

# 'The Dining Room' delights at St. D's

**Performances of "The Dining Room" by A.R. Gurney Jr. continue through Saturday, Nov. 1, at the St. Dunstan's Guild Playhouse at Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills. The production is directed by Bill Kircher. For ticket information, call 644-0527 anytime.**

The St. Dunstan's Guild production of "The Dining Room" by A.R. Gurney Jr. is terrific. The credit goes to the six actors who play 57 characters.

Gurney is a shrewd playwright. He knows his WASPs. He knows their prep schools, their crystal, their furniture, their jobs, their marriage rites, their cocktail hours, their dinner parties and junior assemblies. He catches the changing mores in the Northeastern part of the United States with precision and wit.

Mary Geiger, a pert, pretty blonde, brings panache to her roles including a real estate agent, a mother, a child at a birthday party, six other women, and Ruth. She closes the play by wanting to have a dinner party, in the dining room, to which she invites everyone she knows.

Geiger brings resonance to her roles, especially that of Ruth. Saying goodbye to Annie, the excellent maid who makes butter balls, Ruth seems to be saying goodbye to all maids.

LEE STORVES is really fine as Annie, both at the opening and during the finale. Storves is a very funny teenager, and she competently plays whatever role falls her way.

Sally Garrison nearly steals the show. Garrison has range and energy. This address is super, whether

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# It's a hit at Farmington Players, too

Performances of the Farmington Players production of "The Dining Room" by A.R. Gurney Jr. continue through Saturday, Nov. 15, at the Barn Theatre in Farmington Hills. For ticket information, call 628-5081.

By Barbara Michals  
special writer

Believing that you can tell a lot about a culture by how it eats, playwright A.R. Gurney Jr. explores the foibles and manners of the upper-middle-class WASP in "The Dining Room." Farmington Players offers a deft and lively production of this warm-hearted comedy.

In a series of vignettes, the dining room becomes a symbol for a vanishing way of life. The author laments that people don't take the time to eat in dining rooms anymore or to fuss about gracious table manners and the family china and crystal.

The play's many episodes overlap slightly, so that two sets of characters may briefly occupy the stage simultaneously but be oblivious to each other. Director Cynthia Doehler keeps the pacing smooth and brisk throughout.

Six cast members each play nine or 10 different roles that cover a span from childhood to old age. Kirk Hanley, Duncan Main, Joyce Moore, Tarayann Razzoog, Jim Sndeman and Jane Zucatti are all marvelously adept at shifting persona in the blink of an eye and capturing characterization with a few subtle strokes.

ZUCATTI'S SHARP enunciation seems too exaggerated in early scenes, but she's pleasing as a bubbly little girl and very touching as a senile matriarch.

Hanley is particularly effective as Standish, the stodgy family head dashing off to "the club" to defend his brother's good name.

Razzoog is fine as the teenager unhappy with dancing school and the young mother trying to cope with a children's birthday party and the demands of her lover at the same time.

Gurney's world is peopled with faithful family servants, preppy names like Winkle and Blinky, and cocktail glasses adorned with

**Barbara Michals**

pheasants. Children seem to clutter up orderly households, whether they are young ones at the breakfast table, grown ones returning home with their offspring after a bad marriage, or grandchildren seeking a free ride on the family fortune.

For all, the dining room is a special place filled with family memories, not necessarily all good ones. Farmington's dining room, designed by Phil Hadley and Bob Batis-

toni, is a handsome set with traditional furniture and old masters on the walls.

Barbara Michals teaches high school English and Journalism in Southfield. A theater critic for the last 12 years, she is an inveterate playgoer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.

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