

The Director Writes

RolePlay

By Alan Ayckbourn

It is extraordinary how difficult it is to get people to gel. There are so many barriers to combination. Barriers of age, sex, class, education, occupation and even roles of parenthood or filial expectation and duty all lead us to have different expectations of people and lead us into modes of behaviour which cause tension much more often than they produce harmony.

Artificially throwing people together usually leads to an incompatibility which can have one of two outcomes: conflict or vacuous non-responsiveness.

This is the problem examined by Alan Ayckbourn so deftly in tonight's presentation, *RolePlay*.

An interesting question to ask is, what is the bond that tentatively holds any of the couples together at the beginning of the play and then, what is it that forces them asunder? Of course that too leads one to ask if any of the subsequent relationships stand any better chance of success. Is there any successful partnership evident or indeed possible from within its seven characters?

RolePlay is very much an interaction or non-interaction of characters. The dialogue sparkles with the essence of mundanity, aspiration, desperation and resignation but within each of the characters we hear of a search or longing for something better that they wish for. As with all good comedy, *RolePlay* is built around the sadness of humanity and the fruitless and indeed pointless search for perfection.

Enjoy it.

Roger Scales
Director

About Ayckbourn

Alan Ayckbourn is, without any doubt, one of the most important influences in the late twentieth century British theatre scene. Adored by some and decried by others, he has irrevocably altered the conception of the art of writing comedy and has expanded this genre of dramatic presentation immeasurably.

And yet he has not followed a single path or developed in a conventional ordered manner.

At times he has experimented with comic versions of established genres, as with the conventional thriller in *Communicating Doors* or with classic conceits as in the *Revenge's Tragedies*. At other times his plays seem to be preoccupied with the idea of time and have taken Priestley's experiments with this concept forward to new heights. Sometimes he is consumed with the problems of today or, perhaps more accurately, tomorrow, and his plays turn blacker as with *Henceforward*. We also see him flout polite conventions in an Ortonesque way as he highlights and makes comic the taboo of suicide in *Absurd Person Singular* or mental illness in *Woman In Mind*.

At other times, Ayckbourn seems to be obsessed with place, as in tonight's play which is part of a trilogy, each part of which takes place in the same apartment.

Whatever his preoccupation is in a particular work, there are always some constants. An anarchic gift with dialogue which delineates character to perfection, a gift for creating a surprise or twist from one act or scene to another, and a dramatic construction that hides the consummate craftsmanship that underpins it.

Roger Scales

ROLEPLAY

By Alan Ayckbourn

CAST

Julie	Elena Ruggeri
Justin	Ian Rowe
Paige	Laura Fairclough
Micky	Lester Adams
Derek	John Pyke
Dee	Claire Sears
Arabella	Beverley Robley

Directed by
Roger Scales

The action takes place in a Docklands apartment in the present

Act I *late afternoon*

INTERVAL

Act II *mid evening*

CREW

Stage Manager		Michael Pagan
Assisted by	Serena Macklin	Wendy Sproule
Set Designer		Alison Pagan
Set Construction		Richard Hickman
Mike Andrews	Mike Bateman	Bill Bond
Ian Crawford	Paul Davidson	Rob Lindsay
John McClenahan	Vivian Meazza	Alan Robb
Alan Rose	Anthony Taylor	Malcolm Wren
Set Painted By		
Margot Jobbins	Serena Macklin	Alison Pagan
Lighting		Stuart Clark
Sound		Dorian Brook
Properties		
Margot Jobbins	Viv Prowse	Nora Williamson
Wardrobe		Lin Johnson
Prompters	Barbara Landman	Dee Williams

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