

**HIGHBURY THEATRE CENTRE
HIGHBURY PLAYERS
PROPOSED SEASON 2018-2019**

PLAY 1 – 11th-22nd September 2018

“Absent Friends” by Alan Ayckbourn –(1974)

Dramatic Comedy/Free Choice

3M 3F

Never performed at Highbury

Set in the present. Box set, no changes

When Colin, a friend who has been absent, comes back to his circle of friends, his friends are worried about how to approach him over the death of his fiancée, Carol, who has drowned. Diana organizes a tea party for Colin's arrival. The characters are shown to have inter-relational tensions, and this is near erupting when Colin arrives, heightening the tension when they all work hard to appear friendly towards him. However, Colin seems euphorically happy while the rest of the party are near breaking point.

Diana is concerned that her husband Paul may not be faithful, and has a feeling he is having an affair with Evelyn. Evelyn's husband John is in business with Paul, and knows that Paul and Evelyn have slept together, but doesn't say anything for fear of damaging business relations. Colin's arrival triggers a confrontation, and Diana ends up pouring cream on Paul and breaking down at the end of the play. This is a typical Ayckbourn mixture of comedy and drama, and we thought it would be a good start to the season to open with a well known playwright. We also thought we could do some good publicity around ending this season and starting next with an Ayckbourn play.

PLAY 2– 23rd October – 3rd November 2018

“Variation on a Theme” by Terence Rattigan (1958) – English Classic

4M 4F

First performed 1958. Never performed at Highbury

Box set, French chateau terrace.

Rose is a beautiful and worldly socialite, part of the French Riviera set. Her faithful servant Hettie does her best to look after her, but money is scarce and Rose has expensive tastes. Her daughter Fiona does not communicate much with her, and Rose is sometimes lonely, despite being pursued by Kurt, a rich business man. A young ballet dancer, Ron, calls at the villa and Rose finds him charming. They begin a tempestuous love affair, although Hettie feels he is only using Rose's social standing to advance his career.

In an emotionally charged story of desire and disillusionment, Rose is persuaded by Ron's choreographer and mentor, Sam, to sacrifice her personal happiness for the sake of her young lover's success and career. But as Rose's health deteriorates, and Ron is faced with the loveless reality of their separation, they finally face up to their need to be needed.

STUDIO - "Attack of the Christmas Puddings" by Simon Baker and Richard Walter - 10th -15th December 2018

Simon and Richard have completely revised their play especially for Highbury, with new groan-worthy jokes! The actual dates need to be finalized with Steve and Rob, as we hope that the play will be staged by the Highbury Academy, as last year.

PLAY 3 - 8th – 19th January 2019

**"Enchanted April" by Matthew Barber (1995) Free Choice
First performed 2000. Never performed at Highbury. Set in 1922.
3M 5F**

First performed in 2000 in America. Adapted from the novel by Elizabeth Von Arnim. Never been done at Highbury. Set in 1922. Flexible staging for Act 1, Terrace set for Act 2.

Lotty is depressed by the cold rain of an English winter, and sees an advertisement for a castle in Italy to rent in April. She meets Rose, and persuades her to join her in going away on holiday. They advertise for two other ladies to share the castle, and Caroline Brambel and Mrs Graves reply. Caroline is weary of society and wants to get away for some peace and quiet. Mrs Graves is stern and apt to require her own way.

Lotty has to tell her husband that she is going away on holiday, and this takes some courage, as he is usually the more forceful character of this married pair. Rose has been unhappy too, and she also tells her husband at the last minute that she is going away.

Act 2 is set in Italy at the castle. Lotty and Rose relax in this beautiful setting, and Costanza looks after them well, despite the ancient plumbing. Caroline and Mrs Graves take longer to settle, but eventually they too are won over by the beauty around them, and all of them change in their approach to life. The young and talented artist, Anthony Wilding, drops in to see them, and decides to sketch Rose. Lotty decides to invite Mellersh to stay, and Rose invites Frederick. Both come, but we find out that Frederick had been tempted to have an affair with Caroline because Rose had shut him out of her heart after they lost a baby. The play ends with them all finding a new lease of life in this enchanted place. We feel that this will be a "feel good" play with many comic touches for the dark and miserable winter months.

PLAY 4 – 12th-23rd February 2019

**"Four Plays for Coarse Actors/The Coarse Acting Show" by Michael Green – Comedy/Play With Music (1978)
20 M or F – roles can be doubled or trebled
Never performed at Highbury
No specific time setting. Flexible set/staging.**

Hilariously, everything which can go wrong in a production does so. // *Fornicazione* is a "grim" tale of operatic adultery, poison and

mayhem. *Streuth* is the crime story Agatha Christie would never have dared to write. *A Collier's Tuesday Tea* combines the kitchen with the coal mine with an irreverent glance at D.H. Lawrence. *All's Well that Ends As You Like* pushes the genius of the bard to its limits while filching lines from most of his plays. In all, cues are missed, effects fail and props are lost and confusion reigns, but the coarse actors struggle on. These plays are each written in a well known genre, and we hope that our audiences will find them funny.

PLAY 5 – 26th March – 6th April 2019

“Rules For Living” by Sam Holcroft (2015) – New Play

First performed 2015. Never performed at Highbury

3M 4F

Set in the present. Box set. Technical challenges – food fight!

The play's action is set in an open-plan kitchen/living room or kitchen-conservatory where Edith and her family are gathering for lunch on Christmas Day. Edith plans everything with military precision, but her plans are destined to be thrown into disarray. Her son Matthew arrives partnered by a nervously jocular actor, Carrie, but secretly nurses a passion for his sister-in-law, Sheena. And Sheena, a compulsive drinker, is unable to contain her anger at her cynical, underachieving husband, Adam, or her concern for their psychologically damaged daughter, Emma.

After the short opening scene, each subsequent scene is introduced with a 'rule' (eg 'Matthew must sit to tell a lie', 'Edith must clean to keep calm'), which is displayed to the audience for the duration of the scene. The characters adhere to these rules, even as they accumulate alarmingly (each rule, once it appears, applies throughout the rest of the play). In the play's second act, the rules are modified by a conditional element, so that each rule is activated until a specific condition is met: 'Matthew must sit and eat to tell a lie... until he gets a compliment'. Eventually, as the family gathering descends into chaos, all the rules are obscured by a title card stating that 'ANARCHY RULES'. This will be a challenging play to stage, but it is funny and insightful. It will also be a good show case of our talents for the LTG AGM.

PLAY 6 – 30th April – 11th May 2019

“Dead Man’s Hand” by Seymour Matthews (1984)

Thriller

3M 3F

Never performed at Highbury. Set in the present. Box set, no changes.

The action takes place in the lounge of an Italian villa. The play opens with Jennifer and Brian arriving by taxi at a villa which has been let to them for a holiday. They find the villa stocked with their favourite drinks and food. Soon after their arrival, David and Corinne arrive, and all four of them find they are the guests of Mr Konakis, whom none of them has ever met. Shortly after, an Italian called Franco arrives, telling them he has had a puncture some way up the road, and he asks to use the telephone. They then discover that the line has been ripped out. David goes to the front door and finds a dead fox with a dagger, and a note telling them all to confess their sins. They then discover

that Jennifer has been murdered by suffocation with a pillow in the bedroom.

The next scene starts with Brian asleep on the settee, but when Franco tries to wake him, he too is dead, poisoned by cyanide. As David and Franco call for help, there is a pause, and no-one enters. It then becomes clear that this is a play within a play, Frank is directing the play, and Angela has missed her entrance, so he stops the rehearsal to give notes to the others. As they discuss the play, it is revealed that they have all been hired to perform it for one night only, in the private theatre of Mr Leadwood, whom none of them has actually met. Leadwood has written the play they are performing, called "The Domino Man". Pamela then appears to tell them that Angela is dead, and has been strangled.

Martin confirms that he has checked the corpse, and Angela is indeed dead. He then starts to ask each of them where they were, and what they were doing to try to reconstruct the murder. As they try to piece together what has happened and when, Pamela suggests that the play they have been rehearsing is being played out in reality, in reverse, as Angela's character (Corinne) is the last to die in the play, but the first to die in reality. Frank has gone to look for another telephone, but when he has been gone for some time, Martin goes to look for him. He comes back to tell them that Frank has fallen down stairs, over a trip wire stretched across the top stair.

Derek becomes very agitated, as he is the next person to be murdered in the play they were rehearsing. Martin encourages them all to think of someone they may have harmed in the past, as that could explain the identity of Mr Leadwood. Kate admits that she had jilted Howard de la Tour, who is now a famous actor. Martin admits that he once used deceit to beat him to a part in a long-running TV series. Pamela admits that she stole some money from Howard by falsifying the theatre accounts when they were working together. Pamela then realizes that Arthur Leadwood is an anagram of Howard de la Tour. Derek denies knowing Howard, but Kate tells him that his wife had been having an affair with Howard. As the thunder and lightning start on the set, and the lights flicker on and off, Frank appears with as a hooded figure, and Martin urges Derek to tell them what happened with Howard. Derek fearfully confesses that he killed Howard and buried him in his garden.

Martin produces a gun, with which he threatens Derek. He reassures Pamela and Kate that they are safe, but explains that the whole set-up has been a trap to make Derek confess. Martin reveals that Howard was his brother, and he needed proof that Derek had murdered him, so Frank, a friend, and Angela, Martin's wife, had agreed to help with the deception. Derek grabs the gun and threatens Martin, but runs when he hears the sound of police sirens. We hope that the twists and turns in the plot of this thriller will keep our audiences engaged.

PLAY 7 – 25th June – 6th July 2019

"All My Sons" by Arthur Miller – International Classic

6M 4F

First performed 1948, set in that year. Box set. American accents needed.

Last performed at Highbury 1988-89 season

All My Sons is based upon a true story, which Arthur Miller's then mother-in-law pointed out in an Ohio newspaper. The news story described how in 1941–43 the [Wright Aeronautical Corporation](#) based in Ohio had conspired with army inspection officers to approve defective aircraft engines destined for military use. The story of defective engines had reached investigators working for Sen. [Harry Truman](#)'s congressional investigative board after several Wright aircraft assembly workers informed on the company; they would later testify under oath before Congress. In 1944, three Army Air Force officers, Lt. Col. Frank C. Greulich, Major Walter A. Ryan, and Major William Bruckmann were relieved of duty and later convicted of neglect of duty.

Joe Keller was exonerated after being charged with knowingly shipping damaged aircraft engine cylinder heads from his factory to the military during [World War II](#), causing the deaths of twenty one pilots. For three and a half years he has placed the blame on his partner and former neighbor, Steve Deever. His wife Kate knows that Joe is guilty but lives in denial while mourning for her older son Larry, who has been MIA for three years. She refuses to believe that Larry is dead and maintains that Ann Deever — who returns for a visit at the request of Larry's brother Chris — is still "Larry's girl" and also believes that he is coming back. Chris wants to marry Ann, and they both want to move on with their lives, but Kate's attitude causes tension and they know it will be difficult to persuade her that their marriage would be an acceptance of Larry's death.

When Ann's brother George arrives, accusing Joe of framing his father, the family tensions build until Ann reveals that Larry had committed suicide, believing in his father's guilt. The play ends with Joe accepting his responsibility for the deaths of the pilots – “they were all my sons”- and he takes his own life. We thought that this moving play would be a fitting end to the season.

Arts Director
19th March 2018