

**The Semi-Circle** presents

# *A Chorus of Disapproval*

A play by Alan Ayckbourn, directed by Richard Levitt



October 19, 20, 21 and 22, 1999 at 7.30 pm  
at the Aula of the Bäumlhof Gymnasium in Basel.

**Semi  
circle**

What you may, or may not, know.....

By the year 2000, the **Semi Circle** will have been a part of Basel's cultural landscape for a quarter of a century. Since our first public performance in 1975 we have staged over 70 productions offering a broad spectrum of plays to our audiences. Although comedy remains our most popular genre, we have also successfully produced dramas, thrillers, classical plays, a full-length musical and - our most challenging project to date - a Shakespeare 'entertainment' with excerpts from comedies, tragedies and sonnets, along with period music.

Our aim as an amateur dramatic society is to offer a high standard of theatrical entertainment in the English language. Putting on plays requires a great deal of hard work, commitment and discipline, but it is also lots of fun. Of our 140 members about one-third are regularly active either on stage or behind the scenes.

The Semi Circle stages two productions a year. Our main, full-length productions take place at the *Gymnasium Bäumlhof* in Basel in late October. Workshop productions, which take the form of evenings of three one-act plays, are staged at the end of March, in the cellar theatre of the English Seminar at the *Schönes Haus* in Basel. Being more of an experimental nature, these give new or less experienced members greater opportunity to practise their skills on stage or behind the scenes.

Thanks to our participation in a number of theatre festivals at various venues in Switzerland, the group has become well known outside the canton of Basel and regular contacts with other amateur theatre groups are maintained. This year we performed for the first time at FEATS (Festival of European Anglophone Theatrical Societies) in Geneva and our contribution, *An Englishman Abroad*, had an enthusiastic reception.

Our current mailing list contains over 1600 names, and our mailings announcing forthcoming productions go to addresses not only in Basel but throughout Switzerland and in the border regions of France and Germany.

In the course of the year, in addition to our annual post-Christmas party, theatre evenings on a variety of themes are arranged for our members.

The Semi Circle is a non-profit making society. We take pride in the fact that over the years we have been able to make several donations totalling CHF 10,000 to various Basel charities, and we are grateful to our audiences for their loyalty and support, without which these donations would not have been possible.

## *A Chorus of Disapproval*

### *Synopsis*

The audience finds itself in an amateur dramatics performance of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. In the next scene, set 3-4 months earlier, we watch the arrival of a newcomer to the group, Guy Jones, an agreeable, rather shy, middle-aged widower. As rehearsals progress, we witness some profound interaction among the actors, triggered off by their fascination for Guy. As the plot unravels, personal tensions grow, resulting in some hilarious moments.

### *Zusammenfassung*

Die Zuschauer befinden sich in einer Amateuraufführung des Stücks *The Beggar's Opera* von John Gay. Wir gehen 3-4 Monate zurück und erleben die Ankunft eines neuen Vereinmitglieds Guy Jones, der sich als sympathischer, etwas schüchterer Witwer mittleren Alters herausstellt. Die Proben kommen in vollen Gang. Während die Handlung des Stücks Form annimmt, tauchen immer grössere Spannungen zwischen den Schauspielern auf, ausgelöst durch die Faszination für Guy. Ein paar herrliche Situationen sind vorprogrammiert.



*A Chorus of Disapproval* is produced by  
special arrangement with Samuel French Ltd.



The digital piano used in tonight's performance was rented from Musik Hug Basel who have kindly helped to sponsor this production.

## *A Chorus of Disapproval*

### *The Acts*

The action occurs between the first rehearsal and first performance of an amateur production of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*.

It takes place in and around a small provincial theatre between the months of February and May.

### *Act One*

The performance—The rehearsal hall—The local pub—Dafydd's living room—The rehearsal hall—Ian and Fay's living room—The rehearsal hall.

— INTERVAL —

### *Act Two*

The cafe—The rehearsal hall — Jarvis and Rebecca's garden —The theatre.



Director, Richard Levitt, with his right-hand woman, Yvonne Fenn

## *A Chorus of Disapproval*

### *Cast in Order of Appearance*

Guy Jones

Dafydd ap Llewellyn

Hannah Llewellyn

Bridget Baines

Mr Ames

Enid Washbrook

Rebecca Huntley-Pike

Fay Hubbard

Ian Hubbard

Jarvis Huntley-Pike

Ted Washbrook

Crispin Usher

Linda Washbrook

*Michael Clarke*

*John Patient*

*Joan Rogers*

*Corinne Widmer*

*Louis van Niekerk*

*Kate Rudolph*

*Margaret Dürrenberger*

*Diana Zuger*

*Peter Williams*

*Eric Collino*

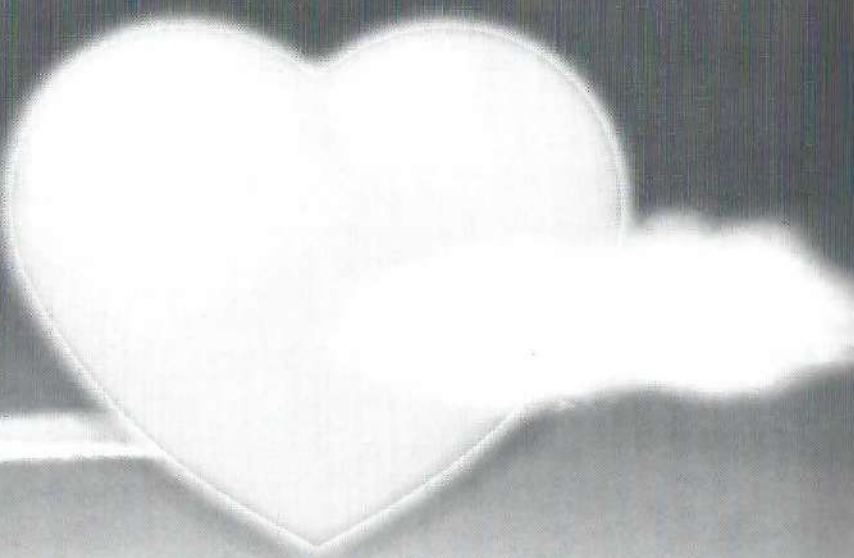
*Chris Morrison*

*Tony O'Sullivan*

*Catherine Hornby*



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## *Words from the Director*

As I read Ayckbourn's play, I kept saying to myself, "Yes, yes..., that's exactly how it is. This play is about an amateur group who puts on an operetta or musical every year. The company is made up of a cross section of age groups and social standings. Along comes business man Guy Jones (a Parsival-type character) who in his quiet and quasi innocence manages to upset every member of the society.



Ayckbourn has caught just the right feeling of the amateur milieu. It is a play full of humor and yet touching at the same time. The added dimension of music (not without its problems) adds greatly to the color of the work. Specific songs have been carefully chosen to relate to the story line. It is a challenge for our actors to discover the multi-faceted qualities of their characters, not to mention the daunting fact that they must also sing (most of them for the first time).

The challenge for the director is to keep this very fluid action alive and forward moving. To maintain the amateur quality (low budget), I have chosen to represent Gay's 18<sup>th</sup> century opera (the first musical) in a 20<sup>th</sup> century manner. "But I see 'tis time for me to withdraw, the actors are preparing to begin. Play away the Overture."

*Richard Levitt*

## *A Chorus of Disapproval*

### *The Songs*

All songs are taken from *The Beggar's Opera* by John Gay (1685-1732).  
The only song not by John Gay is *Ar hyd y nos, All Through the Night*, a traditional Welsh melody.



The song practice with musical director, Louis van Niekerk



By John Gay

'Had the play remain'd as I at first intended, it would have carried a most excellent Moral. 'Twould have shown that the lower sort of People have their Vices in a degree as well as the Rich: And that they are punish'd for them.

*But think of this Maxim, and put off your Sorrow,  
The Wretch of To-day, may be happy To-morrow.'*

'Life's a jest and all things show it;  
I thought so once - and now I know it.' (his own epitaph)

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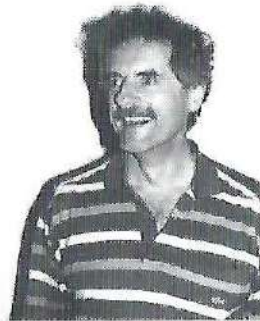
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## About the Actors

**Michael Clarke** is an original Essex boy - and it shows!! After living in France for a few years and a short while in the States, he came to settle in Basel 18 years ago. In 1994 he was conned into appearing in a Pantomime - *Cinderella* - put on by the English Speaking Club of Basel. Since this turned out to be not too painful - well, it was quite fun really - he went on to join the Semi Circle where he has appeared in *Interior Designs*, *Doctor in the House* and *The Problem*. He has also appeared - usually as the villain - in three more Pantomimes.

Michael supports his acting activities by appearing in a supporting role in the Clinical Development Department of Hoffmann-La Roche.



Originally from the SW of England, **Chris Morrison** recently moved to live full-time in Basel with his wife and daughter after many years in a village called Misery in Canton Fribourg. His only previous stage experience was gained playing the part of a tree in a production of 'Othello' whilst still at school. A research biochemist by profession, Chris currently spends some of his time working in a local pharmaceutical factory but his other hobbies have included hiking, cycle touring, skiing, pretending to play the guitar, speleology and amateur radio, though not necessarily in that order.



**Eric Collino** has been chosen for major and minor roles in main productions and workshops during the last 7 years. He enjoys the humour and drama associated both with rehearsals and live performances. Amateur theatre, he says, has enriched his life by providing opportunities to work with a wide variety of interesting people from many different kinds of background. Après theatre is much better than après ski!

**Margaret Dürrenberger** came to Switzerland from Scotland 40 years ago. *Rebecca* is her second appearance in an Ayckbourn play. Last year she played Mrs Pearce in *Between Mouthfuls*.



**Catherine Hornby** has been living in Basel for two years and is a student at the International School.

Originally from Stevenage, England, she has also spent some time in Italy. She was involved in a few amateur drama shows back in England and has also appeared in some school productions. This is her first performance with the Semi Circle.



**Tony O'Sullivan** was born in London, and has lived in Switzerland since 1981, where he works in the chemical industry. He has appeared in three previous Semi Circle productions.

**John Patient** is married and has been living in Basel for two years. Last year he was Friar Tuck in the Christmas pantomime,

*Robin Hood*. John works in the IT industry but apart from the last digit of his bank balance the only thing he has in common with Bill Gates is that he has played the role of Brindsley in Anthony Schaefer's Black Comedy. This is John's first role with Semi Circle.



**Joan Rogers** came to Switzerland in 1967 from Liverpool to work for a Swiss shipping company. She has been a member of the Semi Circle since 1980 and has appeared in several productions, some of her favourites being *The Boy Friend*, *I Remember Mama* (title role), *Monologue: A Lady of Letters* and last autumn's Shakespeare collage. Joan is now employed as a full-time secretary for a machine engineering company.

**Kate Rudolph** is a trained actress and painter. She was born in the USA but has travelled extensively to other countries, particularly Australia and England, for the most part in pursuit of drama and speech training. In Australia she became a member of the Storytelling Guild of Sydney. Kate joined the Semi Circle in 1997 and in the following year took part in *Will Power* as a director and actress (in the French scene of *Henry V*). She directed *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* by T.S. Eliot at a recent Semi Circle event with invited audience. In Basel Kate is active in therapeutic speech and painting.



**Louis van Niekerk**, a 33 year old South African, came to Basel in the autumn of 1993 to study organ at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis. There he met Richard Levitt, his singing teacher, who used him to act in the school opera production where he played three different acting roles. Richard thereafter invited him to join the Semi Circle and so began his association with the Semi Circle where he played in *You Can't Take It With You*, *Arsenic and Old Lace* and *Will Power! Shakespeare As You Like It*. This spring he also appeared in his first workshop production, *An Englishman Abroad*, in three different roles. This play was chosen to represent the Semi Circle at FEATS 99 in Geneva. Louis made a memorable contribution to the Semi Circle with his role in this play as Toyla, a long-haired-cigarette-smoking-balalaika-wielding-Russian-electrician from the Russian ballet.

**Corinne Widmer** was born in Watford, England and moved to Switzerland with her family 16 years ago. After acquiring her law degree at the University of Basel last year she decided it was high time to start acting again. She has appeared in one other Semicircle Production, Arthur Miller's "The Crucible" (1990). She is currently a research assistant at the University and is working on her Ph.D.



Since coming to Basel from the UK 6 years ago, **Peter Williams** has enjoyed acting across the span from executioner to expectant father in various Semi Circle productions. *Doctor in the House* gave the opportunity to lose half his age and now *A Chorus of Disapproval* gives the chance to sing, fortunately only buried in the chorus.



**Diana Zuger** has been with the Semi Circle from the very beginning and took part in the very first play readings back in the early seventies. Since then she has had a tremendous variety of roles, young and old, some of her favourites being *You Can't Take it With You*, *Arsenic and Old Lace* and last year's Shakespeare event. She has even had a go at directing one-act plays but of course really prefers to slip into a character on stage and give it life to the best of her ability. This will be the first time she's had to sing on stage but luckily only in the chorus!



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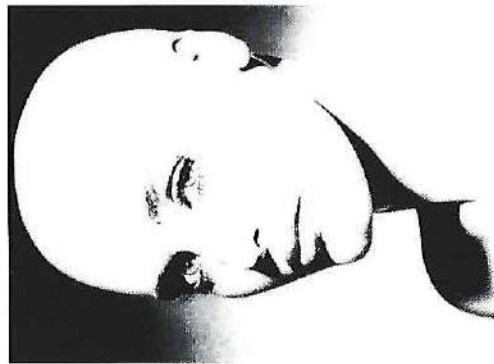
## *A Chorus of Disapproval*

### *Production Team*

Production manager **Barbara Hummel**  
Director **Richard Levitt**  
Director's assistant / Stage manager **Yvonne Fenn**  
Musical director **Louis van Niekerk**  
Lights/Sound **Roger Kleiber**  
Set construction **Bob Williamson, Tony Fenn**  
Props **Sheila McKenzie**  
Assistant to Production manager **Susan Billington**  
Publicity **David Foggetta**  
Programme **Ann Maerki**  
Costumes **Norman Koeth**  
Make-up **Sonia Dell & friends**  
Prompter **Andrea Murdoch**  
  
Foyer exhibition **John & Susan Stafford**  
Photographs at dress rehearsal **Rüdiger & Uta Kessel**  
  
Bar **Chris Comerci & friends**  
Box office **Joy Scherer & friends**

- Our thanks also to the many helpers who are not mentioned by name -

Für Damen und Herren



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The main protagonists



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