LOVE LETTERS by A.R. Gurney

With Gérard Depardieu and Anouk Aimée

Direction: Benoît Lavigne
Costumes: Elisabeth Tavernier
Lights: Fabrice Kebour
Music: Micel Winogradoff
Translation and adaptation: Alexia Périmony

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PRESENTATION

Love Letters is a play by A. R. Gurney that was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. The play centers on two characters, Melissa Gardner and Andrew Makepeace Ladd III. Using the epistolary form sometimes found in novels, they sit side by side at tables and read the notes, letters and cards – in which over nearly 50 years, they discuss their hopes and ambitions, dreams and disappointments, victories and defeats – that have passed between them throughout their separated lives. While Andrew becomes a U.S. senator, Melissa fails as an artist. In the end Melissa kills herself.

Biography of Albert Ramsdell Gurney

Born in Buffalo in New York, Gurney, a graduate of St. Paul's School (Concord, New Hampshire), attended Williams College and the Yale School of Drama, after which he began teaching Humanities at MIT. He began writing plays such as Scenes from American Life, Children, and The Middle Ages while at MIT, but it was his great success with The Dining Room that allowed him to write full-time. Since The Dining Room, Gurney has written a number of plays, most of them concerning WASPs of the American northeast. While at Yale, Gurney also wrote the musical: Love in Buffalo. This was the first musical ever produced at the Yale School of Drama.

Gurney's latest play is "The Grand Manner," a play about his real life encounter with famed actress Katharine Cornell in her production of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. The play was produced and performed by Lincoln Center for the summer of 2010. It was also produced in Buffalo by the Kavinoky Theatre.

Gurney has also written several novels, including:
- The Snow Ball
- The Gospel According to Joe
- Entertaining Strangers

Gurney has also appeared in several of his plays including The Dining Room and most notably Love Letters.

In 2006, Gurney was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.
A long and huge mahogany table. On each side, Gerard Depardieu (on the left), heavy, dark suit and white shirt; Anouk Aimée (on the right), in a scarlet red dress, diaphanous complexion, dark hair and no wrinkle. Beauty at its most aged 81. She even gently bites her upper lip as a beginner.
Performing the Love Letters by American writer A.R. Gurney for the 6th time might the reason why Lola from the Jacques Demy movie still delivers the same looks with an unreasonable ingenuity.
From its creation in 1990 with Bruno Cremer, the only feminine actress has been acting opposite to Jean-Louis Trintignant, Philippe Noiret, Jacques Weber and Alain Delon... The tables sometimes changed (sometimes two small), the lighting (small lecture spot or not), the shape of the jugs of water, of the glasses or of the actor's glasses.
But everything just remains the same. Like it's still. And surprisingly open to the sensitivity of the play, even if it's a reading. Even with a rather conventional American romance and its visible strings.
From childhood to death, we follow the path of 2 lovers who will never succeed to live together. She's rich, frivolous and is suffering from depression. He's a hard working poor man who wins but is plagued by doubts and a lack of confidence. Since their school years, they sent each other letters. While he's mad about her, she continuously makes fun of him but proves to be unable to do without him. Of course, they will never reunite just like so many others before them and others after them.
The success of this exchange of letters is based on this failure everybody has once experienced, the intimate memories attached to it and our own reflection embodied on stage by the actors. But whatever!
The audience is well aware that it's only an excuse to see two amazing actors face each other. They're the ones we come for and admire more than the mere text.
And it's worth it. And the reading eventually comes with good surprises even with the text in hands Depardieu is just brilliant.
First confused by the softness of his voice contrasting with his massive body. The voice of an angel stuck in the body of a bull.
It's like there's an animal on stage, a monster, something out of the ordinary which is both puzzling and awe inspiring leading to fascination and respect.
During the performance, he suddenly changes colour as he gets speechless in front of his stage partner with her playful and cocky elegance.
But his reedy voice suddenly change like no other. Sitting in front of us, he suddenly embodies the deepest and most secret unconscious contradictions of the beings.
A simple gesture with his glasses, or his outstretched arm towards his lost partner feels like thunder.
But with the utmost lightness. He cannot say -as he recently did- that he's bored on stage, it's a lie. He's just too detailed in his play and full of respect for the audience in every single word and even when being silent, dreaming or pausing for a while.
The audience give them the biggest hand for the amazing performance.
For an hour and a half, the room is religiously silent. The audience only daring to breathe with the actors. Every single spectator of the fully booked house is standing at the end, demonstrating their admiration.
There's something beautiful to witness a seduced audience sharing the same emotion. Almost as beautiful as two legendary actors at their very best.
SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF GÉRARD DEPARDIEU

Gérard Depardieu started his acting career at the small traveling theatre "Cafe de la Gare", along with Patrick Dewaere and Miou-Miou. After minor roles in cinema, at last, he got his chance in Bertrand Blier's Les valseuses (1974). That film established a new type of hero in the French cinema and the actor's popularity grew enormously. Later, he diversified his screen image and became the leading French actor of the 80s and 90s. He was twice awarded a César as Best Actor for Le dernier métro (1980) and Cyrano de Bergerac (1990), also received an Oscar nomination for "Cyrano" and a number of awards at international film festivals. In 1996, he was distinguished by the highest French title of "Chevalier du Légion d'Honneur".

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF ANOUK AIMÉE

She is the daughter of the actress Geneviève Sorya. In 1948 she played the part of Juliette in Les amants de Vérone (1949). In the following years (fifties and beginning sixties) she made various films (e.g. Les amants de Montparnasse (1958) and La douceur de vivre (1960)) but had only with Lola (1961) of Jacques Demy and Un homme et une femme (1966) of Claude Lelouch major success. With the latter she had the chance to establish herself in America but did not use this opportunity. Therefore she was only participating in second row productions in Europe and America.