Albee sees characters come to life

Playwright Edward Albee said he enjoyed seeing his characters become real people according to Arts senior Margaret Bergquist, a cast member.

Albee attended the Oct. 6 performance of his plays “The Death of Bessie Smith” and “The Sandbox.”

Albee, in a short, informal critique of the performance, asked the 13 cast members of both plays why they did the things they did. His main concern was whether or not they had any problems performing the plays. “It was a two-way type of feedback” said Arts junior Mike McCandless who performed in “The Sandbox.”

“He didn’t really say if he liked the performances or not.”

“HIS comments were valid, although he wasn’t specific,” McCandless said.

Albee said the energy levels of both plays must be precise, and according to McCandless, he said the energy level could have been a bit higher in the Wednesday night performance.”

Bergquist, who performed in “Death of Bessie Smith” said Albee “didn’t like the music we used in ‘Sandbox’.” He thought they should have used the music specifically written for the play by New York composer, William Flannigan, she said.

“He can’t really say if we did right or wrong,” said Bergquist. “Even though he wrote the plays, he has to leave himself open for interpretation.”

ALBEE directed specific remarks to both Bergquist and McCandless’s performances.

“He told me to memorize my lines better,” said Bergquist. “I didn’t say a couple of lines right.”

“Albee told me my pauses were too long,” said McCandless.

Both were satisfied with his comments. “Since he wrote the plays, he knows exactly how the characters should be portrayed,” said Bergquist.

Albee also presented a lecture entitled “Playwright vs. the Theater” last Thursday following the performance of his plays in Upper Brandeis. More than 700 people attended as Albee lectured on why he became a playwright, and the status of the arts in the United States.

He told the students in the audience that they were the hope for the arts because their ideals and standards had not yet been set. He said too many Americans expect anything that is profitable to be good.

Traveling, lecturing and seeing his plays sometimes gives him an insight into the plays, Albee said. He recalled a performance by students at Texas Tech of a play about the English that normally called for English accents. The Southern twang in the actors’ voices startled him at first but then made him realize new things about each character, thing that were never visible before.