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This amateur production of  
Absent Friends is presented  
by special arrangement with  
SAMUEL FRENCH LTD



*by Alan Ayckbourn*



**7.30pm**  
**The Village Hall, Escrick**

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# CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Putting on a production involves many people and it is down to the enthusiasm, support, experience, commitment and friendship within the group that makes all the time and hard work so worthwhile. There were several occasions when this production may well have not gone ahead, and it is thanks to the determination of the director, Nicki, who spent many hours reading lots of plays until she eventually found one that worked for the dynamics of the group.

After having acted with several other groups around Yorkshire (due to various house moves), it took me a while before I found The Monday Players, and I have spent 17 years being very proud to be a part of a great group of people who come together to produce fabulous theatre.

This year we have welcomed new members Carol Drinkwater, Nigel Fisher, Niamh McKeating and Doreen Marsh. If you are interested in joining The Monday Players, on or off stage, or both, please get in touch and come along to a play read or rehearsal. You will be very much welcomed.

There will be a donation to York Cancer Trust, which will be facilitated by the raffle proceeds.

Finally, thank you to all our sponsors who have been kind enough to advertise in our programme and to our audience for your continued support and patronage. It is, as always, greatly appreciated.

I hope you enjoy our play.  
With best wishes  
Linda (Vice Chair)

Linda  
x



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Not going to lie... it's been quite a journey to get here! I had been very excited to be directing another Ayckbourn – Time of my Life – an absolute diamond of a play. Alas, due to an unexpected shortfall of both the younger female and male variety, I had to rethink my plans, and quickly! A further five one-acts and three full plays were perused, considered, and discarded, until I came full circle and went with my leaning towards Ayckbourn. Having directed Absurd Person Singular back in 2015, I do worry why I feel such a connection to his frustratingly warped and dysfunctional characters! Perhaps they are so far removed from anyone I know (or are they?) that they excite me, draw me in to their quirkiness, and obvious vulnerabilities.

Absent Friends is described as a play, not a comedy. Cheap laughs you will not find, but the clever Ayckbourn humour is present throughout, bringing relief to an undercurrent of loss and despair; excruciating pauses illuminate the awkwardness in the room ... you will laugh, of that I am certain. Friends, absent from the get together, permeate the room, yet friends, present in the room, are absent! It is regarded as one of Ayckbourn's most popular plays, a regular on the AmDram circuit, and with frequent professional revivals all over the world. It was first performed in 1974 at The Library Theatre in Scarborough, with a cast including Peter Bowles, Richard Briers and Phyllida Law, and subsequently made into a 'Theatre Night' TV play with Julia McKenzie, Tom Courtenay, Maureen Lipman and Hywel Bennet.

It is set in the present day (at the time of writing, the early 70s), however, I needed to differentiate from our previous production of Abigail's Party which was set in the late 70s. Ayckbourn expressed his intention that within the play, the unequal roles of male and female be exposed. The wife/mother very much subservient to her husband; little time outside of the home to pursue her own ambitions and individuality. Identity and self-worth are lost. Evelyn, however, is a 'new woman', determined not to be ineffectual as she observes Diana and Marge to be. I decided that I could set a little later, mid-80s... big hair, double denim, shoulder pads and knitted cardis – nice! Even though women had progressed slightly, pushing forward to become a little less in the background, a life outside the home, sadly not all were in such a position, nor felt strong enough or supported by their husbands to do so. History had dictated a woman's place in society, especially within the home – Diana and Marge are still only homemakers, yet to fly free!

Absent Friends is a simple play on the surface, no whizzy effects, scenery, or gimmicks, yet it is clever, frustrating, and intriguing. I decided to stage the play in a studio style space – different from any other production, I didn't want scenery, excess set furniture, elaborate styling. It is all about the characters, their personalities, the social dynamics, and their conversations. Having our audience seated on tiers, I hope it will make the space more intimate, everyone a little closer to observing this dysfunctional bunch of fabulousness!

At this opportunity I want to express my sincere thanks and affection to my wonderful cast. It has been a hard slog at times but with giggles a plenty. I appreciate their tenacity to stick with it, tolerating my exacting demands! Enjoy it you fabulous bunch of people. Thanks also to my amazing production and rehearsal team, your dedication and support has been key in getting to this point. Finally, a special thanks to Linda Baillie, she has been my right-hand woman throughout this journey, stepping into a cornucopia of roles, often with little or no warning, and enabling me to both direct and act for this production. I owe you!

I hope you enjoy Absent Friends!

Nicki



# THANKS

We would like to thank the following persons / organisations for their contributions to this production:

- Painting - Ian Cale ([www.iancaleartist.com](http://www.iancaleartist.com))
- Bar - Riccallish Allsorts
- Pram - Carol Drinkwater
- Additional props - Members of The Monday Players

# MP ONLINE

## LATEST NEWS

All the latest news from the society including announcements, upcoming events and society socials, new members, website updates and much more...

## PAST PRODUCTIONS

All the shows we have produced since The Mondays Players was founded in 1993, which reflect our interests, ambitions and challenges over the years...

## PHOTO AND VIDEO GALLERIES

Photos/videos from all the plays, pantomimes, cabarets and rehearsals down the years...

## ABOUT US

History of the society, contact details for MP Officers and details of how to join our group...

## PAST & PRESENT MEMBERS

Onstage and offstage history of all the members, past and present, plus those non-member helpers who have contributed to our productions...

[www.mondayplayers.com](http://www.mondayplayers.com)

@MondayPlayers



# THE CAST

Diana

Helen Lawley

Evelyn

Nicki Clay

Marge

Julia Birkett

Paul

Geoff Stockill

John

Trevor Britain

Colin

Mike Waters

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Absent Friends is set in the mid 1980s in the open-plan living room of a modern executive-style house owned by Diana & Paul.

**Act I** Saturday afternoon 3pm

**Act II** Immediately following

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There will be an interval of 20 minutes between Act I and Act II when the bar will re-open. The raffle will be drawn during the interval. Please note that there will be no late admission after the commencement of the play following the interval.

The play will finish at approximately 10pm.

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PLEASE NOTE THAT PHOTOGRAPHY AND/OR  
FILMING OF THE PERFORMANCE IS NOT PERMITTED.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION.

# THE CREW

## DIRECTOR

Nicki Clay

## PROMPT

Linda Baillie  
Jill Pearson

## ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR

Linda Baillie

## PROPS & FURNITURE

Carol Drinkwater  
with Linda Baillie & Nicki Clay

## STAGE MANAGER

Linda Baillie

## PROGRAMME

## & POSTER DESIGN

Graeme Parker

## STAGE CREW

Bob Wells

## LIGHTING & SOUND

Andrew Faulkes,  
Nigel Fisher & Ken Davison

## SET DESIGN

## & CONSTRUCTION

Nicki Clay, Ken Davison,  
Bob Wells & The Monday Players

## TRANSPORT

Nick Leaf

## HALL BOOKINGS

Pamela Yates

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Nancy Waters

## FRONT OF HOUSE

Pat Davison with Doreen Marsh,  
Carol Drinkwater, Bob Wells,  
Alan Rome & Gary Bateson

## HAIR

Alan Rome

## TICKET SALES

Pat Davison  
Bob Wells

## BAR SERVICE

Gary Bateson with Anita Shipley &  
Barrie Shipley

## REHEARSAL 'EVELYN'

Linda Baillie

## REHEARSAL REFRESHMENT

## CO-ORDINATOR

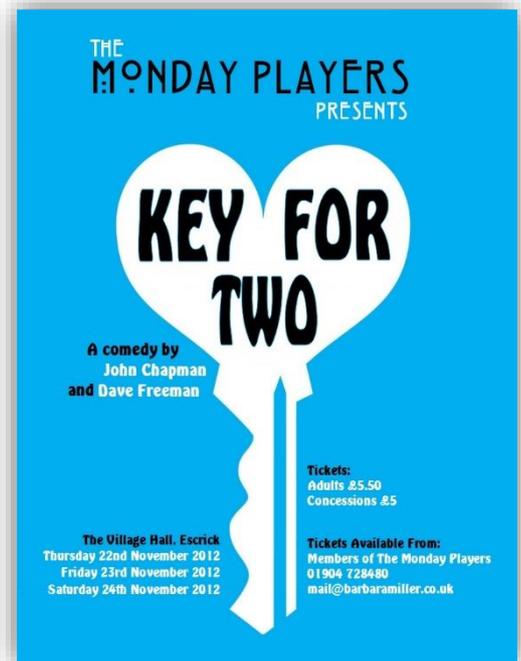
Pamela Yates

# TEN YEARS AGO...

## KEY FOR TWO

PLAYWRIGHTS: John Chapman  
and Dave Freeman  
DATES: 22nd-24th November 2012  
DIRECTOR: Sadie Ashton

CAST:  
Harriet - Jill Pearson  
Gordon - Graeme Parker  
Alec - Brian Rowland  
Anne - Linda Baillie  
Richard - George Horne  
Magda - Norma Nicholson  
Mildred - Pam Newsholme



Harriet, a divorcee living in an elegant flat in Brighton, solves her financial problems by entertaining two married gentlemen callers on different days of the week. The scheme faces collapse when her friend Anne, whose marriage is tottering, arrives at the flat hotly pursued by her husband. One of Harriet's lovers is confined to Harriet's bed with a sprained ankle and the second lover turns up unexpectedly closely followed by two irate wives in search of itinerant husbands.



# PAST PRODUCTIONS

1993

Dec Season's Greetings

1995

May The Happiest Days Of Your Life

1996

Feb When We Are Married

Nov Fish Out Of Water

1997

May Breath Of Spring

Nov Bedroom Farce

1998

May Suddenly At Home

Nov Flying Feathers

1999

May Cabaret Evening

Nov Stepping Out

2000

Apr The Farndale Avenue Housing  
Estate Townswomen's Guild  
Dramatic Society Murder Mystery

Jun Millennium Cabaret

Nov Celebration

2001

May Last Tango In Whitby

Nov Fringe Benefits

2002

Jun Separate Tables / Dress Rehearsal

2003

Jan Red Riding Hood

May Joking Apart

Nov Blithe Spirit

2004

Mar Sand Castles

Jun Cabaret 2004

Nov Daisy Pulls It Off

2005

May 'Allo 'Allo

Nov Lord Arthur Savile's Crime

2006

May Witness For The Prosecution

Nov Party Piece

2007

May Outside Edge

Nov Caramba's Revenge

2007

May Outside Edge

Nov Caramba's Revenge

2008

Apr Comic Potential

Nov Angels In Love

2009

May Cabaret 2009

Nov Natural Causes

2010

May Pygmalion

Nov Taking Steps

2011

May Habeas Corpus

Nov Role Play

2012

May Diamond Jubilee Cabaret

Nov Key For Two

2013

May Ladies' Day

Nov Season's Greetings

2014

May Salt Of The Earth

Nov Relative Values

2015

May The Odd Couple

Nov Absurd Person Singular

2016

May A Respectable Funeral /  
Last Tango in Escrick

Nov The Importance of Being Earnest

2017

May See How They Run

Nov Theft

2018

May How The Vote Was Won

Nov Par For The Course

2019

May The Ladykillers

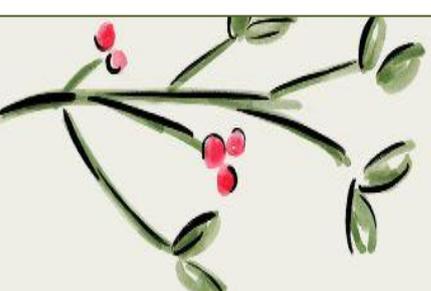
Nov Hobson's Choice

2021

Nov Thermal Underwear /  
Lockdown in Little Grimley

2022

May Abigail's Party



# Christmas Market

Thursday 1st December 2022

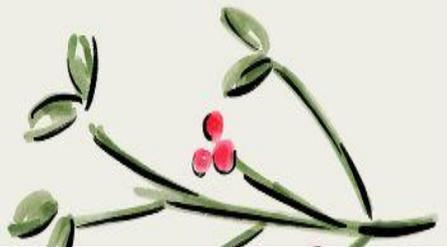


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Dog Tired wishes The Monday Players a very successful production of ABSENT FRIENDS

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# RUMORS

MAY 2023



The Deputy Mayor of New York has just shot himself! At a wedding anniversary celebration, the host lies bleeding in the other room and his wife is nowhere in sight. As the confusions and mis-communications mount, the evening spins off into classic farcical hilarity...!