

PROSCENIUM



4 - 7 June 2025

Confusions

Alan Ayckbourn



IMPROBABLE FICTION

by

ALAN AYCKBOURN



16th, 17th, 18th & 19th July

19th & 20th July @ 3 pm

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Mass in Blue

and Rutter : Birthday Madrigals

Conductor : Sam Evans

Piano : Paul Ayres

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Soprano Soloist

Joanna Forbes L'Estrange

Photo: Dynamic Wang at Unsplash

Merchant Taylors' School

Sandy Lodge Lane, Northwood,
HA6 2HT

5.30 pm

Saturday 5th July 2025

Tickets £20

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PROSCENIUM

Confusions

By Alan Ayckbourn

Wednesday 4 to Saturday 7 June 2025
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

Mother Figure

Directed by Izzie Cartwright

Lucy Lynette Alston
Rosemary Eva Peerless
Terry Nishchal Patel

Drinking Companion

Directed by Dan Weiss

Harry Mark Sutherland
Waitress Crystal Anthony
Paula Eva Peerless
Bernice Sarah Rabin

Between Mouthfuls

Directed by Izzie Cartwright

Waitress Crystal Anthony
Pearce Neville Price
Mrs Pearce Izzie Cartwright
Martin Mateo Faulin
Polly Hannah Lester

Gosforth's Fête

Directed by Izzie Cartwright

Milly Eva Peerless
Mrs Pearce Izzie Cartwright
Gosforth Robert Ewen
Vicar Richard Kessel
Stewart Mateo Faulin

A Talk in the Park

Directed by Paul Davis

Arthur Paul Davis
Beryl Sarah Rabin
Charles Mike Williams
Doreen Angela Evans
Ernest Stephen Koranteng

Creative Team

Production Director Izzie Cartwright
Design Richard Kessel, Helen Nathanson, Izzie Cartwright
Stage Manager Hannah Lester
Costumes Angela Evans
Lighting Design / Lighting Operation Helene Smith
Sound Operation Helene Smith
Sound Compilation Anton Jungreuthmayer
Poster and Programme Design Charles Anthony
Programme Compilation Mark Sutherland

The action takes place in various locations in the late 1970s

There will be one interval of fifteen minutes
after *Between Mouthfuls*

With thanks to Keith Cochrane, Roger Knight,
Caroline Bronne-Shanbury, Shirley Wootten,
East Lane Theatre, Janet Harrison, Will Unwin,
Lloyd Davis, Jon Thedham

Alan Ayckbourn

A playwright and theatre director, to date Alan has written 91 plays – *Earth Angel* will premiere in autumn 2025 at the Stephen Joseph Theatre where nearly all his plays are first staged.

His wide body of work, spanning 65 years, has won countless awards and been seen on stage and screen throughout the world. Significant works include *Relatively Speaking*, *How The Other Half Loves*, *Absurd Person Singular*, *The Norman Conquests*, *Season's Greetings*, *A Chorus of Disapproval* and *Woman in Mind*, many of which have been revived in recent years. More than 35 of his plays have been performed in the West End or at the National Theatre.

In New York, his regular visits with the SJT company performing his plays for the Brits off Broadway Festival at 59E59 Theatres received an enthusiastic reception and reviews and he has had a dozen plays produced on Broadway.

More than 75 of his plays have been published, the majority of which are still in print alongside his best-selling guide to writing and directing, *The Crafty Art of Playmaking*. His first 'novel', *The Divide*, was published in 2019.

Inducted into American Theatre's Hall of Fame, a recipient of the Critics' Circle Award for Services to the Arts, he became the first British playwright to receive both Olivier and Tony Special Lifetime Achievement Awards. He was knighted in 1997 for 'services to theatre'.

Source: Alan Ayckbourn's official website – www.alanayckbourn.net

Reputation

Ayckbourn was a contemporary of Osborne, Pinter, Wesker, Arden and Delaney, and yet for a considerable time he did not receive the critical attention accorded to the other playwrights. There is even a possibly apocryphal story of a literary party with guests wearing 'I am not Alan Ayckbourn' badges. Michael Billington explains: *It is a characteristic of the English intellectual classes that they cannot bear popularity and success. It takes a writer or painter or composer or performer out of the clutches of the ruling elite and*

delivers him or her over to the multitude: what is enjoyed by the many must automatically be second-rate. (1990)

Gradually, however, there has been recognition of his status as a dramatist, acknowledging that he can deal with the darker side of human nature and admiring his technical adventurousness. *He is a very funny writer but a deeply serious one who turns behaviour into social comment.* (Billington) So many of his plays express disillusionment with marriage, horror at masculine insensitivity towards women, dislike of do-gooders and bullish opportunists, sympathy with the feckless and incompetent: and he does this powerfully and successfully because he shows rather than tells, demonstrates rather than debates, observes without judging.

Confusions – the Scarborough Context

After nearly twenty years of summer seasons, at the end of which the company always disbanded and sought work elsewhere, [in 1974] Ayckbourn and manager Ken Boden wanted to extend the Scarborough Library Theatre's activities into the autumn and winter. Only ten weeks after opening *Absent Friends* (fourteen weeks after Ayckbourn had written it), they needed something fresh for three male and two female actors that could play in neighbouring Filey and Whitby in the early part of the week and Scarborough at the weekends for a short season before a national tour. Ayckbourn didn't have a new full-length play ready, but took a one-act play called *Mother Figure*, originally written for a commercial project with several other playwrights called *Mixed Blessings* (it toured but didn't go into London, and hasn't been published), and added four more, gave them an overall title and they were marketed as "loosely linked". *Mother Figure* owes something to his perception of what happened to his own mother and to his first wife as a result of having to stay at home and look after children; *Drinking Companion* and *Between Mouthfuls* were set in motion by the regular appearance of apparently glamorous saleswomen in Scarborough hotels and a hotel restaurant in Devon that had seen better days, but the content of these plays and the final two essentially came from the author's head. (*Ayckbourn has said since that the play can also be effective with a cast of 20 actors, not just the five as originally cast*).

Source: *A Pocket Guide to Alan Ayckbourn's Plays*
Paul Allen (Faber and Faber, 2004)

Ayckbourn on Ayckbourn

“The brief I give writers is the one I was originally given by Stephen Joseph: by all means write what you want but for God’s sake say it in a way that is going to appeal to people who come to the theatre...if your message is in an empty theatre it is useless. Let’s see how clever we can be at saying unpalatable things in a palatable manner.”

“Political theatre is usually so busy being political that it forgets to be theatre.”

“My biggest recurrent theme is that people do care about each other; it’s just that they handle each other in boxing gloves most of the time.”

Proscenium and Alan Ayckbourn

Confusions is the sixth play by Alan Ayckbourn to be performed by Proscenium. The others are:

A Chorus of Disapproval	March 1995
Absent Friends	June 2004
Bedroom Farce	March 2012
Relatively Speaking	October 2014
Woman in Mind	November 2019

Comedy

“Never look down on comedy or regard it as the poor cousin of drama. Comedy is an essential part of any play. Without light how can we possibly create shadow? It’s like a painter rejecting yellow. Yet we’re an odd nation. Secretly I suspect we don’t really believe we’re seeing anything worthwhile unless we’ve had a really miserable time.”

Source: *The Crafty Art of Playmaking*
Alan Ayckbourn (Faber and Faber, 2002)

“Comedy is a weird but very beautiful thing. Even though it seems foolish and silly and crazy, comedy has the most to say about the human condition. Because if you can laugh you can get by. You can survive when things are bad when you have a sense of humour.”

Source: *All About Me*
Mel Brooks (Cornerstone, 2021)

“Humanity takes itself too seriously. It is the world’s original sin. If the caveman had known how to laugh, history would have been different.”

Source: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
Oscar Wilde

“When humour works, it works because it’s clarifying what people already feel. It has to come from someplace real.”

Source: Tina Fey
Actor/writer/comedian

“Comedy is tragedy plus time.”

Source: Carol Burnett
Actor/writer/comedian

Ayckbourn and Marriage

“Ayckbourn suggests the distinctive sound of a middle-class English Sunday morning is that of a marriage quietly falling apart...He takes sex and violence off the streets and puts it back in marriage where it belongs.”

Michael Billington

“In Ayckbourn’s world the married state itself frequently becomes a weapon of destruction – and not only for the husband and wife. For when marriages break down, they rarely implode. Marriage difficulties distribute their own disturbance...we get picture on picture of ‘the destruction caused by the fall-out from a disintegrating nuclear family’”

Michael Holt

Our Next Production:

An Ideal Husband

By Oscar Wilde

Proscenium presents Oscar Wilde's sharp and sparkling social comedy, **An Ideal Husband**. Robert Chiltern, a respected politician, is being blackmailed by the cunning Mrs Chevelly for his former corruption - his career and marriage lie in the balance. Wilde's witty and thought-provoking play cleverly explores moral choices in both public and private life.

The play's appeal lies in its blend of humour and insight, with classic characters who range from the sanctimonious, judgemental and hypocritical to the delightfully cynical and honest Lord Goring, who might just save the day. Wilde questions rigid ideals of perfection in marriage and politics, suggesting that love and integrity are rooted in acceptance and forgiveness of flaws, and not in unattainable ideals.

Directed by Linda Hampson

Wednesday 5 to Saturday 8 November 2025

Compass Theatre, Ickenham

Box Office : 01895 250 615

About Proscenium

Proscenium was founded in 1924. Since then, the aim of this experienced group has been to present classic and contemporary plays to as wide an audience as possible. Since 1990, performances have taken place at the Harrow Arts Centre and, more recently, at the Compass Theatre, Ickenham.

The company meets three times a week in Harrow for rehearsals, so that up to four plays are presented in each season. Social, fund-raising activities and play readings take place throughout the year.

Chair : Mike Williams

Contact us at www.proscenium.org.uk

PROSCENIUM

An Ideal Husband

Oscar Wilde



5 - 8 November 2025

Tickets : £17 Concessions: £16
Group of 10+: £13
Box Office: 01895 250 615
www.proscenium.org.uk

7.45pm, Compass Theatre
Ickenham, UB10 8PD
www.hillingdontheatres.uk

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