

Two theaters jeer at holiday drear with same comedy

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By LAWSON TAITTE / The Dallas Morning News
ltaitte@dallasnews.com

Season's Greetings has become the holiday fare of choice for theatergoers who want to stay as far away as possible from Ebenezer Scrooge.

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📄 **11/25/07:** [Stage West smartly unwraps Ayckbourn's 'Greetings'](#)

Alan Ayckbourn's 1980 comedy has had many productions here over the years. The two area companies most devoted to the British playwright's work, Dallas' Theatre Three and Fort Worth's Stage West, opened rival productions last weekend. And this wasn't the first *Season's Greetings* for either.

In *Season's Greetings*, the playwright depicts an extended family's holiday gathering that disintegrates into disaster.

These productions offer theatergoers an opportunity to compare and contrast.

"Every show changes with each production," Stage West founder Jerry Russell says. "The actors always bring something new. Some things will work better for their group of performers, and others will work better for us."

So you might want to take a break from your annual visit to Victorian London and try a trip to the British suburbs instead this Christmas. Or two trips.



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Courtney Perry / DMN

Emily Gray as Belinda and David Fluitt as Clive in Theatre Three's *Season's Greetings*
Theatre Three, Dallas

Director: Kerry Cole

Previous T-3 productions of *Season's Greetings*: 1985

Previous T-3 productions of plays by Mr. Ayckbourn: Nine productions of different plays.

Why so much Ayckbourn? "Traditionally, English comedies had been about the outrageous antics of the London upper-class," says Theatre Three executive producer-director Jac Alder. "He writes about suburban middle-class people. Their very lack of imagination is why they are so funny. And of course, he writes for our kind of theater – he runs a theater-in-the-round himself in northern England."

Why so many *Season's Greetings*? "It has kind of become the anti-*Christmas Carol*," says Ms. Cole. "A lot of members of both casts have worked on it before – this is the third time I've done it. All of the actors love this show because Alan Ayckbourn writes such great characters even in such a short amount of stage time – and it's a lot of fun."

Runs through: Dec. 16 in the basement space, Theatre Too.

Tickets: \$20 to \$30. 214-871-3300: www.theatre3dallas.com

Stage West, Fort Worth

Director: Jerry Russell

Previous Stage West productions of *Season's Greetings*: 1986, 1995.

Previous productions of plays by Mr. Ayckbourn: 12 of nine different plays (or 16 of 11 if you count the parts of *The Norman Conquests* trilogy separately.)

Why so much Ayckbourn? "I love his humor," says Mr. Russell. "And I think he's amazingly innovative. Some of the earlier comedies, especially, have just the right combination of darkness and silliness. I just think he's the best comic playwright, ever."

Why so many *Season's Greetings*? "There have been times I've said we'd do *Season's Greetings* every Christmas if we wouldn't get tired of it," Mr. Russell says. "It's about people to whom awful things happen. It's not for kids, however – though it's not blue or offensive."

Runs through: Dec. 31

Tickets: \$20 to \$24. Metro 817-784-9378; www.stagewest.org.