

# InsideOUT

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## ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR

BY ALAN AYCKBOURN  
DIRECTED BY SABIN EPSTEIN  
THE SPACE THEATRE

YOUR MARRIAGE,  
YOUR FRIENDS  
AND THE  
HOLIDAYS. ON  
THE ROCKS.

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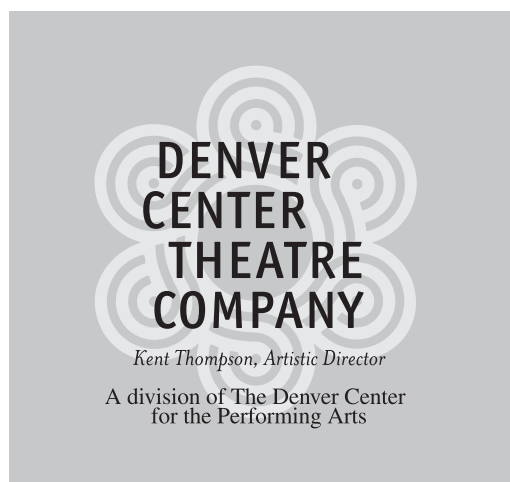
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# InsideOUT

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## Synopsis

*“MARION: I don’t know what it is about Christmas but—I know it’s supposed to be a festive thing and we’re all supposed to be enjoying ourselves—I just find myself remembering all the dreadful things I’ve said—the dreadful things I’ve done and all those awful hurtful things I didn’t mean.” — Absurd Person Singular*

The play is set in three different kitchens on successive Christmases. In Act I we see an ambitious tradesman, Sidney Hopcroft, and his compulsive cleaner wife, Jane, fretfully entertaining two couples: Geoff, a philandering architect and his flaky wife Eva plus an upper-crust bank manager Ronald and his condescending spouse Marion. By the second act the action has shifted to the architect’s kitchen where his wife spends the whole evening vainly trying to commit suicide though no one notices. Finally, we are in Ronald the banker’s kitchen where he seeks to console his alcoholic wife and the unemployed architect, Geoff. Only with the arrival of the now successful Hopcrofts do we see how the social scene has changed.

In this play Ayckbourn writes of the emergence of a culture of self-interest in which the hard-working small businessman enjoys a victory over the lazily arrogant professional classes.

# Alan Ayckbourn:

## A Chronology

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- 1939** Born April 12 to Horace, first violinist for the London Symphony Orchestra, and Irene, a writer for women's magazines.
- 1947** Irene, now divorced, marries Cecil Pye, a bank manager.
- 1952** At public school on a Barclay's Bank scholarship, Alan studies journalism.
- 1954** Leaves school and works with actor-manager Donald Wolfitt.
- 1954-57** Works as a stage manager and actor for various provincial companies, discovers his talent for technical theatre, especially sound and lighting.
- 1957** Joins Stephen Joseph's experimental Studio Theatre Company which emphasizes theatre-in-the-round in Scarborough, England. He acts and stage manages.
- 1958** Writes first play, *The Square Cat*, under pseudonym "Roland Allen."
- 1959** Marries Christine Roland. Writes *Love After All*. This play and *The Square Cat* performed in Scarborough by the Studio Theatre Company.
- 1960** National Service at RAF Cardington, Bedfordshire (is discharged after two days for medical reasons). First child born. *Dad's Tale* ("Roland Allen") performed in Scarborough.
- 1961** Second child born. *Standing Room Only* ("Roland Allen") plays in Scarborough. Although a West End producer likes the script and plans a production, the play is never produced on a London stage.
- 1962** Becomes founding member and Associate Director of the theatre company of the theatre company at the Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent. Children's play, *Xmas v. Mastermind* in Stoke is a disaster. *Standing Room Only* in Stoke.
- 1963** *Mr. Whatnot* performed at Stoke.
- 1964** Leaves the Stoke company. Last performance as an actor. *Mr. Whatnot* produced in London to disastrous reviews. Joins the BBC in Leeds as radio drama producer, vowing never to write again.
- 1965** *Meet My Father* performs in Scarborough.
- 1967** *The Sparrow* performs at Scarborough. Under new title of *Relatively Speaking*, *Meet My Father* is produced in London to favorable reviews. It is Ayckbourn's first major hit.
- 1969** *How the Other Half Loves* performed in Scarborough. *Relatively Speaking* produced for television by BBC. *Ernie's Incredible Illucinations*: children's one act produced and published in London. *Countdown* in Scarborough.
- 1970** Leaves BBC. Director of Productions at Library Theatre in the Round, Scarborough. *Family Circles* in Scarborough.
- 1971** *Time and Time Again* in Scarborough.
- 1972** *Absurd Person Singular* in Scarborough. *Time and Time Again* in London.
- 1973** *The Norman Conquests* in Scarborough. It consists of three plays, each taking place simultaneously in different rooms of a country

house. *Table Manners* is in the dining room; *Living Together* is in the living room and *Round and Round the Garden* in the conservatory. *Absurd Person Singular* in London. *Evening Standard* Best Comedy Award for *Absurd Person Singular*.

**1974** *Absent Friends* in Scarborough; A's first "serious" comedy. *Confusions*, five interlinked one-act plays in Scarborough. *Service Not Included*, A.'s only screenplay written for the BBC. *Norman Conquests* in London. *Evening Standard* Best Play Award and Plays and Players Best Play Award for *Norman Conquests*. Variety Club of Great Britain Playwright of the Year.

**1975** *Jeeves*, musical based on P. G. Wodehouse characters, score by Andrew Lloyd Webber. *Bedroom Farce*, with three beds on stage representing three bedrooms and the couples that inhabit them, in Scarborough. *Absent Friends* in London.

**1976** Scarborough company gets its own theatre in a converted schoolhouse, named the Steven Joseph Theatre in the Round. *Just Between Ourselves* in Scarborough; attracted critics because of writing on oppression of women in marriage. *Confusions* in London. *Time and Time Again* produced on television by ATV.

**1977** *Ten Times Table*. *Bedroom Farce* and *Just Between Ourselves* in London. *Norman Conquests* produced for television by Thames TV. *Evening Standard* Best Play Award for *Just Between Ourselves*.

**1978** *Joking Apart* in Scarborough. *Men on Women on Men* in Scarborough; unpublished late-night and lunch time revues with scores by Paul Todd. *Ten Times Table* in London. *Just Between Ourselves* produced for television.

**1979** *Sisterly Feelings* in Scarborough; the first of Ayckbourn's "multiple outcome" plays. *Taking Steps* in Scarborough; three stories of a country house. *Joking Apart* in London. *Joking Apart* shares Plays and Players Award for Best Comedy of 1979.

**1980** *Suburban Strains* in Scarborough; full length musical, score by Paul Todd. *First Course* in Scarborough; review, score by Paul Todd. *Second Course* in Scarborough; review, score by Paul Todd. *Season's Greetings* in Scarborough. *Sisterly Feelings*, *Taking Steps* in London. *Bedroom Farce* produced for television by Granada TV.

**1981** *Me, Myself, and I* in Scarborough; three revues, score by Paul Todd. *Way Upstream* in Scarborough; A.'s most darkly symbolic play. *Making Tracks* in Scarborough; a musical, score by Paul Todd. *Suburban Strains* in London.

**1982** *Intimate Exchanges* in Scarborough; another "multiple outcome" play. *A Trip to Scarborough* in Scarborough. *Season's Greetings* and *Way Upstream* in London.

**1983** *A Cut in the Rates* in Scarborough; a one-act play. *Backnumbers* in Scarborough; a revue, score by Paul Todd. *Incidental Music* in Scarborough; a revue, score by Paul Todd. *It Could Be Any One of Us* in Scarborough; spoof of Agatha Christie mysteries. *Making Tracks* at Greenwich Theatre.

**1984** *The Seven Deadly Virtues* in Scarborough; musical musings on both natural and supernatural virtues, score by Paul Todd. *A Chorus of Disapproval* in Scarborough. *The Westwoods* in Scarborough; two brief musical revues, score by Paul Todd. *Intimate Exchanges* at Greenwich Theatre and then London.

- 1985** *Woman in Mind* in Scarborough.  
*Boy Meets Girl/Girl Meets Boy* in Scarborough; musical revue, score by Paul Todd.  
*A Chorus of Disapproval* in London.  
*Absurd Person Singular*; *Absent Friends* produced for BBC television.
- 1986** Starts two year leave of absence from Scarborough to act as a Company Director at the National Theatre, London.  
*Mere Soup Songs* in Scarborough; musical revue, score by Paul Todd.  
*Mere Soup Songs* in London.  
*Woman in Mind* in London.  
*Me, Myself, and I* in London as late night entertainment.  
*Evening Standard* Best Comedy Award, Olivier Best Comedy Award, DRAMA Best Comedy Award for *A Chorus of Disapproval*.
- 1987** *Henceforward—* in Scarborough; could be termed A.'s science fiction debut.  
*A Small Family Business* at National Theatre, London; tackles morality of the business world.  
*Season's Greetings* and *Way Upstream* produced for BBC television.
- 1988** Returns to Artistic Directorship of the Stephen Joseph Theatre.  
*Man of the Moment* in Scarborough; a play on fame and morality.  
*Mr. A.'s Amazing Maze Plays* in Scarborough.  
*A Small Family Business* tours UK and opens in London's West End.  
*A Chorus of Disapproval* produced as feature film by Michael Winner.  
*Evening Standard* Best Play Award for *A Chorus of Disapproval*.  
*Plays and Players* Best Director Award for Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*.
- 1989** *The Revengers' Comedies* in Scarborough.  
*The Inside Outside Slide Show*.
- 1990** *Invisible Friends* in Scarborough, children's play.
- 1991** *The Revengers' Comedies* in London.
- Absent Friends*, *Taking Steps* premieres in New York.
- 1992** *Time of My Life* in Scarborough.  
*Dreams from a Summer House* in Scarborough.
- 1994** *Communicating Doors* in Scarborough and Gielgud Theatre, London.  
*Haunting Julia* in Scarborough.  
*Musical Jigsaw Play* in Scarborough.
- 1995** *A Word from our Sponsor* in Scarborough.
- 1997** *Things We Do for Love* in Scarborough.
- 1998** *Comic Potential* in Scarborough.  
*The Boy Who Fell into a Box* in Scarborough.
- 1999** *House and Garden* in Scarborough and National Theatre, London.
- 2000** *Virtual Reality* in Scarborough.  
*Whenever* in Scarborough.
- 2001** *Damsels in Distress* in Scarborough.  
*Gameplan* in Scarborough.  
*Flatspin* in Scarborough.  
*Roleplay* in Scarborough.
- 2002** *Snake in the Grass* in Scarborough.  
*The Jollies* in Scarborough.

Ayckbourn, Alan. *The Crafty Art of Playmaking*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002.

Nelson, Bob, ed. *Study Guide for Absurd Person Singular*. Salt Lake City: Pardoe Theatre, Brigham Young University, 1993.

# From Ayckbourn's Preface to the Play

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"*Absurd Person Singular*"—the title was originally intended for a play I didn't write and subsequently, because I rather cared for it, given to the play I did write— was first produced in Scarborough in 1972.

At that time, I remember, I was becoming increasingly fascinated by the dramatic possibilities of offstage action. Not a new device, granted, but one with plenty of comic potential still waiting to be tapped. Very early on in my career as a dramatist I discovered that, given the chance, an audience's imagination can do far better work than any number of playwright's words. The offstage character hinted at but never seen can be dramatically as significant and telling as his onstage counterparts. Offstage action is more difficult. Unless care is taken, if the dramatist chooses to describe rather than show his action, the audience can rapidly come to the conclusion that they're sitting in the wrong auditorium.

Thus, when I came to write *Absurd Person* and started by setting the action in Jane and Sidney Hopcroft's sitting room, I was halfway through the act before I realized that I was viewing the evening from totally the wrong perspective. Dick and Lottie were indeed monstrously overwhelming, hearty and ultimately very boring, and far better heard occasionally but not seen. By a simple switch of setting to the kitchen, the problem was all but solved, adding

incidentally far greater comic possibilities than the sitting room ever held. For in this particular case, the obvious offstage action was far more relevant than its onstage counterpart....

**A** *bsurd Person*, then, could be described as my first offstage action play. It is also, some critics observed, a rather weighty comedy. Its last scene darkens considerably. I make no apologies for this. As I've grown in confidence as a dramatist (confidence, that is, that I can get most of the techniques right most of the time), I have also grown in the conviction that I owe it to the characters I've created to develop and therefore to a certain extent know how a play should run....

As a nation, we show a marked preference for comedy when it comes to playgoing, as any theatre manager will tell you. At the same time, over a large area of the stalls one can detect a faint sense of guilt that there is something called enjoyment going on. Should we, people seem to be asking, be sitting here laughing like this? It's to do with the mistaken belief that because it's funny, it can't be serious—which of course isn't true at all. Heavy, no; serious, yes. It would therefore seem unwise to compound this guilt feeling by artificially resolving the play. In other words, it can be funny, but let's make it truthful."

Ayckbourn, Alan. *Preface to Absurd Person Singular*. Garden, City, NY: Nelson Doubleday, 1974.

## Pre-Thatcher Economics

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"If you lead a country like Britain—you have to have a touch of iron about you."

Margaret Thatcher, on her reputation as *Iron Lady*, (Mar. 21, 1986).

**A** *bsurd Person Singular* was written in 1972, seven years before Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister of Great Britain, which proved to be an event of profound importance for that country. Only by knowing the historical, political and economic circumstances of pre-Thatcher Britain can we judge the changes the

Iron Lady brought.

Because it was home to the Industrial Revolution, Britain became enormously wealthy in the 1800s. Even after the destruction of World War I, it remained the richest country in Europe. As late as the beginning of World War II, per capita income in Britain was 25% above the rest of Europe.

But World War II had a devastating impact on the British people. They came out of it with a deep longing for stability and security. This led to the establishment of a far-reaching welfare state that included nationalization of much of Britain's



industry. Taxes were raised and the British pound was devalued to pay for all the benefits. The British Empire had finally come to an end.

Although incomes continued to rise, they rose much more slowly in Britain than in the rest of Europe. By 1978 Britain was among the poorer nations of the continent. Its productivity, which had once been the best in the world, was down to 69% of that in the United States.

During the 1950s and 60s, the British people became accustomed to the idea that the country was in decline and that nothing could be done about it. The principal job of Britain's leaders, both Conservative and Labour, was to manage the decline so that it was not too disruptive.

To keep the system operating required huge government subsidies paid for with budget deficits that were financed by the central bank. This led to high inflation, and inflation exacerbated problems such as a tax system that pushed almost everyone into tax brackets once reserved for only the wealthy. In 1979 the basic tax rate was 33% and the top rate went as high as 98%.

Press reports were filled with stories about famous Britons deserting the country, managers refusing promotions and a growing proliferation of tax-avoidance schemes. Even company cars became pervasive as one of the few ways a person could enjoy tax-free income.

In 1975 Margaret Thatcher was elected leader of the Conservative party. She achieved the position by arguing that British decline was not inevitable and that the right policies could control inflation and restore prosperity. These policies included tight control of the money supply, tax rate reductions, privatization of British industry, deregulation and a tougher position toward unions.

In 1979 Conservatives won control of Parliament, making Mrs. Thatcher prime minister. Just one month after taking office, the basic rate of taxation was cut from 33% to 30% and the top rate on wages went down from 83% to 60%. In subsequent years, the basic rate was reduced to 25 % and the top rate lowered to 40%.

Britain's nationalized industries were sold off to the general public, making many of them shareholders for the first time. The nation's extensive public housing was sold to tenants, making many of them homeowners for the first time. After a series of bitter encounters, she was able to reform the unions. The result was a rejuvenation of the economy, the restoration of an enterprise culture and the end of discussion about British decline. Critics claim her economic policies were divisive socially, that she was harsh or "uncaring" in her politics, and hostile to the institutions of the British welfare state.

[http://www.nationalreview.com/nrof\\_bartlett/bartlett200405170929.asp](http://www.nationalreview.com/nrof_bartlett/bartlett200405170929.asp)

## Themes in *Absurd Person Singular*

Ayckbourn writes satirically of the manners and mores of the British middle class. In this play Sidney Hopcroft aspires to the social status of his guests, the Jacksons and the Brewster-Wrights. As Michael Billington says: "The play becomes a surreptitious political comment on the withering decline of the professional classes and the rise of the fly, deft, make-money-quick provincial profiteer."<sup>1</sup> Susan Rusinko in her essay "Upsetting the Balance" writes "materialistic acquisitiveness becomes the context for an examination of suburbia with its marital rituals and relationships."<sup>2</sup>

Michael Holt believes the play "traces the disintegration of a comfortable social order and

its transformation into a meritocracy."<sup>3</sup> He says Ayckbourn has always mistrusted power because of the abuse it creates and the exploitation of the underdog.

In all of Ayckbourn's adult plays human desperation keeps appearing, its cause the everyday inhumanity of people to one another, especially in marriages and families. Sidney is indifferent to Jane; Geoff is purportedly leaving Eva, and Ronald can't understand women. As we laugh ourselves silly, Ayckbourn sneaks up on us with some hard truths. As he says: "I don't think people were meant to live with each other for too long... I think a big piece of us dies in a marriage."<sup>4</sup>

The marriages of Geoff and Eva and Jane and Sidney are fraught. Geoff, a known philanderer, is about to leave Eva for another woman; only her suicide attempt seems to chasten him. His colossal architectural failure humbles him and forces him to rely on Eva's business expertise. Surprisingly, she becomes the dominant partner. Meanwhile, Sidney is so busy trying to impress the Brewster-Wrights (investment banker) and the Jacksons (architect) that he pays little attention to Jane even when she runs out in the pouring rain to buy tonic water. As Sidney rises in the business world, he becomes more forceful and domineering while Jane parrots her husband's remarks.

1. Billington, p. 63.
2. Rusinko in Dukore, p. 49.

3. Holt, p. 22.
4. White, p. 55.

Billington, Michael. *Alan Ayckbourn*. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1983.

Dukore, Bernard F. *Alan Ayckbourn: a Casebook*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991.

Rusinko, Susan. "Upsetting the Balance of the English Comic Tradition"

Holt, Michael. *Alan Ayckbourn*. Plymouth, UK: Northcote House Publishers, Ltd., 1999.

White, Sidney Howard. *Alan Ayckbourn*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984.

## Ayckbourn's Women

*"EVA: He doesn't even know I'm here. As far as he's concerned, my existence ended the day he married me. I'm just an embarrassing smudge on a marriage license."* – Absurd Person Singular

In her essay "Ayckbourn's Women" Felicia Hardison Londre finds Ayckbourn's female characters are mostly downtrodden wives and usually trapped in unsatisfactory relationships with men. "Most of Ayckbourn's couples seem condemned to an endless coexistence built upon unfulfilled expectations."<sup>1</sup> This is certainly true of Jane and Sidney, Eva and Geoffrey and Ronald and Marion.

Other women are defined by their function as

mothers. Brenda and Pattie in *Season's Greetings* (produced by the DCPA in 2007) are caught up in the responsibilities of child-rearing and do little else.

After 1985, career women begin to appear in Ayckbourn's plays. The smallest category of women is those who could be called self-determined, who say what they think and do what they want. But we see none of them in this play.

Londre, in Dukore, p. 89.

## Ayckbourn's Men

*"RONALD: Well, this whole women business, really I mean, this may sound ridiculous, but I've never to this day really known what most women think about anything."* – Absurd Person Singular

In his essay "Ayckbourn's Men," Richard Hornby writes that the male figures in Ayckbourn's plays are mostly bland, but underneath are driven and obsessive such as Sidney. They are ordinary, but obtuse and befuddled, somewhat like Ronald, who can't understand why both of his marriages have failed.

Hornby suggests that "All three abuse their wives through indifference."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the wives

exhibit neurotic behavior: Eva takes pills, Jane is a compulsive cleaner, and Marion is an alcoholic. According to Hornby, "The new sin is not deceit, but shallowness, indifference and lack of imagination, which can be cruel and destructive."<sup>2</sup>

1. Hornby, p. 107.
2. Hornby, p. 113.

Dukore, Bernard F. *Alan Ayckbourn: a Casebook*. New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1991.

Hornby, Richard. "Ayckbourn's Men."

Londre, Felicia Hardison, "Ayckbourn's Women."



# Alan Ayckbourn and Neil Simon

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Over the course of his career, Alan Ayckbourn has often been compared to Neil Simon. Both are prolific writers of comedy and both focus on middle class characters that are bound by conventional values. Their characters fail at most things from going through doorways to relationships. In Simon's plays such bungling seems lovable and harmless; therefore, his audiences avoid the implications of their own failures. In Ayckbourn's plays, however, "the consequences of one person's actions in the lives of others is all too clear. Ayckbourn's characters provoke nervous laughter that disturbs rather than confirms audience complacencies."<sup>1</sup>

Neil Simon makes audiences feel good about themselves; in Ayckbourn the laughter conceals the real pain the characters feel. Both writers use stock comedic devices such as spilling wine, locking themselves out of their houses, etc. But in Ayckbourn "there is a latent sadness in them because they are shown to be symptoms of desperation."<sup>2</sup>

Both writers have written comedies, musicals and children's plays. But "over the course of an ongoing career, Ayckbourn has developed sophisticated and unique insights into such subjects as marriage, family life... the success ethic, male oppression of women, particularly in marriage, and the penchant for women, particularly wives, to be complicit in their own oppression."<sup>3</sup>

1. Cornish and Ketels, p. 2.
2. Cornish and Ketels, p. 3.
3. Nelson, p. 5.

Cornish, Roger and Ketels, Violet. *The Plays of the Seventies*. London: Methuen, 1986.

Nelson, Bob, ed. *Study Guide to Absurd Person Singular*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Pardoe Theatre, Brigham Young University, 1993.

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## Ayckbourn on Ayckbourn

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"I'd like to finish up writing tremendously human comedies—Chekhovian comedy in a modern way.... Light comedy must be recognizable to people in the street. The difficulty is to make it relevant and still funny."

Interview "Farceur, Relatively Speaking." *The Guardian*, Aug. 7, 1970.

"Significant Theatre, Serious Theatre, are deadly words. They should all be banished, this feeling that unless there is a glum silence in the auditorium, nothing meaningful can be happening.

I made a vow when I was an actor with nothing to do except wait for my line on p. 49, that in my plays there would be no butlers, waiters or soldiers with spears."

Interview with Mel Gussow. "Ayckbourn, Ex-Actor, Now Plays Singular Writer of

Comedies." *New York Times*, Oct. 11, 1974.

"The characters aren't necessarily getting nastier, but I do feel they're getting sadder."

Interview with Michael Coveney.

"Scarborough Fair." *Plays and Players*, Sept. 1975.

"[My ambition is] to write a very serious play that makes people laugh all the time, a play in which all the laughter comes from words like yes or no, or even from the pauses between them."

Interview with Benedict Nightingale.

"Ayckbourn—Comic Laureate of Britain's Middle Class." *New York Times*, Mar. 25, 1979.

"I'm on a crusade to try and persuade people that theatre can be fun; but every time I start doing that, some hairy bugger from the left comes in and tells

them it's instructive, and drives them all out again."  
Interview with Ian Watson. *Conversations*,  
1981.

"It seems to me that the deeper you go into  
a character, the sadder the play must inevitably  
become."

Interview with Ray Connolly, "Ayckbourn,  
with Music." *Sunday Times*, Feb. 8, 1981.

"Mainly I want to say things about the fear and  
distrust people have for each other, the fact that  
men and women still don't seem to understand each  
other very well."

Interview with Bryan Appleyard. "Still  
Hoping for Heroes." *The Times*. Aug. 18, 1982.

"Farce is a tragedy that's been interrupted."

Interview with Michael Hickling.  
"Absolutely Farcical." *Yorkshire Post*. May 5, 1984.

"I consider myself a professional director who

writes occasionally. After all, I direct for eleven  
months of the year and write for only one."

Interview with John Russell Taylor.  
"Scarborough's Prodigy." *Plays and Players*. Apr.  
1987.

"There are still things to say about the fear and  
dislike people have for each other and the fact that  
members of each sex are like Martians to the other."

Interviewed by Mark Lawson. "A Nation of  
Shoplifters." *The Independent*. May 20, 1987.

"The trouble with playwriting is that it is beset  
with rules. I always compare it with furniture  
making rather than with any other kind of writing.  
To create a play you need a great knowledge of  
construction."

"Alan Ayckbourn," *Drama*, No. 1, 1988.

Trussler, Simon, ed. *File on Ayckbourn*. London: Methuen  
Drama Book, 1989.

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# Questions

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- 1) Explain how in *Absurd Person Singular*, Ayckbourn comments on social status and class.
- 2) How does the comment of changing status and class reflect today's economic climate?  
What is the difference in the way Americans and British regard social status?
- 3) Each act takes place in a different kitchen. What are the similarities and differences of the physical spaces and how do the people in these spaces interact?
- 4) When Ayckbourn started writing the play, he set it in the Hopcroft's living room. Why do you think he switched the location to the kitchen?
- 5) When Marion praises Jane's kitchen and washing machine, is she being sincere or insincere?  
What does this reveal about Marion's character and social standing?
- 6) How would you describe the three couples? How would you describe their relationships to each other and to the other couples?
- 7) Dick and Lottie Parker, the fourth couple in the play, never appear onstage. Why do we only hear them and never see them?
- 8) Why does no one seem to notice Eva's suicide attempts in Act Two?
- 9) Why do the Brewster-Wright's and the Jacksons hide from the Hopcrofts in Act Three?
- 10) Ayckbourn has said that "Laughter in the theatre can be an amazing bridge. It can persuade people to keep their minds open long after their inherent prejudices have told them to close them." Describe which serious topics this play treats with humor.
- 11) How does the title, *Absurd Person Singular*, relate to the play?