



THE STUDIO THEATRE
COMPANY

MR WHATNOT
BY ALAN AYCKBOURN

Theatre

in the

VICTORIA
THEATRE

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round

Alan Ayckbourn

Alan Ayckbourn has been with the Studio Theatre Company now for 6 years. He appears tonight as both author and director of *Mr. Whatnot*, though he is one of the four principal actors in the company.

He was born in 1939 in Hampstead, but spent most of his childhood and schooldays in Sussex. He went straight into the professional theatre on leaving school, working with Sir Donald Wolfit in Edinburgh, and in provincial repertory companies at Leatherhead and Worthing. He joined the Studio Theatre Company in 1956 after a period at the famous Oxford Playhouse on stage management and playing small parts.

He joined this company as a stage manager, eventually becoming stage director, and playing parts. He has now played more than 60 parts in theatre in the round, and is unquestionably the most experienced actor in this form in the country.

Stephen Joseph encouraged him to begin writing plays for the Company, and his first *The Square Cat* was produced in 1959. *Love after All* followed in the same year, then *Dad's Tale* (1960) and *Standing Room Only* (1961). *Standing Room Only* was first produced at Scarborough and was immediately bought for West End presentation. After a great deal of negotiation and rewriting this plan has been abandoned, and the play is to be presented by ABC Television in their Armchair Theatre series next spring. All Alan Ayckbourn's plays have been presented in this district, either at the Municipal Hall, Newcastle, or at the Victoria Theatre. *Standing Room Only* was the great popular success of the first Victoria season, for which he also wrote the Christmas play, *Christmas V. Mastermind*. Tonight's play, *Mr. Whatnot* was, like all the others, written for the particular actors who were to play in it.

Alan Ayckbourn is married, with two young sons. He says he finds writing easy, conversation difficult, and statement of ideals impossible. So far all his plays have been comic — so will the next one be. He now directs, and says his ambition is to direct his own plays exclusively. He is in fact, he says, a bit of a bighead.

Victoria Theatre

The Victoria Theatre is a permanent repertory theatre set up and administered by the Studio Theatre Company (founder and Managing Director Stephen Joseph). The Company gratefully acknowledges financial assistance from the Arts Council of Great Britain, ABC Television Limited, Biddulph Urban District Council, Cheadle Rural District Council, Leek Urban District Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Stone Urban District Council, and Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

ARTISTS: Alan Ayckbourn (actor, producer, dramatist), Arnold Beck (stage manager), Elizabeth Bell (actress), Peter Cheeseman (theatre director, producer), Bernard Gallagher (actor, producer), Peter King (actor), Stanley Page (actor), Caroline Smith (stage director, producer), David Spencer (actor, trainee director), Heather Stoney (actress).
STAFF: Mrs. M. Beech, Mrs. J. Cheeseman, Mrs. C. M. Cooper, Ms. D. Ellis, Mr. K. Jackson, Mr. D. Sharratt.

The Victoria Auditorium and Coffee Bar are staffed by young people from schools, colleges and works in North Staffordshire, who give up their free time to help us.

Mr. Whatnot

by Alan Ayckbourn

Mr. Whatnot
Lord Slingsby-Craddock
Lady Slingsby-Craddock
Amanda, their daughter
Cecil, her fiance
A Tweedy Lady
A Pedestrian
A Gardener
A Butler
A Maid
A Vicar

Peter King
Stanley Page
Heather Stoney
Elizabeth Bell
Bernard Gallagher
Caroline Smith
David Spencer
Bernard Gallagher
David Spencer
Caroline Smith
David Spencer

Play directed by Alan Ayckbourn

Theme and Piano effects by Michael Garrick

In and around the Grange. Saturday night and Sunday morning.

We would like to acknowledge the kindness of the following in lending us properties for this production: Rosina Ward of Longton; Philpotts of Fenton; Lewis's of Hanley; Mr. Steele of The Philadelphia, Hanley; Donald Bradley of Longton; Mr. Welch of Hanford; Rev. Hickling of Hartshill; Newcastle Borough Council; Wigs by Wig Creations; Olivier cigarettes by Benson and Hedges; nylon stockings by "Kayser"; Miss Bell's and Miss Stoney's hair dressed by Hulse of Newcastle and Stoke.

There will be one interval of fifteen minutes.

Refreshments are served during the interval and before and after the performance. Special arrangements can be made for parties on request.

Please do not smoke in the theatre.

Motorists are requested not to park their cars in Victoria Street or Hartshill Road, but in the nearby side streets. Parking lights should be lit.

In accordance with the requirements of the City of Stoke on Trent Council:

- (1) *The public may leave at the end of the performance by all exit doors and such doors must at that time be open.*
- (2) *All gangways, corridors, staircases and external passageways intended for exit, whether permanent or temporary, shall be kept entirely free from obstruction.*
- (3) *Persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any of the other gangways. If standing be permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the numbers permitted by the Council and indicated in the notices exhibited in these premises.*
- (4) *No smoking shall be permitted to take place on the acting area except as part of the performance or entertainment.*