her relationship with her daughter she’s very controlling.

Was the character of Eve the initial impulse for this script?

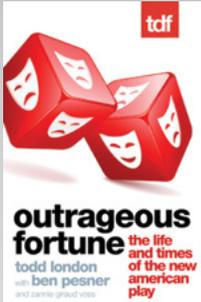
This play actually started a little bit as a joke. (*Laughs.*) I have two plays that have very strong, commanding, “bitchy” characters. And I have a friend who joked, “You need to write a Bitch Trilogy!” At one point I had watched Suze Orman on some TV show, and she told the story of how she came to

do what she does. There aren’t many similarities between the character of Eve and Suze Orman, but definitely she has the same background: she was a waitress who gave all her money to a financial advisor who misadvised her. She lost like \$50,000, and then realized, “Oh, I have to take control of my own money.” So I was telling my friend who made the suggestion, and he was like “That’s your third bitch. That’s her!” (*Laughs.*) I’m also a huge Henry James fan, and so I connected the two. Henry James writes so much about class and money and writes wonderful female characters. When I started writing the play I was lucky enough to have gotten a fellowship from Tennessee Repertory Theatre, to come out there and work on a play. Whatever I wanted to work on. This was also right when the economy was collapsing, and all of a sudden these ideas of money, and the 1% and the 99%, it all really started coming together.

“A lot of my plays start around one specific character and the play builds from there.”

That’s an interesting point to bring up, the importance of that fellowship. For an artist in our country it’s often a fellowship or residency that makes it possible to do your work. Just how do you make a living as a playwright?

(*Laughs.*) That’s a very good question! It’s like how the character of Henry is trying to make a living in the play. You really do patch together a life. You do a little bit of teaching here and there, maybe if you’re lucky you get a residency or commission. You’re constantly swinging from one thing to another hoping for a paycheck to come in. I’ve started to write a little bit for TV which is helping a lot. But I have two children right now, and it is this constant question in your life. How are you going to pay the bills? How are you going to pay for your health insurance? I think that Henry’s anxiety about money is a very truthful thing.

INSIDE CPH CONTINUED >>

Rich Girl is the centerpiece production of our New Ground Theatre Festival, which, in many ways, is about exposing our audience to the processes that go into developing new work. Several years ago Todd London wrote a book called *Outrageous Fortune: The Life and Times of the New American Play* where he explored

the challenges of getting new plays produced, in larger professional theatres especially. Have you had that experience?

I feel very lucky to finally have this production. I started working on [*Rich Girl*] in 2008 and had a pretty full draft at the beginning of 2009. And then you're just sending it around. It's had a couple of readings — I'm a core member at the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis, so it had a reading there, and it had a reading at City Theatre in Pittsburgh. But, you know, I feel immensely lucky because I have plays that have had tons of readings and I could not get a production. *Rich Girl* is my first major regional production, and I feel pretty blessed.

You bring up that point of relationships. What role do relationships play in the life of a playwright and her plays?

Relationships can be incredibly important. My first professional production was purely because the director liked the play and brought it to the theatre, Wellfleet Harbor Actor's Theatre. I first met David Saint [Artistic Director of George Street Playhouse], who is co-producing *Rich Girl*, because I had a reading of a previous play at Hartford Stage and met him there. So, definitely relationships matter. Theatre is a collaborative art form. It's something where you will be in the room with someone for a period of time, so if someone is fun to be in the room with I think it helps. (*Laughs.*) And if you like being in the room with someone it helps the product.

Let's talk about those relationships in the rehearsal room. How do actors impact your work?

It's funny, because Michael [Bloom, *Rich Girl* director and CPH artistic director] has mentioned that some playwrights hate staging rehearsals. I guess because the process is slow, and people are thinking almost mechanically. For me, you can only know if your play works once people are up on stage, walking. As a playwright you're thinking of structure,

“ It really isn't until you have bodies in the space that you actually understand your play. ”

you're thinking of the arc of the entire play, but there is something so amazing about an actor who is only focused on their arc. They can say, “You know, this one line isn't very active, and the rest of the scene is so active. What can we do?” Or, “Can we cut that line?” It's amazing, the precision of great actors. So there are just so many ways that actors are invaluable to the process. You can have reading after reading after reading, but it really isn't until you have bodies in the space that you actually understand your play.

And what about the relationship with a director?

I've heard it said that the best directors, they get great people in the room then they allow for greatness by getting out of the way. I think Michael's one of these people, where



Playwright Victoria Stewart with Michael Bloom, CPH Artistic Director and director of *Rich Girl*

INSIDE CPH

CONTINUED >>

they have a really amazing eye, they let the actors do what they do best, and then they find ways to shape it. And Michael has been useful in the rewriting. He'll turn to me when I bring in a new page and say "There's this one line that doesn't make sense to me." And he's always right! (*Laughs.*) I think a director brings an outside eye, and you as a playwright and a director are working together on the big picture of what the entire structure is, of what the entire play is saying at the end of the day.

You and Michael are in tech rehearsals now at George Street, and start previews in a few days. Has the script changed much in the past several weeks of rehearsal?

I haven't brought in any completely brand new scenes or anything, because the play has had a fairly long process and a lot of readings. And I think since it is somewhat based on a source material it's not like I'm struggling to find plot. But every day I'm in rehearsal there are tweaks or cuts or line changes. Even in tech, yesterday, I wrote a new opening for the play.

And then, after tech, the final piece of the puzzle comes with the audience...

You know, especially when you hear it with an audience—and it is a funny play — if you hear it with an audience and there is something that's not working, you're going to want to tweak it. There's nothing worse than when you have something that's supposed to be a joke and no one laughs.

INSIDECPH

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RICH GIRL & NEW GROUND THEATRE FESTIVAL: How to Build a Play

Monday, April 22 • 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Ever notice that "playwright" isn't spelled "write"? Just like a shipwright and other such artisans, playwrights needs special skills for their craft. Find out how to build a play — and how to steer it safely to its premiere — in this revealing conversation with *Rich Girl* playwright Victoria Stewart and other New Ground artists.

Space is limited and RSVP is required.

Email InsideCPH@clevelandplayhouse.com to RSVP.

(*Laughs.*) So I'm sure, after our first previews, there will be some tweaks even then. Because I do want people to leave the theatre arguing about it, arguing about motives and who's "right." I have sympathy for all the characters. I take them all at their word. But I think that's the wonderful thing about this play in front of an audience: they're going to have different opinions about what the end of the play means and who's right and who's wrong. I'm just really excited to hear an audience, and hear their reactions!



commonthreads

Taken alone, each play in CPH's season is entertaining and vital, but fascinating connections emerge when you examine them together.

Their stories may be nearly 100 years apart, but *The Devil's Music's* real-life legend Bessie Smith and *Rich Girl's* fictional financial maven Eve are both women who found success by overcoming social gender bias and making their own rules. Bessie Smith overcame barriers of race, gender and sexuality in her time to become one of the highest-paid stars of her day — the take-me-as-I-am Empress of the Blues made the modern equivalent of \$25,000 a week at the peak of her career. Similarly, Eve has amassed fame and fortune with a tough-talking persona and the straight-to-the-point credo, "Honesty first" — and she intends to instill her brand of "girl power" in to her daughter, Claudine, too. "We can do it," indeed!

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Remember to visit our interactive *ENGAGECPH* exhibit in the Allen Theatre lobby's Fasenmyer West Lounge for more exciting ways to connect to the work on CPH stages!

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