



ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT PRESS RELEASE – 9/19/2007
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THEATRE EVENT - NEW LEAF THEATRE

Contact: Erin Shelton
Phone: (773) 931-5477
erin@newleaftheatre.org

NEW LEAF THEATRE PRESENTS

THE DINING ROOM

by A.R. Gurney

The show

New Leaf Theatre presents an unexpected version of this A.R. Gurney classic about the impact people have on each other as they push, pull and pummel their way through life. The production strips away years of tradition and convention to show the simple beauty of the play underneath – a play focused on the always intricate, frequently messy and oddly funny ways human beings carve out their place in the world. Artistic Director Jessica Hutchinson directs this look into how we become who we are, and why it's worth remembering.

The facts

The Dining Room opens Wednesday, October 10th at 8:00 p.m. and runs Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays through November 17th. Show times are at 8:00 p.m., with added 3:00 p.m. matinees on November 10th and November 17th. There will be NO PERFORMANCES OCTOBER 25-27th.

All performances are held at the Lincoln Park Cultural Center, 2045 N. Lincoln Park West in Chicago. Tickets are \$15, \$12 sr/student, and \$10 industry, with headshot and resume. Tickets can be reserved through our website at <http://newleaftheatre.org> or by calling 773-516-3546. Group rates available.

The challenge of the play, as director Jessica Hutchinson sees it

“One of the beautiful things about Gurney's text is its complexity. On one hand, he gives you enough details about these characters, their relationships and their circumstances to know their story and communicate it to others, using his words alone. But on the other, he gives you this enormous creative landscape that cast and crew can explore and lay claim to; there are endless directions in which to take each character, each scene. That kind of freedom can be overwhelming. It can also be exhilarating. For New Leaf, and for this cast, it's what we crave. It's in claiming that territory as your own that you define your collective aesthetic and honestly function as individual artists.

The cast is really taking advantage of the opportunity to create. Given the short length of each scene, the number of characters they're playing, and the pace the script demands, it would be easy to just dip into the characters and show us a representation of who they are. But these actors are hungrier than that. The 18 vignettes that comprise this play are not just slices of ordinary life – they can seem so at first, sometimes even to the characters themselves. When you begin to delve into them, though, you find they're moments of huge impact and major turning points in these characters' lives. As such, they're not emotionally easy places to get into, especially on the turn of a dime, and then repeatedly. This cast is challenging itself to move past the easy choice, to dive into the uncomfortable places Gurney wants them to go, and find the truth of these people – to find it and share it with each other, and with an audience.”

The company

New Leaf is a not-for-profit theatre company in its 7th season. Recent shows include last season's *The Permanent Way* by David Hare – Highly Recommended by the Chicago Reader, deemed a “Must See” by TimeOut Chicago, and Jeff Citation-nominated for Best Ensemble; *As It Is In Heaven*, “Highly Recommended” by the Chicago Reader and also nominated for Best Ensemble by the Jeff Citation Committee; the Jeff-Recommended *Brilliant Traces*; and the Sun-Times-Recommended *Accelerando*.

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