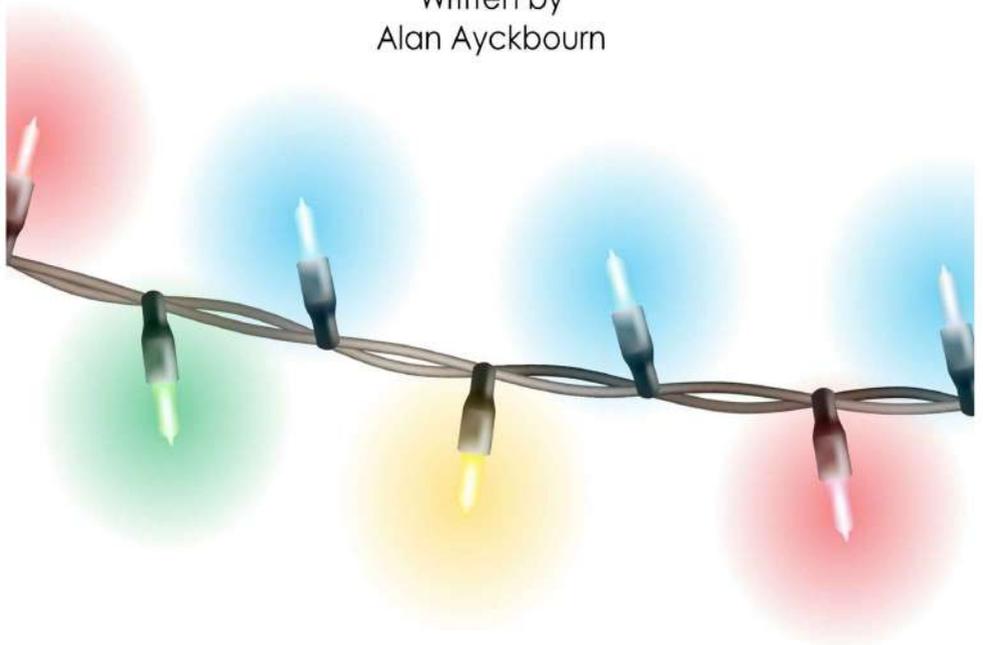


THE ALEXANDRA PLAYERS  
Present

# Season's Greetings

Written by  
Alan Ayckbourn



25th - 28th October 2017

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# THE DIRECTOR'S THOUGHTS

My love for Alan Ayckbourn plays stems from proudly watching my mum acting in them when I was a child and finding the dark humour amusing, yet slightly scary! Many years later an opportunity arose for me to direct *Absurd Person Singular* which had always been one of my favourite plays. I found this a hugely rewarding experience so, eight years on, when *Season's Greetings* was suggested for our Autumn production, I jumped at the chance to have another go!

*Season's Greetings* is not dissimilar to *Absurd Person Singular*. Both plays are set at Christmas time, feature couples from different social backgrounds and demonstrate society's obsession with status and financial success. Ayckbourn's keen understanding of the dynamics of human relationships is ever present; the subtle undercurrents beneath interactions often indicate the true nature of the characters' thoughts and feelings. The humour is bitter-sweet in the sense that it is derived from both hilariously farcical events and poignant moments through which the audience can truly connect with the characters.

One of the most prevalent and thought-provoking themes of the play is dissatisfaction with one's life, yet at the same time, a fatalistic acceptance of the cards that life has dealt. This leads to comparisons with others, a perceived inability to change circumstances and feelings of self-pity and blame. The hilarious and raucous game of Snakes and Ladders on Christmas Day is a superb metaphor for this!

Despite our small stage, the Alexandra Players always welcome a challenge and *Season's Greetings* has been no exception! The requirement for three different rooms to be visible at the same time generated a highly creative approach from our set and lighting designers and lots of hard work by the actors to avoid upstaging each other. However, whilst the technical elements are incredibly important, they ought to go unnoticed as you simply immerse yourselves in exciting, believable story-telling by a talented cast.

I hope this production will intrigue and amuse you in equal measure and that you will leave the theatre, not only with the 'feel-good factor', but asking yourself questions about the characters' motivations and imagining how their relationships may have evolved after the curtain was drawn...

*Juliette*

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'Season's Greetings'

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# Alan Ayckbourn

Born in 1939 in Hampstead, Alan began writing at an early age. His first play, 'a rip-off of Jennings', was written when he was about 10.

Leaving school in 1956, he became an actor and joined Sir Donald Wolfit's production at the Edinburgh Festival. In 1957 he found himself in Scarborough, where he came under the influence of the Artistic Director of the local theatre, Stephen Joseph.

In 1965 Stephen Joseph asked Alan to write a play that "would make people laugh when their holidays were spoiled by the rain". The result was *Meet My Father*, later renamed *Relatively Speaking*.

When Stephen Joseph died in 1967, Alan took over his dream of establishing a permanent, custom-built theatre-in-the-round for Scarborough. In 1988 the closure of the local Odeon cinema provided a suitable home. The converted classic thirties art-deco building has seen the premiere of nearly every Ayckbourn play since the 24th April 1996.

This year The Stephen Joseph Theatre is celebrating 60 years of association with Alan Ayckbourn. In gala evenings on the 10th and 17th September, *A Brief History of Plays*, a tour through 81 plays and 60 years of plays performed, Sir Alan was joined by his company as well as guest stars.

Alan's new play *A Brief History of Women*, that tells of an unremarkable man and the remarkable women who loved him, left him and lost him over 60 years, and of the equally remarkable old manor house that saw it all happen, is playing in repertory with a revival of his classic farce, *Taking Steps*, at the New Vic, Newcastle-under-Lyme.

The premiere of Alan's new play, his 82nd, *Better Off Dead*, is planned for 2018.

He retains the brief that Stephen Joseph gave him "You've got to entertain them" but at the same time he does not believe that because a play is commercial it has to have absolutely no brain to it. Toby Young, theatre critic for *The Spectator Magazine*, wrote: 'Tom Stoppard and Alan Ayckbourn have both ably demonstrated that it's perfectly possible to pitch plays at the mass audience without pandering to the lowest common denominator.'

Source: *The Alan Ayckbourn Official Website*

*Season's  
Greetings  
in  
rehearsal*



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# Season's Greetings

A PLAY  
by ALAN AYCKBOURN

First presented at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough, on 25th September 1980. subsequently presented at the Apollo Theatre, London, by Michael Codron in the Greenwich Theatre production on 29th March 1982.

## CAST

Neville	Keith Hartley
Belinda, his wife	Alex Parker
Phyllis, his sister	Janet Denne
Harvey, his uncle	Roy Moore
Bernard, Phyllis's husband	Mark Higgins
Rachel, Belinda's sister	Sue McGeehan
Eddie	Mark Campbell
Pattie, Eddie's wife	Rose Bayley
Clive	Ryan Hutchings

The action takes place in the home of Neville and Belinda Bunker

## ACT I

Scene One	Christmas Eve, 7-30pm
Scene Two	Christmas Day, noon
Scene Three	Christmas Day, midnight

## ACT II

Scene One	Boxing Day, 3-30pm
Scene Two	December 27th, 5-15am

There will be an Interval of **15 minutes** between Act I and Act II.

Refreshments will be available in the church café (tea and coffee) and wine will be available in the foyer.

# PRODUCTION

Director	Juliette Harrison
Setting design & Construction	Roy Moore Rob Hames
Lighting design	David Hawkett
Lighting operation	Lee Copp
Sound design	David Hawkett
Production Co-ordinator	Janet Sweet
Stage Management	Jackie Hartley Janet Sweet

FOH Management	Rob Hames
Refreshment Co-ordinator	Susan Boorman
Website & publicity design	Louise Gaul
Programme	Janet Sweet
Photography	Ian Whittington
Box Office	Keith Hartley

Thanks to Jackie Dowse for loan of puppets and Ian's granddad for construction of puppet theatre. Puppet theatre scenery and drapes by Louise Gaul and Clare Sweetapple.

## Safety

In the unlikely event that the hall has to be vacated in an emergency, please leave the building by the nearest exit, which is clearly indicated.

In accordance with local safety requirements:

1. The public may leave at the end of the performance by all exits and these doors must at that time be kept open.
2. All gangways, passages and staircases must be kept free from obstruction.
3. Persons will not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways.
4. Smoking is not allowed.

Please note that taking of photographs and video recording during the performance is strictly prohibited.

Please switch off all mobile phones

[www.alexandraplayers.org.uk](http://www.alexandraplayers.org.uk)

# The Company

## **KEITH HARTLEY**

### *Neville*

Keith trained at the City of London Polytechnic student union bar in Moorgate, and then at The British Oak, Blackheath, before passing out with flying colours (before his eyes). Joined the Alexandra Players in 1987, and has been trying to leave ever since. Appearances in plays such as *Round and Round the Garden*, *Time Of My Life*, *It Could Be Any One Of Us* (all by Sir Alan Ayckbourn), dressing up as women in various pantomimes; *The Caretaker* (Harold Pinter); Inspector Jack Frost in *Cat's Cradle* (Leslie Sands). Keith has also directed, stage managed, sold tickets at the door, and played with sound and lights. His appearance in *The Flint Street Nativity* as Wise Frankincense marked his lisping debut. This year he played Frank in *The Memory of Water* and directed *Black Comedy*.

## **ALEX PARKER**

### *Belinda*

Alex's first role was as the Wicked Queen in a school production of *Snow White and the 21 Dwarves*, and she's been hooked ever since. More recently she has acted with the Lancaster University Theatre Group, in productions such as *The Tempest* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This is Alex's second acting part with the Alexandra Players, having previously played Clea in Peter Shaffer's *Black Comedy* which was directed by Keith Hartley who now plays her husband!

## **JANET DENNE**

### *Phyllis*

Janet joined the Alexandra Players in 2000. Over the years, she has taken many varied roles, including directing *Murder Mistaken*, *Groping for Words* and *Essence of Love*. She appeared as the lead Susan in *Good Things*, the likeable but hapless heroine who rebuilds her life through her interactions with the varied characters who enter her charity shop. Then she played the drunken has-been actress in *We Happy Few*, our RSC Open Stages production. She was last seen on stage last year as the Shepherd in *The Flint Street Nativity*. Earlier this year she directed *Who Calls?*



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**ROY MOORE***Harvey*

Roy combines acting with directing and set and lighting design. He is proud of the range of productions the Alexandra Players have put on in recent years. Highlights include *The Passion Play* in Greenwich Park, a joint production of *David Copperfield* with the Roan Company and playing Davies in Pinter's *The Caretaker*. Directing credits include *The Killing of Sister George*, *Crown Matrimonial*, *Daisy Pulls It Off* and *The Flint Street Nativity*. He has appeared in many productions over the years, some of the most recent being Charles Stanton in *Dangerous Corner*, Neville in *Neville's Island*, Mellersh Wilton in *Enchanted April* and Stewart in *Private Fears In Public Places*. This year he played Colonel Melkett in *Black Comedy*.

**MARK HIGGINS***Bernard*

Mark joined the Players in 2003. In 2009 he took on his first directing role with J. B. Priestley's *Dangerous Corner* and appeared as Geoffrey in Ayckbourn's *Absurd Person Singular*. He played the critically acclaimed part of Angus in *Neville's Island* and Saul Watson in *Play On!* In 2012 he played Frederick Arnott in our "close to faultless" production of *Enchanted April*, the Duke of York in *Crown Matrimonial* and Ambrose in *Private Fears In Public Places*. In the last four years he has played Bob Jackson in *Pack of Lies*, Frazer in *Good Things*, Fusspot, the Lord Chamberlain, in *The Sleeping Beauty*, Duke Felmet in **Wyrd Sisters**, Eddie in *Timeshare*, Star in *The Flint Street Nativity* and Harold Gorringer in *Black Comedy*.

**SUE MCGEEHAN***Rachel*

Sue has been with the Players for 20 years and in that time has taken on roles in productions as varied as *Gigi*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Gaslight*, *Stepping Out*, *David Copperfield* and *My Sister In This House*. In recent years she performed as Daisy's trusty sidekick, Trixie Martin, in *Daisy Pulls It Off* and Barbara Jackson in *Pack of Lies*. In 2014 she played Azuriel in *Sleeping Beauty* before giving birth to Aisling, a sister to Conor. As a busy mum of two, Sue is less able to commit to as many acting roles but was stage manager for the RSC Open Stages production of *We Happy Few* and the Philip Ayckbourn premiere of *Timeshare*, and in 2015 took on the loveable character of Magrat in the stage adaptation of Terry Pratchett's *Wyrd Sisters*. Last year she was Angel in *The Flint Street Nativity*, and this year Lane in *Who Calls?*

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**MARK CAMPBELL*****Eddie***

This is Mark's first (and hopefully not last) venture with the Players. He has previously acted and directed at the Edward Alderton Theatre, the Erith Playhouse and the Bob Hope Theatre. Previous roles include Sloane in *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, Private Walker in *Dad's Army*, Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Captain Ashwood in *It Ain't Half Hot Mum*. He has directed several plays, including *Brimstone and Treacle*, *Rope*, *Abigail's Party* and *Justifying War*, a play about the Hutton Enquiry in which he played his namesake, Alistair Campbell. His production of *The Caretaker* won a Bexley Arts Council award in 2006, and he recently adapted and directed the world premiere of a special amateur production of *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em*.

**ROSE BAYLEY*****Pattie***

Originally from South Africa, Rose did a drama course led by Professor Bud Castle at the Johannesburg College of Education. In 2010 she joined the Henley Players before moving to the UK with her husband in 2011, when she joined the Alexandra Players. With the Players she has done backstage work and acted in *Crown Matrimonial* (Elizabeth, Duchess of York), *Daisy Pulls It Off* (Belinda), *Good Things* (Scotch Doris), *Pack of Lies* (Sally), *Sleeping Beauty* (evil fairy Carabosse), *We Happy Few* (Flora Pelmet), *Cinderella the Untold Story* (O'Reilly The Fairy Tale Fixer), *Wyrd Sisters* (Nanny Ogg), *Cat's Cradle* (Peggy Fletcher), *Timeshare* (Marina) and *Who Calls?* (Twilley).

**RYAN HUTCHINGS*****Clive***

Ryan joined the Alexandra Players in 2016, and this is his first stage role with the group. He studied Drama at the University of the West of England, and has been involved in theatre with the Highbury Players (Portsmouth), as a founding member of FULL Theatre Company (Bristol), and with UWE Small Moving Parts (Bristol). He has appeared in many varied roles throughout his acting career from Shakespearean leads, to demi-gods, through to appearing on stage as Woody Allen. *Season's Greetings* marks his first performance in four years, and he's itching to get back to treading the boards.

**JULIETTE HARRISON*****Director***

Juliette is a talented photographer, actor and musician. She joined the Alexandra Players in 2000 and has appeared in many of our productions since then including *Steel Magnolias*, *Stepping Out*, *Blithe Spirit*, *David Copperfield* and *My Sister In This House*. She directed *Absurd Person Singular* in 2010 and played Lotty Wilton in the delightful comedy *Enchanted April* in 2012. More recently she played Clare Beaumont in *Daisy Pulls It Off*, had a small part in *Good Things* and took the leading role of Hetty Oak in our RSC Open Stages production of *We Happy Few*. She played Mary in our recent production of *The Flint Street Nativity*, Vi in *The Memory of Water* and Mrs Abernethy in *Who Calls?*

**ROB HAMES*****Set construction***

Rob is a regular in our front-of-house team and spends many hours on the stage creating our outstanding sets. He learned many of his set building tricks from the master of set design, Dave Townsend, with whom he worked for recent productions such as *The Sleeping Beauty*, *We Happy Few*, *The Essence of Love* and *Wyrd Sisters*, and with Roy Moore on *Cat's Cradle*, *Timeshare*, *The Flint Street Nativity*, *The Memory of Water* and *Black Comedy*.

**DAVID HAWKETT*****Lighting design***

David Hawkett (lighting and sound design) enjoys all things techie backstage. He's done sound or lighting for most of the recent Players' productions. "The best bit about Am Dram is when it all comes together: actors, set, props, costumes, front-of-house, sound, lights - and, most important, the audience", he says.

**LEE COPP*****Lighting operator***

Having been with the Alexandra Players over a year, Lee has helped back stage on the production of *Cat's Cradle*, had a small walk-on part in *Timeshare*, then his first 'proper' role as both Herod and Joseph, which he thoroughly enjoyed along with the rest of the cast, in *The Flint Street Nativity*. He then directed an excellent production of *The Memory of Water* this year.

**JANET SWEET****Co-ordinator**

Janet joined the Players in 1978 and has played many roles, from junior heroines through middle-aged matrons to mischievous grannies. Some favourite roles have been Queen Mary in *Crown Matrimonial*, Emma in *Way Upstream*, Granny in *Haywire*, Olwen Peel in *Dangerous Corner*, May Archer in *A Foot in the Door* and Jocelyn Thrripp in *We Happy Few*. She enjoyed being Pensioner-age witch Granny Weatherwax in *Wyrd Sisters* and Miss Furnival in *Black Comedy*.

**JACKIE HARTLEY****Stage manager**

Jackie has been with the group since 1987. She has taken part in many productions and directed four, including *We Happy Few*, as part of the Royal Shakespeare Company's Open Stages Project. In February of this year she trod the boards with her husband Keith in *The Memory of Water*, a moving and dramatic study of the interaction between three sisters in the aftermath of their Mother's death. In June she had the pleasure of few lines but maximum impact as the ghostly Mistress of the House in *Who Calls?* In this production she aims to be neither seen nor heard (unless something goes radically wrong!) as she is taking on the important task of stage management, creeping around backstage, making sure both props and actors appear, as if by magic, in the right place at the right time.

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