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Review: 'The Dining Room' a tasty feast

BY ANN HICKS • ARTS WRITER • JUNE 12, 2009

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There are close to 20 separate scenes in A.R. Gurney's snarky play "The Dining Room," which makes its staging highly challenging, mainly because of all the overlapping dialogues, scenes and on- and off-stage traffic.

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Veteran director Benjamin P. Robinson nailed all those challenges, along with six terrific actors who turned "The Dining Room" into a tasty feast at its Thursday night opening at Centre Stage. This production is one of the best and also the last on the roster of this theater's current season.

Gurney's play mercilessly ridicules the mid-20th-century pretensions of America's uppity WASP classes, placing all action in a well-appointed dining room where he turns his numerous characters into funhouse mirror reflections.

One of the strongest points of this production is that while there's a risk of gilding the lily, none of the actors — Cindy Mixon, Katy Beth Cassell, Anne Elizabeth Butler, Allen Evans, Jeff Warren

and Christopher Evans — succumb to the urge to exaggerate the multiple characters they have to slip into at a moment's notice. Instead, along with the audience, they savor each succulent role and episode, from the bluntly humorous to the profoundly tragic.

Everything works here, from Lesley Preston's elegant set to Guy Perticone's expert lighting.

"The Dining Room" plays through June 27. For tickets, call 233-6733.

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