

Season's Greetings

by Alan Ayckbourn

Directed by
Sonia Dell

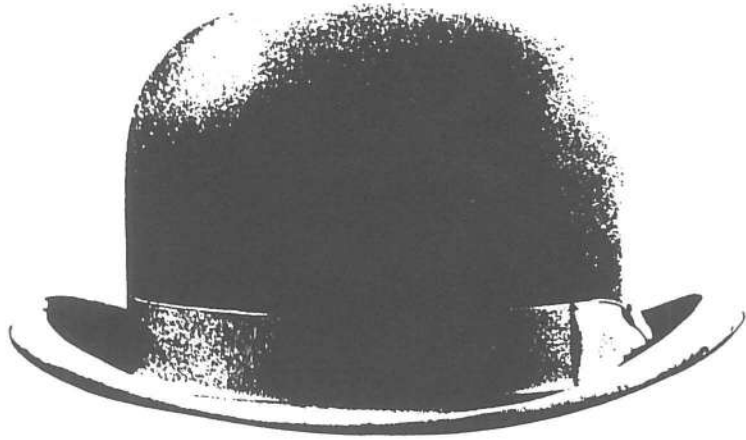
24th, 25th, 26th and 27th October 1995
At the Bäumlhof Gymnasium, Basel

Starting at 7.30 p.m.
Tickets SFr. 16 and SFr. 20
with student identification
SFr. 12 and SFr. 16

A

Semi
circle
present

Hats Off!



**IT IS THANKS TO YOU,
OUR AUDIENCE AND PATRONS,
THAT THE SEMI-CIRCLE
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THIS YEAR!**

Season's Greetings

Season's Greetings is about half a dozen friends and relatives celebrating Christmas together with Neville and Belinda as hosts. Various children are also there, but unseen. Nevertheless, the presence of children is always felt, and indeed seems duplicated in the adults. Petty and not so petty squabbles break out. Christmas presents are rifled, mechanical toys are set off. A final climax leads to what momentarily appears to be a tragedy when a young writer, Clive, is shot as a "looter" by the trigger-happy Harvey. Hilarious highlights include a chaotically incompetent puppet show and a midnight love scene that ends by setting up a fearful din among several noise-making Christmas presents.



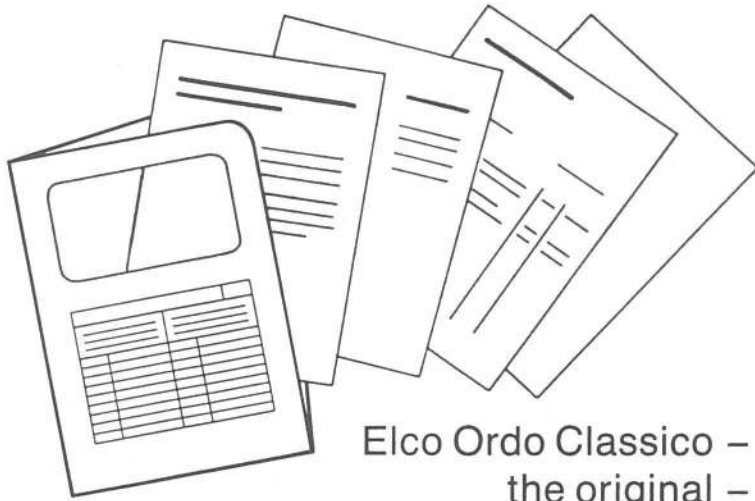
In *Season's Greetings*, ein halbes Dutzend Verwandte und deren Freunde feiern Weihnachten bei Neville und Belinda. Einige Kinder sind ebenfalls mit dabei: obwohl nie zu sehen, ist ihre Anwesenheit immer spürbar und ihr Benehmen scheint oft von den Erwachsenen nachgeahmt zu sein. Kleinliche und weniger kleinliche Auseinandersetzungen entstehen. Weihnachtsgeschenke werden aufgebrochen, mechanische Spielzeuge werden eingeschaltet. Das Finale, eine vermeintliche Tragödie, wird erreicht durch die Ankunft eines jungen Autors namens Clive und dessen Erschiessung durch den schiessfreudigen Harvey, der ihn für einen Einbrecher hält. Zu den wahnwitzigsten Glimmermomenten gehört ein chaotisches und inkompetentes Puppentheater und ein Liebesszene um Mitternacht, die einen erschreckenden Lärm unter den diversen geräuscherzeugenden Weihnachtsgeschenken hervorruft.

*The Semi-Circle's production of Season's Greetings
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Season's Greetings

A Play by
Alan Ayckbourn

Cast in order of appearance

Harvey, Neville's uncle	Eric Collino
Bernard, Phyllis's husband	Edward Atkinson
Belinda, wife of Neville	Molly Arnold
Pattie, wife of Eddie	Thérèse Offrell
Neville	Dennis Dell
Eddie	Roger Dixon
Rachel, Belinda's sister	Sue Stafford
Phyllis, Neville's sister	Joy Scherer
Clive	Allen Holland

The action takes place in the home of Neville
and Belinda Bunker. The time is the present.

ACT I

Scene 1: Christmas Eve, 7.30 p.m.
Scene 2: Christmas Day, noon.
Scene 3: Christmas Day, midnight

ACT II

Scene 1: Boxing Day, 3.30 p.m.
Scene 2: December 27th, 5.15 a.m.

*There will be an interval for refreshments
after Act I, Scene 2.*



From Your Director

Dear Semi-Circlers,

Alan Ayckbourn has come up year after year as a possibility for our major production, so this year I thought - why not? Let's take the bull by the horns - I'm not one to resist a challenge, as some of you probably know.

Ayckbourn writes his plays to be performed "in the round". So the first problem of course was the staging. Since the Bäumlhof stage is rather large, this did not prove too difficult.

The second problem surfaced at the auditions. Anyone who has been involved with our productions before will know of our perpetual problem in finding "men". Believe it or not, it was not a dearth of gentlemen this time, but rather a lack of ladies. However, as usual, things, or rather, people, came together and a rather good cast was formed. A few old faces, a few new ones - a good mix I think.

Ayckbourn's plays are not full of action, as devotees may know - they are rather a study of characters, problems and situations. This creates problems for the actors (and the director!) - a farcical situation or a juicy murder can deflect the audience from any possible shortcomings in any of the actors (not, I hasten to add, that this problem applies to any of my actors, here). Each character, and therefore each actor, is open to individual scrutiny, and has to pull his/her weight. To what extent, you alone can judge!

It certainly does not seem that two years have already passed since I directed *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*. *Season's Greetings* will be a totally different experience, yet I hope you will enjoy it as much, if not more!

Season's Greetings to you all,

Sonia

Sonia Dell



Alan Ayckbourn

Born in London in 1939, Alan Ayckbourn spent most of his childhood in Sussex and was educated at Haileybury. Leaving there one Friday at the age of seventeen, he went into the theatre the following Monday and has been working in it ever since. He has been stage manager, sound technician, lighting technician, scene painter, prop maker, actor, writer and director. These talents developed under his mentor, Stephen Joseph, whom he first met in 1958 upon joining the newly formed Library Theatre of Scarborough. He was a BBC Radio drama producer from 1965 to 1970, returning to Scarborough to take up the post of artistic director of the Theatre In The Round, left vacant after Stephen Joseph's death in 1967. Since that time, he has premiered over thirty of his plays, firstly at the Library Theatre, then, from 1976 onwards, at the company's new converted base, The Stephen Joseph Theatre. Over twenty of his plays have subsequently been produced either in the West End or at the National Theatre. They have been translated into thirty two languages and have been performed in virtually every continent of the globe, receiving many national and international rewards in the process. His most recent play, *Connecting Doors*, is currently playing in the West End. It differs in style from his usual plays in that it has the same ambiguous relationship to time much used by J. B. Priestley, as last seen in the Semi-Circle production of *An Inspector Calls*.



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Introducing the Cast

Edward Atkinson

Edward has lived in Basle since 1989 and works for a bank here. He is especially glad to have a part where he can use all four limbs, to help with the “manipulation”.

Molly Arnold

Molly comes from Bournemouth. She attended some acting courses in England and also appeared on the stage there. She came to Switzerland 30 years ago and was one of the earliest members of the Semi-Circle. She took part in *Blithe Spirit*, *Dear Charles* and *You Can't Take It With You*. Her musical talents showed through in *Old Time Music Hall* and *The Seaside Show* as well as in *The Boy Friend*. She has also acted in German and Swiss German for the Frenkendorf drama group, appearing in *Das Schwarze Heft*, *Anatevka* and several classical pieces.

Eric Collino

Eric is a Londoner, born just outside the sound of Bow Bells, so is not quite a Cockney. He has been living in Switzerland for 15 years and joined the Semi-Circle five years ago. His only previous acting experience at that time: 3 minutes on stage in the firm's pantomime in '63. He has since appeared in the workshop production *Thermal Underwear* and the main productions *An Inspector Calls*, *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* and *You Can't Take It With You*. He spends his spare time wondering which part of his hi-fi system is next due for a change.



Sonia directing; but who's saying "I want it, I want it now"?

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Dennis Dell

Dennis is a real London cockney, born within the sound of Bow Bells. He works for Roche and is a keen nature enthusiast and an expert on butterflies. He first went on the stage for the Semi-Circle as a nasty little lawyer in *Love for Love*, and continued with rôles in *The Crucible*, *What's for Pudding?* and as the dirty old man with a vivid imagination in *George*. His adventures with a moustache in *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* were memorable and he played the Roman Toga clad odd-job man in *You Can't Take It With You*. He has also been very active within the Semi-Circle as production manager, programme editor and spotlight operator.

Roger Dixon

Roger is a project management consultant. Except for a two year break in Canada, he has lived in Switzerland since 1968. He was in Basle from 1968 to 1980, then in Geneva, before returning to Basle in 1984. He was a member of the Geneva Amateur Operatic Society and appeared in over 20 shows, including music hall, pantomime and operetta. As a member of the Flowing Bowl, he took part in *Old Time Music Hall* at the Gundeldingen Casino in 1979, where he shared the pianistic duties brought about by the sacking of the orchestra four days before the opening night.



"I'm the champion Snakerer and Ladderer of all time!"

Allen Holland

Allen first touched down in Switzerland during the summer of 1991, two weeks after graduating in Finance at the University of Texas Business School in Austin. His reason for leaving his home city of Houston, Texas, was to realise his dream in an international business career while experiencing different cultures. His daily rôle is that of a currency derivatives dealer. His other rôles include musician, sportsman and actor. *Season's Greetings* is Allen's third production with the Semi-Circle, after *You Can't Take It With You* and *Sure Thing*, which were very successful plays.

Thérèse Offrell

Thérèse is 26, comes from Sweden and works for Crossair. She joined the Semi-Circle two years ago and promptly acted as prompter in *Sweet Caroline Sweet*. Tonight is a chance for her to escape the servant parts she has had with the Semi-Circle up to now, having played an amorously-inclined maid in the main production *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* and a dancing maid with corns in *You Can't Take It With You*. She loved this character, Greta, even with her horrible "Swenglish" accent. Thérèse has been acting, singing and dancing all her life. She finds acting a challenge that brings energy into life and would like to see more young people join the group to share in the fun.

Joy Scherer

Born in Leicester, England, Joy first came to Basel more than 25 years ago. She is married to a Swiss and mother of two teenage daughters. She joined the Semi-Circle in 1984, and made her acting debut with the group in the workshop production *Fumed Oak*. Since then, she has appeared in several one-act plays as well as having a go at directing. This is her fourth appearance in a major production, after *Nightmare*, *An Inspector Calls* and *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*.

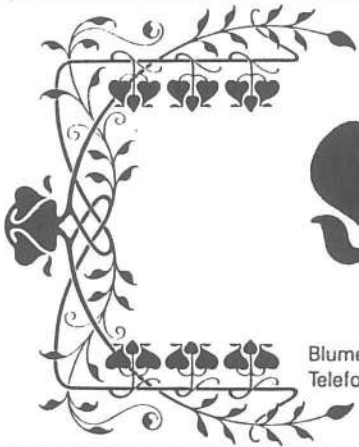
Sue Stafford

Sue was born near Windsor Castle but has lived half her life in Switzerland. She works as a technical translator and spends her spare time writing. She has had a short story published in the USA and (in translation) in Germany. After playing the sexually deprived Mrs. Kirby in *You Can't Take It With You* last year, she is cast this time as - guess who? - reserved, sexually inhibited Rachel!



About the Director

Sonia Dell has learnt her trade as a director of one act plays in Semi-Circle workshops and as assistant director in many main productions. In 1993, she took the major step of directing a main production, *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*. She assisted Richard Levitt with last year's *You Can't Take It With You* and returns to directing tonight's main production.



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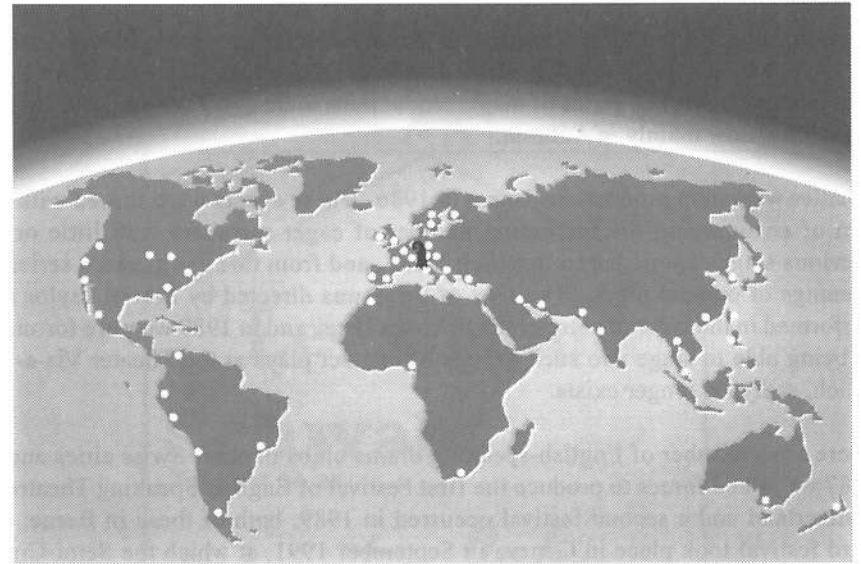


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About the Semi-Circle

The Semi-Circle is a non-profit society devoted to the furtherance of English-speaking theatre in the region of Basel and the performance of dramatic works in the English language. The foundation stone of the society was laid in 1967 when a few members of the British Circle began to meet regularly to read plays in English. The play-readings were informal events, solely for the entertainment of the participants. Later, Peter Broberg, who had trained in acting and production, agreed to help the group form a drama society, and the Semi-Circle was born. The Semi-Circle was initially sponsored by the British Circle Basel but is now a fully independent society.

The first two productions were rehearsed public readings of well-known plays which took place in 1975 and 1976. These were followed in 1977 by the first of three revues, produced jointly with a group of singers calling themselves *The Flowing Bowl*. The Semi-Circle's first performed play was Alan Melville's *Dear Charles* in 1978. The first play put on at our 'home' theatre for major productions - the Bäumlihof Gymnasium - was Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* in 1982, which was directed by Peter Broberg. Since then, the Semi-Circle has presented an unbroken series of major productions there every season, often in late Winter but now mainly in Autumn.


Smaller workshop productions began in 1986. These events were started with the aim of encouraging the increasing number of eager members with little or no previous stage experience to 'try their hand', and from this has grown a series of evenings of one-act plays. The first of these was directed by Muriel Taylor and performed in the cellar theatre of the Schönes Haus, and in 1989 we were fortunate in being able to stage two such groups of one-act plays at the Theater Vis-a-Vis which, sadly, no longer exists.

There are a number of English-speaking drama clubs in other Swiss cities and in 1987 we joined forces to produce the first Festival of English-Speaking Theatre in Switzerland and a second festival occurred in 1989, both of these in Berne; the third festival took place in Geneva in September 1991, at which the Semi-Circle presented a *Respectable Funeral* by Jimmy Chinn. In 1993 in Berne we presented *A Sense of the Ridiculous*, by Rae Terence, and just last month we took *Last Tango in Little Grimley* by David Tristram to the 1995 festival held in Zürich. In recent years our activities have also included a group of Alan Bennett monologues and some Christmas charity productions (the latter directed by Norman Koeth).



Apart from productions for public performance, we also arrange informal play-readings which are open to all members of the society. New members, with or without experience, are always welcome - on stage, behind the scenes or front-of-house. If you would like to apply for membership, or if you would simply like to be informed of our events regularly by post, please contact our Secretary:

Cynthia Baer
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Official statistics for major productions

12 rehearsals at the Bäumlhof

9 stage rehearsals

2 run-throughs

1-2 dress rehearsals

= a minimum of 65 hours (excluding commuting time, time for preliminary and ad hoc rehearsals, costume fittings, nail biting, and the incidental matter of learning one's lines. Aspirin and antacid not imputed.)



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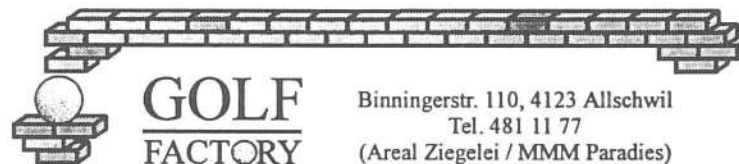
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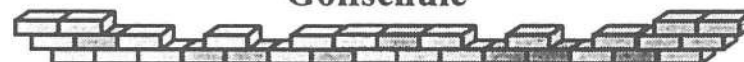
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*The stage but echoes back the public voice.
The drama's laws the drama's patrons give.
For we that live to please, must please to live.*

Samuel Johnson, Prologue at the opening
of the Drury Lane Theatre, 1747.



PRODUCTION TEAM

PRODUCTION MANAGER John Stafford
DIRECTOR Sonia Dell
DIRECTOR'S ASSISTANT Barbara Hummel
STAGE MANAGER Barbara Hummel
PROMPTER Caroline Weisskopf
STAGE SET Kathy Dixon
..... Grayson Richards
SET ARTWORK Bob Williamson
LIGHTING - SOUND Kari Scheuring
PROPERTIES Françoise Loiseau
..... and crew
MAKE-UP Jenny Aellig
..... Helen Baldomero
..... Ray Kleiber
..... and crew
PUBLICITY Dennis Dell
..... Cynthia Baer
FRONT-OF-HOUSE Jean-Pierre Zuger
..... and crew
FOYER EXHIBITION Roger Kleiber
PHOTOGRAPHER Sue Stafford
BOX OFFICE Zuzana Cox
..... and crew

The Semi-Circle wishes to thank Herr R. Wyler and Grammohaus Lothar Löffler for handling ticket sales. DECOFLEX in Liestal was extremely helping in assisting with Christmas decorations.



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PREVIOUS SEMI-CIRCLE PRODUCTIONS

Wilde Lord Arthur Savile's Crime (reading, May 1975)
Shaw Heartbreak House (reading, December 1976)
- Jubilee Review (jointly with the Flowing Bowl, May 1977)
Melville Dear Charles (January, 1978)
- Old Time Music Hall (jointly with the Flowing Bowl, September 1978)
Coward Hay Fever (January 1980)
- A Seaside Show (jointly with the Flowing Bowl, October 1980)
Wilde The Importance of Being Earnest (February, 1982)
Coward Present Laughter (February 1983)
Coward Blithe Spirit (February 1984)
Rattigan Separate Tables (March 1985)
Williams Night Must Fall (March 1986)
Coward Fumed Oak (workshop, May 1986)
Chinn A Respectable Funeral (workshop, January 1987)
Shaw Pygmalion (February 1987)
- The Paradise Pageant (at the 1st Festival of English-Speaking Theatre in Berne, April 1987)
Hughes Red Carnations (workshop, August 1987)
St Vincent Aria Da Capo (workshop, November 1987)
Millay
Townsend Womberang (workshop, November 1987)
- The Paradise Pageant (for charity, December 1987)
- The Nativity Pageant (for charity, December 1987)
van Druten I Remember Mama (March 1988)
Shirley Bus Stop (workshop, May 1988)
Pertwee Postal Orders (workshop, May 1988)
Chinn From Here to the Library (workshop, May 1988)
Chinn A Respectable Funeral (workshop, September 1988)
- The Paradise Pageant (for charity, December 1988)
- The Nativity Pageant (for charity, December 1988)
Congreve Love For Love (February/March 1989)
Mortimer Knightsbridge (workshop, May 1989)
Shirley Round and Round the Gooseberry Bush (workshop, May 1989)
Pinter 5 Review Sketches (at 4th Festival of English-Speaking Theatre in Berne, October 1989; workshop, November 1989)

Chinn Too Long an Autumn (workshop, November 1989)
Dickens A Christmas Carol (reading for charity, December 1989 and 1990)
Miller The Crucible (February 1990)
Kelly Queer Street (workshop, May 1990)
Smith Departure (workshop, May 1990)
Robbins Nightmare (March 1991)
Chinn A Respectable Funeral (at the 3rd Festival of English-Speaking Theatre in Geneva, September 1991)
Wilson The Boy Friend (musical, October 1991)
Davis Thermal Underwear (workshop, March 1992)
Morris Bar Stools (workshop, March 1992)
Tristram What's for Pudding? (workshop, March 1992)
Priestley An Inspector Calls (November 1992)
Terence A Sense of the Ridiculous (workshop, March 1993)
Edwards Sweet Caroline Sweet (workshop, March 1993)
Hickmann George (workshop, March 1993)
Bennett Talking Heads (3 Monologues, May 1993)
Cox Lord Arthur Savile's Crime (based on the short story by Oscar Wilde) (October 1993)
Terence A Sense of the Ridiculous (at the 4th Festival of English-Speaking Theatre in Berne, October 1993)
Mortimer Lunch Hour (workshop, March 1994)
Morris Phones (workshop, March 1994)
Wasserstein The Man in a Case (workshop, March 1994)
Strange A Jolly Sinister Jape (workshop, March 1994)
Hart and Kaufmann You Can't Take It With You (October 1994)
Bennett Green Forms (workshop, 1995)
Ives Sure Thing (workshop, 1995)
Tristram Last Tango In Little Grimley (workshop, 1995; and at the 5th Festival of English-Speaking Theatre in Zürich)



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