Redgrave and Gurney discuss “Sweet Sue”

LYNN REDGRAVE and A.R. GURNEY, JR.
At Kresge Little Theatre, Dec. 4.

By PAULA MAUTE

BRITISH ACTRESS LYNN REDGRAVE and MIT Literature Professor A.R. Gurney, Jr., shared the stage at Kresge Little Theatre last Thursday to discuss their work on Gurney’s play “Sweet Sue,” now playing at the Wilbur Theatre in Boston.

“Sweet Sue” opened last Thursday to discuss their work on Gurney’s play “Sweet Sue,” now playing at the Wilbur Theatre in Boston. Lynn Redgrave and Mary Tyler Moore, who falls in love with her son’s college roommate, Jake—the only other character in the play—is also simultaneously played by two actors.

Describing this play as experimental and an “extremely exciting experience,” Gurney split Sue’s character into two roles not to create a psychological play deriving into the unconscious but to show that “when we are under stress,” many parts of our personalities are at work, he said. People are not always conscious; more often, they feel divided, not knowing exactly what they want or precisely how they feel.

Redgrave jokingly described her middle aged role as, “a woman at a certain age...entering her prime.” At times, Redgrave found it “tricky synchronizing the scores” but she enjoys sharing the part with Moore. The only “difference” she has with Moore is that they both write their own wardrobe cards (which they wear throughout the play) “and I don’t.”

At what point in their lives did Gurney and Redgrave choose their respective professions? Gurney always wanted to become a playwright, even in grammar school. When his high school English teacher asked if he could write a play instead, he developed his craft during his time at Yale and went on to teach at MIT for 25 years. Several years ago, when his children were in college, he took off time to write. The idea of writing full-time struck him, and he found that he was “a liberating experience” and “made him”

— Continued from page 11 —

But not to readers of The Legend of Fru. Did you notice how frequently one pair of players would show the physical interaction between Sue and Jake, while the others would show a contrasting psychological posture. It was as though the second part were speaking on the astral plane.

That’s a nice way to look at it. Thank you.

And you must admit the concept was entirely successful as a comedic device. Even the obvious lines were played for laughs.

But when they carried it too far and played the double roles for laughs, as when Redgrave didn’t know which boy she should speak to, Gurney said he found the act “tricky synchronizing the scores.”

Or, worse, when one Jake started handling the other’s clothes.

Or remember when one Susan suggested they see a psychiatrist, and the other said “tobacco, I can’t see you and smoke together.”

Yes, I remember, that was just silly. But that line was clever, and it was funny. Which is why we were both happy when we heard the second act before I realized I didn’t care about the story very much.

Yes, I acknowledge that without the double roles I would not have been enthralled by the play.

You agree with me then.

Not at all. I was interested in the characters precisely because of the double roles. They were both individuals I wouldn’t remember if I net them, but I found them memorable because of their inner representation.

You don’t think the bottom line was basically “did she or didn’t she?”

Not at all. Those in the audience who were simply waiting to find out whether they had an affair or not were appropriately disappointed when Gurney left it rather ambiguous.

Yes. At one point, Redgrave was clearly fantasizing, but I thought “why not accept this version of events? It might as well be the truth.”

The paradox of theatre. None of it is real anywhere; no one believe what we will.

I think Gurney is very much aware of this. In any case, whether they have their affair or not, they do little to bridge the generation gap.

That’s right. Is Sue and her alter ego, Sue Too, who ends up dancing together. Literally and figuratively.

A.R. Gurney, Jr. at Kresge

“Writing is easy. All you have to do is sit staring at a blank sheet of paper until the drops of blood start forming on your forehead.”—Gene Fowler

An All-American Christmas Gift...

THE CAMBRIDGE HANDBOOK OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

A compact and accessible guide to the major landmarks of American literature for students and general readers.

Edited by Jack Salisbury

- Authors, novels, plays, poetry, literary magazines and literary movements;
- Chronological tables of American literature from 1607 to the present;
- Glossary of terms;
- Bibliography;
- Authoritative, up-to-date, clearly presented.

An ideal gift, an invaluable reference work.

Paper $9.95

At bookstores or from

Cambridge University Press

COLUMBUS, OH 43210

CALLING ALL SENIORS

“Writing is easy. All you have to do is sit staring at a blank sheet of paper until the drops of blood start forming on your forehead.” — Gene Fowler

Don’t let it get to that point! Do PHASE TWO of the Writing Requirement now! Why not try:

• An IAP Seminar
  • UROP Seminar, Jan. 13-14, 10-11:30 am, Rm. 1-132
  • Course 6 Seminar, Jan. 7, 16, 21; 1-3 pm, Rm. 36-153, for Course 6 Majors only will help students rewrite material from 6.012 or 6.170 into a Phase Two paper.
  • Workshop on writing a paper, Jan. 5-9, 12:15-12:45 pm, Rm. 4E-304, Steven Strong, Director of the Writing and Communication Center.

• 21,780 Science and Engineering Writing, Spring Semester

• Special Rewriting Seminars to be offered throughout the spring.

QUESTIONS? See Bonnie Walters, Committee on the Writing Requirement, Room 20C-105, x3-2039.