



LIFE OF RILEY



PRESS HIGHLIGHTS



REVIEWS

SAN DIEGO ARTS<http://www.sandiego.com/arts-and-theatre>**LIFE OF RILEY at the Old Globe Theatre**By [Welton Jones](http://www.sandiego.com/writers/welton-jones) (http://www.sandiego.com/writers/welton-jones) • Fri, May 6th, 2011

The English dramatist Alan Ayckbourn has now written 75 plays! Not counting, it says here, the one-acts, revue turns and kids' shows!

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With the American premiere of his 74th play – LIFE OF RILEY – now on the stage of its White Theatre, the Old Globe has presented 11 of them.

No deathless literary triumphs here, just an overwhelming sense of superb craftsmanship at the service of shrewd observation.

Manipulating random scraps of conversations between very ordinary people, Ayckbourn gently peels away layers of defenses to reveal lives not exceptional, just intriguing. And he knows better than they do what actors need (maybe because he has directed over 240 productions himself), so there are few rough spots in his more popular shows, just the pleasant babbling of the comic brook.

The author, according to the Globe's excellent program notes, enjoys creating vivid characters never actually seen on stage (the "unseen hoard," he calls them) and that's the case here. The title role – a carefree schoolteacher beloved by all, especially since he's got only months left to live – is played only by bursts of 1980s rock 'n' roll. There are descriptions but there's also plenty of room for imagination.

This Riley becomes catnip for the female halves of three couples, frayed by the usual unarticulated misunderstandings that Ayckbourn finds in domestic life. The question becomes what will the women do about it and how will the men react. And the answer comes with the playwright's usual satisfactory symmetry and, this time, a dash of the wistful.

Director Richard Seer and his terrific cast know a warm bath of theatrical potential when they see one and this play is an entire spa. Whatever the division of inspiration between author, director and actor, the piece fairly hums with contented purpose and universal mutual respect.

The characters don't stand still for description. Colin McPhillamy plays a fuddy-duddy physician, decent to a fault, maddeningly distracted and sweetly adorable. His wife is an arch, self-absorbed gossip with a touch of the shrew but Henny Russell makes her a plausible pillar of the community.

As a restless philanderer, Ray Chambers shares freely the dwindling manhood of middle-age and the anguish of idealized comradeship while Dana Green plays his frustrated and perhaps (this being England, remember) class-hampered wife as a babe just about to began the fade.

Nisi Sturgis is the fled wife of Riley trying to reinvent herself as a Natural Woman by embracing the strong and silent farmer played by a stolid David Bishins. It's a D. H. Lawrence-flavored sub-plot developed almost entirely by non-verbal running gags, the sort of thing readily available in an impish Ayckbourn universe.

The other offstage characters include a floozy represented only by an irritating ringtone, a rut-bound director of amateur theatricals and an obscure old friend who, the author suggests, may yet turn up in his own play. There's a lot of such incestuous drollery in Ayckbourn: The play they're rehearsing is his RELATIVELY SPEAKING of 1965.

Robert Morgan's sets and costumes are comfortably at his usual high standard and Chris Rynne deftly lights the four separate playing areas into easy coherence.

The "life of Riley," by the way, is more than the title of late radio and early television shows involving William Bendix and Jackie Gleason. The expression apparently originated in the popular poetry of James Whitcomb Riley. It's supposed to designate the comfortable existence of one who's got it made, but obviously there are ironies afoot.

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Play review: 'Riley' offers smiles, by George

Alan Ayckbourn's 'Life' stirs laughs, though it overstays a bit at the Globe

 BY [JAMES HEBERT](#)

FRIDAY, MAY 6, 2011 AT 5:29 P.M.

George Riley seems like a friend to die for. Unfortunately for George's pals, he's about to beat them to it.

The "seems like" is important because in "Life of Riley," the Alan Ayckbourn comedy that's now getting a witty (if a bit too drawn-

out) U.S. premiere at the Old Globe Theatre, the title character never actually shows his face.

His presence is instead reflected in the affections and regrets (emphasis on regrets) of the people around him. Chief among them: George's estranged wife Monica (Nisi Sturgis); longtime pal Jack (Ray Chambers) and his wife Tamsin (Dana Green); and long-ago flame Kathryn (Henny Russell) and her husband Colin (Colin McPhillamy).

The revelation of Riley's terminal illness at the top of the show winds up serving as a kind of X-ray of these people's relationships and emotional states. And the prognosis is not good. There's infidelity, furtive drinking, secret plotting and an epidemic of miscommunication.

Ayckbourn, always game for a fresh plot invention (witness such ingeniously engineered works as "Communicating Doors" and the matchless, interlocking trilogy "The Norman Conquests"), has his characters rehearsing a play within the play. And it's one of his own plays: The circa-1965 marital comedy "Relatively Speaking."

Besides riffing on his own long career arc ("Riley" is Ayckbourn's 74th play) and pondering the prospect of mortality, the celebrated British writer, now 72, seems to be getting at the idea of making peace with maturity and the losses it can bring. George sounds so frozen in long-ago youth that he probably could sell Botox to Dorian Gray, and his final gift to his friends might be simply to inspire them to put away childish things.



/ HENRY DIROCCO

Henny Russell, Dana Green, Colin McPhillamy and Ray Chambers in the U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's "Life of Riley" at the Old Globe Theatre.

DETAILS

"Life of Riley"

Old Globe Theatre

When: 7 p.m. Tuesdays-Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Fridays; 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays (no matinee May 21); 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays; plus 2 p.m. May 18. Through June 5.

Where: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

Tickets: \$29-\$67

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Online: theoldglobe.org

And yet that message is muddled by a conclusion that appears to reject such sober notions and the people who lug them around. It's one reason that "Riley," while a likable and solidly crafted play, doesn't quite rise to the level of a major Ayckbourn.

Director Richard Seer's production has plenty of sharply funny scenes, though, and his ace cast lets us savor dialogue that's tuned beautifully to character.

"You tick the right boxes as far as I'm concerned" is the terminally stodgy Colin's idea of a compliment to his wife. Meantime, it's hard to resist the fired-up Kathryn, normally a helmet-haired ice queen, when she calls Tamsin a "chippy little minx."

Russell and McPhillamy are both a riot in those roles, and Green's frisky but insecure Tamsin and Chambers' charismatic (though curiously overemotional) Jack also give the piece vivid life. David Bishins, a standout of last year's Neil Simon works at the Globe, has a small but pungently funny turn as Monica's new mate; Rebecca Gold also steps in wordlessly (and briefly) at the end as seen-it-all teen Tilly.

Robert Morgan's garden sets and meticulous costuming give the show visual zing, while the sounds of Pink Floyd and AC/DC ping the ears (aided by Paul Peterson's sound design).

Floyd's "Wish You Were Here" is a sly choice for a play whose title character is not only offstage but almost off this mortal plane. George is out of sight, but (for characters and audiences alike) very much in mind.



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THEATER REVIEW

OLD GLOBE'S 'LIFE OF RILEY' LIKABLE, SOLID

JAMES HEBERT • U-T

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The "seems like" is important because in "Life of Riley," the Alan Ayckbourn comedy that's now getting a witty (if a bit too drawn-out) U.S. premiere at the Old Globe Theatre, the title character never actually shows his face.

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Ray Chambers (left) and Colin McPhillamy star in "Life of Riley" at the Old Globe. HENRY DIROCCO

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THEATER

The Portrait of an Invisible Man

REVIEW

Terry Teachout

Life of Riley

The Old Globe, Balboa Park,
1363 Old Globe Way, San Diego
(\$29-\$67), 619-23-GLOBE,
closes June 5

San Diego

PROLIFIC ARTISTS tend to get taken for granted. Alan Ayckbourn, for instance, has written 74 plays (with a 75th now being read-

ied for its premiere in September). This figure, coupled with the fact that most of his plays are comedies of one sort or another, leads a great many people to wrongly suppose that he must be a lightweight. But Mr. Ayckbourn is in truth one of the half-dozen greatest living playwrights in the English-speaking world, and "Life of Riley," his latest effort, is outstanding in every way. That it has received its U.S. premiere not on Broadway but at San Diego's Old Globe is yet another nail in the coffin of New York's fast-waning reputation as the vital center of theater in America.

Though the plot of "Life of Riley" is simpler than is Mr. Ayckbourn's wont, it contains a typical twist: The title character is neither seen nor heard, only talked about. When George Riley, a suburban schoolteacher, learns that he has a terminal illness that will kill him in a matter of months, his approaching fate becomes the subject of passionate interest to three people: Monica (Nisi Sturgis), his ex-wife, and Kathryn (Henny Russell) and Tamsin (Dana Green), two married women who have taken a more than friendly interest in him. Stir in Colin (Colin McPhillamy) and Jack (Ray Chambers), the not-at-all-complaisant husbands of Kathryn and Tamsin, and Simeon (David Bishins), the farmer with whom Monica is now living, and you've got a sure-fire recipe for a frenetically complicated farce.

That, however, is where things start to get really interesting, for Mr. Ayckbourn specializes in sad comedies whose laughter is tinged with regret, and "Life of Riley," like "The Norman Conquests" before it, is not a standard-issue farce but a darkly shadowed portrait of three middle-class marriages that have been

steeped in the sour brine of chronic disappointment. Nor does Mr. Ayckbourn let any of his characters off easy. At first glance Kathryn and Tamsin appear to be sharp-tongued shrews who have driven their long-suffering husbands to distraction, but the closer you look, the clearer it becomes that Colin and Jack are as much to blame for their own unhappiness, and Kathryn wraps up the first act with a speech that belongs in the annals of quiet desperation:

"Do you find, Tamsin, with most men, they don't really listen to you, do they?...Oh, yes, when you're young they do, they hang on your every word. But then, of course, they sense there might be something in it for them, don't they? It's in their interest to listen. But as you grow older and less overtly attractive, they hear

less and less. They get that glazed, vaguely interested look like you're both conversing through a sheet of glass. As if you're in prison or the post office. I've found that's generally the case with most men."

American directors and actors sometimes make the mistake of overegging Mr. Ayckbourn's comic puddings, trawling for easy laughs instead of playing his scripts straight down the middle and letting the audience draw its own conclusions. Not so Richard Seer, who has staged "Life of Riley" with particular subtlety, striking an impeccable balance between cleverness and seriousness. As usual, the Old Globe has fielded an exceptional cast, only one of whose members, surprisingly enough, is English. (All praise to Jan Gist, the dialect coach, who has evidently done yeo-

man service.) Mr. McPhillamy, the lone Englishman, is ideal as the latest in Mr. Ayckbourn's long line of unhappily oblivious husbands of a certain age, but everyone deserves identically high praise, especially Mr. Chambers, a superb classical actor whose commanding performance in the title role of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival's 2005 production of "Coriolanus" still stands out boldly in my memory.

The Old Globe is presenting "Life of Riley" in its recently opened Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, a 250-seat house with arena-style seating that is a perfect space in which to present Mr. Ayckbourn's plays, most of which (this one included) were written to be played in the round. The stage is small, but Robert Morgan's set, which packs four separate playing areas into a tiny space, is so carefully and cre-

atively designed that you wouldn't want it to be a bit bigger, and no one in the audience is more than five seats away from the actors.

The Old Globe is, of course, one of America's oldest and most admired troupes, but this production is noteworthy even by the company's own high standards. It's a real coup for Louis G. Spisto, the Old Globe's executive producer, to have brought a brand-new Alan Ayckbourn play to California, though anyone who keeps up with American regional theater knows that such triumphs are increasingly common in the erstwhile hinterlands. Bravo, San Diego!

Mr. Teachout, the Journal's drama critic, blogs about theater and the other arts at www.terryteachout.com. Write to him at teachout@wsj.com.



Henny Russell as Kathryn, Dana Green as Tamsin, Ray Chambers as Jack and Colin McPhillamy as Colin in Alan Ayckbourn's 'Life of Riley.'

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*San Diego*

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SAN DIEGO

Regional Reviews by Bill Eadie

Life of Riley

Old Globe Theatre

Sir Alan Ayckbourn is a prolific British playwright whose *The Norman Conquests* was given a distinguished production by Cygnet Theatre last late summer/early fall. Mr. Ayckbourn's 74th play, *Life of Riley*, now receiving its U.S. premiere at the Old Globe's White Theatre, presents parallels to *Norman* but is a work inferior in most every aspect.

The title character of *The Norman Conquests* is a cad who can't keep his hands off any of the women within reach. The same is true for the title character in *Life of Riley*, George. The women within reach are Monica (Nisi Sturgis), his departed but not-yet-divorced wife who lives with and is considering marriage to Simeon, a farmer (David Bishins); Kathryn and Tamsin (Henny Russell and Dana Green), who are in George's social circle though married to other men (Colin, played by Colin McPhillamy, and Jack, played by Ray Chambers); and even Tilly (Rebecca Gold), Tamsin's about-to-turn-16 daughter. The catch is that, while *Norman* spent much of its time observing the behavior of its title character, *Riley's* title character is much discussed by the others but never makes an actual appearance (though, he is said to be just off-stage on a number of occasions).



Dana Green and Henny Russell

Which leaves Sir Alan with a collection of three boring British couples who seem to be at pains to keep up appearances at all costs. The women are more interesting than the men (as was the case in *Norman*), but in all honesty they are not terribly more interesting. The laughs, and there are many one-liners that range, in audience reaction, from mild titter to medium belly-laugh, come mainly from recognition of humor to be found in the daily tug and pull of long-term live-in relationships. But *Norman*, which also found humor in the same tug and pull, was quite a bit more manic and a yard funnier.

All of this carping about *Life of Riley* as a play does not apply to the production, however. Director Richard Seer has headed the Old Globe's professional actor training program for many years, and he is an actor's director. Taking advantage of the White's intimate in-the-round space, Robert Morgan's just-right scenic design and costumes, Chris Rynne's area-defining lighting design, and Paul Peterson's clever sound effects, he's fashioned an intimate comedy where the action is full of nuance and every nuance matters. The cast responds almost with glee in recreating a zeitgeist where the stiff upper lip prevails, except when it turns to a sneer or explodes in a scowl. It's a lovely confluence of technical prowess and ensemble skill that almost makes up for the weaknesses in the script. Almost.

Life of Riley runs through June 5 at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre on the Old Globe's campus in San Diego's Balboa Park. Tickets (\$29-67) available by calling (619) 23-GLOBE [234-5623] or by visiting [The Old Globe's website](http://www.oldglobe.org).

The Old Globe presents *Life of Riley*, by Alan Ayckbourn. Directed by Richard Seer, with scenic and costume design by Robert Morgan, lighting design by Chris Rynne, sound design

by Paul Peterson, dialect coaching by Jan Gist, casting by Samantha Barrie, CSA, and stage management by Elizabeth Stephens.

With David Bishins (Simeon), Ray Chambers (Jack), Rebecca Gold (Tilly), Dana Green (Tamsin), Colin McPhillamy (Colin), Henny Russell (Kathryn) and Nisi Sturgis (Monica).

Photo: Henry DiRocco

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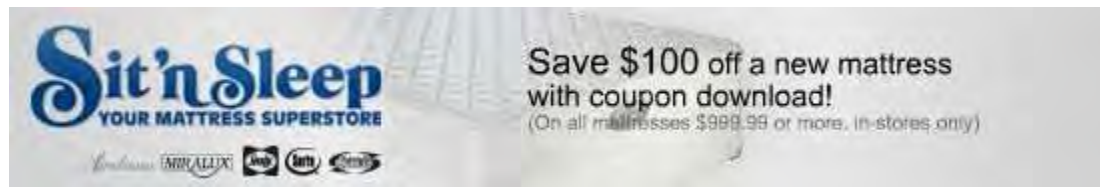
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Theater review: Alan Ayckbourn's 'Life of Riley' at the Old Globe

May 9, 2011 | 12:30 pm

Comments (0)

Rehearsals for the next amateur theatrical production are cause for high spirits among the circle of acquaintances depicted in "Life of Riley," [Alan Ayckbourn](#)'s 74th play. If the lines that they practice sound familiar, it's because they're from the English playwright's breakthrough success, 1965's "Relatively Speaking."

"I've done this play three times before," one character mentions, another cheeky little reference to the popularity of the comedies written by the prolific 72-year-old.



Enough of that popularity has crossed the Atlantic to establish a fan base in the States, although the

faithful often are frustrated to find their local theaters sticking to the same narrow range of time-tested titles, rather than a recent, unseen one. So the Old Globe's U.S. premiere of "[Life of Riley](#)," which entered the canon just seven months ago, has his Yankee devotees almost giddy with excitement.

In addition to being an expression in common parlance, the title nods toward the play's agent of action. George Riley goes unseen and unheard, but we learn this much about him right way: He doesn't have long to live. When the news reaches the home where the night's play rehearsal is to be held, the husband's reaction is just the most extreme example of what everyone is feeling. "Why George?" he wails when what he really means is, "Why me?" The grief that these people experience is really for themselves, now that they're hyper-aware of how brief an opportunity yet remains to achieve perfect fulfillment.

Relationships, of course, are a key part of that fulfillment. We meet three couples, and for each, daily life has drifted into a general malaise of taking the other person for granted. Riley's impending fate might shake that up, especially as it begins to loosen secrets from the past and set a few new ones in motion.

The action unfolds on four lawns, each delineated with sly specificity by designer Robert Morgan. Notice, for instance, the expensive but tacky patio set favored by the most ostentatious couple. Morgan does the same with his costumes, sending cues so casual that many of them register only subliminally.

The same might be said of Richard Seer's direction, which hovers at the edge of perception until some stray detail enters your consciousness and makes you chuckle.

Mostly American, the performers don't come naturally to the accents or the dry English sense of humor, which causes a slight disconnect. Colin McPhillamy, who trained in London, clicks with the material most completely. He plays a recognizable Ayckbourn type: the square, thickheaded, forever baffled husband. He's a treat. So too is Dana Green, portraying a wife whose good heart is obscured by some questionable wardrobe and hair dye choices, and whose increasingly shrill behavior is provoked by a husband (Ray Chambers) who may love her desperately but can't manage to be faithful.

Ayckbourn is progenitor of what might be considered a [more intellectual cousin of the British sex farce](#). His plays are funny, but quietly, craftily so. "Life of Riley" is a perfectly reliable continuation of that brand, its parade of human vulnerabilities sure to leave viewers taking stock of their own.

-- Daryl H. Miller, from San Diego

"Life of Riley," the Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego. 7 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays, with some exceptions. Ends June 5. \$29 to \$67. (619) 234-5623 or www.theoldglobe.org. Running time: 2 hours, 15 minutes.

Photo: From left, Henny Russell, Dana Green, Colin McPhillamy and Ray Chambers in the U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's "Life of Riley" at the Old Globe. Credit: Henry DiRocco / The Old Globe

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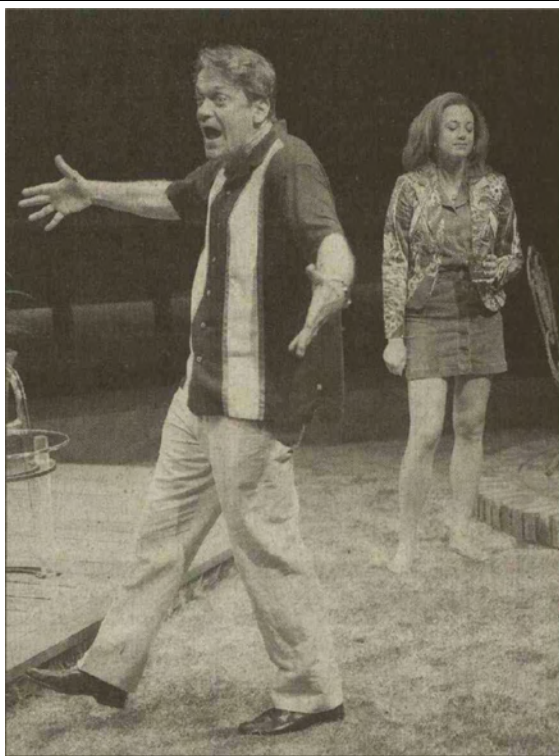
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HENRY DiROCCO

COMEDY: Ray Chambers and Dana Green in the Old Globe production of Alan Ayckbourn's 74th play.

THEATER REVIEW

Ayckbourn again, but new

The U.S. premiere of 'Life of Riley' will delight fans of the prolific playwright.

DARYL H. MILLER
FROM SAN DIEGO

Rehearsals for the next amateur theatrical production are cause for high spirits among the circle of acquaintances depicted in "Life of Riley," Alan Ayckbourn's 74th play. If the lines that they practice sound familiar, it's because they're from the English playwright's breakthrough success, 1965's "Relatively Speaking."

"I've done this play three times before," one character mentions, another cheeky little reference to the popularity of the comedies written by the prolific 72-year-old.

Enough of that popularity has crossed the Atlantic to establish a fan base in the States, although the faithful often are frustrated to find their local theaters sticking to the same narrow range of time-tested titles, rather than a recent, unseen one. So the Old Globe's U.S. premiere of "Life of Riley," which entered the canon just seven months ago, has his Yankee devotees almost giddy with excitement.

In addition to being an expression in common parlance, the title nods toward the play's agent of action. George Riley goes unseen and unheard, but we learn this much about him right way: He doesn't have long to live. When the news reaches the home where the night's play rehearsal is to be held, the husband's reaction is just the most extreme example of what everyone is feeling. "Why George?" he wails when what he means is, "Why me?" The grief that these people experience is really for themselves, now that they're hyper-aware of how brief an opportunity yet remains to achieve perfect fulfillment.

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daryl.miller@latimes.com

'Life of Riley'

Where: The Old Globe, White Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego

When: 7 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays, with some exceptions. Ends June 5.

Price: \$29 to \$67

Contact: (619) 234-5623 or www.theoldglobe.org

Running time: 2 hours, 15 minutes

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THEATER REVIEW: 'Life of Riley' not one of Ayckbourn's best

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THEATER REVIEW: 'Life of Riley' not one of Ayckbourn's best

By PAM KRAGEN - pkragen@nctimes.com North County Times - The Californian | Posted: Wednesday, May 11, 2011 1:21 pm | No Comments Posted | Print

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[Buy this photo](#) Henny Russell as Kathryn, Dana Green as Tamsin, Ray Chambers as Jack and Colin McPhillamy as Colin in the U.S. Premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's "Life of Riley" at The Old Globe April 30 - June 5, 2011. Photo by Henry DiRocco.

If you're at all familiar with the work of Alan Ayckbourn, you arrive at his plays ready for the gimmick. Known as Britain's master of the puzzle play, Ayckbourn is known for writing intricately layered stories with hair-trigger timing, broad sight gags and cleverly designed sets with action occurring simultaneously on multiple fronts.

"Life of Riley," the 72-year-old playwright's 74th play, is having its U.S. premiere this month at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego, and while all of the ingredients that make up the Ayckbourn recipe are there, the comic soufflé never rises.

The play's first act gets off to a slow start, and there's not much comic payoff in the second act to compensate for it. The characters aren't very likable, so it's hard to care about their self-inflicted troubles. And there's not much interesting in the show's two gimmicks: The title character Riley is never seen onstage, and the others are performing in a community theater production of Ayckbourn's 1965 hit "Relatively Speaking," which ---- like "Life of Riley" ---- deals with the subject of marital infidelity.

"Life of Riley" is mildly amusing and it's crisply directed by Richard Seer, but in the pantheon of Ayckbourn plays, it's best to describe it as one of the prolific author's lesser works.

Staged in the round in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, "Life of Riley" involves three couples in their late 30s and early 40s whose relationships are all intimately affected by the surprise news that their friend George Riley has been diagnosed with terminal cancer and has just months to live.

Loose-lipped doctor Colin and his wife, Kathryn, a dental receptionist, lead a dullish existence, enlivened only by roles at the local community theater. The news of Riley's imminent demise goads the neglected Kathryn into trying to rekindle a long-ago fling with Riley before he dies. Riley's best friend, Jack, a philandering businessman, hurtles into despair at the news, while his wife, Tamsin --- tired of her husband's cheating ---- decides she, too, will have a go at Riley before he's gone.

Then there's Monica, Riley's estranged younger wife, who left him weeks before his diagnosis for the less-charming but infinitely

more stable Scottish-born farmer Simeon, but who now feels she must return to his bedside out of spousal duty. Soon all the wives are fighting for Riley's affections, but none of them know the final act Riley has planned for himself.

The play feels overlong at two hours, 15 minutes, but director Seer's timing is not at fault. The actors do their best to keep the tension taut, but the flabby script does them no favors.

Henny Russell is the cast standout as Kathryn, a very real middle-aged woman who longs to feel something, anything, again in her lifeless marriage. And Colin McPhillamy is a close second as her devoted but emotionally disconnected husband, Colin, who can muster only a polite "I'd prefer you not" when she announces she's running off with Riley on a two-week holiday.

Dana Green is vivacious as Tamsin, Jack's pretty but tacky wife who quietly tolerates his cheating. And Ray Chambers comically falls apart as the man-child Jack. Nisi Sturgis gets little to do as Riley's wife, Monica, and David Bishins has a one-note role as the quiet farmer Simeon. Rebecca Gold also has a very brief scene as Tilly, Jack and Tamsin's teen daughter.

Robert Morgan created the set (a multilocal sunken garden representing four different patios) and costumes (timelessly designed anywhere between the '70s and today). Chris Rynne designed the lighting and Paul Peterson designed the sound. The cast's English and Scottish accents, coached by Jan Gist, are mostly solid.

"Life of Riley" is the 11th Ayckbourn play produced at the Old Globe since 1978, and playgoers may fondly recall some of the best from the past (1984's "Taking Steps," 1994's "Mr. A's Amazing Maze Plays" and 1999's "Bedroom Farce"). "Life of Riley" isn't as well written as some of these others and his plotting seem to be locked in a time capsule. Ayckbourn may yet have more plays in his head, but "Life of Riley" isn't the best for a final act.

"Life of Riley"

When: 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; through June 5

Where: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, The Old Globe complex, Balboa Park, 1363 Old Globe Way, San Diego

Tickets: \$29-\$67

Info: 619-234-5623

Web: theoldglobe.org

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THEATER REVIEW

Old Globe comedy 'Life of Riley' not one of Ayckbourn's best

BY PAM KRAGEN
pkragen@nctimes.com

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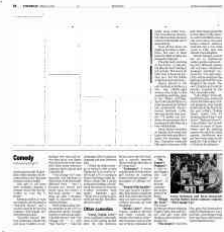
Henny Russell as Kathryn, Dana Green as Tamsin, Ray Chambers as Jack and Colin McPhillamy as Colin in "Life of Riley" at The Old Globe. Photo courtesy of Henry DiRocco

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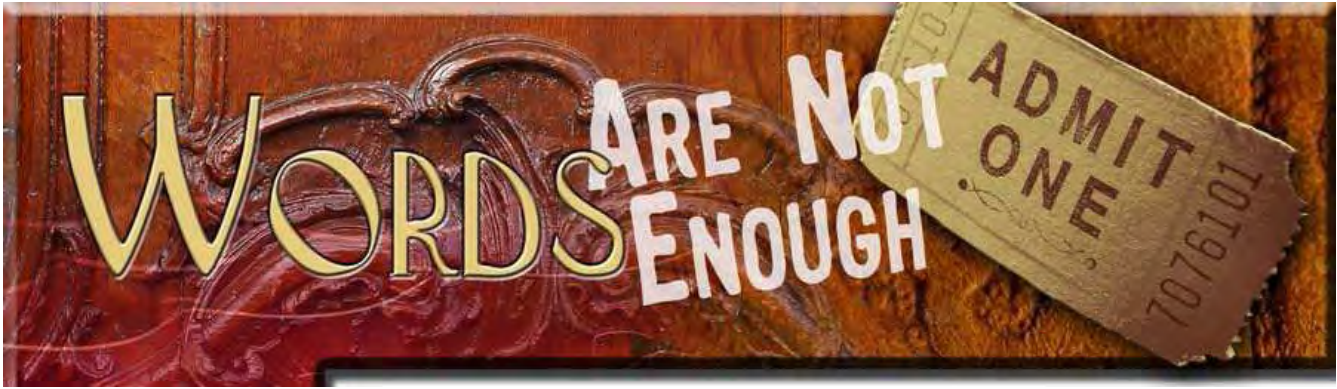
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Old Globe's morbidly obese *Life of Riley* staggers, eventually dies of its own weight

The surprising thing about *Life of Riley*, The Old Globe Theatre's U.S. premiere of Sir Alan Ayckbourn's new comedy, is not so much its aimlessness as the actors struggle to maintain consistency. The real problem is with Ayckbourn himself. His writing usually reflects what's inside his smile—there's a joy and an irony to both, punctuated by a street savvy that colors his words with undeniable clout.

But with this one, the London native's impish grin yields a disconcerting clench of the jaw. The play is strikingly—nay, incredibly—overwritten, leaving director Richard Seer to massage the thick dialogue and scramble to maintain our interest in the characters. In turn, the stage personnel spin their wheels, drowning in minutiae as they overstay their welcomes. This isn't a play so much as a status report, crafted and acted as though the success of every single moment hung on every single word.

The setup is simple enough: George Riley is dying, and a few of his close friends are dealing with the news in their own ways. Monica (Nisi Sturgis), George's estranged wife, feels a duty to her ex despite her budding relationship with Simeon (David Bishins). Jack (Ray Chambers), George's best friend, and his wife Tamsin (Dana Green) are too busy to grieve meaningfully amid Jack's philandering and Tam's obsession with her cool car and good looks. Colin (Colin McPhillamy) and wife Kathryn (Henny Russell) have perhaps the most vital relationship with George; Colin is George's doctor, and George's illness gives diva Kathryn a chance to grandstand.



Jack (Ray Chambers) is about to pop wife Tamsin (Dana Green) if she doesn't shut up about her car. (Photo by Henry DiRocco)

The women have a history with George, who as a parting token invites all three to the Canary Islands. I won't tell you whether they go; I'll only say that we don't know enough about George to make the ending practicable and that it takes way too long to get to that point in any event. Monica's clash with Simeon's son, Jack's paramour, Kathryn's incessant one-upmanship game, and on and on: Ayckbourn devotes far too much effort fleshing them out, leaving no wiggle room for dialogue about the central figure—and the fact that George is never onstage makes this an even more important misstep.

Meanwhile, McPhillamy's Colin is eminently watchable—his vocals betray a befuddlement not often found in members of his trade, and the result is a lot of fun. Bishins has a good handle on Simeon's surly side; Simeon has a son, so he's apparently been married before, and his gruffness makes me wonder about the note on which his marriage must have ended.

Rebecca Gold, a senior at The Bishop's School, plays Tilly, Jack and Tam's daughter. The part is written in at the very end of the show, as Tilly's decides at the last minute to attend George's funeral; Gold has no lines, but her facial expressions speak volumes.

Beyond that, Paul Peterson's sound design (featuring the likes of Pink Floyd and AC/DC) is good, but it doesn't make sense until the show's half over. Robert Morgan's compact scene work serves him well, although the grounds around Simeon's house could stand a bit of roughing up.

And ultimately, the acting suffers collectively amid Ayckbourn's overzealous attentions. He's having too much fun—nothing wrong with that, except that his enjoyment comes at the cast's expense.

This review is based on the opening-night performance of May 5. Life of Riley runs through June 5 at The Old Globe Theatre's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. \$29-\$67. 619-23-GLOBE, oldglobe.org

--Martin Jones Westlin

NVA's West Coast premiere of *Sweet Storm* is no particular challenge—and that's just fine

Hurricane Donna went down for 17 days in late summer of 1960, causing significant crop and infrastructure damage to west-central Florida—and Bo and Ruthie Harrison, God bless 'em, didn't even care. The Lithia Springs pair were too busy figuring each other out on their wedding night, anticipating the kind of life they'd dreamed of as high-school sweethearts and charting their bond of matrimony in

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Ayckbourn's "Life of Riley" is much ado about nothing



Carol Davis



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Henny Russell, Dana Green, Ray Chambers and Colin McPhillamy

Credits: Henry Di Rocco

Rating for Life of Riley:

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San Diego, CA---O.K. The cat's out of the bag! George Riley, beloved teacher, friend and past lover of beloved friends has only six months to live.

How do I know?

This is how it all went down. Absent-minded Colin (Colin McPhillamy), who is a physician, is perplexed (he's always in a state of perplex) at the news that a dear friend, George, has been diagnosed with a terminal illness. While wondering out loud how to deal with the possibility of breaking the results to him, he shares the news with his wife, Kathryn (Henny Russell) but never gives her the name of the friend because he doesn't want anyone else to know until the doctor informs George.

Kathryn, who figures out who the friend is, and is not one to hold back on a little gossip, calls her friend Tamsin (Dana Green) and blabs the news to her. She in turn tells her

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wayward husband Jack (Ray Chambers), who all but has a breakdown because he was 'best friends' with George from the beginning and now what was he going to do to ease George's pain?

If that's not bad enough, Monica (Nisi Sturgis), George's ex, who walked out on him, is bawling her eyes out because the guy she's with now, the strong silent farmer, Simeon (David Bishins) has a son who hasn't connected with her yet and her man refuses to engage in conversation. And Simeon, well, he doesn't have much to say about anything. His best moves come when his temper and frustration has him almost kicking a discarded tractor tire left in the yard on his farm. What the hay?

But don't be misled by a little bit of gossip and a few oddball folks looking to relive their past associations with a guy that everyone seems to love but who is causing havoc with their lives. This is playwright Sir Alan Ayckbourn's playground and what you see is not always what you get. Ayckbourn, who has penned 75 plays so far and has had 11 (including this one) of his plays mounted in some form or other, on one stage or another at the Old Globe Theatre over the years, is a pro at these clever cat and mouse games. The very first one I saw was "How The Other Half Loves" on the then Cassius Carter Stage more years ago than I care to remember.

"Life of Riley" (Remember the radio and T.V. show "The Life of Riley" starring William Bendix?) is making its American Premiere with this showing and it doesn't differ much from the formulaic pattern of many of Ayckbourn's other plays where unfinished conversations drift off into the sunset, assumptions are assumed, there is more than meets the eye going on between all the couples on stage and even those off stage (we never meet George) in varying degrees of confusion and miscommunication.

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Most of the characters are stock characters that could be dropped down into any of his other plays, but of the others I've seen, they are a bit more interesting than this group. For the most part they are all usually doing whatever it is that has them busying about trying to hide whatever it is from the others. In this particular play, with a bit of a clever twist, Colin, Kathryn and Tamsin are amateur thespians rehearsing, of all plays "Relatively Speaking" Ayckbourn's 1965 play that is again, riddled with one set of assumptions and miscommunications about relationships seen on and off the set, with another set of realities.

At plays end most of the plot lines are neatly settled with a few belly laughs in between. Unfortunately, "Life of Riley" isn't one of Ayckbourn's most creative or even interesting endeavors and his peeps seem to be in terminal hysteric frenzy (except Colin) most of the time. They holler and cry at the drop of a hat or stomp and run if they're not happy. This happens in a never-ending stream of exits up and down stairs or coming in from or walking out of ramps. Pretty much, it's much ado about nothing.

Director, Richard Seer, a familiar face at The Old Globe, leads his talented cast with an eye on the timing, and that is what makes Ayckbourn so damn funny. A gesture by Colin, a look by Kathryn, a sneer by Tamsin, or an outburst or cell phone interruption by Jack, an almost whack at the tractor tire by Simeon or burst of tears by Monica changes the entire direction of a scene. After all, Ayckbourn's job is to keep us on our toes and that's done, overall.

Robert Morgan's set design is neatly divided into four patio or garden areas, all pleasing to the eye and (he designed the costumes as well) the clothes are class appropriate. Paul Peterson's Pink Floyd and AC/DC blaring outbursts of music bring us back to a time when George was oh so involved with both Kathryn and Tamsin. Chris Rynne's lighting is right on at every corner of George's past life.

While this is not one of Ayckbourn's best shot, his plays are well worth seeing just for the fun of it.

See you at the theatre.

Dates: through June 5th

Organization: The Old Globe Theatre

Phone: 619-234-5623

Production Type: Comedy/Farce

Where: 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

Ticket Prices: \$29.00-\$67.00

Web: theoldglobe.org

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THEATER REVIEW: "Life of Riley" is not the best effort by Alan Ayckbourn

JEAN LOWERISON - SDGLN THEATER CRITIC
May 13th, 2011

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Just like the stripper Mazeppa in "Gypsy," whose advice to new talent is "you gotta get a gimmick," playwright Alan Ayckbourn has trained his fans to expect a gimmick in his plays.

In "Life of Riley," it's this: The titular character never appears onstage – but he still manages to wreak havoc in the lives of six of his closest friends.

One of those friends is physician Colin (Colin McPhillamy), who lets the news about Riley (that he has cancer and has been given six months to live) slip to gossipy wife Kathryn (Henny Russell).

Soon the whole sextet knows the story, touching off regrets, reminiscences and revelations about good ol' George. The group consists of George's ex-wife Monica (Nisi Sturgis), now living with taciturn farmer Simeon (David Bishins); businessman Jack (Ray Chambers) and his wife Tamsin (Dana Green), a mini-skirted former hairdresser with fingernails that preclude gardening; and Tilly (Rebecca Gold), Jack's teenage daughter by a former marriage, who only appears in the last scene.

There's another gimmick here: some of the group are rehearsing for a community theater staging of Ayckbourn's "Relatively Speaking." When one actor pulls out, someone suggests George be recruited to take over the part.

That's the plot, such as it is. The stage of the Old Globe's White Theatre is divided into four gardens (one belongs to the absent George), where the action takes place.

McPhillamy is terrific though puzzling as Colin. McPhillamy's acting is top-notch, but it's difficult to accept the notion of a physician as vague and slow on the draw as Colin seems to be.

Russell is suitably annoying as the power in this family, though part of that must be laid at the feet of Colin, whose emotional vacuum has left her bereft of the human connection she craves.

Sturgis's Monica has the guilt concession locked up, wondering whether her departure precipitated his imminent demise in some way. That she feels she needs to leave Simeon (albeit temporarily) to care for George speaks volumes about their relationship as well.

Bishins is fine in the limited role of Simeon, and Green and Chambers play well off each other as Tamsin and the philandering Jack.

Ayckbourn has written 75 plays, twice as many as Shakespeare. Unfortunately, "Life of Riley" lacks his usual strengths: interesting characters, an engaging plot and clever lines. "Life of Riley" is really a long sitcom, predictable and frankly dull.

The details

"Life of Riley" plays through June 5 at the Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.

Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m.; matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m.

For tickets call (619) 234-5623 or visit [HERE](#).

Tags: [Alan Ayckbourn](#) [Balboa Park](#) [Harvey White Theatre](#) [Jean Lowerison](#) [Life of Riley](#) [Old Globe](#) [Theater review](#)

Photo credit: Henry DiRocco

Dana Green as Tamsin and Ray Chambers as Jack in the U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's "Life of Riley" at The Old Globe.

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'Life of Riley'

Read our review of the productioni running at the Old Globe Theater in San Diego this week and beyond.

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THEATER | SAN DIEGO

'Life of Riley' not one of Ayckbourn's best

By PAM KRAGEN

pkragen@nctimes.com

If you're at all familiar with the work of Alan Ayckbourn, you arrive at his plays ready for the gimmick. Known as Britain's master of the puzzle play, Ayckbourn is known for writing intricately layered stories with hair-trigger timing, broad sight gags and cleverly designed sets with action occurring simultaneously on multiple fronts.

"Life of Riley," the 72-year-old playwright's 74th play, is having its U.S. premiere this month at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego, and while all of the ingredients that make up the Ayckbourn recipe are there, the comic soufflé never rises.

The play's first act gets off to a slow start, and there's not much comic payoff in the second act to compensate for it. The characters aren't very likable, so it's hard to care about their self-inflicted troubles. And there's not much interesting in the show's two gimmicks: The title character Riley is

never seen onstage, and the others are performing in a community theater production of Ayckbourn's 1965 hit "Relatively Speaking," which — like "Life of Riley" — deals with the subject of marital infidelity.

"Life of Riley" is mildly amusing and it's crisply directed by Richard Seer, but in the pantheon of Ayckbourn plays, it's best to describe it as one of the prolific author's lesser works.

Staged in the round in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, "Life of Riley" involves three couples in their late 30s and early 40s whose relationships are all intimately affected by the surprise news that their friend George Riley has been diagnosed with terminal cancer and has just months to live.

Loose-lipped doctor Colin and his wife, Kathryn, a dental receptionist, lead a dullish existence, enlivened only by roles at the local community theater. The news of Riley's imminent demise goads the neglected Kathryn into trying to rekindle a long-ago fling

with Riley before he dies. Riley's best friend, Jack, a philandering businessman, hurtles into despair at the news, while his wife, Tamsin — tired of her husband's cheating — decides she, too, will have a go at Riley before he's gone.

Then there's Monica, Riley's estranged younger wife, who left him weeks before his diagnosis for the less-charming but infinitely more stable Scottish-born farmer Simeon, but who now feels she must return to his bedside out of spousal duty. Soon all the wives are fighting for Riley's affections, but none of them know the final act Riley has planned for himself.

The play feels overlong at two hours, 15 minutes, but director Seer's timing is not at fault. The actors do their best to keep the tension taut, but the flabby script does them no favors.

Henny Russell is the cast standout as Kathryn, a very real middle-aged woman who longs to feel something, anything, again in her lifeless marriage. And Colin McPhillamy is a close second as her devoted but emotionally disconnected husband, Colin, who can muster only a polite "I'd prefer you not" when she announces she's running off with Riley on a two-week holiday.

Dana Green is vivacious as Tamsin, Jack's pretty but tacky wife who quietly tolerates his cheating. And Ray Chambers comically falls apart as the man-child Jack. Nisi Sturgis gets little to do as Riley's wife, Monica, and David Bishins has a one-note role as the quiet farmer Simeon. Rebecca Gold also

has a very brief scene as Tilly, Jack and Tamsin's teen daughter.

Robert Morgan created the set (a multilocal sunken garden representing four different patios) and costumes (timelessly designed anywhere between the '70s and today). Chris Rynne designed the lighting and Paul Peterson designed the sound. The cast's English and Scottish accents, coached by Jan Gist, are mostly solid.

"Life of Riley" is the 11th Ayckbourn play produced at the Old Globe since 1978, and playgoers may fondly recall some of the best from the past (1984's "Taking Steps," 1994's "Mr. A's Amazing Maze Plays" and 1999's "Bedroom Farce"). "Life of Riley" isn't as well written as some of these others and his plotting seem to be locked in a time capsule. Ayckbourn may yet have more plays in his head, but "Life of Riley" isn't the best for a final act.

"Life of Riley"

WHEN: 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; through June 5

WHERE: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, The Old Globe Complex, Balboa Park, 1363 Old Globe Way, San Diego

TICKETS: \$29-\$67

INFO: theoldglobe.org



(from left) Henny Russell as Kathryn, Dana Green as Tamsin, Ray Chambers as Jack and Colin McPhillamy as Colin in the U.S. Premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's *Life of Riley*, at The Old Globe April 30 - June 5, 2011.

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Review: "Life of Riley" at The Old Globe Theatre in San Diego

Posted By: Macho Show Queen · 6/2/2011 4:10:00 PM

A couple of years ago I saw Alan Ayckbourn's *The Norman Conquests* in New York. It was a stunning piece of theatre. So I was very excited when I found out that the U.S. premiere of Ayckbourn's *Life of Riley* was taking place in San Diego.

In *Life of Riley*, three women find out that "Riley" (a character we never see) is dying of a terminal disease. Though each is married, they all have a past with Riley and feel compelled to offer whatever solace and comfort they can to him in his final months.

Not that this sits well with their husbands. Nor does it sit well with the women, all of whom know each other and are friends. You see, each woman thought she was Riley's "special one." It's like a better-written version of *Three's Company*.

Mr. Ayckbourn has a wonderful way with dialogue and a very good sense of humor. But with *Life of Riley* it feels as if he's phoned it in. There's a seventh character listed in the program, a young woman who is the daughter of one of the couples. Want to guess what happens to her? There are no surprises here except how shoddily constructed the play is.

It is to the cast's credit that in spite of my disappointment with Mr. Ayckbourn's writing, I never felt there was a false moment in their work. Each and every performance was spot on. Nisi Sturgis, Colin McPhillamy, Henry Russell, David Bishins, Dana Green and Ray Chambers were terrific. I don't mean to leave out Rebecca Gold, who plays the young girl, but she doesn't have more than one brief scene at the end of the play.

As we were walking out, a gentlemen expressed disappointment that there wasn't more Pink Floyd in the show. (Various rock songs "stand in" for Riley.) If that's your first comment when leaving the theatre, something has gone quite wrong. Indeed it has. The only life in this *Riley* is on the stage. If only there had been more life on the page.

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“Dooley” – Diversionary Theatre, “Life of Riley” – Old Globe Theatre & “Curse of the Starving Class” – Triad Productions

The one thing that unites three dramatically, thematically distinct plays is premature death. But stylistically, this world premiere, U.S. premiere and American classic couldn't be more different: a snarky British comedy, a despairing drama, and something of a bio-fantasy.

The world premiere of William di Canzio's "Dooley" is the story of physician Tom Dooley, who worked tirelessly in several Southeast Asian countries during the era of Communist paranoia. He was a revered Navy man. But he had one flaw, in the eyes of the military, along with his cocky bravado and disregard for rules. He was gay, so he was forced out of the service with a Less than Honorable discharge.

A hero and humanitarian, in line for Surgeon General, Dooley was victimized by a hidebound system of homophobia and hypocrisy. After his early death in 1961, at age 34, President Kennedy cited him as an inspiration for the Peace Corps.

Wafting through Di Canzio's play is the Greek god Thanatos, beautifully and ethereally played by Shaun Tuazon. Robert Borzych, absent from San Diego stages for too long, is pitch-perfect as Dooley. Michael Mizerany's choreography effectively punctuates the imaginative direction of Cynthia Stokes. The lighting and sound wonderfully balance the earthbound and the other-worldly. The play could use some tightening, but this excellent, thought-provoking production is a don't-miss at Diversionary Theatre.

On a tighter budget and smaller scale, Triad Productions has once again mined the depth and humor in a dark play. Artistic director Adam Parker and his talented ensemble get the tonal shifts just right in "Curse of the Starving Class," Sam Shepard's 1978 family drama about poverty, fate, the failure of the American Dream and the genetics of dysfunction.

Charles Peters is terrifically terrifying as the alcoholic patriarch, and Rhiannon Jones, though a bit young for the role, breathes defiant life into the burned-out mother of this physically and emotionally famished clan.

On the largest scale, the Old Globe is presenting the American premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's 74th play, "Life of Riley." Known for his structural complexity, Ayckbourn here intertwines the lives of three couples, as they react to the impending death of the title character, who never makes an appearance onstage. George Riley, a "hippie Peter Pan" with a passion for Pink Floyd, provides both a threat to the floundering couples and an impetus for them to rediscover their relationships. Carpe Diem, the play is saying, and when you go, it's best to exit soaring.

For all its cynically comical considerations of mortality, middle age and marriage, the piece feels like a trifle. Despite the impressive performances, especially from the cluelessly droll Colin McPhillamy, it's hard to care deeply about any of these less-than-savory, oh-so-English types. But Richard Seer's direction is crisp, and the design is outstanding.

Choose your theatrical poison: untimely death seen as comedy, tragedy or inevitability.

Triad Productions' "Curse of the Starving Class" plays through May 28 at the 10th Avenue Theatre. The world premiere of "Dooley" continues through May 28 at Diversionary Theatre.

"Life of Riley" continues through June 5, in the Old Globe's Weiss Theatre in Balboa Park.

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ENTERTAINMENT - LIVE STAGE

San Diego: Life of Riley Theatre Review

by My Nguyen

Things are not how they at first appear in The Old Globe's production of *Life of Riley*. Written by Sir Alan Ayckbourn, *Life of Riley* is Sir Alan's 74th play. Recently awarded with the UK's Critic's Circle Annual Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts and a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the theater, he is one of the world's most successful living playwrights, as well as The Old Globe's most-produced living playwright.

Ten of Ayckbourn's plays were staged at The Old Globe, including the US premieres of *Mr. A's Amazing Maze Plays* and *Intimate Exchanges*.



Precisely because appearances can be deceiving in *Life of Riley*, it is advisable that theatergoers who will be attending a showing of this production be on the lookout for what is not at first apparent to them. The entire production of *Life of Riley* relies on the premise that the unseen sights running underneath the gamut of everyday people's lives are important as well as vital to storytelling.

Characters that are featured here include a spacey, off-beat doctor; a women who is looking for a life outside of her neurotic, estranged husband; a businessman who can't stand the idea of losing his best friend; and two wives who long for different husbands but wind up falling for the same man. These characters' lives get played out in scenes that exist on the fringes of a "bigger event." Sometimes examining these exchanges that either get forgotten or ignored, we gain a wholly different perspective, and perhaps even a more interesting one.



And like the sights and insights left mostly hidden or unseen in people's lives, our protagonist, George Riley, never makes an appearance throughout the span of the play. Yet it can't be denied that Riley greatly impacts these people's lives. Even though we never get to see him, his absence happens to further this mystique, which definitely helped flesh out and shape a character we never even get to meet. Towards the end of the production, Riley's friends are very much weeping for themselves and their predicament as much as they are grieving for his passing. Perhaps to the rest of the characters' chagrin and the



protagonist's pleasure, Riley went out with a big bang, which went well according to his plan. Riley, not only was able to live life to the fullest—he was also credited for brewing the awful predicament he left behind—further immortalizing himself in his friends' lives.

For a character that was technically "imaginary" to wreck such havoc is something that demonstrates Ayckbourn's ingenuity and creative force. Peppered throughout this humorous play are touching scenes and at times riveting and insightful pieces of dialogue. Perhaps Ayckbourn's most memorable achievement is his ability to put his audience in his characters' shoes. People from all walks of life can definitely find themselves relating to these at times off-the-wall and poignant characters.

Staged inside the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, an intimate arena-like performance area, the stage is separated into four sections and each sector representing a family's back stoop. Under the direction of Richard Seer, this ingenious setup demonstrates Seer and Stage Manager, Elizabeth Stephens's, ability to utilize space not just according to physical compartments, but also in regards to the comical bantering and the hilarious exchanges between characters.

Performances of *Life of Riley* will run April 30 – June 5. Tickets can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.

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Life of Riley

by [Alan Ayckbourn](#)
directed by [Richard Seer](#)
Old Globe, San Diego
White Theatre
through June 5

UK playwright [Alan Ayckbourn](#) is revered internationally as a virtuoso at penning highly comedic plays. Ayckbourn, like [Neil Simon](#), writes funny one-liners and creates very humorous characters, but uniquely manages to surprise his fans each and every time with a new and compelling artifice. In his brilliant *Absurd Person Singular*, for example, three couples spend three different Christmas Eves together over the course of a few years. *The Norman Conquests* is a trilogy wherein each play has the same time span and series of events, but in each one we see things

from a different perspective. *Table Manners* is in the kitchen, *Living Together* in the living room and *Round and Round the Garden* speaks for itself. Now in *Life of Riley*, receiving its US premiere at the White Theatre of San Diego's Old Globe, the dying man everyone is going out of their way to accommodate is never seen, but his presence is felt throughout. Riley is a dramedy with less physical comedy than other Ayckbourn pieces. Here three couples struggle to find a sense of peace and happiness outside and within the confines of their failing marriages. The action takes place outdoors in four different garden patios. It boasts a splendid cast, with superior direction from [Richard Seer](#), and succeeds quite admirably as engrossing and entertaining fare.

The women talk disparagingly of the exclusiveness of Male Friendship with capitals M.F. putting down their husbands' lack of attention; the men seem oblivious to their wives' needs. Sounds rather typical of marrieds across the globe, but it's the strength of the fun-loving, appealing George Riley - known as a hippie Peter Pan and with little time to live - that stimulates a closer look into their problematic relationships. Are they going too far with their care and attention to him? Is it causing a further rift in their marriages? These are questions to consider for Ayckbourn is relentless in poking fun at the women and the men for their idleness and recklessly flawed behavior as each mate is quick to put the blame on the other for an imperfect union. Colin ([Colin McPhillamy](#)) is a doctor who would rather spend time synchronizing his clocks than making wife Kathryn happy. Kathryn ([Henny Russell](#)), once in love with George Riley before her current marriage, cannot tear herself away from her flask - "Just a wee one!" becomes her anthem, as she lives for the past. Jack (Ray Chambers) keeps a young mistress on the side and his wife Tamsin ([Dana Green](#)) is understandably irate and frustrated. Then there's their 16 year-old daughter Tilly ([Rebecca Gold](#)) who gets innocently caught up in George Riley's private world. Monica (Nisi Sturges),



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his distracted wife who has walked out on him, is torn between her obligation to him because he is dying and to her new boyfriend Simeon ([David Bishins](#)), who loves her "simply". In the end George Riley dies and all the friends come to mourn him, but only one has a real sense of how life should be lived, at least according to the Riley method. The rest settle for each other. Maybe Riley schemed it this way? Who's more content? Is it better to compromise or go out on a limb and live for the moment? Happiness is where you find it; Ayckbourn lets us decide where to lean.

Under Seer's even pacing the ensemble is super[B. Russell](#) is simply great as the deceptive Kathryn and the scene between the three ladies in Act II when they find out that George has invited all of them to spend a weekend away with him is dramatically hilarious. Knives come out, hateful remarks are hurled, and fireworks simply soar. A great example of how one spouse covers up his own guilt and tries to find blame in the other is where Jack smells the liquor in the lemonade, and without realizing it's Kathryn's glass, automatically assumes it to be Tamsin's. Ayckbourn is meticulous with all the little details. And there are also some delightful jokes about community theatre of which the characters are a part. As Colin and Kathryn rehearse for an upcoming production, the lines and pauses within their dialogue overlap deliciously with real life. Another fine Ayckbourn theatrical touch!

The play is in the round with each garden at a corner, and [Robert Morgan](#)'s excellent scenic design makes each appear decidedly different; George Riley's appears well-tended and attractive whereas the others are cold and unadorned. The very fact that the play takes place outdoors and that we never see inside adds further fascination to the play's exploration of life's complexities.

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BWW Reviews: Alan Ayckbourn's Life of Riley Makes US Premiere @ Old Globe



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Unlike many of Ayckbourn's plays which are more farcical and rely on slapstick, *Life of Riley* concentrates on the characters and how they relate to each other. The humor comes from within. It is a realistic comedy that will attract a middle-aged audience, those that are more vulnerable to life's ups and downs. As a result of the sacrifice and suffering, they are ultimately wiser ... yet a tad envious of the loss of youth and reckless abandonment.

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To the above list of talked-about-but-never-seen characters of stage and screen fame can now be added George Riley, a man whose impending death has all the onstage characters in Alan Ayckbourn's seventy-fourth full-length play in a tizzy.

Life Of Riley (yes, George even figures in the play's title) gets its United States Premiere at San Diego's Old Globe just eight months after the Brits got their first look at it—and a delightful two hours of comedy it is.

As always in an Ayckbourn play, there is a gimmick of sorts, or two actually in this case. The first is, of course, the play's unseen but not unsung hero. The second is its setting. Just as Ayckbourn's Bedroom Farce takes place in three side-by-side bedrooms, all the action in Life Of Riley occurs in a quartet of gardens, occupying the four quadrants of the in-the-round Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre.

Middle-aged Colin (Colin McPhillamy) and Kathryn (Henny Russell) are in their elegant garden running lines for an upcoming community theater production of Ayckbourn's Everything's Relative when Colin lets slip that a patient of his has terminal cancer. Using her powers of detective reasoning, Kathryn quickly deduces that it is their longtime friend George, then rings up George's best friend Jack (Ray Chambers) with the news. Naturally Jack can't keep this a secret from his wife Tamsin (Dana Green), and when he and the Mrs. arrive for rehearsal soon after, Jack suggests that they offer George a part in the play, thereby giving him a reason to enjoy the last six months of his life. Meanwhile somewhere out in the English sticks, George's estranged wife Monica (Nisi Sturgis) has taken up rural living with a widowed farmer named Simeon (David Bishins).

It doesn't take long for a) jealousy to rear its head, b) heretofore secret past relationships to be revealed, and c) all three women to be making plans to accompany George on a vacation jaunt to Tenerife, leading the ladies to believe that he may have a last-ditch holiday *à quatre* on his mind. Not surprisingly, the men in these women's lives are not amused.

For the audience, on the other hand, amusement is indeed the order of business in Ayckbourn's next-to-latest hit comedy. (Yes, since Life Of Riley's September World Premiere, Mr. Prolific has already gone and written and directed number seventy-five.) Admittedly, after the play's absolutely hilarious opening scene which skewers amateur actors like never before, Act One does get a bit talky and drags a tad as intermission approaches. Fortunately, once the women have started comparing plans for a Canary Island vacation with soon-to-be dear departed George, there's nary a dull or unfunny moment until the comedy's surprisingly touching dénouement.

What is not at all surprising is the level of talent onstage and off at the Old Globe, beginning with Richard Seer, who directs with sparkle and flair. As for the actors assembled by Seer and casting director Samantha Barrie, they could hardly be better. With the help of dialect coach Jan Gist, Life Of Riley's sextet of American thespians come across so British-to-the-core that they could almost get through customs without a passport. Not only that, but the specificity of their

dialects reveals much about each character, from McPhillamy's and Russell's uppah-clahssiness to Green's dropped h's (which hint that former beautician Tamsin has married up) to Bishins' folksy provincial accent for Simeon. All in all, the six thesps make for a fabulous bunch: McPhillamy's fuddy-duddy Colin, Russell's veddy proper Kathryn, Chambers' philandering Jack, Green's vampy Tamsin, Sturgis's would-be country girl Monica, and Bishins' man-of-few-words Simeon. High school senior Rebecca Gold completes the cast nicely in a last minute coda.

Robert Morgan's in-the-round scenic design for Life Of Riley's four-garden setting is quite splendid, each garden superbly detailed, and if the grass isn't real, you could have fooled me. Morgan gets bonus points for some terrific costumes that tell you exactly who is who at first glance. Chris Rynne's lighting design is both subtle and vivid, and Paul Peterson's sound design is his usual excellent work. (Note the use of '80s rock as a symbol of George's ever-presence, and listen for subtle barnyard sounds whenever we're with Monica and Simeon.) Elizabeth Stephens is stage manager.



Though unlikely to achieve the same phenomenal success as Ayckbourn's most-produced plays (Absurd Person Singular, The Norman Conquests, Bedroom Farce, and A Chorus of Disapproval to name just a few), Life Of Riley does exactly what it supposed to do—and what few playwrights do as well as Ayckbourn. It entertains...and it makes you want to come back for more. I'm already ready for Number 75!

Old Globe Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego.

[Click here](http://www.oldglobe.org) for current performance schedule, closing date, and reservation line.

www.oldglobe.org

--Steven Stanley
May 15, 2011

Photos: Henry DiRocco

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[Life of Riley, San Diego \(/index.php?view=article&catid=7%3Atheater&id=579%3Alife-of-riley-san-diego&tmpl=component&link=aHR0cDovL3d3dy5jdWx0dXJldnVsdHVyZS5uZXQvaW5kZXgucGhwP29wdGlvbj1jb21fY2I=print=1&layout=default&option=com_content&Itemid=10\)](#)



From left: Rebecca Gold, Ray Chambers, Dana Green, David Bishins, Nisi Sturgis, Colin McPhillamy and Henry Russell in the U.S. premiere of "Life of Riley"
Photo by Henry DiRocco

'Life of Riley'

By Alan Ayckbourn
 Directed by Richard Seer
 The Old Globe, San Diego
 April 30 – June 5, 2011

"Life of Riley" is Sir [Alan Ayckbourn](http://www.alanayckbourn.net/) (<http://www.alanayckbourn.net/>)'s 74th play, and San Diego audiences have the privilege to see its [U.S. premiere](http://www.theoldglobe.org/tickets/production.aspx?PID=8115) (<http://www.theoldglobe.org/tickets/production.aspx?PID=8115>) production. Sparkled with

sarcastic humor only the British can master, the play takes us to the heart of a community of thespians who learn about their friend George Riley's terminal diagnosis. Riley is the center of his own universe (and ours for the night) and in his final hour, all shall revolve around him. Cleverly, Ayckbourn didn't bother giving Riley a voice. The elusive man resides offstage. Instead, the privy audience witnesses the commentaries and emotional reactions of the gallery of friends, which includes a doctor whose wife happens to be an old friend of Riley's, a best-friend who struggles with extramarital activities and delights in spoiling his teenage daughter, and a soon-to-be ex-wife who has escaped to the country with a new-found love. Through them, we get to know Riley intimately, and the invisible man becomes a vivid persona.

If an acting award can be given for this production, it must go to Colin McPhillamy, who plays Riley's doctor of the same first name, Colin. McPhillamy owns the character so completely, he must have jumped straight from Ayckbourn's imagination.

That is not to say the rest of the cast doesn't have great talent. Any actor needs to be accomplished to honor the script. Indeed, "Life of Riley" is not so much about what the characters say, but rather about what they choose to keep to themselves. Lack of assertiveness is the key dysfunction and, if done well (and it certainly is in this production), the chaos it creates is wonderful to watch. Ray Chambers, who plays Riley's best friend, Jack, makes some great choices and conveys the human nature of the part very well. Dana Green plays his wife, Tamsin, and sparkles in that role, while Rebecca Gold is his teenage daughter, Tilly. Henny Russell is Kathryn, Colin's not-so-innocent wife. Russell exploits skillfully the sarcastic and manipulative dialogues and situations. Nisi Sturgis plays the runaway wife of Riley, Monica; the farmer she fell in love with, Simeon, is played by David Bishins.

Award-winning director [Richard Seer](http://broadwayworld.com/people/Richard_Seer/) (http://broadwayworld.com/people/Richard_Seer/) heads this wonderful production. The set, which consists of four backyards, is by Robert Morgan. Very efficiently, the style of the different gardens and furniture (or lack of) reflects the provenance and attitudes of the different families involved in the plot. It also offers a nice flow throughout the play in this in-the-round production. Morgan also appropriately designed the costumes. Lights are designed by Chris Rynne and Paul Peterson is the sound designer.

If you are still hesitating to buy a ticket because you think the subject at hand, learning of a dear friend's dying prognosis, is a little too morose for an evening of fun, that's because you've never known how amusing it could be to psychologically mess with your friends before you kicked the bucket... until you saw "Life of Riley."

Patricia Humeau

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“Life of Riley”

Worth Living

By Patricia Morris Buckley
SDUN Reporter

When you're the David Beckham of playwriting, you probably have to set higher goals for yourself so you don't get bored. Perhaps that's what prolific British playwright Alan Ayckbourn intended to do with his latest creation, “Life of Riley.”

Ayckbourn is best known for a string of comedies such as “Relatively Speaking,” “Taking Steps,” “How the Other Half Loves,” “The Norman Conquests” and “Time of My Life.” Often referred to as the British Neil Simon, he's penned 74 plays in his 75 years.

In his latest, it's as if he sets out to do the impossible, like balancing on a high wire above the clouds. He's written a show where the main character is never seen, à la “Waiting for Godot.” (It's also like the film “The Big Chill,” where one never sees the character whose funeral brings all the friends together.) At first it seems undoable, but as the play progresses, one senses the main character's presence would be far too intrusive.

The play shows us the reaction of three couples as they discover their friend, George Riley, has only six months left to live. Slowly, we learn more and more about George, not unlike peeling back the layers of an onion: He's a playboy, an adventurer, a little thoughtless and extremely charming. Each of the couples contemplates what their life will be like without him.

But then George invites every female character for one last vacation, which upsets the delicate balance of each couple's relationship and thrusts them full steam toward a relationship-changing crisis.

Three elements in this production really stand out. The first is the set by Robert Morgan (who also designed the

“LIFE OF RILEY”

When: Through June 5
Where: Old Globe Theatre,
Balboa Park

Tickets: \$29-\$67

Info: (619) 23-GLOBE

Web: theoldglobe.org

costumes), which depicts four entirely different and cleverly defined gardens in miniature, tiny worlds if you will, each in the stage's corners. They have to be minute because there's only so much room at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, the Globe's theater in the round. Wonderfully, the grassy area in the center becomes another playing space when the production ends.

Also remarkable is the Globe's cast. Each actor plays the pathos and the comedy with equal excellence. One in particular provides far more laughs than the script supplies, and English actor Colin McPhillamy plays the older, conservative Colin with such dignity and sweetness that— even though

see Theater, page 12



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FROM PAGE 11 **THEATRE**

his character is nowhere near as flashy as the others—it's the most memorable.

Director Richard Seer does an impressive job keeping the action and dialogue light, which considering the topic, makes the play all the more enjoyable. I will say that I'm not a huge Ayckbourn fan, but rarely have I laughed as much during one of his plays. I attribute that to Seer having asked his cast to emphasize the jokes, mining a few that are barely there as well.

There are a few loose ends tied up too quickly, a predictable twist toward the end (who George really takes on his vacation) and one or two other missteps. But Ayckbourn fans will chuckle at the fact that several characters in the cast are rehearsing a play—which just happens to be Ayckbourn's first huge hit, "Relatively Speaking."

Ayckbourn may have seen this script as a writing challenge, yet the result is entertaining. With an able cast and director, this production is clever, charming and enjoyable. ♦



The U.S. Premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's *Life of Riley*, at The Old Globe April 30 - June 5, 2011. (Photo courtesy of Henry DiRocco)

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Old Globe's 'Life of Riley' gets laughs, but from annoying characters

By Diana Saenger

LET'S REVIEW

The Old Globe has acknowledged the prolific career of playwright Sir Alan Ayckbourn by producing 10 of his plays in the last 25 years. "Life of Riley" (Ayckbourn's 74th play) is making its world premiere at the Globe, but while it offers many laughs, the story suffers from repetitious pacing and characters who fail to draw us into their dilemmas.

Directed by Richard Seer, the story centers on three couples at different stages in their lives who are enlisted to help a friend with only months to live.



Henny Russell (Kathryn), Dana Green (Tamsin), Ray Chambers (Jack) and Colin McPhillamy (Colin) star in 'Life of Riley' through June 5 at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre at the Old Globe. Courtesy

Colin (Colin McPhillamy) and Kathryn (Henny Russell) are the oldest and complacent with life. Colin is a doctor and Kathryn a stay-at-home and meddling wife. They are rehearsing for a play, but Colin's unwillingness to concentrate or pay attention to Kathryn's babbling continually irritates her,

Tamsin (Dana Green) and Jack (Ray Chambers) are middle-aged. Tamsin is also in the play, but her life is falling apart as she detects Jack is having an affair. Monica (Nisi Sturgis) is married, but has left her husband, George Riley, and is now in love with Farmer Simeon (David Bishins).

When Kathryn coaxes the name of his dying patient out of her husband and realizes it's George Riley, she phones Tamsin who tells Jack, George's best friend. Tears and trauma follow as Kathryn, who was in a relationship with George when she was younger, Tamsin and Monica all vie to take care of him.

Much of a play's enjoyment comes from getting to know and care for its characters. That's my problem with "Life of Riley." While Colin is wonderful at playing the doofus — the best character in the play — he can't carry the weight of this story alone. Lines from Kathryn like, "He saves his patients only to kill them with his small talk," make her one-dimensional and tiring. Jack's role requires him to be a basket case over George, but it's over the top and unrealistic for a man truly mourning. The many scenes with Jack and Tamsin screaming at each other are also draining.

The creative team of Robert Morgan (scene and costume), Chris Rynne (lighting), Paul Peterson (sound), Jan Gist (dialect coach) and Elizabeth Stephens (stage manager) comes through fine in this production, but their efforts did not enhance my enjoyment of the show.

George Riley is only alluded to, he never appears in the play, and I think that's a significant reason it didn't resonate with me. The characters never convince me he's really a part of their lives and their continual bickering, shouting and unresolved relationships left me constantly checking my watch.

If you go

What: "Life of Riley"

When: 7 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays; 7 p.m. Sundays to June 5

Where: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

Tickets: \$29-\$67

Contact: (619) 23-GLOBE

Website: TheOldGlobe.org

Post-show forum: May 31, free.

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‘Life of Riley’ gets laughs, but from annoying characters



Let's Review

BY DIANA SAENGER

The Old Globe has acknowledged the prolific career of playwright Sir Alan Ayckbourn by producing 10 of his plays in the last 25 years. “Life of Riley” (Ayckbourn’s 74th play) is making its world premiere at the Globe, but while it offers many laughs, the story suffers from repetitious pacing and characters who fail to draw us into their dilemmas.

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- **Website:** TheOldGlobe.org
- **Free, post-show forum:** May 31. Discuss the play with cast members.

doctor and Kathryn a stay-at-home and meddling wife. They are rehearsing for a play, but Colin’s unwillingness to concentrate or pay attention to Kathryn’s babbling continually irritates her. Tamsi (Dana Green) and Jack (Ray Chambers) are middle-aged. Tamsi is also in the play, but her life is falling apart as she detects Jack is having an affair.

Monica (Nisi Sturgis) is

married, but has left her husband, George Riley, and is now in love with Farmer Simeon (David Bishins).

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Much of a play’s enjoyment comes from getting to know and care for its characters. That’s my problem with “Life of Riley.” While Colin is wonderful at playing the doofus — the best character in the play — he can’t carry the weight of this story alone. Lines from Kathryn like, “He saves his patients only to kill them with his small talk,” make her one-dimensional and tiring. Jack’s role requires him to be a basket case over George, but it’s over the top and unrealistic for a man truly mourning. The many scenes with Jack and Tamsi



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Henny Russell (Kathryn), Dana Green (Tamsi), Ray Chambers (Jack) and Nisi Sturgis (Monica) star in 'Life of Riley' through June 5 at The Old Globe Theatre. COURTESY

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The Old Globe production of "Life of Riley"

May 9, 2011 | Filed under: Jack Lyons,News | Posted by: By Jack Lyons Theatre and Film Critic



Henny Russell as Kathryn and Colin McPhillamy as Colin in the U.S. Premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's *Life of Riley*, at The Old Globe April 30 - June 5, 2011. Photo by Henry DiRocco.

SAN DIEGO'S OLD GLOBE DEBUTS HILARIOUS ALAN AYCKBOURN PLAY

By Jack Lyons Theatre and Film Critic

When it comes to prolific and talented comedy playwrights who still practice the art form, two names leap out and stand head and shoulders above the rest: Neil Simon and Sir Alan Ayckbourn. When I speak with my British actor friends about playwrights, I refer to Ayckbourn as the Neil Simon of England. "Au contraire" comes the immediate response, "Simon is the Alan

Ayckbourn of America". Touche! When all is said and done, however, both men are true giants of the comedy genre, and are without peer when it comes to making people laugh.



Ayckbourn's newest comedy play "Life of Riley", making its U.S. debut at San Diego's Old Globe White Theatre, seamlessly and cleverly directed by Richard Seer, marks Ayckbourn's seventy-fourth full-length play! Simon's writing canon numbers of thirty-four plays and thirty-four screenplays is equally impressive, but it looks like "Advantage Ayckbourn" for sheer output.

What makes an Ayckbourn play so relevant, regardless of which side of the Atlantic the play is being presented on, is the richness of the characters, the detailed back-stories provided for the actors, and the absolutely spot-on dialogue of his characters. He has a marvelous ear for the cadence and lilt of his countrymen's speech. Also, his plots, although circuitous at times, are quite easy to follow thanks to a symbiotic relationship he maintains with his

performers. It also helps when one "owns" the theatre (The Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough, where he was the artistic director for thirty-seven years), and he still maintains long-standing relationships with a cadre of players, ala one big, happy, and talented repertory-styled performing company.

"Life of Riley" is typical Ayckbourn. George Riley, the title character for example, is referred to quite often by the characters, but is never seen onstage. Ayckbourn is a master of deflection when it comes to giving the audience just the right amount of information and insight, but not spoiling the inevitable comedic twists and turns that every comedy needs in order to succeed. It's a gift Ayckbourn and Simon share alike with their audiences.

With "Life of Riley" the playwright looks backward, forward, and, now and then, sideways with wry comic affection on the lives we lived or might have lived. George Riley's closest friends discover that he has just a few months to live and they each deal with the news in their own very surprising ways. A cast of six, solid and talented, actors deliver wonderfully nuanced and highly comedic performances to this hilarious tale of friends and neighbors who come together in an effort to help George do whatever he feels he has to do. After all, George has deeply affected each of their lives. What they don't know is that George is planning one last final farewell, which could complicate their futures. Let the fun begin...

Colin McPhillamy as Colin, and Henny Russell as Kathryn, anchor the three-couple play. They portray the traditionally quintessential British middleclass couple. He's a bit vague and slow to react when confronted with information or news outside his safe zone – the hospital (he's George's medical doctor). At first, Colin reminded me of Sir Ralph Richardson's style of delivery, but McPhillamy, soon dispelled any comparison, by bringing his own hilarious comedy timing to his perplexed character with reactions and double takes that are priceless to watch.



Nisi Sturgis as Monica and David Bishins as Simeon in the U.S. Premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's Life of Riley, at The Old Globe April 30 -

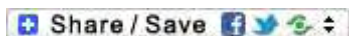
Even though Russell's Kathryn is a secret tippler, and somewhat "public school" who is frequently impatient and condescending with her hubby, she somehow manages to be a sympathetic character and one the audience can still find time to care about. Perhaps, this is due, in part, to Russell and McPhillamy's onstage comedic chemistry which resonates so effectively with the audience. The night I attended, I saw a lot of the audience nodding their gray heads up and down, which may have accounted for the peals of laughter and the shocks of recognition that kept wafting throughout the audience every time they appeared on stage.

Ray Chambers as Jack, George's best friend, is the loyal, trusting-to-a-point husband of Dana Green (Tamsin), Jack's young sexy housewife. Chambers and Green have their mid-life crises as younger married couples often do. Chamber's Jack walks the walk of a seemingly well-adjusted married man while Green's Tammy talks the talk of a mother of a teenage daughter; both delivering polished performances in the process. Nisi Sturgis as Monica, George's ex-wife; now newly paired with Simeon, played by David Bishins complete the three couples. To say anymore about the story would be telling. Suffice it to say, Sir Alan has the last word.

"Life of Riley" is an enjoyable evening at the theatre whether you're British, American, or any other flavor. I'm only sure, however, of one bona fide Brit in the cast. The program notes list Colin McPhillamy as having been trained and having worked for the BBC and as an actor/writer in London. The rest of the company deliver very commendable British accents, and we can thank dialect coach Jan Gist for keeping them on point, on inflection, and on accent. Well Done, company of players.

Gifted writing with excellent ensemble actors in the hands of an award-winning Broadway director, like Richard Seers, is universally understood and appreciated, no matter the country of origin. The entire creative team at the White Theatre also can take their bows: Scenic and Costume Design by Robert Morgan, Lighting Design by Chris Rynne, and the ever-reliable Sound Design by Paul Peterson are first rate.

"Life of Riley" performs at The Old Globe White Theatre through June 5, 2011.



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Posted by By Jack Lyons Theatre and Film Critic on May 9, 2011. Filed under Jack Lyons, News. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0. Both comments and pings are currently closed.

June 5, 2011. Photo by Henry DiRocco.



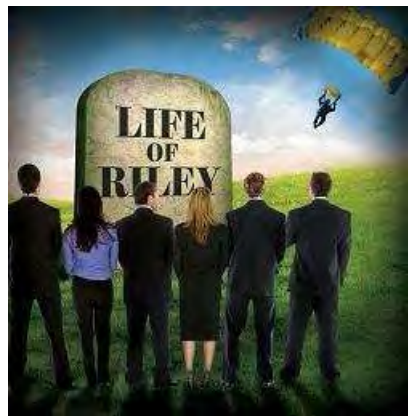
Dana Green as Tamsin and Ray Chambers as Jack in the U.S. Premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's Life of Riley, at The Old Globe April 30 - June 5, 2011. Photo by Henry DiRocco.

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Theater Review: LIFE OF RILEY by Alan Ayckbourn (San Diego)

by [Tony Frankel](#) on May 19, 2011

in [Regional Theater](#)



BY GEORGE, I THINK THEY'VE GOT IT; THE SCRIPT, HOWEVER...

A friend of mine is an Alan Ayckbourn fanatic, owning dozens of the prolific playwright's scripts, yet he can count on one hand the productions he has seen to date. I concur with my friend that something is lost in translation when Ayckbourn's plays hit the States, perhaps due to the subtleties that only an English actor can glean from the mind of an English author. While some may perceive Ayckbourn's plays to be slight, he is both a master observer of the English suburban middle class and a deft innovator who overcomes the confines of a black box by challenging our notions of space and time – such as with his plays *House* and *Garden*, both of which take place concurrently on different stages using the same actors. However, at the Manhattan Theatre Club in New York, the time device of *House* and *Garden* could not compensate for the American cast's inability to overcome the weightlessness of the material. The London production of *Communicating Doors* (with Julia McKenzie) was a funny, thrilling and optimistic farce in which doors between adjoining hotel rooms served as a mechanism for time travel; and yet the off-Broadway production (with Mary-Louise Parker) felt paper-thin.



Of course, Ayckbourn is at his best when he is shocking or devastatingly funny, such as his trilogy [The Norman Conquests](#), but it is his overall ability to make the commonplace human experience utterly fascinating that explains why he is the world's most performed living playwright. Ayckbourn's reputation is well-deserved, regardless of how slight or significant a particular script may be. On stage, however, the Knighted Scribe's words are deceptively simple, not unlike those of Neil Simon – actors must be grounded in reality for the comedy to soar.



Yanks may be forever challenged to get that British patois down pat (and vice versa, which may explain why recent revivals of Neil Simon in London used American actors). Absurdly enough, probably due to Sir Alan's astounding body of work, reviewers tend to overpraise American productions, such as last year's [Bedroom Farce](#) at the Odyssey, which was so off-the-mark that it was downright embarrassing.

This brings us to the Old Globe's U.S. premiere of *Life of Riley*, the 74th play of the inexhaustible writer. The device here is that George Riley, a character we never meet, has been given a few months to live, thereby affecting the lives of three couples; included in these duos are Riley's doctor, an ex-paramour, a soon-to-be ex-wife, and a philandering best friend. When Riley is cast in a local playhouse production of Ayckbourn's own *Relatively Speaking* (his first hit (1965) that also deals with infidelity), the wily Riley uses the situation for manipulative purposes of his own.



Fortunately, director Richard Seer and his lovely cast have overcome the impediments normally associated with American productions of Ayckbourn's works – they hit all the right notes, especially Colin McPhillamy as Riley's doctor, Colin, and Henny Russell as Kathryn, Colin's wife, who conspires to rekindle an old love affair with Riley by suggesting he be in the community play.

Unfortunately, *this* play, *Life of Riley*, is not one of Ayckbourn's better efforts. True, some of the dialogue is funny (Kathryn notes that conversing with her spouse is akin to "talking through a sheet of glass, as if you're in prison or at the post office"), and there is no shortage of mistaken motivations, but the structure does not compel – especially due to three underdeveloped characters: Monica (Nisi Sturgis), who left Riley just weeks before his diagnosis; Simeon (David Bishins), the swarthy Scottish farmer with whom Monica now resides; and Tilly (Rebecca Gold), a teenage girl who has almost as much stage time as George Riley!



Mr. Bishins is a perfect example of why *Life of Riley* neither sizzles nor fizzles: the actor brings strength and vulnerability to what is essentially a thankless role – everything about him screams hardscrabble, hard-working cultivator, but his presence adds no conflict or surprise. When Monica's sense of spousal obligation sends her to Riley's side, Simeon's response is to kick a large tire and go limping offstage. This scene, as with many others, makes the play come off as a very long episode of a British sit-com. It's a physical bit of business which falls flat and interrupts the flow of the piece, thereby keeping the tension at a minimum.

Some scenes positively crackle: Tamsin (Dana Green) is so furious that her husband Jack (Ray Chambers) is having an affair that she accepts Riley's offer to take a holiday (read: have an affair of her own); when Kathryn and Monica, who have also been invited on holiday by Riley, meet Tamsin at Riley's home, the fur really flies. Likewise, the scenes in which Colin and Kathryn rehearse their parts in the community play (only to discover that it mirrors the communication problems in their own marriage) are rife with wry wit.



The result is that *Life of Riley* is a pleasant afternoon tea instead of a sumptuous feast. It's a quandary as to whether Seer could have done more with the material. Both the play's world premiere (at the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, directed by Ayckbourn himself) and here in San Diego were staged in-the-round, and Seer's cast has no problem handling the English idioms and idiosyncrasies. Certainly, the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre – one of the finest ever built, both for sight-lines and its technical capacity – is perfectly utilized: Robert Morgan's set of four gardens (and costumes that could be worn in any Ayckbourn play from the 1960s onward) fit the space perfectly, and Paul Peterson's multi-directional sound is extraordinary.

Perhaps Ayckbourn, who suffered a stroke in 2006, was just feeling a bit more genteel. One can only hope that we will see more of his vulgar villains and biting observational wit in the future – produced with the excellence of The Old Globe, naturally. In the meantime, *Life of Riley* is a nice diversion, no different than a stroll through sunny Balboa Park where The Old Globe is situated.

tonyfrankel @ stageandcinema.com

Photos by Henry DiRocco

Life of Riley

scheduled to close June 5 at time of publication

for ticket's visit <http://www.TheOldGlobe.org> or call (619) 23-GLOBE

Tagged as: [Alan Ayckbourn](#), [Colin McPhillamy](#), [Communicating Doors](#), [Dana Green](#), [David Bishins](#), [Garden](#), [Henny Russell](#), [House](#), [Julia McKenzie](#), [Life of Riley](#), [Manhattan Theatre Club](#), [Mary-Louise Parker](#), [Neil Simon](#), [Nisi Sturgis](#), [Odyssey Theater](#), [Paul Peterson](#), [Ray Chambers](#), [Rebecca Gold](#), [Relatively Speaking](#), [Richard Seer](#), [Robert Morgan](#), [Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre](#), [Stephen Joseph Theatre Scarborough](#), [The Norman Conquests](#), [The Old Globe in San Diego](#)

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Photo: Ken Friedman

The stage is utterly bare. **Adrianne Lobel's** set design comprises raised and lowered frames of various sizes, colored beautifully and lighted by **James. F. Ingalls**. Vertical white entrance panels line both sides of the proscenium. In the first act **Christine Van Loon's** costumes are earth tones and in the second, brighter and more spring-like. Here, too, subtle variations abound, in the colors of the women's underskirts and in shoulder treatment for both men and women.

As for the music, I cannot adequately express my delight. The 30-piece orchestra played with great sensitivity. Accompanying the individual solos, the continuo elements epitomized and highlighted the excellence of ensemble. Cellist **John Waiz** and flutist **Gary Woodward** effected especial instrumental wonders.

I've been a fan of Coburn's since *Rigoletto*. She possesses an interesting timbre and a glorious top voice. She handles Handelian embellishments with aplomb. Hong has been a great favorite ever since she made her San Diego Opera debut as a young unknown and then soared to an international career. She sings with great beauty and finesse. Heard in major opera houses worldwide, Relyea is absolutely magnificent. I believe this was my first experience with tenor Banks, also renowned and a veteran of the Metropolitan Opera and beyond. The voice might grow on one eventually; however, I found it edgy and unpleasant in most of Banks' range.

Let's hear it for amusement. Choreographer Morris, who took a bow at the end of the evening, has a great sense of humor. Gently, he mocks nymphs, shepherds, hunting dogs and humans. His dancers have soaked it all up, for they are so adept at subtle takes, animal attitudes and bumpkin styles. Honestly, I can't remember a more wonderful evening in the theatre! The size of the stage, the orchestra, the soloists, the dancers and visual elements combined to make a blissful experience and memories to store up and treasure.

Supremely Enjoyable Ayckbourn

Everyone loves George Riley. Even his ex-wife, Monica, who's cohabiting with an inarticulate farmer named Simeon, wants to comfort George in every sense of the word, especially now, when he is diagnosed with terminal cancer. George's imminent demise affects all the characters in **Sir Alan Ayckbourn's** 2010 comedy, *The Life of Riley*, seen in its U.S. premiere through June 5 at the **Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre** at the **Old Globe** in Balboa Park.

When the leading romantic actor drops out of the play that the unhappily married Colin and Kathryn are

rehearsing at "curtain rise," George is invited to join the little theatre group in hopes of distracting him from his impending death. Unhappily married due to her husband Jack's philandering, Tamsin is the third cast member of the play-within-a-play, which we never see. Tamsin and Jack are the parents of a 16-year-old daughter named Tillie, whom we see only briefly.

Ayckbourn, the most prolific British comedy writer in history, delights in employing a trick or a puzzle in his plays. That poor George is never seen on stage is Ayckbourn's delight, and ours as well, in the case of *The Life of Riley*. Director **Richard Seer** assembles a masterful ensemble and gives us some sense of George through his garden filled with stone creatures and his loud music heard from what would be the house above the garden.



Ray Chambers and Colin McPhillamy
Photo: Henry DiRocco

The acting ensemble – **David Bishins** as Simeon, **Ray Chambers** as Jack, **Rebecca Gold** as Tilly, **Dana Green** as Tamsin, **Colin McPhillamy** as Colin, **Henny Russell** as Kathryn and **Nisi Sturgis** as Monica – is tightly knit and deeply talented. The expressive McPhillamy, who in profile resembles Alfred Hitchcock, takes Brenda's Ayckbourn Burgoo Prize as most Ayckbournesque of all. He is absolutely delicious and right on the pound sterling.



Sir Alan Ayckbourn Photo: Tony Bartholomew

The

masterful Ayckbourn is a keen observer of the melancholy and regret that lie just beneath the surface of gentility. If attuned, the observer becomes an observer, too. Ayckbourn never tells, he merely shows how people live their lives, fail to communicate, and miss love. Simultaneously it is excruciatingly funny and painfully sad. It R us. George is the only one who truly knows how to live. We can't see him, but we certainly feel his presence. He is Norman in absentia.

With scenic and costume design by **Robert Morgan**, lighting by **Chris Rynne** and sound design by **Paul Peterson**, the White Theatre convinces us that the action really takes place in four separate English gardens between May and November. The area of England is not specified, but it could be somewhere near Scarborough, where Ayckbourn (b. 1939) has created plays since he was 19 years old. *The Life of Riley* is his 74th play, and last year he received a Special Tony Award for lifetime achievement. He was knighted in 1997. See more about this wondrous playwright at www.alanayckbourn.net

For tickets to *The Life of Riley* go to www.theoldglobe.org or phone (619) 232-GLOBE.

Burgoo Rating: Five

Dooley bows at Divvy

Cynthia Stokes, who directed **Nicolas Reveles'** opera *Sextet*, at **Diversions** late last year, returns to stage a rather operatic world premiere play by **William di Canzio** simply titled *Dooley*.

Since the play has no subtitle and because the word many no longer be synonymous with the legendary man, it behooves one to know who Dr. Tom Dooley (1927-1961) was. On the Notre Dame web site it states that he was a student there in the 1940s and received an honorary degree in 1960; further, that he became a Navy doctor in Vietnam, founding the Medical International Cooperation Organization and spent much time providing medical care to people in Southeast Asia. His work was also the inspiration for John F. Kennedy's Peace Corps.



Robert Borzych and Shaun Tuazon
photo: Ken Jacques

Sounds admirable, all that, but Dooley had his detractors. Apparently he did liaison work for CIA operative Lt. Col. Edward Lansdale. There were accusations of self-aggrandizement and propagandizing when it came to Dooley's three books about his experiences. Some claimed the war atrocities he described never happened and that he was a mere "bullshit artist." That he was a promiscuous homosexual was documented in a 700-page Navy report. But wait, he was a hero, who quit the Navy to continue his humanitarian work. Dooley died of malignant melanoma back in the States, reportedly the same day his clinic in Laos was overrun. Posthumously he was awarded the

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CINEMATIC MECHANIC

[LIFE OF RILEY \(OLD GLOBE\): 80% – SWEET](#)

[Colin Mitchell](#) | May 09, 2011 | [Comments 0](#) |



From left, Henny Russell, Dana Green, Colin McPhillamy and Ray Chambers in Alan Ayckbourn's "Life of Riley" at the Old Globe. Photo courtesy of Henry DiRocco / The Old Globe.

SWEET

Ayckbourn is progenitor of what might be considered a more intellectual cousin of the British sex farce. His plays are funny, but quietly, craftily so. "Life of Riley" is a perfectly reliable continuation of that brand, its parade of human vulnerabilities sure to leave viewers taking stock of their own.

[Daryl H. Miller – LA Times](#)

SWEET

Director Richard Seer and his terrific cast know a warm bath of theatrical potential when they see one and this play is an entire spa. Whatever the division of inspiration between author, director and actor, the piece fairly hums with contented purpose and universal mutual respect.

[Welton Jones – SanDiego.com](#)

BITTER

All of this carping about Life of Riley as a play does not apply to the production, however. Director Richard Seer has headed the Old Globe's professional actor training program for many years, and he is an actor's director. Taking advantage of the White's intimate in-the-round space, Robert Morgan's just-right scenic design and costumes, Chris Rynne's area-defining lighting design, and Paul Peterson's clever sound effects, he's fashioned an intimate comedy where the action is full of nuance and every nuance matters. The cast responds almost with glee in recreating a zeitgeist where the stiff upper lip prevails, except when it turns to a sneer or explodes in a scowl. It's a lovely confluence of technical prowess and ensemble skill that almost makes up for the weaknesses in the script. Almost.

[Bill Eadie – Talkin' Broadway](#)

SWEET

Director, Richard Seer, a familiar face at The Old Globe, leads his talented cast with an eye on the timing, and that is what makes Ayckbourn so damn funny.

[Carol Davis – San Diego Examiner](#)

SWEET

However familiar the setup and theme, the rueful dramedy is receiving a sturdy, most enjoyable U.S. premiere production at the Old Globe.

[Bob Verini – Variety](#)

LIFE OF RILEY

[The Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre](#)

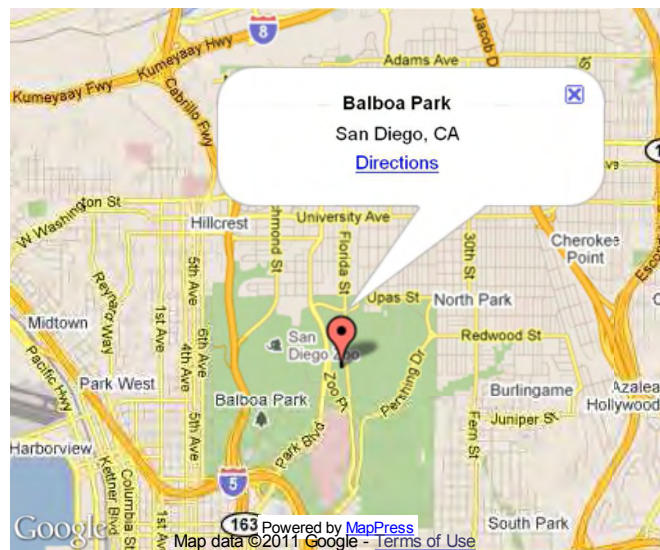
Balboa Park, San Diego

7 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 2 and 8 p.m.

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Tickets: \$29 to \$67. (619) 234-5623

Running time: 2 hours, 15 minutes.



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FEATURES

Old Globe announces the U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's 'Life of Riley'



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Left to right: Rebecca Gold, Dana Green, Ray Chambers, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell, Nisi Sturgis and David Bishins star in the U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's 'Life of Riley' at The Old Globe.

The Old Globe has announced it is staging the U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's new comedy, *Life of Riley*.

Directed by Richard Seer, *Life of Riley* runs in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, part of The Old Globe's Conrad Prebys Theatre Center, with previews starting April 30 and opening night May 5.

Alan Ayckbourn, one of the most successful living playwrights, was recently awarded the U.K.'s Critics' Circle Annual Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts and a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theater. He is also The Old Globe's most-produced living playwright. Globe audiences have enjoyed 10 of Ayckbourn's plays since 1978, including the U.S. premieres of *Mr. A's Amazing Maze Plays* and *Intimate Exchanges*.

With *Life of Riley* (Ayckbourn's 74th play) the playwright looks backwards, forwards and, now and then, sideways with wry comic affection on the lives we lived or might have lived. George Riley's closest friends discover that he has just a few months to live and they each deal with the news in their own very surprising way. George has deeply affected each of their lives, and he is now plotting one last final farewell, which could upset all of their futures.

Tickets can be purchased online at TheOldGlobe.org by phone at 619-23-GLOBE or by visiting the box office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.



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Left to right: Rebecca Gold, Dana Green, Ray Chambers, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell, Nisi Sturgis and David Bishins star in the U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's *Life of Riley* at The Old Globe.

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Theatre



Globe to produce U.S. premiere of 'Life of Riley'

By PAM KRAGEN - pkragen@nctimes.com

Production marks the 11th Alan Ayckbourn play produced at the Old Globe.

Apr 27, 2011 | *11:26 am* | No Comments Posted



Director says 'Blue Leaves' blends tragedy and comedy

By PATRICIA MORRIS BUCKLEY - For the North County Times

MiraCosta College presents John Guare's tragic farce from the 1970s.

Apr 27, 2011 | *11:44 am* | No Comments Posted



OPERA REVIEW: Married opera singers make strong role debuts in 'Faust'

By PAM KRAGEN - pkragen@nctimes.com

Baritones nearly steal the show, though.

Apr 27, 2011 | *11:44 am* | No Comments Posted



THEATER REVIEW: Romantic 'Sweet Storm' enjoys poetic turbulence

By DAN BENNETT - For the North County Times

New Village Arts production is well-cast and subtly directed.

Apr 27, 2011 | 11:44 am | No Comments Posted

**Deavere Smith offers stories on life, healing and death in 'Let Me Down Easy'**

By PAM KRAGEN - pkragen@nctimes.com

The "Nurse Jackie" and "West Wing" star plays 20 characters in the solo show opening Wednesday.

Apr 20, 2011 | 10:06 am | No Comments Posted

**New Village's Scott makes directing debut with 'Sweet Storm'**

By PATRICIA MORRIS BUCKLEY - For the North County Times

Two-character drama is the story of newlyweds facing an approaching storm from a tree house.

Apr 20, 2011 | 10:06 am | No Comments Posted

**Married singers team up again for San Diego Opera's 'Faust'**

By CHARLENE BALDRIDGE - For the North County Times

Tenor Stephen Costello and soprano Ailyn Perez are making their debuts in the roles of Faust and Marguerite.

Apr 20, 2011 | 10:06 am | No Comments Posted

**THEATER REVIEW: Comedy sequel 'Moon' shines at North Coast Rep**

By PAM KRAGEN - pkragen@nctimes.com

Solana Beach theater presents the second play in Tom Dudzick's 'Over the Tavern' trilogy.

Apr 20, 2011 | 10:06 am | No Comments Posted



CALIFORNIAN: DJ-turned-comic returns to Temecula

By HOLLY HERNDON - For The Californian

Though he swears his stage is a reference to a fuzzy bunny he knew in junior high, Jorge Aldama, we can't print it in our family newspaper. But, you can find out what that is when Aldama performs this week at the Comedy Club at Pechanga.

Apr 20, 2011 | 2:35 pm | No Comments Posted

**CALIFORNIAN: Husband and wife photographers capture Temecula's history**

By HOLLY HERNDON - For The Californian

Husband and wife photography team Jim and Jeannie Miley have no problem describing the beloved area they have called home for more than 25 years.

Apr 20, 2011 | 2:35 pm | No Comments Posted

THEATER REVIEW: Strong performers add lift to Patio's 'Last Five Years'

By RUTH LEPPER - For the North County Times

"The Last Five Years" is a romantic musical with a twist: It starts out in two directions. On a split set, the male lead, Jamie, tells the story from the first day he met his wife, Cathy. On the other side of the stage, the female lead, Cathy, is telling the same story, but in reverse ---...

Apr 20, 2011 | 10:06 am | No Comments Posted

**THEATER REVIEW: Reality meets fantasy in bold, relevant 'Dreamlandia'**

By DAN BENNETT - For the North County Times

Palomar College production blends myth and reality in creative piece.

Apr 20, 2011 | 10:06 am | No Comments Posted

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Globe to produce U.S. premiere of 'Life of Riley'

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Globe to produce U.S. premiere of 'Life of Riley'

By PAM KRAGEN - pkragen@nctimes.com North County Times - The Californian | Posted: Wednesday, April 27, 2011 11:26 am | No Comments
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[Buy this photo](#) Rebecca Gold, left, Dana Green, Ray Chambers, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell, Nisi Sturgis and David Bishins star in the U.S. Premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's "Life of Riley" at The Old Globe April 30 - June 5, 2011. Photo courtesy of Henry DiRocco



The Old Globe steps back into familiar territory this month with the U.S. premiere of "Life of Riley," the latest comedy by Britain's master of the puzzle play, Sir Alan Ayckbourn.

Since 1978, the Globe has produced 10 of Ayckbourn's plays, many of them directed by the late Craig Noel, the Globe's longtime artistic director. Ayckbourn's plays ---- including "Bedroom Farce," "The Norman Conquests" and "Absurd Person Singular" ---- are known for their intricate timing and creative use of staging. "The Life of Riley" is the 72-year-old playwright's 74th play, and like all of his others, it plays with the conventions of theatricality.

In "Life of Riley," Ayckbourn focuses on the notion of the "off-stage character." In this case, the title character George Riley is never seen onstage during the play. Riley, it turns out, is a middle-aged man dying of cancer, and when his friends find out the dire news, it sets them off on a series of comic misadventures and affairs to make the most of the time George has left.

Richard Seer, who runs the Globe's MFA acting program at the University of San Diego, is directing the play for the Globe and talked about the production last week:

Question: Globe audiences may be familiar with Ayckbourn, but for those who aren't, can you say a bit about him?

Answer: He's one of the few playwrights that writes for theater in the round. All of his plays were written for the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, England, which is a theater in the round. It's a very small enterprise with limited technical capabilities, so he has always come up with some sort of device in each play that makes up for the limitations of working in a small theater in Northern England. It's great that we can do this play in our own theater in the round. It's rare that we have a play that works so well in the space.

Q: Is this the first time you've directed Ayckbourn?

A: It is. For years, people have been saying this is a playwright I should direct because my sensibility and sense of humor are the same as his, but the opportunity didn't come up. That was Craig's territory for many years, so I didn't have the chance.

Q: What's it like working on an Ayckbourn play?

A: Each of his plays has a gimmick. In this one, he's playing with offstage characters. He's also having fun with himself. In this play, the characters are rehearsing a play for a community theater and it turns out they're rehearsing "Relatively Speaking," which was Ayckbourn's first big hit. Nowadays, it's a play that everyone does in community theater, so he's poking fun at his own work.

Q: What's the play about?

A: All of the characters are in their 30s or 40s, and it's mostly about middle-age crisis and relationships and infidelity. There are three couples, and when they find out that George is terminally ill, all of them begin to look at their relationships differently. All of the characters have some relationship with George, and through his actions they begin to reinvestigate how their own relationships work. A lot of his plays are pretty dark, and this play deals with terminal illness, but it's not really dark. It's really quite affirming. When I read it, I thought of Ayckbourn as a man who is looking back with a little less anger and darkness and looking at the sweet parts of his life as well.

Q: Are you enjoying the experience?

A: I love it. I love deluded characters. I think our delusions are what is funny about us and is idiosyncratic about human beings. He's got a whole world of characters who think they're one thing and they're actually something else. As Americans, we tend to think that good people are not self-serving, but the English have a slightly more ironic eye on that subject.

Q: Tell me about your cast.

A: I'm really excited to be working with two of my former students (from the MFA program), Henny Russell and Nisi Sturgis. They've both gone on to terrific careers. And Colin McPhillamy has a long history with the Globe. In fact, he was in the cast when we first did "Relatively Speaking" (in 1980), so he's come full-circle.

"Life of Riley"

When: Opens Saturday and runs through June 5; showtimes, 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Where: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, The Old Globe complex, Balboa Park, 1363 Old Globe Way, San Diego

Tickets: \$29-\$67

Info: 619-234-5623

Web: theoldglobe.org

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"LIFE OF RILEY"

The Old Globe presents the U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's latest British comedy about a dying man and the friends who love him.

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Old Globe to produce U.S. premiere of Ayckbourn's 'Riley'

BY PAM KRAGEN

pkragen@nctimes.com

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tion of the "off-stage character." In this case, the title character George Riley is never seen onstage during the play. Riley, it turns out, is a middle-aged man dying of cancer, and when his friends find out the dire news, it sets them off on a series of comic misadventures and affairs to make the most of the time George has left.



Richard Seer

Richard Seer, who runs the Globe's MFA acting program at the University of San Diego, is directing the play for the Globe and talked about the production last week:

Question: Globe audiences may be familiar with Ayckbourn, but for those who aren't, can you say a bit about him?

Answer: He's one of the few playwrights that writes for theater in the round. All of his plays were written for



Rebecca Gold, left, Dana Green, Ray Chambers, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell, Nisi Sturgis and David Bishins star in "Life of Riley" at The Old Globe. Photo courtesy of Henry DiRocco

the Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough, England, which is a theater in the round. It's a very small enterprise with limited technical capabilities, so he has always come up with some sort of device in each play

that makes up for the limitations of working in a small theater in Northern England. It's great that we can do this play in our own theater in the round. It's rare that we have a play that works so well in the space.



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Page 2 of 2

“Life of Riley”

WHEN Opens Saturday and runs through June 5; showtimes, 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays

WHERE Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, the Old Globe complex, Old Globe Way, Balboa Park, San Diego

TICKETS \$29-\$67

INFO 619-234-5623

www.theoldglobe.org

Q: Is this the first time you've directed Ayckbourn?

A: It is. For years, people have been saying this is a playwright I should direct because my sensibility and sense of humor are the same as his, but the opportunity didn't come up. That was Craig's territory for many years, so I didn't have the chance.

Q: What's it like working on an Ayckbourn play?

A: Each of his plays has a gimmick. In this one, he's playing with offstage characters. He's also having fun with himself. In this play, the characters are rehearsing a play for a community theater and it turns out they're rehearsing “Relatively Speaking,” which was Ayckbourn's first big hit. Nowadays, it's a play that everyone does in community theater, so he's poking fun at his own work.

Q: What's the play about?

A: All of the characters are in their 30s or 40s, and it's mostly about middle-age crisis and relationships and infidelity. There are three couples, and when they find out that George is terminally ill, all of them begin to look at their relationships differently. All of the characters have some relationship with George, and through his actions they begin to reinvestigate how their own relationships work. A lot of his plays are pretty dark, and this play deals with terminal illness, but it's not really dark. It's really quite affirming. When I read it, I thought of Ayckbourn as a man who is looking back with a little less anger and darkness and looking at the sweet parts of his life as well.

Q: Are you enjoying the experience?

A: I love it. I love deluded characters. I think our delusions are what is funny about us and is idiosyncratic about human beings. He's got a whole world of characters who think they're one thing and they're actually something else. As Americans, we tend to think that good people are not self-serving, but the English have a slightly more ironic eye on that subject.

Q: Tell me about your cast.

A: I'm really excited to be working with two of my former students (from the MFA program), Henny Russell and Nisi Sturgis. They've both gone on to terrific careers. And Colin McPhillamy has a long history with the Globe. In fact, he was in the cast when we first did “Relatively Speaking” (in 1980), so he's come full circle.

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Theater preview: 'Riley' gets new life at the Globe

Alan Ayckbourn's comedy crosses the pond for its U.S. premiere

 BY [JAMES HEBERT](#)

THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2011 AT 11:15 A.M.

[Sir Alan Ayckbourn](#)'s plays outnumber his birthdays, and when you're 72 years old, that's evidence of a seriously prolific career.

"Life of Riley" is No. 74 for the much-honored British playwright, and it's a work that takes Ayckbourn in some ways right back to the

beginning, observes Richard Seer, who is directing the barbed comedy's U.S. premiere at the [Old Globe Theatre](#).

"I look at it and say, 'This is somebody who has matured into a different kind of thinker,'" says Seer, a favorite Globe collaborator who also heads the theater's joint MFA program with the University of San Diego.

"His plays early on were very, very dark. They ended often with a near-murder or something shocking about them, much more like the work of the playwrights he grew up with — (Harold) Pinter and some of those other black-comedy writers."

Over the years, though, Ayckbourn became known far more for his comic — sometimes farcical — style in such plays as "[Absurd Person Singular](#)," "[Communicating Doors](#)" and 1973's masterful, interlocking "Norman Conquests" trilogy, which had a strong Broadway revival two years ago. (Cygnet Theatre also [did "Norman"](#) last year, and "[Doors](#)" in 2007.)

Ayckbourn received a Tony Award for lifetime achievement last year.

"Life of Riley" plays off his career arc in a sneakily self-referential way. Although, as Seer describes it, the play is not the giddiest of Ayckbourn comedies ("It's plenty funny, believe me, but not *simply* funny"), it actually incorporates part of the writer's own theatrical history.



/ HENRY DIROCCO

Rebecca Gold, Dana Green, Ray Chambers, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell, Nisi Sturgis and David Bishins (left to right) star in Alan Ayckbourn's "Life of Riley" at the Old Globe Theatre.

DETAILS

"Life of Riley"

Old Globe Theatre

When: Previews begin April 30. Opens May 5.
Schedule: 7 p.m. Tuesdays-Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Fridays; 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays (no matinee May 21); 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays (no matinee today); plus 2 p.m. May 18. Through June 5.

Where: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

Tickets: \$29-\$67

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Online: theoldglobe.org

The story revolves around key character George (the “Riley” of the title), who has just learned that he has only a few months to live. One of his responses to that news is to join up with an amateur theatrical troupe, which is rehearsing a play that turns out to be “Relatively Speaking” — the 1965 play that was Ayckbourn’s first hit.

“To include his first big success in this play is kind of coming full circle,” Seer says. “‘Relatively Speaking’ is a clearly comic play — it has very few underpinnings of something more serious. As a consequence, it’s probably done more than any other (Ayckbourn play). So he’s commenting on that.

“This is a playwright who has such an incredible gift for comedy, who is saying in his later career: ‘Yes, but I can be a serious playwright.’”

Seer adds that Ayckbourn, who suffered a stroke a few years ago, seems “much more aware of mortality now, and he’s writing about mortality in this play. And he’s writing with a view to what his previous success and his life have been about.”

There’s another little twist to “Life of Riley,” and it becomes apparent if you scan the cast list to see who’s playing George. The answer: Nobody. The play’s namesake never steps onstage.

Instead, his influence is witnessed through the reactions and flailings of his friends, his estranged wife and his onetime flame. (At the Globe, they’re played by David Bishins, [Ray Chambers](#), Rebecca Gold, Dana Green, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell and Nisi Sturgis.)

“It’s hard for us to laugh if there’s someone there struggling with a terminal disease,” as Seer puts it. “So (Ayckbourn) wisely keeps him out of sight. And we watch these people turn his tragedy into their own.”

Seer notes that Ayckbourn has a special place at the Globe: He was a favorite of the late founding director, [Craig Noel](#), and his works have been produced at the Balboa Park theater nearly a dozen times over the years.

But staging the U.S. premiere of an Ayckbourn play — not to mention just the second production anywhere — ranks as “a rare privilege,” the director adds.

The first company to produce “Life of Riley” was the playwright’s own [Stephen Joseph Theatre](#) (named for an important early mentor of Ayckbourn’s) in [Scarborough, England](#), last year. Like the space where the Globe’s staging unfolds, Ayckbourn’s performance home is an arena-style theater.

“He writes plays that can and perhaps should be done in the round,” says Seer. “So the fit with our White Theatre is sort of perfect.”

And it’s one other way in which “Life of Riley” brings this major figure of the modern stage full circle.

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LIFE OF AYCKBOURN

Prolific playwright gets self-referential,
introspective about mortality in 'Life of Riley'

JAMES HEBERT • U-T

Sir Alan Ayckbourn's plays outnumber his birthdays, and when you're 72 years old, that's evidence of a seriously prolific career.

"Life of Riley" is No. 74 for the much-honored British playwright, and it's a work that takes Ayckbourn in some ways right back to the beginning, observes Richard Seer, who is directing the barbed comedy's U.S. premiere at the Old Globe Theatre.

"I look at it and say, 'This is somebody who has matured into a different kind of thinker,'" says Seer, a favorite Globe collaborator who also heads the theater's joint MFA program with the University of San Diego.

"His plays early on were very, very dark. They ended often with a near-murder or something shocking about them, much more like the work of the playwrights he grew up with — (Harold) Pinter and some of those other black-comedy writers."

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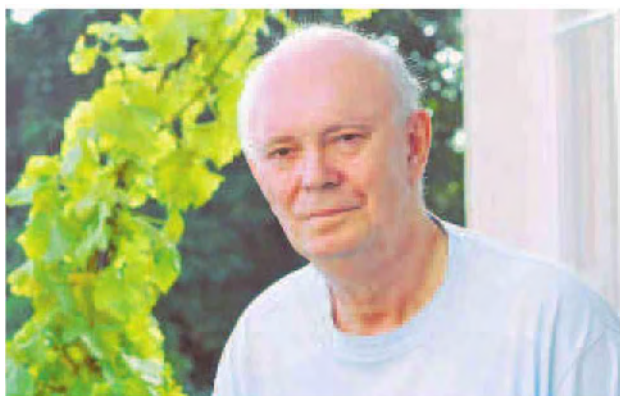


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Playwright Alan Ayckbourn. TONY BARTHOLOMEW

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Bishop's School student lands a role in The Old Globe's 'Life of Riley'

By Diana Saenger

Sir Alan Ayckbourn, who received a special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theater, sees his 74th (and newest) play, "Life of Riley," have its U.S. premiere at the Old Globe Theatre in Balboa Park under the direction of Richard Seer, now through June 5. The Old Globe has staged 10 of Ayckbourn's plays since 1978.



Rebecca Gold, Dana Green, Ray Chambers, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell, Nisi Sturgis and David Bishins star in the U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's 'Life of Riley,' at The Old Globe. Photo by Henry DiRocco.

Enter someone newer to the footlights, Rebecca Gold, a senior at The Bishop's School in La Jolla, who is making her first professional appearance in the role of Tilly. Gold played Celia in The Globe's 2010 Shakespeare Intensive production of "As You Like It," and caught a casting director's eye.

"I became aware of the Shakespeare Intensive program for students when our teacher saw an ad and told us about it," Gold said. "I auditioned and got a call back along with 30 other San Diego students. It was an incredible opportunity to participate in workshops with professional actors and the Globe's costume designers. I also enjoyed getting to meet new students. It felt a little like what going to college will be like."

Gold has been active in The Bishop's School theater program and recently played Yvette in its production of "Mother Courage and Her Children." Gold said she thought her experience with The Globe was behind her until she received a call from casting director Samantha Barrie who told her she was impressed with Gold's performances.

"She called on my birthday to ask if I wanted the role of Tilly, and I was so excited," Gold said. "They needed a 16-year-old girl for a non-speaking part and I was thrilled to take it."

The lighthearted "Life of Riley" centers on the dying George Riley, a cantankerous (though never seen) old man. He decides to have a last farewell for his close friends, and when each one learns of his plight, they react in unexpected ways.

“This is the story of three couples whose women have been involved with George in some way,” Gold said. “When he asks each woman to come on a holiday with him and take care of him in his final days, at first they agree. Eventually the women are convinced not to go.”

While her thoughts are wrapped around her role, Gold said she is also focused on her future. Her family is supportive of her interest in acting because she said she grew up watching her older brother perform. She’s been accepted to Stanford University where she will begin this fall.



Rebecca Gold

“I feel like I have learned so much about myself, other people, and the way people react to one another as an actress,” Gold said. “It’s an amazing art form, and I feel so lucky to have had acting experiences through high school. I chose Stanford because I want to continue my academic studies, but also my acting, and Stanford has both programs.”

Gold said she believes “Life of Riley” will appeal to a wide range of patrons because “it’s very fun, and George is like a hippie Peter Pan who never gets old and wants a fun life forever.

“The play contains some great classic music,” she said, “and is easily relatable to everyone as they watch how couples see things change from their 30s to 40s and beyond.”

If you go

What: “Life of Riley”

When: Matinees and evenings through June 5

Where: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre,

1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

Tickets: \$29-\$67

Contact: (619) 23-GLOBE

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Bishop's student lands a role in The Globe's 'Life of Riley'

BY DIANA SAENGER
Contributor

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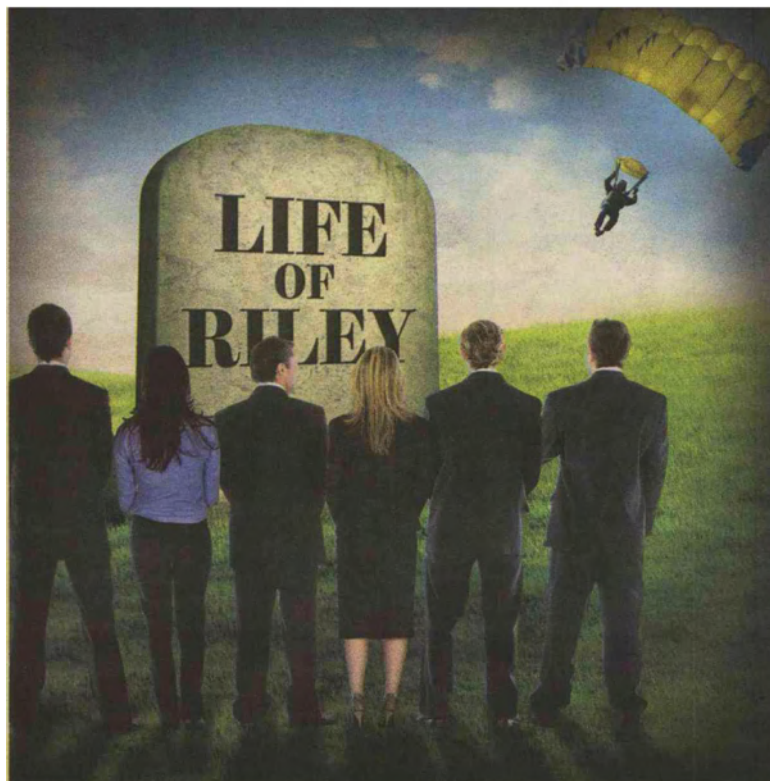
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'Life of Riley' to Open

The U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's new comedy, "Life of Riley," will be staged beginning May 4 in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre — part of The Old Globe's Conrad Prebys Theatre Center — under the direction of Richard Seer. One of the world's most successful playwrights, Ayckbourn holds the U.K.'s Critics' Circle annual Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts and a special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the theater. Audiences at the Globe have witnessed 10 of Ayckbourn's plays since 1978, including the U.S. premieres of "Mr. A's Amazing Maze Plays" and "Intimate Exchanges." "Life of Riley" is Ayckbourn's 74th play.

The cast of "Life of Riley" features David Bishins (Simeon), Ray Chambers (Jack), Rebecca Gold (Tilly), Dana Green (Tamsin), Colin McPhillamy (Colin), Henny Russell (Kathryn) and Nisi Sturgis (Monica). The creative team includes Robert Morgan (Scenic and Costume Design), Chris Rynne (Lighting Design), Paul Peterson (Sound Design), Jan Gist (Dialect Coach) and Elizabeth Stephens (Stage Manager).

Performances continue through June 5. Ticket prices range from \$29 to \$67. Regular Performances: Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8 p.m., Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2 p.m. and Sunday evenings at 7 p.m. There is also a Wednesday matinee on May 18 at 2:00 p.m. and no Saturday matinee performance on May 21. Discounts are available for full-time students, patrons 29 years of age and under, seniors and groups of 10 or more.



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April 07, 2011



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Bon Voyage! *Anything Goes*, With Sutton Foster and Joel Grey, Opens on Broadway

Anything Goes, the Cole Porter musical about the lovers, liars and clowns on a transatlantic cruise, opens April 7 in a Broadway revival starring Sutton Foster, Joel Grey, Laura Osnes and Colin Donnell.

Related Multimedia

Henny Russell, Colin McPhillamy, David Bishins Among *Life of Riley* Troupers in U.S. Premiere

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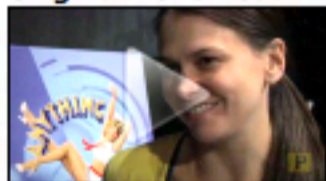
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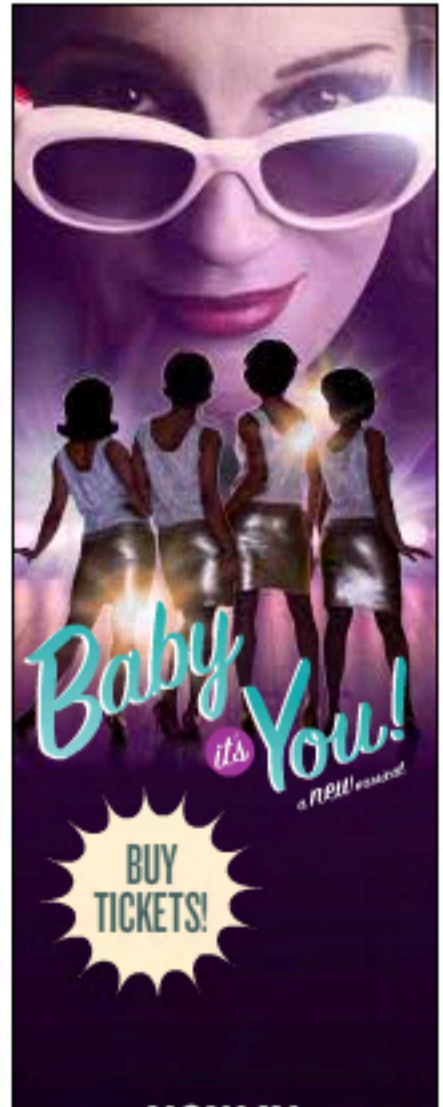
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Henny Russell, Colin McPhillamy, David Bishins Among Life of Riley Troupers in U.S. Premiere

By [Kenneth Jones](#)

07 Apr 2011

The U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's new comedy, *Life of Riley*, at The Old Globe, will feature David Bishins, Ray Chambers, Rebecca Gold, Dana Green, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell and Nisi Sturgis.

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Directed by Richard Seer, *Life of Riley* — Ayckbourn's 74th play — will run in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, part of The Old Globe's Conrad Prebys Theatre Center April 30-June 5. Opening night is May 5.

In *Life of Riley*, according to Old Globe, "the playwright looks backwards, forwards and, now and then, sideways with wry comic affection on the lives we lived or might have lived. George Riley's closest friends discover that he has just a few months to live and they each deal with the news in their own very surprising way. George has deeply affected each of their lives, and he is now plotting one last final farewell, which could upset all of their futures."

The creative team includes Robert Morgan (scenic and costume design), Chris Rynne (lighting design), Paul Peterson (sound design), Jan Gist (dialect coach) and Elizabeth Stephens (stage manager).

Ayckbourn's plays include *Relatively Speaking*, *How the Other Half Loves*, *Absurd Person Singular*, *Bedroom Farce*, *A Chorus of Disapproval*, *The Norman Conquests*, *A Small Family Business*, *Henceforward...*, *Comic Potential*, *Things We Do For Love*, *House & Garden* and *My Wonderful Day*, among others.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park

in San Diego, CA.



Rebecca Gold, Dana Green, Ray Chambers, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell, Nisi Sturgis and David Bishins
photo by Henry DiRocco

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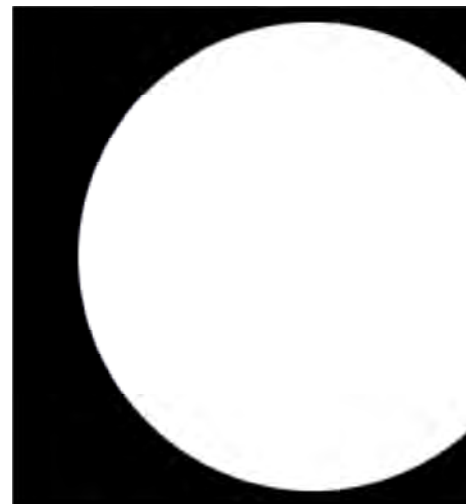
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David Bishins, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell et al. Set for Old Globe's *Life of Riley*

By: **Dan Bacalzo** · Apr 7, 2011 · San Diego

The Old Globe has announced complete casting for the U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's new comedy, *Life of Riley*, to be presented April 30-June 5, with an opening on May 5. Richard Seer will direct.

In the play, George Riley's closest friends discover that he has just a few months to live and they each deal with the news in their own very surprising way. George has deeply affected each of their lives, and he is now plotting one last final farewell, which could upset all of their futures.

The cast will feature David Bishins (Simeon), Ray Chambers (Jack), Rebecca Gold (Tilly), Dana Green (Tamsin), Colin McPhillamy (Colin), Henny Russell (Kathryn) and Nisi Sturgis (Monica).

The creative team will include Robert Morgan (scenic and costume design), Chris Rynne (lighting design), and Paul Peterson (sound design).

For tickets and more information, [click here](#).



Rebecca Gold, Dana Green, Ray Chambers, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell, Nisi Sturgis and David Bishins
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David Bishins, Ray Chambers Lead Old Globe's LIFE OF RILEY 4/30-5/4



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Thursday, April 7, 2011; Posted: 03:04 PM - by [BWW News Desk](#)[Share](#) |[Like](#)[Sign Up to see what your friends like.](#)

Executive Producer [Lou Spisto](#) today announced the complete cast and creative team for the U.S. premiere of [Alan Ayckbourn](#)'s new comedy, *Life of Riley*. Directed by [Richard Seer](#), *Life of Riley* will run in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, part of [The Old Globe](#)'s Conrad Prebys Theatre Center, April 30 - June 5. Preview performances run April 30 - May 4. Opening night is Thursday, May 5 at 8:00 p.m.

Tickets can be purchased online at

www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.

Sir [Alan Ayckbourn](#), one of the world's most successful living playwrights, was recently awarded the U.K.'s Critics' Circle Annual Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts and a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theater. He is also [The Old Globe](#)'s most-produced living playwright. Globe audiences have enjoyed 10 of Ayckbourn's plays since 1978, including the U.S. premieres of Mr. A's *Amazing Maze* Plays and *Intimate Exchanges*.

With *Life of Riley* (Sir Alan's 74th play!) the playwright looks backwards, forwards and, now and then, sideways with wry comic affection on the lives we lived or might have lived. George Riley's closest friends discover that he has just a few months to live and they each deal with the news in their own very surprising way. George has deeply affected each of their lives, and he is now plotting one last final farewell, which could upset all of their futures.

The cast of *Life of Riley* features [David Bishins](#) (Simeon), Ray Chambers (Jack), [Rebecca Gold](#) (Tilly), [Dana Green](#) (Tamsin), [Colin McPhillamy](#) (Colin), [Henny Russell](#) (Kathryn) and [Nisi Sturgis](#) (Monica).

The creative team includes [Robert Morgan](#) (Scenic and Costume Design), Chris Rynne (Lighting Design), [Paul Peterson](#) (Sound Design), Jan Gist (Dialect Coach) and Elizabeth Stephens (Stage Manager).

Playwright [Alan Ayckbourn](#) was born in Hampstead in 1939 to a violinist father and a mother who was a writer. No doubt he inherited their creativity but a bigger gift was his first close-up view of two people who couldn't be happy together. By 1945 they had split up and in 1948 his mother married her bank manager. Utterly incompatible, she had a complete breakdown before Alan persuaded her to leave home. He left school at 17 with two 'A' levels and an exhaustive knowledge of miserable relationships perceived through the woman's eyes which may explain so much of his writing. Two years in regional theater as an actor and stage manager led in 1959 to the writing of his first play *The Square Cat* for Scarborough's Theatre In The Round at the instigation of his then employer and subsequent mentor, [Stephen Joseph](#). Some 74 plays later, his work has been translated into over 35 languages, is performed on stage and television throughout the world and has won countless awards. There have been English and French screen adaptations, the most notable being Alain Resnais' fine film of *Private Fears in Public Places*. Major successes include *Relatively Speaking*, *How the Other Half Loves*, *Absurd Person Singular*, *Bedroom Farce*, *A Chorus of Disapproval*, *The Norman Conquests* (recently revived to great acclaim by [Matthew Warchus](#)), *A Small Family Business*, *Henceforward...*, *Comic Potential*, *Things We Do For Love*, *House & Garden* and *My Wonderful Day*. He is also a noted director and it was only in 2009 that he retired as Artistic Director of the [Stephen Joseph](#) Theatre, Scarborough, a post he held for 37 years. Indeed, he would perhaps consider his greatest achievement to be the establishment of this permanent home for the Theatre in the



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Round company he first worked for all those years ago when the splendid two auditoria complex fashioned from a former Odeon Cinema opened in 1996. His current plans include the world premiere of Dear Uncle, an adaptation of [Anton Chekhov's](#) Uncle Vanya and, in the autumn of this year, the premiere of his 75th play Neighbourhood Watch. In addition to the many honorary degrees and other awards he has received, he was recently inducted in to American Theatre's Hall of Fame, received the Society of London Theatres' Special Award and this year has been honoured with a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre as well as the Critics' Circle Award for services to the arts. He was knighted in 1997. www.alanayckbourn.net.

Director [Richard Seer](#) is an award-winning director and actor and has directed and/or performed on Broadway, Off Broadway, on film and television and in over 70 productions at regional theaters in this country and Great Britain, including The Kennedy Center, [Goodman Theatre](#), Stratford Shakespeare Festival, [Brooklyn Academy Of Music](#), [Huntington Theatre Company](#), Playwrights Theater, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Studio Arena Theater, Edinburgh Festival Fringe and the [Sybil Thorndike](#) Theatre in England. He originated the role of Young Charlie in the 1978 Tony Award-winning Broadway production of [Hugh Leonard's](#) Da and received the [Theatre World](#) Award for his performance. At [The Old Globe](#), he has directed productions of The Last Romance, The Price, Romeo and Juliet, Who's Afraid of [Virginia Woolf?](#), Trying, Fiction, Blue/Orange (San Diego Critics Circle Award), All My Sons, Da and Old Wicked Songs (Patté Award). Recent directing assignments also include Third ([Huntington Theatre Company](#)) and Sonia Flew (San Jose Repertory Theatre). He received his M.F.A. in directing from Boston University, where he was awarded the prestigious Kahn Directing Award in 1985. In 1990, Seer was invited to return to Boston University's School for the Arts as an Associate Professor of Acting and Directing. He has been Director of [The Old Globe](#)/University of San Diego Graduate Theatre Program since 1993. In 2010, he was awarded the [Craig Noel](#) Distinguished Professorship.

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David Bishins, Ray Chambers Lead Old Globe's LIFE OF RILEY 4/30-5/4



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Thursday, April 7, 2011; Posted: 03:04 PM - by [BWW News Desk](#)

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TICKETS to Life of Riley can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Performances at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre begin on April 30 and continue through June 5. Ticket prices range from \$29 to \$67. Performance times: Previews: Saturday, April 30 at 8:00 p.m., Sunday, May 1 at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, May 2 at 7:00 p.m. and Wednesday, May 3 at 7:00 p.m. Regular Performances: Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m. and Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. There is also a Wednesday matinee on May 18 at 2:00 p.m. and no Saturday matinee performance on May 21. Discounts are available for full-time students, patrons 29 years of age and under, seniors and groups of 10 or more.

Associated events taking place during the run of Life of Riley include:

INSIGHTS SEMINAR: Life of Riley
Monday, May 2 at 7:00 p.m. FREE
Insight Seminars are informal presentations of ideas and insights to enhance the theater-going experience. The seminars feature a panel selected from the artistic company of each production and take place in the theater where the production is performed. Reception, 6:30 p.m. Seminar, 7:00 p.m. Admission is free and reservations are not required.

POST-SHOW FORUMS: Life of Riley
Tuesdays, May 10 and 31 and Wednesday, May 18. FREE
Discuss the play with members of the Life of Riley cast and crew at post-show discussions led by the Globe's creative staff after the performances.

OUT AT THE GLOBE: Friday, May 27 at 6:30 p.m. \$20
An evening for gay and lesbian theater lovers and the whole LGBT community, Out at the Globe includes a hosted wine and martini bar, appetizers and door prizes. \$20 per person. RSVP at (619) 23-GLOBE. (Tickets to Life of Riley are sold separately.)

THANK GLOBE IT'S FRIDAY: Fridays, May 13 and 20 at 6:30 p.m. \$20
Kick off the weekend with the Globe's Friday pre-show bash. TGIF includes a hosted wine and martini bar, appetizers and desserts. \$20 per person. RSVP at (619) 23-GLOBE. (Tickets to Life of Riley are sold separately.)

LOCATION: [The Old Globe](#) is located in San Diego's Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. There are numerous free parking lots available throughout the park. Valet parking is also available (\$10). For additional parking information visit www.BalboaPark.org.

The Tony Award-winning Old Globe is one of the country's leading professional regional theaters and has stood as San Diego's flagship arts institution for 75 years. Under the direction of Executive Producer [Louis G. Spisto](#), [The Old Globe](#) produces a year-round season of 15 productions of classic, contemporary and new works on its three Balboa Park stages: the 600-seat [Old Globe Theatre](#) and the 250-seat Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, which are both part of [The Old Globe's](#) Conrad Prebys Theatre Center, and the 612-seat outdoor Lowell Davies [Festival Theatre](#), home of its internationally renowned Shakespeare Festival. More than 250,000 people attend Globe productions annually and participate in the theater's education and community programs. Numerous world premieres such as The Full Monty, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, A Catered Affair, and the annual holiday musical, [Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas!](#), have been developed at [The Old Globe](#) and have gone on to enjoy highly successful runs on Broadway and at regional theaters across the country.



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Thursday, April 7, 2011; Posted: 02:04 PM - by [BWV News Desk](#)[Share](#) |[Like](#)[Sign Up to see what your friends like.](#)

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The creative team includes [Robert Morgan](#) (Scenic and Costume Design), Chris Rynne (Lighting Design), [Paul Peterson](#) (Sound Design), Jan Gist (Dialect Coach) and Elizabeth Stephens (Stage Manager).

Playwright [Alan Ayckbourn](#) was born in Hampstead in 1939 to a violinist father and a mother who was a writer. No doubt he inherited their creativity but a bigger gift was his first close-up view of two people who couldn't be happy together. By 1945 they had split up and in 1948 his mother married her bank manager. Utterly incompatible, she had a complete breakdown before Alan persuaded her to leave home. He left school at 17 with two 'A' levels and an exhaustive knowledge of miserable relationships perceived through the woman's eyes which may explain so much of his writing. Two years in regional theater as an actor and stage manager led in 1959 to the writing of his first play The Square Cat for Scarborough's Theatre In the Round at the instigation of his then employer and subsequent mentor, [Stephen Joseph](#). Some 74 plays later, his work has been translated into over 35 languages, is performed on stage and television throughout the world and has won countless awards. There have been English and French screen adaptations, the most notable being Alain Resnais' fine film of Private Fears in Public Places. Major successes include Relatively Speaking, How the Other Half Loves, Absurd Person Singular, Bedroom Farce, A Chorus of Disapproval, The Norman Conquests (recently revived to great acclaim by [Matthew Warchus](#)), A Small Family Business, Henceforward..., Comic Potential, Things We Do For Love, House & Garden and My Wonderful Day. He is also a noted director and it was only in 2009 that he retired as Artistic Director of the [Stephen Joseph](#) Theatre, Scarborough, a post he held for 37 years. Indeed, he would perhaps consider his greatest achievement to be the establishment of this permanent home for the Theatre in the Round company he first worked for all those years ago when the splendid two auditoria complex fashioned from a former Odeon Cinema opened in 1996. His current plans include the world premiere of Dear Uncle, an adaptation of [Anton Chekhov](#)'s Uncle Vanya and, in the autumn of this year, the premiere of his 75th play Neighbourhood Watch. In addition to the many honorary degrees and other awards he has received, he was recently inducted in to American Theatre's Hall of Fame, received the Society of London Theatres' Special Award and this year has been honoured with a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre as well as the Critics' Circle Award for services to the arts. He was knighted in 1997. [www.alanayckbourn.net](#).

Director [Richard Seer](#) is an award-winning director and actor and has directed and/or



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performed on Broadway, Off Broadway, on film and television and in over 70 productions at regional theaters in this country and Great Britain, including The Kennedy Center, [Goodman Theatre](#), Stratford Shakespeare Festival, [Brooklyn Academy Of Music](#), [Huntington Theatre Company](#), Playwrights Theater, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Studio Arena Theater, Edinburgh Festival Fringe and the [Sybil Thorndike Theatre](#) in England. He originated the role of Young Charlie in the 1978 Tony Award-winning Broadway production of [Hugh Leonard's](#) Da and received the [Theatre World](#) Award for his performance. At [The Old Globe](#), he has directed productions of *The Last Romance*, *The Price*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Trying*, *Fiction*, *Blue/Orange* (San Diego Critics Circle Award), *All My Sons*, *Da* and *Old Wicked Songs* (Patté Award). Recent directing assignments also include *Third* ([Huntington Theatre Company](#)) and *Sonia Flew* (San Jose Repertory Theatre). He received his M.F.A. in directing from Boston University, where he was awarded the prestigious Kahn Directing Award in 1985. In 1990, Seer was invited to return to Boston University's School for the Arts as an Associate Professor of Acting and Directing. He has been Director of [The Old Globe/University](#) of San Diego Graduate Theatre Program since 1993. In 2010, he was awarded the [Craig Noel](#) Distinguished Professorship.

TICKETS to Life of Riley can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Performances at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre begin on April 30 and continue through June 5. Ticket prices range from \$29 to \$67. Performance times: Previews: Saturday, April 30 at 8:00 p.m., Sunday, May 1 at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, May 2 at 7:00 p.m. and Wednesday, May 3 at 7:00 p.m. Regular Performances: Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m. and Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. There is also a Wednesday matinee on May 18 at 2:00 p.m. and no Saturday matinee performance on May 21. Discounts are available for full-time students, patrons 29 years of age and under, seniors and groups of 10 or more.

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Henny Russell, Colin McPhillamy, David Bishins Among Life of Riley Troupers in U.S. Premiere

By [Kenneth Jones](#)
07 Apr 2011

The U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's new comedy, *Life of Riley*, at The Old Globe, will feature David Bishins, Ray Chambers, Rebecca Gold, Dana Green, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell and Nisi Sturgis.

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Directed by Richard Seer, *Life of Riley* — Ayckbourn's 74th play — will run in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, part of The Old Globe's Conrad Prebys Theatre Center April 30-June 5. Opening night is May 5.

In *Life of Riley*, according to Old Globe, "the playwright looks backwards, forwards and, now and then, sideways with wry comic affection on the lives we lived or might have lived. George Riley's closest friends discover that he has just a few months to live and they each deal with the news in their own very surprising way. George has deeply affected each of their lives, and he is now plotting one last final farewell, which could upset all of their futures."

The creative team includes Robert Morgan (scenic and costume design), Chris Rynne (lighting design), Paul Peterson (sound design), Jan Gist (dialect coach) and Elizabeth Stephens (stage manager).

Ayckbourn's plays include *Relatively Speaking*, *How the Other Half Loves*, *Absurd Person Singular*, *Bedroom Farce*, *A Chorus of Disapproval*, *The Norman Conquests*, *A Small Family Business*, *Henceforward...*, *Comic Potential*, *Things We Do For Love*, *House & Garden* and *My Wonderful Day*, among others.

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Mark Montgomery and Jenny Bacon
Credit: Liz Lauren

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Jenny Bacon plays the leading lady at the center of Goodman Theatre's world-premiere production of Pulitzer Prize finalist Sarah Ruhl's *Stage Kiss*, billed as an offbeat fairy tale about theatrical intimacy, April 30-June 5.

Alan Ayckbourn's *Life of Riley* Gets U.S. Premiere at Old Globe Starting April 30

The American premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's new comedy, *Life of Riley*, at The Old Globe, begins April 30 in anticipation of a May 5 opening night. The company features David Bishins, Ray Chambers, Rebecca Gold, Dana Green, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell and Nisi Sturgis.



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Alan Ayckbourn's *Life of Riley* Gets U.S. Premiere at Old Globe Starting April 30

By [Kenneth Jones](#)
30 Apr 2011



Alan Ayckbourn

with wry comic affection on the lives we lived or might have lived. George Riley's closest friends discover that he has just a few months to live and they each deal with the news in their own very surprising way. George has deeply affected each of their lives, and he is now plotting one last final farewell, which could upset all of their futures."

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In *Life of Riley*, according to Old Globe, "the playwright looks backwards,

forwards and, now and then, sideways with wry comic affection on the lives we lived or might have lived. George Riley's closest friends discover that he has just a few months to live and they each deal with the news in their own very surprising way. George has deeply affected each of their lives, and he is now plotting one last final farewell, which could upset all of their futures."

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Rebecca Gold, Dana Green, Ray Chambers, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell, Nisi Sturgis and David Bishins
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Henny Russell as Kathryn, Dana Green as Tamsin, Ray Chambers as Jack and [Colin McPhillamy](#) as Colin

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(from left) Dana Green as Tamsin and Henny Russell as Kathryn



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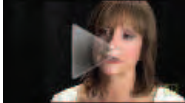
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Alan Ayckbourn's *Life of Riley* Opens May 5 in U.S. Premiere at Old GlobeThe American premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's new comedy, *Life of Riley*, opens at The Old Globe May 5. The tale of a man on borrowed time features David Bishins, Ray Chambers, Rebecca Gold, Dana Green, Colin McPhillamy, Henry Russell and Nisi Sturgis.LOMBARDI "SEE THIS PLAY!" GET TICKETS
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PHOTO CALL: Alan Ayckbourn's *Life of Riley* at San Diego's Old Globe

By Krissie Fullerton
05 May 2011

The American premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's new comedy, *Life of Riley*, opens at The Old Globe May 5 following previews that began April 30.

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In *Life of Riley*, according to Old Globe, "the playwright looks backwards, forwards and, now and then, sideways with wry comic affection on the lives we lived or might have lived. George Riley's closest friends discover that he has just a few months to live and they each deal with the news in their own very surprising way. George has deeply affected each of their lives, and he is now plotting one last final farewell, which could upset all of their futures."

The cast of *Life of Riley* features David Bishins, Ray Chambers, Rebecca Gold, Dana Green, Colin McPhillamy, Henny Russell and Nisi Sturgis.

Here's a look at the production:

View the Entire Photo Gallery



Dana Green and Ray Chambers
Photo by Henry DiRocco

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Scraping the barrel of the Netflix on-demand options? Here are four good reasons to skip that next goofball comedy and head to Balboa Park for a fun & fabulous evening instead.

Hoppy History

The San Diego History Center is hosting its annual Taste of San Diego Micro Brews event on June 4, from 6-10pm. The event celebrates the history of brewing in San Diego and recognizes local breweries that are making an impact on the national scene with their award-winning craft beers. Taste beers from Karl Strauss, Rock Bottom, Stone Brewing, Ballast Point, Alesmith Brewing, Port Brewing, and Lost Abbey. Other highlights include a logo design contest and a commemorative/ collaborative beer brewed exclusively for the event. Last year's event sold out; tickets are available through the History Center's website.

Black Tie Optional

For an elegant affair, join the San Diego Air & Space Museum for its Studs & Starlets fundraising event on Saturday, May 7. Actor Mickey Rooney will be the special guest for this evening, which also includes dinner, a hosted bar, live jazz entertainment, dancing, red carpet photos, and access to the museum's exhibitions. Be sure to check out SPACE and the 3D/4D Zable Theatre—and keep an eye out for the celebrity impersonators.

Off-Beat Theatre

Have a drink or a bite to eat at Lady Carolyn's Pub then enjoy the U.S. premiere of the play *Life of Riley* at The Old Globe. A quirkier pick than one of the Summer Shakespeare plays, the comedy follows character George Riley, whose closest friends discover that he has just a few months to live. His friends each deal with the news in their own surprising ways while he plots a final farewell. According to the Globe, the "playwright looks backwards, forwards and, now and then, sideways with wry comic affection on the lives we lived or might have lived." Go on Fridays May 13 or 20 for the Thank Globe It's Friday pre-show party of wine, martinis, light eats and live music.

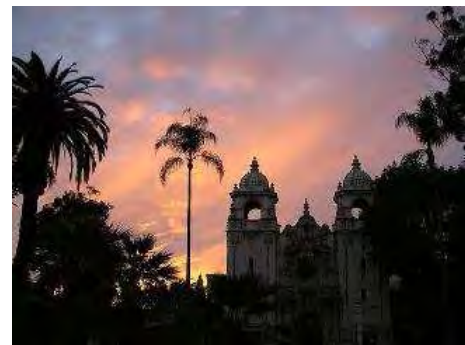
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(http://static.sandiego.com/articlefiles/9c3a8909-1f2c-49fa-b7df-90790afad200/BalboaSunset_DaveWilliam_325.jpg) Balboa Park sunset
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A Merry Month of Entertainment

by Eileen Sondak | [May 2011](#) | [Post your comment »](#)



It's the merry, merry month of May, and the entertainment scene in San Diego is giving arts buffs plenty of reasons for merriment. Some of the shows will tug at your heartstrings or give you food for thought, and you won't have to look far to satisfy your appetite for a perfect evening out.

The San Diego Opera delivers one more matinee of "Faust" May 1 before getting Bizet's "Carmen" ready for a May 14-22 run at the Civic Theatre. One of the most beloved operas of all time, "Carmen" will feature Nino Surguladze and Salvatore Licitra in leading roles, and Edoardo Muller conducting. What a way to end a spectacular season.

Cygnets Theatre's production of "Cabaret" — the sensational, mesmerizing and extremely disturbing musical masterpiece that follows the rise of Nazism amidst the naughty night life of the seedy Kit Kat Klub — will play on at the Old Town Theatre through May 22. Expect an arresting change in this staging. Director Sean Murray transformed the sleazy emcee in this "Cabaret" into a woman (played by Karson St. John), which makes this symbolic character even creepier. The powerful production is appropriately raunchy and ultimately sinister, and it has audiences on their feet for curtain calls. Don't miss it!

The Old Globe will give "August: Osage County" its regional premiere May 7-June 12. This Broadway blockbuster, directed by Sam Gold, is a modern day classic about a dysfunctional family in crisis. Playing at the Globe's White Theatre is Alan Ayckbourn's "Life of Riley," a hilarious offbeat comedy making its U.S. premiere. The deliciously dark comedy continues through June 5.

Aficionados of alfresco entertainment will welcome the arrival of the Globe's Shakespeare Festival, which takes up residency on the outdoor stage May 29. The three-show season will run in rotating repertory through Sept. 25. The Bard's "Much Ado About Nothing" will start the ball rolling, with its delightfully ill-matched lovers trading barbs with comic results. "The Tempest" will begin June 5 and Peter Shaffer's "Amadeus" will be added to the rotation June 12.

The La Jolla Playhouse will launch its season May 17 with a world premiere. "A Dram of Drummhicit," directed by Christopher Ashley, will remain at the Mandell Weiss Theatre through June 12.

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May 4th, 2011

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ON STAGE

Many theaters are wrapping up their 2010 - 2011 seasons, but there are plenty of other options to fill the gap. **The Old Globe** has two new productions.

To celebrate its 75th anniversary, **through June 5**, the theater hosts Alan Ayckbourn's U.S. premiere of **"Life of Riley."** The hilarious comedy examines how George Riley's closest friends deal with the news of his impending death. Cost: \$29 - \$56.

Beginning **Saturday, May 7**, you'll have five weeks to catch the 2008 Tony Award for Best Play and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama -- **"August: Osage County."** This "modern day masterpiece" examines the dysfunctional dynamics of a family reunited under unpleasant events. Cost: \$29 - \$56.

ENLARGE



Sam Shepard's **"Curse of the Starving Class"** opens **Friday, May 6** at the 10th Avenue Theatre, located at 930 10th Ave in San Diego. This look at the American class system is studded with harsh realities, yet its conflicting views of the American Dream are hilariously amusing. Cost: \$15 to \$25 -- or pay what you can on Sunday, May 8.

Travel from Argentina to South Asia with two special performances at the **Balboa Theatre**. On **Friday, May 6** sit back and enjoy **King Clave and Leo Dan**, two legendary Argentinean entertainers, as they perform several Spanish musical numbers. Cost: \$51 - \$97. Then on **Saturday, May 7**, support UCSD students raise funds to help prevent sex-trafficking of young girls, by enjoying a diverse evening full of music, dance, and drama -- the **19th Annual Culture Show: Taal Se Taal Mila**. Cost: \$18.

NEED A LAUGH?

Tonight at the **Whistle Stop Bar**, the **F*** Alt Comedy** troupe featuring comedians Jonathan Fraser, April Ventura, Matt Burke, Bob Hansen, Dan Venti, Rajan Dharni, and Christian Spicer kicks off its monthly *free* show at 9 pm.

Brew Ha Ha Comedy Entertainment brings back one of their most requested headliners, **Anita Milner** on **Friday, May 6**, at **Island Juice**, 6784 El Cajon Blvd. Cost: *Free*. Check out Milner's comedy clip from her Pechanga performances:



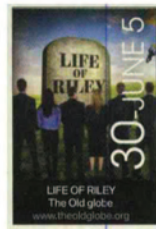
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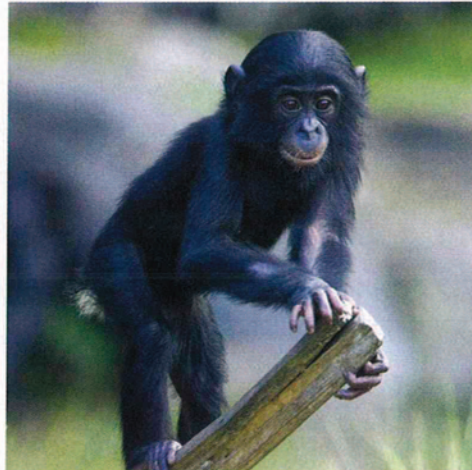
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EXPLORING

Balboa Park



Left to right: the graceful architecture of the House of Hospitality; a bonobo at play at the San Diego Zoo (located inside the park); the **Old Globe Theatre**.

Art, music and
performance
bloom year-round.

Spanning 1,200 acres of lush, beautifully landscaped terrain, Balboa Park is known as San Diego's "crown jewel," offering a variety of outdoor recreation options for kids and adults alike, not to mention a verdant respite from the bustle of the city's increasingly metropolitan pace. The park is also the seat of San Diego's thriving cultural scene.

Nestled between palm trees and botanical gardens, ornate Spanish Colonial buildings house many of the park's museums and art exhibits. Several of the buildings were constructed as part of two world fairs: the Panama-California Exposition in 1915-16, and the California-Pacific International Exposition in 1935-36.

It can take more than one day to see and enjoy each museum, garden and attraction. The **Visitors Center** (619.239.0512) in the House of Hospitality offers a Passport to Balboa Park, allowing admission to any of the park's museums for one week. (Keep in mind some museums are closed on Mondays.) Deluxe packages include passes to the neighboring **San Diego Zoo**. Or go high-tech and let the park's new iPhone app be your guide.

ARTS & CULTURE

Performing arts abound in the park. The **Old Globe Theatre** routinely presents top talent in world-renowned productions; spring features include *Rafta, Rafta...*, about the honeymoon of an Indian couple living in working-class London (March 19-April 24), Alan Ayckbourn's new comedy *Life of Riley* (April 30-June 5) and the Pulitzer-winning *August: Osage County* (May 7-June 12; see p. 51 for more theater listings).

Elsewhere in the park, the **Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theatre** presents whimsical puppet shows, while **Spreckels Organ Pavilion** houses the world's largest outdoor pipe organ, with some 4,500 pipes. Free concerts are offered Sundays at 2 pm.

The park is also home to groups celebrating culture. The **House of Pacific Relations International Cottages** promotes the heritage of countries around the world by hosting open houses and weekend festivals. Neighboring **WorldBeat Center** uses art, music, dance and education to celebrate African and indigenous cultures, while **Centro Cultural de la Raza** is a multidisciplinary center dedicated to the preservation of Chicano/Latino culture.

The park has a vast array of institutions celebrating the visual arts, past and present. Known for its presentation of eclectic traveling exhibitions, the **San Diego Museum of Art** also has a trove of Renaissance and Baroque works, plus a vast Asian collection; an exhibition of the art of Thomas Gainsborough continues in spring. The world-class **Museum of**



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Page 1 of 1

THEATER



“AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY” Opens Thursday in San Diego

Encinitas resident Robert Foxworth and Robin Pearson Rose of San Diego are featured in the Old Globe's cast for Tracy Letts' 2008 Tony Award- and Pulitzer Prize-winning dark comedy that tells the sprawling saga of three generations of a highly dysfunctional Oklahoma family; 7 p.m. Thursdays; 8 p.m. Fridays; 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays; 1 and 7 p.m. Sundays; 7 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays; through June 12; The Old Globe, Balboa Park, 1363 Old Globe Way, San Diego; \$29-\$85; for mature audiences; 619-234-5623 or theoldglobe.org.



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Page 1 of 1

The Old Globe

“Life of Riley,” by Alan Ayckbourn and directed by Richard Seer, runs through June 5 at the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, Conrad Prebys Theatre Center. George Riley’s closest friends discover that he has just a few months to live, and he plots one last final farewell that could upset all of their futures.

The cast includes David Bishins (Simeon), Ray Chambers (Jack), Rebecca Gold (Tilly), Dana Green (Tamsin), Colin McPhillamy (Colin), Henny Russell (Kathryn) and Nisi Sturgis (Monica).

The Old Globe is located in San Diego’s Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. For tickets and information, call (619) 234-5623.

CALENDAR

Orange County/San Diego/Inland Empire

MAY 2011



TUESDAY, MAY 10 TORNADO ALLEY

An explosive giant-screen adventure that takes viewers on an epic chase through the “severe weather capital of the world.” Narrated by Bill Paxton (Twister, Titanic), the film follows “Storm Chasers” star Sean Casey and the scientists of VORTEX2, the largest tornado-research project ever assembled, on separate mission encounters of one of earth’s most awe-inspiring events—the birth of a tornado. Whirling above the human drama are the storms themselves, magnificent forces of nature revealed in breathtaking detail through the magic of the giant screen, making this heart-pounding film one of the most eagerly anticipated IMAX releases of the decade. Reuben H. Fleet Science Center, Balboa Park, 1875 El Prado, San Diego. \$12-15. Through September 30. (619) 238-1233. rhfleet.org.

deal with the news in their own very surprising way. The Old Globe, Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park, San Diego. Tues.-Sun. through June 5. \$29-\$67. (619) 234-5623. theoldglobe.org.

PERLA BATALLA

A one-time background singer for Leonard Cohen and k.d. lang, Batalla has earned acclaim for her multi-faceted repertoire, which encompasses original songs and Latin American tunes. Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, Sierra Cabaret 12700 Center Court Drive, Cerritos. \$35. (562) 467-8818. cerritoscenter.com.

THURSDAY, MAY 12

FESTIVAL OF ARTS PREVIEW 2011

This new display showcases the innovative and fresh new artwork of 14 Orange County artists offering variety, personality and atmosphere that will abound at the Festival of Arts this summer long. The genres being showcased include photography, oils, jewelry, watercolors, sculpture, ceramics, acrylics, handcrafted wood, as well as experimental applications with mixed media. Wells Fargo Bank, 260 Ocean Ave., Laguna Beach. Through June 24. Free. Closed Sundays. (949) 494-1145. foapom.com.

FRIDAY, MAY 13

ALL SHOOK UP

A little bit Shakespeare, with a touch of Hairspray and a whole lot of Elvis Presley songs combine in this tale of mismatched lovers in a 1955 Midwest burg. Fullerton Civic Light Opera Music Theatre, Plummer Auditorium, Lemon & Chapman, Fullerton. Through May 29. \$27-\$52. (714) 879-1732. fclo.com.

ELECTION DAY

Adam’s political activist girlfriend, Brenda, demands that he vote. This seemingly simple task becomes more difficult when Adam is visited throughout Election Day by an eco-terrorist, his emotionally starved sister and a mayoral candidate who will do anything for a vote. Riverside Community Players, 4026 14th St., Riverside. Through May 29. \$15-\$18. (951) 686-4030. riversidecommunityplayers.org.

SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY: A CENTURY OF POP MUSIC

The concert covers pop music from 1900-1999, decade by decade. There are old favorites for everyone including Alexander’s Ragtime Band, In the Mood, Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy; medleys of ‘50s rock & roll, the Supremes, and Aretha Franklin. Old Town Temecula Community Theater, 42051 Main St., Temecula. Also May 14. \$13-\$16. (866) 653-8696. temeculatheater.org.

TUESDAY, MAY 17

A DRAM OF DRUMCHHICIT

An American entrepreneur has found the perfect Scottish island on which to build his new golf course. But as secrets — and bodies — are unearthed, the true nature of the island wreaks comic havoc. La Jolla Playhouse, UCSD Campus, Mandell Weiss Forum, 2910 La Jolla Village Dr., La Jolla. Through June 12. \$35. (858) 550-1010. lajollaplayhouse.org.

AT THE HOP—THE DOO-WOP SHOW

The Alley Cats bring their unique sound of the ‘50s and ‘60s alive through a cappella singing. Welk Resorts Theatre, 8860 Lawrence Welk Dr., Escondido. Tuesdays. \$25 (888) 802-7469. welktheatre.com.

GIRLS NIGHT: THE MUSICAL

Follow five friends as they relive their past, celebrate their present and look to the future on a wild and hilarious karaoke night out. The musical is bursting with energy and is packed with hits like Lady Marmalade, It’s Raining Men, Man, I Feel Like a Woman, I Will Survive and We Are Family. The Laguna Playhouse, Moulton Theatre, 606 Laguna Canyon Road, Laguna Beach. Through June 5. \$55-\$70. (949) 497-2787. lagunaplayhouse.com.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 18

DINNER-DANCE

The Widow or Widowers Club (WOW) of San Diego hosts a dinner/dance at the El Cajon Elks Lodge on Washington Ave., El Cajon. 1st and 3rd Wednesdays. \$13. 619-461-7652 wowsd.org.

THURSDAY, MAY 19

VICKI LAWRENCE AND MAMA

The show chronicles Lawrence’s years on sitcom TV shows where she sang and did stand-up comedy, while also performing as Mama, the cranky, acid-tongued curmudgeon with politically incorrect observations about life. Welk Resorts Theatre, 8860 Lawrence Welk Dr., Escondido. Through May 22. \$65-\$80. (888) 802-7469. welktheatre.com.

FRIDAY, MAY 20

BURN THE FLOOR

Experience, live on stage, all the passion, the drama and the sizzling excitement of 20 gorgeous champion dancers, in a true theatrical experience, a performance with a grace and athleticism. Fox Performing Arts Center, 3801 Mission Inn Ave., Riverside. Also May 21-22. Ticket prices vary. (951) 779-9804. broadwayinriverside.com.

WINES FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Ever tried a Pinotage? How about Chenin Blanc or Semillon? South Africa offers an array of tasty offerings, from Semillon to Shiraz. In this tasting, you’ll try seven of them. Bacchus Wine

ENTERTAINMENT

TUESDAY, MAY 10

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY

When their father goes missing, the huge, sprawling and completely dysfunctional Weston family reunites and sparks fly. The Old Globe Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park, San Diego. Tues.-Sun. through June 12. \$29-\$854. (619) 234-5623. theoldglobe.org.



9 TO 5: THE MUSICAL

The hilarious story of friendship and revenge in the Rolodex era. This new musical comedy tells the story of three unlikely friends who conspire to take control of their company and

learn there’s nothing they can’t do—even in a man’s world. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Segerstrom Hall, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa. Through May 15. \$20-\$80. (714) 556-2787. scfta.org.

FOLLIES FOREVER!

The Follies are known for celebrating the music and dance of the ‘40s, ‘50s and ‘60s with a cast ranging in age from 56 to 81. Guest stars, The Four Preps, stroll down memory lane with their million-sellers like “Big Man,” “Lazy Summer Night,” “Down By the Station” and their chart-topping “26 Miles” (Santa Catalina). Plaza Theatre, 128 South Palm Canyon Dr., Palm Springs. Through May 15, 2011. \$50-\$92. (760) 327-0225. psfollies.com.

THE BOOK OF THE DUN COW

In a mythical age before time, animals band together to fight evil in Walter Wangerin’s story of Chauntecleer the Rooster, the mournful, funny Mundo Cani Dog and the mysterious Dun Cow. Lamb’s Players Theatre, 1142 Orange Ave., Coronado. \$48-\$53. Through May 15. (619) 437-6000. lambsplayers.org.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 11

LIFE OF RILEY

George Riley’s closest friends discover that he has just a few months to live and they each



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» AGENDA



⤴ MAY 13 & 20

Thank Globe It's Friday

The Old Globe Theatre looks forward to the weekend just as much as the rest of us. Its festive Friday-night pre-show parties, featuring hosted wine, martinis, appetizers and dessert, are held this month in conjunction with the performances of *August: Osage County* and *Life of Riley*. 6:30 p.m. 619-234-5623, theoldglobe.org.



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Page 1 of 1

AND THIS...

PLAY TIME

Biggest party hit? Telling your BFFs you only have a few months to live. Well, it's a hit when told in the dry British wit of Tony Award-winning English playwright Alan Ayckbourn. His outstanding production *Life of Riley* crosses the pond for a limited engagement from **April 30-June 5**. *The Old Globe Theatre, theoldglobe.org*

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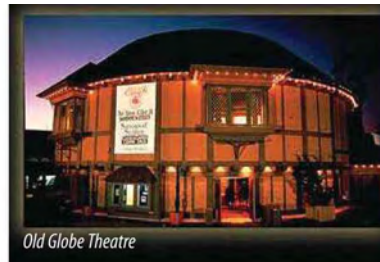
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Page 1 of 1

Old Globe Theatre
Sheryl & Harvey White
Theatre

What: *Life of Riley*
When: Through June 5
Where: 1363 Old Globe Way, San Diego
How: 619-23-GLOBE
theoldglobe.org





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Page 1 of 1

SPOTLIGHT THROUGH JUNE 5

“Life of Riley”



Old Globe Theatre

7 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday;
8 p.m. Thursday-Friday; 2
and 8 p.m. Saturday; 2 and
7 p.m. Sunday. Sheryl and
Harvey White Theatre, 1363
Old Globe Way, Balboa Park.

\$29-\$67; (619) 234-5623 or theoldglobe.org

The U.S. premiere of Alan Ayckbourn’s wistful comedy (play No. 74 from the celebrated and prolific British writer) showcases a group of friends in turmoil over the terminal illness of a longtime pal. As it happens, they’re fretting more over their own lives than his. While the piece’s themes and characters ultimately are stretched a little thin, “Riley” still winds up a witty and worthwhile trip.

JAMES HEBERT • U-T

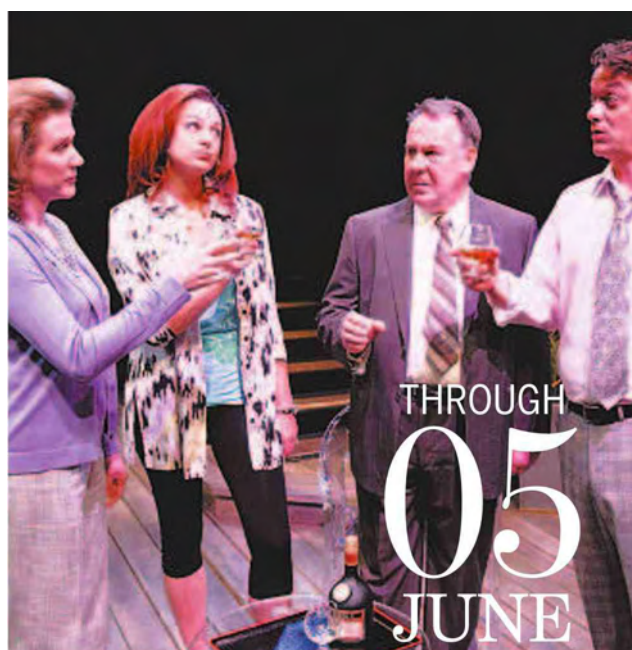


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"Life of Riley"

Old Globe Theatre

7 p.m. Tuesdays-Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Fridays;
2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays; 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays. Sheryl and
Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park.
\$29-\$67. (619) 234-5623 or theoldglobe.org

The title character of Alan Ayckbourn's 74th play (in a U.S. premiere at the Globe) never actually makes it onstage, but both his life and his impending demise are central fixations for his almost terminally neurotic friends. The celebrated British playwright's wistful, witty work heads into its own last hurrah this week.

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Erin Reiter



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Spend this weekend at The Old Globe! Three fabulous shows are playing and you can enjoy one of them outside in the beautiful San Diego sunshine!

The Life of Riley

Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre

Conrad Prebys Theatre Center

April 30 - June 5

George Riley only has a few months to live and his friends deal with his tragic news in their own unique ways!

Post show forum on May 31st!

August: Osage County

Related Topics

[The Old Globe](#)

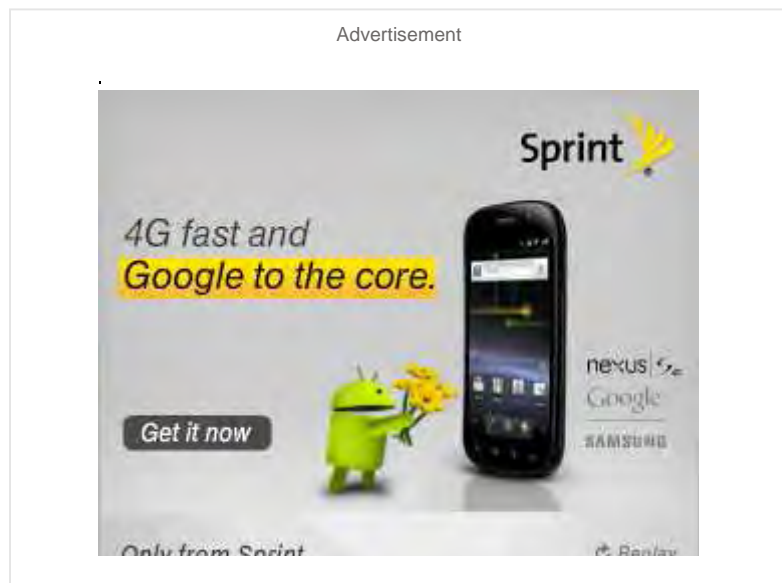
Old Globe Theatre
 Conrad Prebys Theatre Center
 May 7 - June 12

This Tony Award winning play by Tracy Letts has been acclaimed by the New York Times as “the most exciting new American play Broadway has seen in years.” When the father of this dysfunctional family goes missing this family reunites and is full of secrets, lies and betrayals.

Post show forum on June 1st!

Much Ado About Nothing– Opens this weekend!

Lowell Davies Festival Theatre
 May 29 - September 24



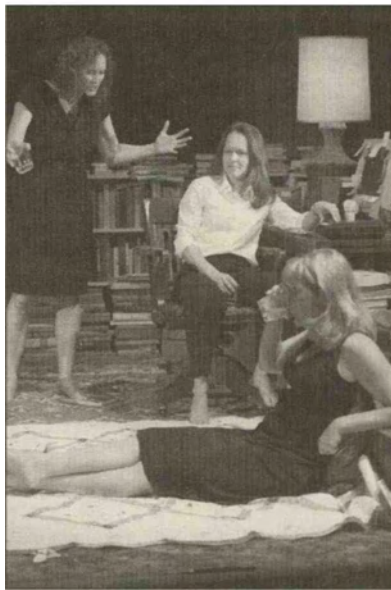
Clever plot twists, young lover, and witty words make this one of Shakespeare’s most beloved comedies!

For more information on show dates and times, tickets and special events go to www.theoldglobe.org

The Old Globe is located in San Diego’s Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. There are numerous free parking lots available throughout the park. For additional parking information visit www.BalboaPark.org.

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friday, may 27



Angela Reed, Carla Harting and Kelly McAndrew perform in *August: Osage County* at the Old Globe Theatre.

Out at the Globe

Another evening for the whole LGBT community. This event includes a hosted wine and martini bar, appetizers, door prizes and a pre-show mixer. There is a choice of two shows: *August: Osage County*, one of the most acclaimed plays of the last decade and winner of the 2008 Tony Award for Best Play and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, or *Life of Riley*, Alan Ayckbourn's hilarious new comedy.

The Old Globe Theatre complex, in Balboa Park, all events start at 6:30 p.m., \$20 per person in addition to your theatre ticket (from \$29), 619-234-5623, theoldglobe.org.

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“Life of Riley” 『ライフ オブ ライリー』

死期迫る男に翻弄される3組のカップル／イギリス喜劇作家エイクボーンの新作



Life of Riley / Photo by Henry DiRocco

⑤ アマチュア劇団に所属するコリンと妻キャスリンは、自宅で芝居の稽古をしている。医師であるコリンは、ある患者が末期がんで余命数か月であることを妻に告げる。キャスリンは夫の話しぶりから、その患者がジョージ・ライリーであると推測する。キャスリンはかつてジョージの愛人だった。彼女は口止めされているにも関わらず、その事実をジョージの親友ジャックに伝える。同じ劇団メンバーのジャックがリハーサル会場でジョージの悲しいニュースを妻タムシンに話していると、コリンとキャスリンが現れる。ジャックはメンバーにジョージをキャスト入りさせるよう提案し、演目の中でタムシンがジョージの相手役を務めることに。ジョージとタムシンの必要以上の情熱的ラブシーンを見て、キャスリンは2人が実際に関係があるのではと憶測する。ジャックも同じように2人の仲を怪しく思い、コリンに相談する。その際、思わずキャスリンがジョージの愛人だったという過去を漏らしてしまう。一方で、ジャックはジョージの疎遠になっている妻モニカに夫の元へ戻るよう説得する。モニカは現在、新しいパートナーのシメオンと暮らしていたが、夫の最期を看取るために帰宅する。

⑥ Sirの称号を授与された英国の喜劇作家アラン・エイクボーンによる新作。オールドグローブ劇場の開設75周年を記念し、アメリカでのプレミア上演となる。不治の病で死を宣告された男の周辺で混乱する男女のカップル3組を描く。因みに、タイトルロールのジョージ・ライリーはステージ上には登場しない。舞台マネージャー兼俳優としてキャリアをスタートさせたアラン・エイクボーン(1939-)は1957年に初の脚本を手がける。1967年に“Relatively Speaking”がウエスト・エンドで大ヒットとなり、一躍脚本家として名を馳せる。彼の作品はこれまで35か国の言語に翻訳されて世界中で上演され、トニー賞受賞をはじめ多数の賞を受賞してきた。本作は2010年に初演を迎えた74作目となる戯曲。

⑦ THE GLOBE THEATRES (Old Globe Theatre), 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park / ☎ 619-239-2255 (T)。期間—6/5(日)迄。上演—火・水曜:7pm、木・金曜:8pm、土曜:2pm & 8pm、日曜:2pm & 7pm。チケット—\$29 ~ \$67。http://www.oldglobe.org



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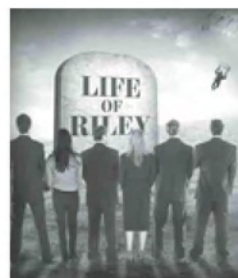
"Life of Riley" 『ライフ オブ ライリー』

死期迫る男に翻弄される3組のカップル／イギリス喜劇作家エイクボーンの新作

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⑦ THE GLOBE THEATRES (Old Globe Theatre), 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park / ☎ 619-239-2255 (T)。期間 — 6/5 (日)迄。上演 — 火・水曜: 7pm、木・金曜: 8pm、土曜: 2pm & 8pm、日曜: 2pm & 7pm。チケット — \$29 ~ \$67。http://www.oldglobe.org



Life of Riley / The Old Globe