Sylvia

by A.R. Gurney
We’ve Gone to the Dogs!

Welcome to today’s performance of Sylvia, a play about a man and his dog - and his wife. Have you ever thought your spouse or partner was paying a little too much attention to their dog? Then this is the play for you! Or have you ever wondered what your dog is saying when she barks ferociously at a cat? Playwright A.R. Gurney has imagined what those words might be, and you’ll hear them in this very funny play (but be forewarned – they’re among the strongest in the English language!).

We’re opening our Black Box season with a comedy – it just seems like laughter is the best response to the many uncertainties of today’s world, and a great way to celebrate the return of live theatre, viewed in person. Like all good plays, Sylvia entertains us, but also affects us on a deeper level. What long-term relationship hasn’t been impacted by jealousy of one kind or another, even if it’s as harmless as jealousy of a partner’s time spent on a hobby? In the play, Greg feels something is missing in his life, and he responds by bringing home a dog – much to his wife Kate’s surprise and dismay. But in a delightful theatrical twist, Gurney has written Sylvia in the form of an adult woman – no dog costume needed.

While you’re at the Arvada Center, take a few minutes to look at our current exhibition. All three galleries are filled with what is often called “text-based art” – these works all incorporate words or letters in some way. Notice how the text is used – some artists focus on text as content (i.e., they use text to create recognizable words), while other artists are more interested in the shapes of the text. Much of the work uses the English language and Roman alphabet, but look for other languages and other alphabets – and you may even notice some made-up letters!

We’ve got lots more in store for the fall – including a very special multidisciplinary presentation in our Amplify series, created and performed by breakbeat poet Idris Goodwin (who is also Executive Director of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College); the evening features a blend of poetry, video, music and dance. You can also catch a concert by the Colorado Jazz Repertory Orchestra or by classical pianist Jeffrey Siegel – or marvel at the students in our Front Range Youth Symphony and our Dance Academy. For the holidays, we’re bringing back the best-selling production in our 45-year history: Elf – the Musical!, based on the popular holiday film classic.

I hope you enjoy your time at the Arvada Center – we’re proud to have served the community for so long, and we’re thrilled to be back up and running! As always, we like to hear from you – so please let us know what’s on your mind. You can reach any of us through our website, and we welcome your feedback.

Philip C. Sneed
President and CEO
SYLVIA

Written by
A.R. Gurney

ARVADA CENTER BLACK BOX THEATRE
OCT 1 - NOV 7, 2021

Director
Lynne Collins

Scenic Design
Brian Mallgrave

Lighting Design
Jon Olson

Sound Design
Morgan McCauley

Costume Design
Clare Henkel

Wig & Makeup Design
Diana Ben-Kiki

Stage Manager
Christine Rose Moore*

Assistant Stage Manager
Melissa J Michelson*

Artistic Director of Plays
Lynne Collins

Underwritten by
Diana and Mike Kinsey

This Theatre operates under an agreement with Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

*Member of Actors’ Equity Association

SYLVIA is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

SYLVIA was originally produced by The Manhattan Theatre Club with funds provided by Milkbone on May 2, 1995.

Cole Porter’s “E’VRY TIME WE SAY GOODBYE” is used by permission of the Cole Porter Musical & Literary Property Trusts.


THE ACTORS

Kate Gleason*

Rodney Lizcano*

Jessica Robblee*

Gareth Saxe*

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.
SETTING:
A Manhattan Apartment

Sylvia ......................................................... JESSICA ROBBLEE*
Greg .......................................................... GARETH SAXE*
Kate .......................................................... KATE GLEASON*
Tom, Phyllis, and Leslie ................................. RODNEY LIZCANO*

RODNEY LIZCANO (Tom/Phyllis/Leslie) appeared in Arvada Center’s productions of The Archbishop’s Ceiling, End of the Rainbow, A Man for All Seasons and The Crucible. Regional credits include: multiple seasons with DCPA Theatre Company, The Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Orlando Shakespeare Theatre, The Old Globe, LOCAL Theatre Co. and Theatre Aspen. Rodney is currently a member of the ensemble at the newly renamed Butterfly Effect Theatre Company in Boulder, CO. He received his training from Southern Methodist University and The National Theatre Conservatory. 

JESSICA ROBBLEE (Sylvia) has performed in several productions with the Arvada Center’s Black Box Repertory Company, including The Moors, The Foreigner, and Drowning Girls. Other credits: A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Colorado Shakespeare Festival), Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune (Miners Alley Playhouse), Frankenstein (DCPA Theatre Company), Five Lesbians Eating a Quiche (Square Product Theatre), Siren Song (Buntport Theater for All Ages).  

www.jessicarobblee.com  

GARETH SAXE (Greg) returns to the Arvada Center in Sylvia. Arvada Center: Plaza Suite; Broadway: The Lion King, The Homecoming, Heartbreak House, Nikolai and the Others; Off Broadway: Harper Regan (The Atlantic); Richard III (Public Theatre); Regional: Hamlet, Dangerous Liaisons, (Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey); Sexual Perversity in Chicago (American Conservatory Theater); iWitness (Mark Taper Forum). Local: Romeo and Juliet, Twelfth Night (CSF); Anna Karenina, Macbeth (DCPA Theatre Company); Film: Public Enemies; TV: SVU; Law & Order. Training: M.F.A.-N.Y.U.  

Joyful, joyful, joyful,  
As only dogs know how to be happy  
With only the autonomy  
Of their shameless spirit.  

-Pablo Neruda  

Scientists have many theories about how and when humans and dogs came to share their lives. The one I like best is called The Human Campfire theory in which wolves domesticated themselves, learning to spend time near the campfire for leftover meat and helping humans hunt and fight off other predators. Over time, wolves slowly changed in order to live with humans. They began to make eye contact and to read human expressions and body signals. New facial muscles, not found in wolves, began to develop in dogs to mimic human facial expressions. According to this theory, dogs and humans developed together for mutual benefit.  

Today, dogs still hang out as we cook, hoping for the lucky drip or drop and bark to let us know that strangers, or mail carriers, pose a threat. But as both species have evolved, canines have also become companions, cuddling on the couch and listening to us with interested eyes. In Sylvia, A.R. Gurney plays with this ancient relationship with hilarious results. He puts Sylvia in a human body and gives her a human voice. She has a dog’s nature and interests—earning treats, hating cats and loving her humans—but she also acts as a kind of therapist for her owners, giving them a chance to express the dreams and fears they don’t feel able to share with each other.  

While Sylvia is a wonderfully crafted comedy, it also touches on something universal, our need for unconditional love. It’s easy to love our dogs because they love us without judgement and are endlessly generous with that love, but with our own species Homo sapien, we often struggle to give love and understanding even to those closest to us. While we really want the human version of a belly scratch, a game of fetch and someone jumping with joy when we come home, we have a hard time knowing how to get what we need. We complicate things that could be simple and forget to do the simple things that dogs do every day.  

A lot has been said and written about what dogs can teach us. We hope that between the laughs, you’re also reminded of a few of those lessons about living in the moment, rolling in the grass and loving each other.  

 Lynne Collins
LYNNE COLLINS is the Artistic Director of Plays for the Arvada Center’s Black Box. She has been co/director and producer on two Zoom plays, *Family Tree* and Christie Con. Recent directing credits include Plaza Suite and Small Mouth Sounds. She also directed *Sense and Sensibility* (Henry Award winner for Outstanding Ensemble, Outstanding Director of a Play and Outstanding Production of a Play) and *All My Sons*. Lynne directed for six seasons at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, including *Much Ado About Nothing, Romeo and Juliet*, and *Noises Off* (True West Award Winner, Best Comedy). She was an Affiliate Artist and resident director with the Foothill Theatre Company in California from 1990 to 2009. She studied at the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, HB Studio in New York and with Stella Adler. She holds an MA from San Francisco State University.

BRIAN MALLGRAVE (Scenic Designer) has been a part of the Arvada Center for 16 seasons. Favorite credits for the Center include *Man of La Mancha* (2013), *The Drowning Girls* (2017), and *Bright Star* (2019). He is the recipient of multiple Henry Awards as well as several Denver Post and Westword “Best Of” awards for his work in local theatre, and in 2019 was recognized as “Alumnus of the Year” from his alma mater, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

JON OLSON (Lighting Designer / Lighting Director) has been a member of the Arvada Center since 2003. *Sylvia* marks Jon’s tenth Arvada Center Black Box design. Jon has received Henry Award nominations for *The Drowning Girls* and *Educating Rita*. Other Arvada Center design credits include Plaza Suite, Bright Star, *The Mousetrap*, *The Archbishop’s Ceiling*, *All My Sons*, *The Moors*, the world premiere of *I’ll Be Home for Christmas*, and the regional premiere of *Trav’lin The 1930’s Harlem Musical*.

MORGAN McCASKEY (Sound Designer) has designed multiple productions for the Arvada Center, including Tartuffe (Marlowe Award), *M. Mannerly*, and *Dividing the Estate*. Other credits: *Tenderly, My Way, Tuesdays With Morrie, Other Desert Cities*, A Little Night Music, *My Name is Asher Lev, A Picasso*, Respect: A Musical Journey of Women (Cherry Creek Theatre Company); A Trip to Bountiful, The Miracle Worker, Jnan, and Sunsets and Margaritas (DCPA Theatre Company). Training: M.F.A in Sound Design; CalArts.
Join the Arvada Center family for an evening celebrating the impact and importance of the arts in our community. The Arts for All Gala will raise crucial funds for arts education programs as well as the theatre and gallery programs you know and love.

Tickets on sale
SEPTEMBER 28, 2021

More information at arvadacenter.org

ON THIS PRODUCTION, the Arvada Center Theatre’s production staff and crew have created or coordinated all elements of set, lighting, props, sound, and costumes.
ON STAGE

Embrace your inner elf! Based on the beloved holiday film, this hilarious fish-out-of-water comedy follows Buddy the Elf in his quest to find his true identity. As Buddy helps New York City rediscover its Christmas cheer, this family favorite helps us all find the joy in the season.

ON OUR WALLS

Influential text-based conceptualist Roland Bernier experimented with symbols and language by taking words out of context and exploiting their visual characteristics. The resulting paintings, drawings, sculptures, and installations mix Bernier’s use of text with his bold colors, strong lines, and vast diversity of materials. Bernier, who passed away in 2015, was a fixture of Colorado’s art scene throughout his career.

IN OUR CLASSROOMS

Front Range Youth Symphony Concert
Main Stage Theatre
October 24, 2021

Arvada Center Dance Theatre Fall Concert
Main Stage Theatre
October 29 - October 31, 2021