

Audition Notice

Absurd Person Singular by Alan Ayckbourn
Production Run is every evening from *Saturday July 7th to Friday 13th*
Directed by Jeff Stone
PA: Mary Morgan assisted by Anne-Marie Carlile

Read Through

Tuesday March 13th at 19:30 in the rehearsal room at the Courtyard Theatre.

Auditions

Tuesday 20th March at 19:30 and
Thursday 22nd March at 19:30
in the rehearsal room at the Courtyard Theatre.

Scripts available from Mary Morgan Tel: 0208 642 0765

Rehearsals: cast read-through early April then in earnest in May and note 3 rehearsals per week in June. We only have stage for 4 weeks before run-up week.

Time

We are going to keep it where it was first set: the early-mid 70s (flares, nylon shirts, kipper ties, mini skirts, plastic dresses, floral patterns, velveteen, long hair for men)

Synopsis

Absurd Person Singular is set over three Christmases in the kitchens of three couples: Sidney, an ambitious tradesman, and his submissive wife Jane; architect and adulterer Geoffrey and his depressed wife, Eva; Ronald, a banker, and his alcoholic wife Marion.

Act One 'Last' Christmas is set at Sidney's house, who hopes to persuade the others to invest in his business – although both Geoffrey and Ronald are dismissive of the man and dislike him. Throughout the scene, Sidney's unfeeling treatment of Jane becomes apparent, as does the way she rises above it. It also becomes obvious that Geoffrey and Eva's marriage is on the rocks and that in Ronald, Geoffrey sees the potential for help with a new commission for a shopping centre. Unseen, Dick and Lottie Potter hold sway with their raucous jokes, forcing the others to seek refuge in the kitchen. By the end of the act Jane has been locked out of the kitchen in the pouring rain only able to return when the party, declared a success by Sidney, is over.

Act Two 'This' Christmas is spent at Geoffrey and Eva's flat. Geoffrey's fortunes have fallen and Eva spends most of the act attempting to commit suicide in ever more desperate ways. Jane mistakes her attempts to gas herself for cleaning and takes over scrubbing the oven; the tablets Eva loses down the sink leads Sidney to offer to help with the plumbing – getting soaked as result; when Eva tries to hang herself, Ronald thinks she's trying to change the light-bulb and takes over - electrocuting himself in the process. In despair, she starts singing a Christmas carol as Geoffrey arrives with a doctor in tow. Amid the chaos, Marion has been getting drunk and the Jackson's rabidly aggressive and unseen dog, has attacked Dick and effectively trapped them all in the kitchen.

Act Three 'Next' Christmas is at Ronald and Marion's house, where Marion tends to lock herself in her bedroom to be comforted by alcohol, leaving Ronald lost in his own home. The roof of Geoffrey's shopping centre has collapsed and, ironically, he is now dependent on Eva. The two couples meet for a Christmas drink but hide when Sidney and Jane turn up uninvited. The couple have come up trumps in the interim and are on the rise. Once in the kitchen, it transpires Ronald, who was dismissive of them before, has to court them to keep their business and Geoffrey desperately needs them to employ him to keep his career alive. Having dished out inappropriate presents and with the fortunes of all now completely reversed, Sidney finally gets his wish for party games and makes everyone dance – literally - to his tune.

Sidney “aspirational working class” “in his thirties” Audition pages 1 to 7

A contractor eager for social and professional advancement, Sidney will do anything to impress his perceived superiors—at the expense of his dignity and marriage. Sidney is socially inept, and shares that innocence with his wife, keeping their marriage together. As the play progresses, he becomes wealthier and wealthier, until eventually the friends he was once desperate to impress are now courting him as their own fortunes sink lower and lower. By the final act success has transformed Sidney's innocence into something approaching macabre sadism: in the earlier acts, the other couples view him with indulgent contempt and tolerate his childishness, but as the play progresses and he acquires money and power, they find themselves compelled to take him much more seriously, until self-preservation dictates they play along with his games.

Jane “working class” “30s” Audition pages 1 to 7

Jane is the most sympathetic character in this piece. Sidney's loyal wife, she's not much brighter than he is, but she's equally eager to please. Unlike Marion and Eva, she also has a knack for the housework in which she takes refuge from the complexity and difficulty of the world. She takes most of her social cues from her husband and would do almost anything to help him succeed, but isn't motivated by greed or social standing: she just wants a comfortable living and a happy family.

Geoffrey “middle class” “40s” Audition pages 26 to 29 (monologue)

An architect by trade, Geoffrey is initially on the way up, only to fall from grace after a design fails and collapses between the second and third acts. A confident man and something of a Jack-the-Lad, he has many casual affairs and could be said to flaunt it. His indifference towards his wife Eva may have led to her addiction to anti-depressants, and even to cause her suicide attempts in the second act. However, by the third act, he is an utterly broken man: his confidence and charisma have been dashed by his career grinding to a halt, and the prospect of Sidney being the last man on earth willing to hire him doesn't thrill him very much, either.

Eva “middle class” “40s” Audition pages 47 to 49

Eva's appearance in the first act is brief, establishing only her addiction to anti-depressants and her difficulties with her husband Geoffrey. She comes into her own in the second act, as a very depressed Eva tries repeatedly to kill herself, growing more desperate to end it all even as the other characters prevent her from doing so. By the third act she has recovered, dispensed with the pain-killers, and appears to be teetotal (or at least a much lighter drinker, refusing alcohol even though she's not driving). She has also taken control of her relationship with Geoffrey, setting the course for his business and forcing him into situations he has typically charmed his way out of but which are now unavoidable. By the end of the play she is in perhaps the best position, being in control of her life and her relationship, neither warped by success nor embittered by failure, though she clearly has many practical challenges to overcome.

Ronald “upper class” “50s” Audition pages 38 to 41, 47 to 49

An aging banker, Ronald takes pride in his work and enjoys the finer things in life. More conservative than the other characters, he is wry and sardonic. Initially both indulgent and disdainful of Sidney and Jane - although casually admiring Geoffrey - he is something of a side show in the second act and by the third act is clearly in severe financial trouble, unable to afford even to heat his house. Although he tries to maintain a facade of cheerful aristocratic bluster, his nerves show through, and he is forced to submit to Sidney as the holder of a large business account in Ronald's bank. (In fact, it is implied that Sidney is Ronald's only remaining significant client.)

Marion “upper class” “50s” “well groomed” Audition pages 38 to 41 (tipsy), 54 to bottom of 56 (very tipsy)

Ronald's second wife is charming though snobbish and deeply eccentric. As the play advances her eccentricities are attributed to alcoholism, climaxing in her thoroughly drunk presence in the third act. Her main role in the play is to reflect and magnify the position of the taciturn Ronald, making his path from polite disdain of Sidney to impoverished failure more clearly elucidated than Ronald's naturally reserved personality would allow.