



OCTOBER 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29

ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR

by Alan Ayckbourn

Cast:

Sidney	JOHN FENNER
Jane	PAT HUCKVALE
Ronald	RON WEBB
Marion	JANE MEREDITH
Geoffrey	GUY BARTLETT
Eva	ELSPETH DALES

Director: DOROTHY DILLAM

ACT I: Sidney and Jane's kitchen last Christmas.
 ACT II: Geoffrey and Eva's kitchen this Christmas.
 ACT III: Ronald and Marion's kitchen next Christmas.

Time - the present
 There will be two intervals of ten minutes.
 Curtain down approximately 10.10 p.m.

Set Design	Ronald Welch
Stage Manager	Steve Ekins
Assistant Set Design	Diana Phipps
Assistant Stage Managers	Pat Griffiths, Jane Armstrong, Martin Boyd, Barry Lidstone, Gwyn Lorimer, Julie Peters
Lighting Design	Keith Postlethwaite
Lighting Assistants	Richard Pemberton, Martin Sabin
Sound	John Cockrill, Sian Williams, Julian Cairns
Wardrobe	Madeline GorriII
Construction Manager	Albert Whitehart
Photographs	Roger Harris, Martin Savage

The Loft thanks Devonports Ltd., Warwick Street, for the loan of the washing machine.

NO SMOKING IN THE AUDITORIUM



LOFT THEATRE FIFTY-SIXTH SEASON 1977-1978

Ayckbourn dish is under-done

ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR—Loft Theatre, Leamington, until October 29 (running time: about 2hr, 35min.).

QUITE apart from his other assets Alan Ayckbourn is a remarkable provisions merchant. Because of the quality of his goods it comes as no surprise that amateur companies as well as professionals should be so anxious to buy.

The point is that even if the cooking is not all that it might be, it is still possible for an audience to feed reasonably well off the scraps that even an inexperienced chef manages to get right.

It's like that with Dorothy Dillam's production of what I regard as Ayckbourn's best play. It's the one about three successive Christmases and three couples.

We trace the social rise of Sidney Hopcraft and his wife Jane through this period. First they act as hosts to bank manager Ronald Brewster-Wright and his wife, Marion; and Geoff Jackson, an architect, and his wife, Eva. Sidney's little general store has grown by the time

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we encounter them one year later at the home of the Jacksons, where Eva is suicidal and Geoff is hitting problems with a big assignment.

The third act takes us to the Brewster-Wright's home. By now Sidney and Jane are rich enough to be excused a lack of social graces. Indeed, with the Jacksons now in financial difficulty and Ronnie desperately trying to ignore the nature of his wife's alcoholism, the Hopcrafts now hold the whip hand.

The production is currently too flabby and under-paced and the timing suffers badly as a result. Some of the Ayckbourn qualities struggle through but there is no realisation of the play's essential class structures and because the result of Ayckbourn's base is not established, the result is something much more cold and inhuman than the playwright intended.

So what can be salvaged from the wreckage? Certainly, Elspeth Dales's performance as Eva. In better company, it would have meant more, but she is the only one who really expresses the desperation which each of the characters separately feels at some point.

John Fenner as Sidney, has made strides. He looks a much calmer actor here than we have seen previously. He is working within himself and although his performance misses some of the nuances, it's always encouraging to see an actor's improvement.

It's difficult to find much comfort in the other performances, which are simply dull, and the only additional kindness I can do the evening is to acknowledge that Ronald Welch has made efforts with the settings. Without being noticeably expressive of the respective life-styles, they are adequate, at least.

David Isaacs



