

World premiere production of Ayckbourn's 74th play comes to the New Vic

The Stephen Joseph Theatre Company in
WORLD PREMIERE

Life of Riley

Written and directed by Alan Ayckbourn
Tues 19 October – Sat 6 November

The premiere production of Alan Ayckbourn's 74th play, *Life of Riley* comes to the New Vic Theatre this October.

With a few months of his life remaining, George Riley's closest friends remember with love, nostalgia or occasional bursts of downright fury, how deeply he has affected all their past lives. George, though, is plotting one final farewell which threatens to upset all their future lives. What exactly is the eccentric maverick Riley playing at?

Alan Ayckbourn's latest play, likewise, looks backwards, forwards and, now and then, sideways with wry comic affection on the lives we lived or might have lived.

Says Ayckbourn: "*Life of Riley is about a man who's dying. A man called George Riley who never actually appears, it's all his friends gathering around trying to sort him out in his final months. And unseen George sorts them out.*"

"There's always a dark side to humour. I always say that if you write a play with all light, you get snow-blind. You have to have shadows to appreciate lightness."

The New Vic is only the second theatre in the country to receive the premiere from Ayckbourn's home theatre, the Stephen Joseph in Scarborough, thanks to a long association between the venues.

Alan Ayckbourn returns to the New Vic after receiving a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre, arguably theatre's highest accolade, in July.

Ayckbourn is the country's most prolific living playwright, penning 74 plays. More than half have subsequently been staged in the West End or at the National Theatre after premiering at the Stephen Joseph. They have been translated into 35 languages, are performed throughout the world and have received many national and international awards.

Life of Riley stars: Laura Doddington, Liza Goddard, Laura Howard, Jamie Kenna, Ben Porter and Kim Wall.

Television and stage actor, Liza Goddard, makes a welcome return to the New Vic following her roles in *Life and Beth* and *Snake in the Grass* as part of *The Things That Go Bump* season in 2008. Joining Liza are Laura Howard, best known for her role as Cully Barnaby in *Midsomer Murders*; Ben Porter whose credits include *Woman in Black* in the West End and a national tour of Ayckbourn's *Bedroom Farce*; and Jamie Kenna who appeared in the film *Stormbreaker*. Having worked with Alan Ayckbourn on *Man of the Moment* at the Royal & Derngate in Northampton last year, Kim Wall makes his

New Vic debut. Laura Doddington returns to the New Vic following *Alphabetical Order* earlier this year.

Tickets for *Life of Riley*, which cost £8.50 – £17.50 (with concessions available), can be booked by calling the New Vic's Box Office on 01782 717962, or online at www.newvictheatre.org.uk

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Press Performance: Tues 19 October, 7.30pm

For further press information, images or to arrange review tickets, please contact Clare Hargreaves on 01782 717954 ext 317 or e-mail chargreaves@newvictheatre.org.uk.

Notes to Journalists

- 1) Alan Ayckbourn is the former Artistic Director of the Stephen Joseph Theatre and the author of 74 plays. More than half have been staged in the West End or at the National Theatre. They have been translated into 35 languages, are performed throughout the world and have received many national and international awards.
- 2) Alan Ayckbourn holds a number of honorary degrees, he is also the recipient of:
A Montblanc de la Culture Award for Europe
Sunday Times Literary Award for Excellence
Lifetime Achievement Awards from the Writers' Guild of Great Britain and the Variety Club of Great Britain.
He was appointed a CBE in 1987.
In 1997 he was knighted for services to the theatre.
In 2009 he was awarded The Laurence Olivier Awards Special Award.
In 2010 he received a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre.
- 3) Alan Ayckbourn's plays 2005 – 2010
Improbable Fiction (2005)
If I Were You (2006)
Life and Beth (2008)
Awaking Beauty (2008)
My Wonderful Day (2009) – toured to New York, playing Off-Broadway to great critical acclaim
Life of Riley (2010)

Tues 19 Oct – Sat 6 Nov: Monday to Saturday, 7.30pm

Matinee: Sat 30 Oct, 2.15pm

Captioned performance: Tues 2 Nov, 7.30pm

Audio Described performance: Weds 3 Nov, 7.30pm

Talkback (meet the cast): Tues 2 Nov, 7.30pm