

ACT II playhouse

World-class theatre • intimate venue

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Act II Playhouse Kicks Off its 2011/12 Season with *Sylvia* by A.R. Gurney, Sept. 6 – Oct. 2

AMBLER, PA – Act II Playhouse kicks off its 2011/12 season with *Sylvia* by **A. R. Gurney**, directed by Act II Associate Artistic Director **Harriet Power**. This romantic comedy tells the story of a love triangle between a man, his wife — and his dog! Performances are Sept. 6-Oct. 2.

Three preview performances of *Sylvia* will be held Sept. 6-8 at 8 p.m., with tickets discounted to \$22. Opening night (press opening) is Friday, Sept. 9 at 8 p.m., and the show runs through Sunday, Oct. 2. Tickets are \$27 for all regular Wednesday-Thursday performances, \$33 for Friday evenings, Saturday evenings and Sunday matinees, and \$36 for opening night, which includes a post-show reception with free food and wine. Discounts are available for students, seniors 65 and older, and groups of 10 or more. For more information, visit www.act2.org or call the Act II Box Office at (215) 654-0200.

Sylvia tells the story of New York power couple Greg (**Greg Wood**) and Kate (**Mary Beth Scallen**), who move from the suburbs to the city expecting to enjoy their newly empty nest. When Greg brings *Sylvia* (**Jessica Bedford**), an adorable stray mutt, back to their home, Kate finds herself ignored – and surprised by Greg's other changes. Can a longtime spouse compete with the undeniable appeal of unconditional love? **Paul Felder** rounds out the cast, playing three hilariously varied roles.

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Sylvia is unique because a beautiful young actress plays the dog, who speaks English and fully comprehends both the husband's and the wife's every word.

“Gurney mines the glorious capacity of theatre to trigger our imaginations, and the glorious capacity of actors to do just about anything,” Power notes. “We not only accept the actress-as-dog but delight in the ways she makes unconditional love so irresistible – and dangerous!”

Sylvia is played by **Jessica Bedford**, a relative newcomer to the Philadelphia theatre scene, making her first appearance on Act II's stage. She received her master's degree in theatre from Villanova University in 2010 – under the tutelage of Power, a professor at Villanova.

“Jessica has a superb sense of humor and spontaneity,” Power said. “She moves beautifully, is delightfully playful, and is very sexy – a great attribute for the role, since the audience must see and identify with the husband falling hard for the stray dog he brings home.”

The design team consists of scenic designer **Dirk Durossette**, costume designer **Rosemarie McKelvey**, lighting designer **James Leitner**, and sound designer **David O'Connor**.

A hit when it premiered on off-Broadway in 1995, starring Sarah Jessica Parker, *Sylvia* was the most produced play in the country during the 1996-1997 season.

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“I think *Sylvia* will remain timeless,” Power says. “Spouses will always face challenges once their kids leave home, some people will always fall in love with dogs, and dogs will always make their owners feel more beloved than anyone else in their lives can.”

SPECIAL DRESS REHEARSAL FUNDRAISER

The final dress rehearsal of *Sylvia* will be open to the public on Sunday, Sept. 4, at 7 p.m. Suggested donation is \$10, and all contributions go to the Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society (PAWS). According to its mission statement, “PAWS is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to saving Philadelphia's homeless, abandoned, and unwanted animals. PAWS is the city's largest rescue organization and only no-kill shelter, and is working to make Philadelphia a place where every healthy and treatable pet is guaranteed a home. Through its adoption locations, special events, and foster care network, PAWS finds loving homes for thousands of animals each year.” Please visit www.phillypaws.org to get involved by adopting, fostering, donating, or volunteering.

ABOUT ACT II PLAYHOUSE

Act II Playhouse, now in its 13th season of professional theatre in the Philadelphia suburb of Ambler, PA, is committed to creating world-class theatre in a venue whose intimacy draws audiences and actors into dynamic interaction. Act II produces new, classic, and contemporary plays and musicals under the direction of Bud Martin (Producing Artistic Director) and Harriet Power (Associate Artistic Director). In July 2010, Howard Shapiro of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* declared that “Act II Playhouse is arguably the most up-and-coming of the region's small professional theaters outside Center City.”

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ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

A. R. "PETE" GURNEY (Playwright) has been writing plays for a long time. Among his works are: *Scenes from American Life*, *Children*, *The Dining Room*, *The Cocktail Hour*, *Love Letters*, *Sylvia*, *Far East*, *Ancestral Voices*, *Big Bill*, *Indian Blood*, and most recently, *Black Tie*. He has also written three novels, a few television scripts, and the libretto of *Strawberry Fields*, a one-act opera. Gurney is a member of the Theatre Hall of Fame and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He has honorary degrees from Williams College and Buffalo State University, and was on the Literature faculty at M.I.T. in an earlier life. His website can be reached at argurney.com

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

HARRIET POWER (Director) is Associate Artistic Director at Act II and also a Professor of Theatre at Villanova University, where she teaches directing and acting. She has divided her professional directing and dramaturgy career between classics (Shakespeare and Chekhov being her favorites) and new plays, working with playwrights at New Dramatists (New York), Philadelphia's PlayPenn, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, West Coast Playwrights, Iowa Playwrights Festival, and the International Women Playwrights Festival. Recently, she directed Act II's seven-actor adaptation of *The Tempest*, the first American production of Sebastian Barry's *The Pride of Parnell Street*, the sold-out hit *Boeing-Boeing*, and the best new play she's ever directed, Bruce Graham's *Any Given Monday* (Barrymore Award, Outstanding New Play). At Act II, she has also directed James Still's *Iron Kisses*, the world premiere of Jeff Baron's *Brothers-in-Law*, and the Barrymore-nominated *Syncopation*. Among her many directing credits, favorites include *Why I'm Scared of Dance* by Jen Childs for 1812 Productions, Donald Margulies' *Dinner With Friends* in Rome, Italy, at Teatro L'Arciliuto, co-produced by The English Theatre of Rome and the American Embassy (winner of "Best of Rome" citation in Trova Roma), *A Moon for the*

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Misbegotten and *Mad Forest* (Venture Theatre), and two world premieres at InterAct Theatre, both by Seth Rozin—*Reinventing Eden* and *Missing Link* (Barrymore nomination, Outstanding New Play). A three-time Barrymore Outstanding Direction of a Play nominee, she received the 1997 Barrymore Award with James J. Christy for *Angels in America: Perestroika*. She has been honored to serve on the selection committee for the F. Otto Haas Award for an Emerging Artist.

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Sylvia Fact Sheet

Theater:

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56 E. Butler Ave.
Ambler, PA 19002

Prices:

Adults: \$22-\$36
Special discounts are available for students, seniors 65+ and groups of 10 or more.

Tickets:

Phone: (215) 654-0200
Online: www.act2.org

Performances:

Tues 9/6 at 8 p.m. (Talkback)	Wed 9/7 at 8 p.m. (Talkback)	Thurs 9/8 at 8 p.m.
Fri 9/9 at 8 p.m. (Opening Night)	Sat 9/10 at 8 p.m.	Sunday, 9/11 at 2 p.m.
Wed 9/14 at 2 p.m.	Wed 9/14 at 8 p.m.	Thurs 9/15 at 8 p.m.
Fri 9/16 at 8 p.m.	Sat 9/17 at 8 p.m.	Sunday, 9/18 at 2 p.m.
Wed 9/21 at 2 p.m.	Wed 9/21 at 8 p.m.	Thurs 9/22 at 8 p.m.
Fri 9/23 at 8 p.m.	Sat 9/24 at 8 p.m.	Sunday, 9/25 at 2 p.m. (Talkback)
Wed 9/28 at 2 p.m.	Wed 9/28 at 8 p.m.	Thurs 9/29 at 8 p.m.
Fri 9/30 at 8 p.m.	Sat 10/1 at 8 p.m.	Sunday, 10/2 at 2 p.m.

Sylvia

By **A.R. Gurney**

Directed by **Harriet Power**

Cast

Jessica Bedford as Sylvia
Paul Felder as Tom/Phyllis/Leslie
Mary Beth Scallen as Kate
Greg Wood as Greg

Production Team

Dirk Durossette, Scenic Designer
Rosemarie McKelvey, Costume Designer
James Leitner, Lighting Designer
David O'Connor, Sound Designer

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