



TWO CLASS ACTS

TWO ONE-ACT PLAYS BY
A.R. GURNEY



DRAMATISTS
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INC.



TWO CLASS ACTS
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SQUASH
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AJAX
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

TWO CLASS ACTS was initially produced by the Flea Theater (Niegel Smith, Artistic Director; Carol Ostrow, Producing Director) in New York City. The plays opened in early September and played through November 20th, 2016. Both plays were beautifully directed by Stafford Arima.

The scenic design for SQUASH is pretty much what occurred in its original production at the Flea Theater.

AJAX, on the other hand, in this production asked its audience to sit all over the place as if it were very much a part of a class.

These two plays require relatively small casts, and run approximately an hour each. They may be performed in either order.

The music or sound proposed for each is simply a suggestion.

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SQUASH

*This play is dedicated to
Carol Ostrow of the Flea Theater.*

SQUASH was originally produced by the Flea Theater (Niegel Smith, Artistic Director; Carol Ostrow, Producing Director) in New York City, opening on October 10, 2016. It was directed by Stafford Arima; the scenic design was by Jason Sherwood; the costume design was by Sky Switser; the sound design was by Miles Polaski; the lighting design was by Jake DeGroot; and the production stage manager was Ben Anderson. The cast was as follows:

DAN PROCTOR Dan Amboyer
BECKY Nicole Lowrance
GERALD CASKY Rodney Richardson

CHARACTERS

DAN PROCTOR, a youngish professor specializing in the Classics.

BECKY, his wife, mother of two

GERALD CASKY, a student

SET

The play is set in and around a university in the Boston area during the mid-1970s. It calls for four playing areas, minimally suggested:

the locker room of a college gym, suggested by a couple of lockers
and a bench in front of them;

a suburban kitchen, suggested by a kitchen table and a chair;

a local bar and grill, suggested by a bar and two barstools;

an academic office, suggested by a metal desk and two chairs.

COSTUME

Though the play takes place on a series of different days, it might be simpler for the actors to wear always the same generic clothes throughout:

DAN, corduroy trousers, blue button-down shirt with no
necktie, tweed sports jacket, leather shoes.

GERALD, jeans, informal shirt, jogging shoes.

BECKY, simple suburban slacks and blouse.

MUSIC

Various songs from the '70s are suggested to introduce or comment on scenes. A director might decide on more appropriate ones.

Other generations may use their own music, or even write its own, for their productions.

SQUASH

*At rise: music: a song like “You Are the Sunshine of My Life.”**

Lights up on a couple of dark-green metal gym lockers with a wooden bench in front of them. Dan comes on in athletic shorts and a sweaty T-shirt, carrying a towel and a wooden squash racket, appropriate for the '70s. He is a nice-looking, well-built guy in his early thirties. Following close behind him is Gerald, a student, dressed casually, carrying a dark-green book bag over his shoulder.

Dan settles at the bench and begins to take off his sneakers.

GERALD. Great game, Professor!

DAN. Squash? It's the best.

GERALD. No, I mean you, personally.

DAN. Me?

GERALD. The way you played. It was beautiful to watch.

DAN. Ah well. The game itself does that to us. It's deliciously elegant. You have to be passionately committed to your shots and at the same time ultimately courteous in allowing your opponent room to respond.

GERALD. I got all that! And I saw you won, hands down!

DAN. I do feel at home in the sport.

GERALD. Is that because it's so preppy?

DAN. Preppy?

GERALD. I mean lots of prep-school guys play it.

DAN. Oh well, that's because lots of prep schools have squash courts. Because lots of prep schools were designed to emulate the English,

* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page and the music note at the beginning of this play..

who brought the game back from India.

GERALD. I take it you went to prep school.

DAN. I did, for my sins. But I like to think I've graduated into a wider world.

He has gotten his sneakers and socks off. Now he stands up and begins to remove his shirt.

Yes, but what brings you to the gym, Mister—Forgive me. I'm not good on names.

GERALD. Casky.

DAN. What brings you to our temple of sweat, Mr. Casky. Normally this is when students start focusing on the evening meal.

GERALD. (*Groveling in his book bag.*) I wanted to hand in my paper on Plato.

DAN. But that's not due till next Friday.

GERALD. (*Handing him a paper.*) I know but I thought you might appreciate getting an early one.

DAN. The early bird catches the A, right?

GERALD. Hopefully.

DAN. (*Taking the paper, tucking it into the locker.*) Well, sir, I'll try to give it early attention.

GERALD. Thank you... There's also another reason I'm here.

DAN. Which is?

GERALD. I wanted to see you play squash.

DAN. Oh come on.

GERALD. Seriously. You talk a lot about the game in class.

DAN. I do, don't I? Squash can be a good metaphor for life. The give and take. What Hemingway calls the "grace under pressure." The need for both passionate aggression and courtly politesse.

GERALD. Right. And when I found out you played every Thursday, I decided to see you in action.

DAN. Luckily you saw a fairly decent match.

GERALD. It was extremely impressive.

DAN. (*Takes off his athletic shirt, hangs it up in his locker.*) Thank

you... And now—to quote from Homer’s *Odyssey*—it’s time to leave the world of challenge and adventure “for the smoke from my hearth fire rising.” In other words, it’s time for me to go home.

GERALD. I hear you’ve got great kids.

DAN. Who told you that?

GERALD. Bandor. The guy from India you invited for Thanksgiving dinner.

DAN. Oh, the exchange student.

GERALD. He said you had a nice family.

DAN. We try.

GERALD. I also saw your family picture on your Christmas card in the dean’s office.

DAN. At least the kids sat still for once in their lives.

He takes off his shorts, hangs them up in his locker.

Well sir, off to seek the shower. Thanks for stopping by. I’m looking forward to reading your paper.

He slips off his jockstrap, wraps the towel around his waist, and starts off.

GERALD. Professor Proctor...

Dan stops.

There’s still another reason why I stopped by the gym today. Besides seeing the squash. And handing in my paper.

DAN. Oh yes?

GERALD. May I be frank?

DAN. Of course.

GERALD. I mean, in class you seem like a pretty open-minded guy.

DAN. That’s the Greeks for you. They make you open-minded to a fault.

GERALD. Yes, well maybe it’s because we’re studying the Greeks that...

Deep breath.

...that I wanted to see your body.

DAN. What?

GERALD. I wanted to see you naked.

DAN. Hold on there!

GERALD. It's like what Socrates talks about in Plato's *Symposium*. Or what you said about that statue of Apollo. The beauty of the human form engages us all.

DAN. I don't want to hear any more of this, Mister—

GERALD. Casky.

DAN. For Christ sake, Casky, go see the school shrink!

He goes off to the showers.

GERALD. (*Calling after him.*) I already did, sir! And I told her I can't help it! That's how I feel! And that's pretty much what I wrote about in my paper.

He waits for an answer. We hear the sound of a shower. Gerald finally goes off in the opposite direction as the lights fade on the lockers and come up on:

A kitchen table and a chair or two.

Music: a song like "Goodbye, Yellow Brick Road."

Becky, Dan's wife, comes in. She is young and pretty, carrying a plastic laundry basket, loaded with clean clothes for kids and adults which she begins to fold and stack carefully on the kitchen table. She intermittently calls offstage toward the family room, where children's voices are heard.

BECKY. (*Calling off.*) All right, kids, no more TV! Books out, on the double!!

Listens. The sound of a baseball game is heard from off where the kids are.

Is that a Red Sox game?

A moment.

I don't care if Daddy lets you! Now please! Turn it off!

Sound of TV goes off.

And I don't want to hear it on again until each of you has read at least three pages of your book! And I'm going to ask Daddy to give you a quiz.

She begins to put the folded clothes back in the laundry basket, glances off.

And Teddy, stop playing with your pee-pee! (*Under her breath.*) At least until you're older

More folding; then:

I think I hear Daddy! (*Low.*) Thank the good Lord.

Dan's voice is heard from off.

DAN'S VOICE. I'm home!

BECKY. (*Calling.*) I'm in the kitchen! (*Another dry aside to herself.*) Where else.

Dan comes on, kisses her.

DAN. Hi, sweetheart.

BECKY. Mmm.

DAN. (*Crossing to offstage, where the kids are.*) Are the kids watching the Red Sox game?

Exits off toward where the kids are.

BECKY. (*Calling after him.*) I told them they couldn't.

Offstage ad-lib sounds of greetings: "Your mother says no. Never mind, turn it off. They'll play again... Who's reading what? The Hobbit?... And who left these Legos all over the floor?"

(*Calling toward off.*) I told them they had to take a stab at their homework before you got home.

DAN. (*Coming back on.*) I'll buy that.

BECKY. You're late, by the way. Squash again?

DAN. What else?

BECKY. I put more beer in the fridge.

DAN. Thank you very much.

He gets a beer for himself and pours a white wine for Becky.

Wait till I tell you what happened today.

BECKY. You got tenure!

DAN. That'll be the day.

BECKY. I'll bet you did.

DAN. I don't even come UP for it until next year, Becky.

TWO CLASS ACTS

by A.R. Gurney

SQUASH. A professor of classic literature finds himself questioning his identity when a student presents an intriguing take on Plato's *Symposium*. Boundaries are tested and personal lives are upended as teacher and student grapple with sexuality, love, and sport. (2 men, 1 woman.)

AJAX. An intrepid student adapts Sophocles's defining war epic to the amusement of his English professor, a passionate ex-actress who finds herself entangled with every aspect of the play—including the playwright. (1 man, 1 woman.)

"A tickling breeze of possibilities ripples through TWO CLASS ACTS... That spirit, with its enthusiastic sense of art's potential to portray and effect transformations, is youthful in nature. ...these works [are] imbued with a giddy openness to change that seems to be as much a part of Mr. Gurney's DNA as his anthropological dedication to a vanishing class of patricians. ... AJAX is best perceived as a happy fantasy, one that bubbles with the belief that borders of all sorts were meant to be leapt over. ... [SQUASH] emanates a similarly optimistic glow..."
—**The New York Times**

"Sometimes, all the right elements come together to make a production that's just delightful. In TWO CLASS ACTS, those include forbidden romances, identity questions, academic debates, and an intriguing blend of classical themes in contemporary contexts."
—**Theasy.com**

"...witty, provocative and sophisticated... The playwright continues to demonstrate that he has a wise and discerning view of the human condition."
—**TheaterScene.net**

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