

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S  
**THE GREAT  
GATSBY**

ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY  
**SIMON LEVY**



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.

THE GREAT GATSBY  
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F. Scott Fitzgerald's  
THE GREAT GATSBY  
adapted for the stage by  
Simon Levy

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World Premiere produced by the Guthrie Theater  
Joe Dowling, Artistic Director; Thomas C. Proehl, Managing Director.

West Coast Premiere produced by Seattle Repertory Theatre,  
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In addition, all programs must include biographies for F. Scott Fitzgerald and Simon Levy, which are available at [www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com).

## ADAPTOR'S NOTE

The described stage setting is the idealized vision of the play played out against a larger-than-life mythic backdrop where spectacular production elements substitute for the lyric beauty of Fitzgerald's descriptive prose; however, symbolism and metaphor, which are central to the novel, may be realized in many ways, and I leave it to the imagination of directors to tell the story as simply or elaborately as they choose. It's my intention that scenes overlap, linger, even play simultaneously sometimes so we play freely with time and space. After all, this is memory, a dreamscape. If possible, it would be exciting to have a live musician (sax, clarinet) to represent the passion and sound of the Jazz Age, as music is integral to the telling of this story. One should approach this play the way you would a musical.

A dash (—) means the next line should overlap and cut off the speaker.

Setting: A landscape of sea and sky.

The action of the play is fluid. Set pieces and furniture, like the people, appear and disappear, impressionistic, like a fairy tale.

The weathered, partially-destroyed billboard of the faceless Dr. T. J. Eckleburg and his gigantic eyes framed by a pair of enormous yellow spectacles passes judgment on the action of the play. Throughout, the eyes change color.

This is a fable — of America, of the Jazz Age, of enchantment and illusions, of a world where love and dreams are pursued and betrayed.

THE GREAT GATSBY was first presented at the Guthrie Theater (Joe Dowling, Artistic Director; Thomas C. Proehl, Managing Director) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on July 21, 2006, to commemorate the opening of their new theatre complex. It was directed by David Esbjornson; the set design was by Thomas Lynch; the costume design was by Jane Greenwood; the lighting design was by Michael Philippi; the music composition was by Wayne Barker; the sound design was by Scott W. Edwards; the dramaturg was Amy Wegener; the voice and dialect coach was Lucinda Holshue; the movement coach was Marcela Lorca; the stunt consultant was John Stead; the casting consultant was Pat McCorkle, C.S.A; and the production stage manager was Chris A. Code. The cast was as follows:

JAY GATSBY . . . . . Lorenzo Pisoni  
NICK CARRAWAY . . . . . Matthew Amendt  
DAISY BUCHANAN . . . . . Heidi Armbruster  
JORDAN BAKER . . . . . Cheyenne Casebier  
TOM BUCHANAN . . . . . Erik Heger  
THE SAXMAN . . . . . Dean Brewington  
GEORGE WILSON . . . . . Mark Rhein  
MYRTLE WILSON . . . . . Christina Baldwin  
LUCILLE McKEE/MRS. MICHAELIS . . . . . Kate Eifrig  
CHESTER McKEE/WAITER/COP . . . . . Bob Davis  
MEYER WOLFSHEIM . . . . . Raye Birk

Note: The Guthrie Theater, in collaboration with the University of Minnesota, added the following as Party Guests and Others: Caroline Cooney, Jennifer Cragg, Ali Dachis, Matt Franta, Karl Meyer, Ben Rosenbaum, Andrew Rotchadl, and Laura Lynne Tapper.

Understudies: Megan Bartle, Robert O. Berdahl, Nathaniel Fuller, Tracey Maloney, Ron Menzel, Carolyn Pool, Luke Stanhope, David J. Wright III.

## CHARACTERS

JAY GATSBY — a romantic idealist, with a disarming smile.

DAISY BUCHANAN — Southern, with a voice that sounds like money.

NICK CARRAWAY — Midwestern, with a kind face and gentle manner.

TOM BUCHANAN — Daisy's husband, with a powerful cruel body.

JORDAN BAKER — Daisy's friend, with an athletic, almost masculine, body.

MYRTLE WILSON — Tom's girlfriend, New York, fleshy and sensual.

GEORGE WILSON — Myrtle's husband, New York, spiritless and anemic.

MEYER WOLFSHEIM

MR. McKEE

POLICEMAN

DANCER

MRS. McKEE

MRS. MICHAELIS

DANCER

Recommended doubling is:

MEYER WOLFSHEIM/MR. McKEE/COP/DANCER

and MRS. McKEE/MRS. MICHAELIS/DANCER.

**Note:** The current version of the play has nine characters: 5 men, 4 women. Additional party guests and dancers may be added at the director's and producer's discretion, and all the roles can be cast separately if you want to use more actors.

**PLACE**

Long Island, New York.

**TIME**

Summer, 1922.

*It was much nicer a long time ago when we had each other and the space about the world was warm — Can't we get it back someday — even by imagining?*

—Zelda Fitzgerald to Scott Fitzgerald,  
in a letter, fall 1930

# THE GREAT GATSBY

## ACT ONE

*Thrilling Charleston music.*

*Lights up. All the characters are onstage, dancing, wild and uninhibited: Daisy and Tom Buchanan, Jordan Baker, Myrtle and George Wilson, Mr. and Mrs. McKee (and other dancers if available).*

*Only Gatsby remains distant and mysterious, wrapped in mist, staring off into a blinking green light, dressed in a white tuxedo, half turned away from us so he's not completely visible. It's important he be insubstantial, ghostly, an illusion.*

*And there's something strange about this first moment, almost as if we're looking at a photographic negative, a memory. This is important because we revisit this scene later when its meaning will become clear.*

*As the dancing gets wilder and wilder, Nick Carraway appears at the back of the stage, suitcase in hand. He weaves his way through the mist and the dancers, unnoticed.*

*He reaches the front of the stage just as the music and dancing reach their climactic frenzy.*

*Everyone freezes.*

*Spot up on Nick.*



NICK. *(To audience.)* In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since. "Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone," he told me, "just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had." He didn't say any more, but we've always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that. *(The dancers drift off as "Gatsby's Love Theme" is heard. Nick turns and looks at him.)* Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this story, represented everything for which I had an unaffected scorn. But if personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something ... gorgeous about him ... some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life. He had an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person ... and which it is not likely I shall ever find again. *(Daisy rushes onstage, followed by Jordan. Or perhaps they float in on a divan. Daisy is mercurial, utterly compelling, and always the center of attention. In truth, she is a classic manic/depressive, much like Zelda Fitzgerald. By contrast, Jordan is almost mannish, athletic, emancipated, and self-assured. The Buchanan house forms around them ... as Gatsby slowly disappears.)*  
DAISY. Nick! Nick, darling, I'm p-paralyzed with happiness! *(She throws herself on him and gives him a huge kiss.)*

NICK. Hello, Daisy.

DAISY. Nick Carraway, Miss Baker. Nick is my cousin —

NICK. Second cousin, once removed.

DAISY. He and Tom graduated Yale together.

JORDAN. Did you play football as well?

NICK. No, Tom was the football hero. I was — *(Tom Buchanan enters. His size and money have made him brutal.)*

TOM. Nick! There you are. *(He wears riding clothes and pushes on a drink cart.)*

NICK. Hello, Tom.

TOM. Care for a drink?

NICK. Uh, not yet. Little early for me. Thanks.

TOM. Who needs a refresher? *(Tom pours a drink. He consumes alcohol the way he used to play football. Daisy flops on a divan, pulling Jordan down with her, cuddling like lovers.)*

DAISY. Nick, I've been telling Jordan all about you.

TOM. You found the place alright?

NICK. Hard to miss.

TOM. Where you staying?

NICK. Across the Sound.

JORDAN. West Egg?

NICK. A little cottage I found.

JORDAN. Really?

NICK. What a strange community! On either side of me are these huge estates that must go for twelve, fifteen thousand for the summer.

TOM. What are you paying?

NICK. Eighty a month.

TOM. Huh. Well, welcome to *East Egg*.

DAISY. How long you staying?

NICK. Until I make my fortune.

DAISY. Tom will help you, won't you, darling?

NICK. I stopped off in Chicago on the way out and at least half a dozen people send their love.

DAISY. Do they miss me?

NICK. The whole town's desolate. All the cars have their left rear wheel painted black as a mourning wreath and there's a persistent wail all night along the North Shore.

DAISY. How gorgeous! (*She jumps up.*) Let's go back, Tom. Tomorrow! (*To Nick.*) You ought to see the baby.

NICK. I'd like to.

DAISY. She's asleep. She's two years old. Haven't you ever seen her?

NICK. Never.

DAISY. Well, you ought to. She's —

TOM. What you doing these days, Nick?

NICK. Learning to be a bond man.

TOM. Who with?

NICK. Probity Trust.

TOM. Never heard of them.

NICK. Oh. Well, you will.

TOM. Any money in bonds?

NICK. Everyone I know is doing it. Making lots of money. After being in the war, well, the Midwest feels kind of dull to me. That's why I've come east. Father's financed me for a year.

JORDAN. Where you from?

NICK. St. Paul. (*She looks at him blankly.*) Minnesota?

JORDAN. (*No clue.*) A-ha.

DAISY. You'll be rich as Midas one day.

NICK. I've bought about a dozen books on banking and credit and investment securities, studying all the time and —

DAISY. You'll help him, won't you, Tom?

JORDAN. (*Yawning and standing.*) I'm stiff. I feel like I've been lying on that sofa for as long as I can remember.

DAISY. Well, don't look at me. I've been trying to get you to New York all afternoon.

TOM. This'll help. (*Tom offers Jordan a drink.*)

JORDAN. It is Prohibition.

TOM. So what!

JORDAN. Besides, I'm absolutely in training. (*She grabs the drink and downs it in one gulp.*)

TOM. How you ever get anything done is beyond me.

NICK. I recognize you from somewhere.

JORDAN. You said you live across the Sound in West Egg. I know somebody there.

NICK. I don't know a single —

JORDAN. You must know Gatsby.

DAISY. (*Demanding.*) Gatsby? What Gatsby?

JORDAN. He's got that huge mansion that looks like an imitation of a French hotel.

NICK. The one with the tower?

JORDAN. Throws huge parties.

NICK. I live right next door. Our lawns practically —

DAISY. (*Suddenly rushes downstage, looking off.*) In two weeks it'll be the longest day in the year. Do you always watch for the longest day of the year and then miss it? I always watch for the longest day in the year and then miss it.

JORDAN. We ought to plan something.

DAISY. (*Excited, manic.*) All right. What'll we plan? What do people plan? (*Looks at her hand.*) Look! (*Holds out finger.*) I hurt it. (*Pouting.*) You did it, Tom. I know you didn't mean to but you did do it. That's what I get for marrying a brute of a man, a great big hulking physical specimen of a —

TOM. I hate that word, "hulking," even in kidding.

DAISY. Hulking. Hulking, hulking, HULKING! (*A beat.*)

TOM. Have a drink, Nick.

NICK. Alright.

TOM. (*Pouring drinks.*) I've got a nice place here.

NICK. Enormous. The sunken gardens —

TOM. It belonged to Demaine, the oil man. I'll show you around. (*He starts to take Nick off.*)

DAISY. Don't take him away yet.  
TOM. Come on, I'll show you the ponies.  
DAISY. Please, Tom.  
NICK. You planning to stay in the East?  
TOM. I'd be a goddamn fool to go anywhere else.  
DAISY. This is a permanent move.  
JORDAN. They hated France.  
NICK. How long were you there?  
TOM. About a year, then we followed the polo circuit.  
DAISY. Drifting, drifting endlessly. Parties and yachts and HULKING men hitting wooden balls with mallets.  
NICK. (*Laughing it off.*) You make me feel uncivilized.  
TOM. (*Violently.*) Civilization's going to pieces! I've gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things, Nick. Have you read *The Rise of the Coloured Empires* by this man Goddard?  
NICK. Why, no.  
TOM. Well, it's a fine book and everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be — will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff. It's been proved.  
DAISY. Tom's getting very profound. He reads deep books with long words in them. What was that word —  
TOM. It's up to us who are the dominant race to watch out or these other races will have control of things.  
DAISY. (*Winking at Nick.*) We've got to beat them down.  
TOM. The idea is that we're Nordics. I am and you are and you are and — (*He hesitates at Daisy.*) and we've produced all the things that go to make civilization — oh, science and art and all that. Do you see? (*A telephone rings off. Everything stops. The telephone rings again.*) Excuse me. (*He exits.*)  
DAISY. (*Trying to be cheerful.*) I love to see you in my house, Nick. You remind me of a — of a rose, an absolute rose. Doesn't he, Jordan? An absolute rose. (*She rises.*) Excuse me. (*She runs off after Tom.*)  
NICK. What is it you're in training —  
JORDAN. Shhhhhhhhh! (*Murmur of angry voices offstage.*)  
NICK. This Mr. Gatsby you spoke of —  
JORDAN. Quiet. I want to hear what happens.  
NICK. Is something happening?  
JORDAN. You mean you don't know? I thought everybody knew.  
NICK. I don't.  
JORDAN. Why ... Tom's got some woman ... in New York.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's  
**THE GREAT GATSBY**  
adapted for the stage by Simon Levy

5M, 4W (doubling, flexible casting)

Jay Gatsby, a self-made millionaire, passionately pursues the elusive Daisy Buchanan. Nick Carraway, a young newcomer to Long Island, is drawn into their world of obsession, greed and danger. The breathtaking glamour and decadent excess of the Jazz Age come to the stage in F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel, and in Simon Levy's adaptation, approved by the Fitzgerald Estate.

*"Playwright Simon Levy does a beautiful job of distilling Fitzgerald's sometimes fussy prose. Levy's combination of narration, dialogue and action delivers most of what is best in the novel ... a brilliant distillation."*

—**The Seattle Post-Intelligencer**

*"A clean, imaginative and sometimes surreal work."*

—**The Minneapolis Star-Tribune**

*"By the end of the evening, there was a longing to see it again. And then again ... This adaptation by Simon Levy clearly understood that Fitzgerald's words are sacred and can't be improved upon. What was added, deleted or changed to adapt the story to the stage was so faithful to Fitzgerald that it became seamless ... Expectations were far exceeded."*

—**The Arizona Daily Star**

*"Somewhere out there, Jay Gatsby is smiling one of those enigmatic smiles, with everything and nothing behind it. 'Yes, old sport,' Gatsby is saying, 'that's about right. That's about right.' Surely, that smiling sign of approval would be Gatsby's suitably understated take on Simon Levy's adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby ... a beautifully crafted interpretation of the 1925 novel which defined the Jazz Age ... This is indeed a grand GATSBY."*

—**The London Free Press**

*"Sweeping ... excellent ... Levy's adaptation wisely anchors itself around the first-person account of narrator Nick Carraway ... a satisfying conclusion ... affecting."*

—**Variety**

**Also adapted by Simon Levy**  
THE LAST TYCOON (Fitzgerald)  
TENDER IS THE NIGHT (Fitzgerald)

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