PROSCENIUM

10 - 13 June 2026

Time of My Life

Alan Ayckbourn

HARROW CHORAL SOCIETY

Son of God Mass

James Whitbourn

with works by Mozart, Handel, Tallis, Purcell and Will Todd

Conductor : Jennifer Sterling

Organ and piano : Paul Ayres

Soprano saxophone : Huw Wiggin

Soprano : Hilary Cronin

Saturday 4th July 2026
5.30 pm

St Alban's Church
North Harrow
HA2 7PF

Tickets £20
under 18s £2
online: www.harrowchoral.org.uk
email: boxoffice@harrowchoral.org.uk
tel: 07794 [illegible]

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PROSCENIUM

Time of My Life

Alan Ayckbourn

Wednesday 10 to Saturday 13 June 2026
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

Cast

Gerry (a businessman) ..... Mark Sutherland
Laura (his wife) ..... Hannah Lester
Glyn (their elder son) ..... Aaron Rice
Adam (their younger son) ..... Martyn Jackson
Stephanie (Glyn's wife) ..... Tish Carroll
Maureen ..... Sarah Rabin
Calvinu (a restaurant owner)
Tuto (head waiter)
Aggi (a waiter)
Dinka (another waiter)
Bengie (yet another waiter)
} ..... Charles Anthony
Waitress ..... Sybil Nordeen

Creative Team

Director and Stage Manager ..... Richard Kessel
Properties and Costumes ..... Shirley Wootten
..... Crystal Anthony
Wigs ..... Angela Evans
Lighting Design and Operation ..... Helene Smith
Continuity ..... Crystal Anthony
Poster and Programme Design ..... Charles Anthony
Programme Compilation ..... Mark Sutherland

Scene – Calvinu's Restaurant – Essa de Calvi

Time – Past, Present and Future

There will be one interval of 15 minutes between Act 1 and Act 2.

With thanks to Keith Cochrane, Anne Gerrard, Lynette Alston, and the staff of the Compass Theatre.

Director’s Note

I have had the immense privilege of appearing in five plays by the master playwright Alan Ayckbourn, including playing Gerry in this very play. Ayckbourn presents many challenges to directors and actors in the technical complexities of his plays. Whether, as is the case here, there are apparent "time warps" or requirements to sing in Welsh, his plays require much imagination from all involved.

I thought that having appeared in this play before would give me a "bird's eye view" of it but I have found during the rehearsal period a much richer production than I was expecting. Ayckbourn's genius lies in being able to tell what is, ostensibly, a complex tale while keeping the audience totally up to speed with events. He is also able to present hilarious comedy alongside true pathos.

The most satisfying element of directing this play is to chart the significant changes in all the characters and all the relationships that provide a shrewd insight into the human condition. I have set the play in the year that it was written, 1992, when we were mercifully free of mobile phones and social media.

My grateful thanks go to Izzie Cartwright, Proscenium’s Artistic Director, for giving me the opportunity to indulge my passion for such an accomplished playwright as the last play of her tenure. I hope that you enjoy this production. Thank you all for coming.

Richard Kessel

Alan Ayckbourn - Playwright & Director

A playwright and theatre director, Alan Ayckbourn has written numerous plays - his 92nd, The Trial of Romeo Oscar - will premiere in 2026 at his home venue, the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough.

Major successes include Relatively Speaking, How the Other Half Loves, The Norman Conquests, Season's Greetings, Absurd Person Singular, Way Upstream, A Chorus of Disapproval, House & Garden and Woman in Mind; the latter recently revived in the West End in a major production starring Sheridan Smith.

As a director, he had directed almost 400 professional productions including the vast majority of world and West End premieres of his work. He has notably directed for the National Theatre - where he was also resident for several years - and the Royal Shakespeare Company.

He has been associated with the Stephen Joseph Theatre since 1957 where, under the guidance of Stephen Joseph, he made his writing and directing debuts. In 1972, he was appointed the company's Artistic Director and held the role for 37 years. In 2018 he was appointed Director Emeritus of the company.

His work has been frequently adapted for film, television and radio - most notably by the late French cinema auteur, Alain Resnais.

More than 75 of his plays have been published and are currently in print alongside his best-selling guide to writing and directing, The Crafty Art of Playmaking, first published in 2002. His first novel, The Divide, was published in 2019.

The recipient of more than 40 awards recognising his plays and career, he was the first British playwright to receive both Olivier and Tony Special Lifetime Achievement Awards and has notably been inducted into the American Theatre's Hall of Fame and is a recipient of the Critics' Circle Award for Services to the Arts. He was knighted in 1997 for 'services to the theatre'.

Source: Alan Ayckbourn's official website www.alanayckbourn.net.

Ayckbourn on Time of My Life

Time of My Life, first performed in 1992, is what I think of as me at my most J. B. Priestley-esque. I have, both as an actor and latterly as a director, long admired the great Yorkshire dramatist's work. I was attracted especially to his so-called 'time' plays, most particularly Time and the Conways. Its constructional conceit in setting its first and third acts in a single time period and the action in its middle second act several years into the future is quite inspired. We catch a glimpse of the varying fates of this middle-class family which, when we return to the third act, the characters themselves have yet to experience. A powerful use of dramatic irony when the audience are granted the somewhat devastating gift of foresight.

Thanks largely to Priestley, I have always considered Time one of the most valuable storytelling tools available to me as a dramatist. It's also one of the first decisions I find I need to make before I set pen to paper. How long or how brief a time frame does my story require to be told? Years? Days? Or can it be told in mere minutes?

The overall premise of Time of My Life is that we should enjoy the present, live for now, not spending too much time looking backwards or forwards but savouring each moment as it happens. Although, regrets one of the characters Glyn, in a key speech, how difficult that is for most of us.

At the start, we witness the moment itself, a happy one, a mother's sixtieth birthday party at a local restaurant surrounded by her family, her husband, her two sons and their respective womenfolk, the six of them finishing dinner together, slightly drunk and sharing a rare moment of enjoyment. Soon after, the narrative splits into three, following the elder son and his wife into the future in a succession of brief scenes taking us two years ahead. Similarly, we follow the younger son and his new girlfriend over a period of two months taking us backwards in time to their first meeting. Meanwhile, the parents

remain at the table in 'real' time in a single continuous post-party scene in synchronicity with the audience who can thus view the moment itself from past, present and future viewpoints.

Hopefully, it's not quite as complicated as it sounds! But then, when was it ever simple to explain a stage device? When I think of the hours I've wasted trying to explain to someone who's never seen it the basic principle of an earlier play, How the Other Half Loves. Often the conversation results in my saying, 'Oh, please, just go and see it!'

Article by Alan Ayckbourn and reproduced from Alan Ayckbourn: Plays 6 (Faber, 2018) with permission from Alan Ayckbourn's official website www.alanayckbourn.net

You can find out more about Time of My Life at Alan Ayckbourn's official website http://timeofmylife.alanayckbourn.net

Ayckbourn - Reputation

Ayckbourn was a contemporary of Osborne, Pinter, Wesker, Arden and Delaney, and yet for a considerable time he did not receive the critical attention accorded to the other playwrights. There is even a possibly apocryphal story of a literary party with guests wearing 'I am not Alan Ayckbourn' badges. Theatre critic Michael Billington explains: *It is a characteristic of the English intellectual classes that they cannot bear popularity and success. It takes a writer or painter or composer or performer out of the clutches of the ruling elite and delivers him or her over to the multitude: what is enjoyed by the many must automatically be second-rate*. (1990). Gradually, however, there has been recognition of his status as a dramatist, acknowledging that he can deal with the darker side of human nature and admiring his technical adventurousness. *He is a very funny writer but a deeply serious one who turns behaviour into social comment*. (Billington) So many of his plays express disillusionment with marriage, horror at masculine insensitivity towards women, dislike of do-gooders and bullish opportunists, sympathy with the feckless and incompetent: and he does this powerfully and successfully

because he shows rather than tells, demonstrates rather than debates, observes without judging.

Ayckbourn on Ayckbourn

> *"The brief I give writers is the one I was originally given by Stephen Joseph: by all means write what you want but for God's sake say it in a way that is going to appeal to people who come to the theatre...if your message is an empty theatre it is useless. Let's see how clever we can be at saying unpalatable things in a palatable manner."*
>
> *"Political theatre is usually so busy being political that it forgets to be theatre."*
>
> *"My biggest recurrent theme is that people do care about each other; it's just that they handle each other in boxing gloves most of the time"*

A note from our next Artistic Directors

We are looking for new directors, new play ideas, and people to get involved on and off-stage. Our next play "For Services Rendered" by W. Somerset Maugham (4-7 November), is as relevant now as it was when it was written. Come to our play reading at Harrow Arts Centre on Tuesday 23rd June at 8pm to find out more, or contact us via our website.

Our Next Production:

For Services Rendered

By W. Somerset Maugham

This biting, critical play by W. Somerset Maugham explores the impact of war on a British family in Kent.

Set in 1932, the play follows the Ardsley family: parents Leonard and Charlotte, and children Ethel, Eva, Sydney, and Lois.

The family seem to be managing their lives very well following the devastating aftermath of World War One and the Great Depression. In reality, each of them is fighting for survival.

The family represents the disillusioned British middle class struggling to cope with the "lost generation" 15 years after the war ended.

Playreading open to all on Tuesday 23rd June at 8pm at Harrow Arts Centre - please come along!

Directed by Crystal Anthony
Wednesday 4th to Saturday 7th November 2026 at 7.45 pm
Compass Theatre, Ickenham
Box Office: 01895 250 615

About Proscenium

Proscenium was founded in 1924. Since then, the aim of this experienced group has been to present classic and contemporary plays to as wide an audience as possible. Since 1990, performances have taken place at the Harrow Arts Centre and, more recently, at the Compass Theatre, Ickenham.

The company meets three times a week in Harrow for rehearsals, so that up to four plays are presented in each season. Social, fund-raising activities and play readings take place throughout the year.

Chair: Mike Williams

Contact us at www.proscenium.org.uk

Proscenium & Alan Ayckbourn

A Chorus of Disapproval	March 1995
Absent Friends	June 2004
Bedroom Farce	March 2012
Relatively Speaking	October 2014
Woman in Mind	November 2019
Confusions	June 2025