



# Birthday Club

Directed by Kristin Freshwater and Courtney Walker

Produced by Tom Green

With special permission from Phil Olson

## SETTING:

Central Pennsylvania, 1992

### ACT 1, SCENE 1

Kathy's birthday.

### ACT 1, SCENE 2

Abbie's birthday. A few months later.

### ACT 1, SCENE 3

Cheryl's birthday. A few months later.

## *TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION*

### ACT 2, SCENE 1

Still Cheryl's birthday. One minute later.

### ACT 2, SCENE 2

Sarah's birthday. A few months later.

### ACT 2, SCENE 3

Emily's birthday. A few months later.

## **SHOW SYNOPSIS:**

Five women get together for their birthdays, each with their own story, to drink, celebrate, commiserate, and support each other as they negotiate through marriage, work, divorce, birth, kids, and solve the problems of the world.

Cheryl, Kathy, Emily and Abbie started Birthday Club five years ago when their friend, Jennifer, was diagnosed with cancer, as a support group to help her get through it. When Jennifer recently passed away, they had an opening for a new member. However, it's not easy to join Birthday Club. Birthday Club is very exclusive, and there's a three-year waiting list. They bring in Sarah as a potential member, but first Sarah must make it through the "interview" and agree to abide by the eight rules of Birthday Club, to be considered an official member.

One by one we learn of their personal, work and family issues, and when it's revealed that one of them went out with another's husband, the Vodka hits the fan. The question is, will Birthday Club survive, or will Rule #5 end it forever?

## **CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS:**

**Cheryl** - Cheryl is a successful business owner and is Sarah's boss. She is anal retentive and has control issues. Her kids are grown and her marriage with her stay-at-home aspiring author husband is strained.

**Emily** - Emily is a high school teacher who is working towards a higher degree in education. She has been divorced twice and is a prolific dater and user of dating sites. She has had lots of "work done."

**Abbie** - Abbie is married and is a stay-at-home wife. She has an easy life with a nice big house with a pool and a boat. She enjoys her life of luxury and is somewhat detached from the "real world."

**Kathy** - Kathy works in "law enforcement," though we don't know how specifically. She is married with 4 kids. She is very tough, a little rough around the edges, and is always willing to speak her mind.

**Sarah** - Sarah is young and naïve and works for Cheryl. She is a member of the very strict "Heemish" religion. She is engaged to be married to her high school sweetheart. She is wholesome, innocent, and unaware of all worldly things outside of her bubble.

## CAST

CHERYL	Mandy Shuker
EMILY	Emily Kinkead
ABBIE	Jennifer LaFleur
KATHY	Kelly Kroese
SARAH	Victoria Byler

## PRODUCTION STAFF

DIRECTOR	Courtney Walker
DIRECTOR	Kristin Freshwater
PRODUCER	Tom Green
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR	Tom Green
SOUND ENGINEER	Mike Montgomery

## SPECIAL THANKS TO

Jen Starkey, George Gaige, The Persimmon Tree Players, The Scottsville Center for Arts and the Natural Environment, Sharon Harris and the Fluvanna County Arts Council, Baine's Books & Coffee: Scottsville, Bailey Printing

## CAST & DIRECTORS' BIOS

### **MANDY SHUKER (Cheryl)**



Mandy is excited to be part of this virtual theater experience with such a lovely cast and crew! It certainly provides a wonderful respite for her family and even the resident cats, who have had quite enough of her drama these long COVID months, she is sure. Previous local theatrical endeavors have included **Beth** in *The Mom Journals* at Live Arts, **Casey** in *Irish Creek* also at Live Arts (Locally Sourced), **Poppy** in *Noises Off* at Four County Players, and a turn behind the scenes at Four County, stage managing *The Mousetrap*.

### **EMILY KINKEAD (Emily)**



Emily is excited to make her return to the stage as, you guessed it, Emily. She engages in her flair for the performing arts every weekday as a speech therapist with the public school system. Emily's previous productions include *Electronic Field Trips* with Colonial Williamsburg. Emily dedicates this performance to her beloved grandmother, Marie Reynolds, who has always encouraged Emily in her theatrical pursuits.

### **JENNIFER LaFLEUR (Abbie)**



Jennifer regularly performs the role of professional adult for an audience of UVA undergraduates, and recently returned to the theater after a 20-year (!) hiatus as **DeeDee West** in the 2019 Live Arts production of *Follies*. Bug-bitten again, she jumped at the chance to join PTP's 2020 production of *Moon Over Buffalo* as **Charlotte Hay**, which was wonderful fun—and will be again, when the show can emerge from quarantine. In the meantime, she's gotten quite good at making pizza and chocolate chip cookies. When not Zooming, or preparing to Zoom, she can be found touring the house and yard with her partner, dog, and two cats.

### **KELLY KROESE (Kathy)**



Kelly has been unnecessarily dramatic her entire life. For her, theater and performing tends to be something she engages with strictly when she feels compelled to over-extend herself (she should probably talk to someone about that). She's delighted to be working with not one, but two playhouses at once, it's more efficient. If she seems like she's familiar with performing online, it's because she can usually be found Monday thru Friday putting on Zoom shows in the public education system as "Ms. Kroese." Kelly is also an experienced consultant in social media marketing and developmental editing, in case you'd like to pay her to do that sort of thing for you. She encourages procreating females to please not drink if you are pregnant. Please.

### VICTORIA BYLER (Sarah)



Victoria is happy to be a part of a theatre production again, even if it's virtual. While doing a virtual show is different, she is glad to gain this as a new experience, and it does make it easier on her travel time! Victoria has been in multiple previous PTP performances. Her first appearance on the Carysbrook Stage was as **Myrtle Mae** in *Harvey* (2011). Her favorite role so far has been **Aggie Wheeler** in *The Game's Afoot*, although she really enjoys being Sarah! The last time she was on stage, she was portraying **Bebe Childress** in Langden Mason's *Present Company Excluded*.

### COURTNEY WALKER (Director)



Courtney is a mother of four, local actress and playwright and happy to be co-directing her first online production! Favorite onstage credits include **Frankie** in *Dearly Beloved* (Persimmon Tree Players) and **Annelle** in *Steel Magnolias* (Victory Hall Players). Courtney is a co-facilitator of the Live Arts Playwrights' Lab and was the playwright of Live Arts most recent online production, *The Mom Journals*. She has a BFA in Theatre Performance from Longwood University. She would like to thank the cast for their enthusiasm for performing in *Birthdays Club* and for their bonding on and off screen.

### KRISTIN FRESHWATER (Director)



Kristin is a graduate of the *University of Virginia's Department of Drama*, where she earned her BA in Theatre and won the *William Demoville Pettway Prize* for her work within the department. Kristin has designed, directed, written and acted in productions with the *UVa Department of Drama*, *Wolfbane Productions*, *Appomattox Courthouse Theater* and *Victory Hall Players*. She is the founder and current Artistic Director of *Victory Hall Players*, the educational community theatre program run by *Scottsville's Center for the Arts and the Natural Environment*, where she serves as an Executive Board member. In this role, she strives to engage the Scottsville community through performance art. You can read more about Kristin and her work at [villeartsandnature.org](http://villeartsandnature.org).

### TOM GREEN (Producer and Technical Director)



Tom is thrilled to be part of this incredibly talented group of thespians. He has produced and directed other shows for PTP, but this is his first attempt at technical direction. Tom has also appeared on the Carysbrook Stage in Fluvanna as **Felix Ungar**, in *The Odd Couple*, **Sgt Trotter**, in *The Mousetrap*, and **Donald Kidding** in *You've Gotta Be Kidding*, among others, and has been in the cast of two Christmas radio shows with Victory Hall Players. Tom's most recent appearance on stage was as **Lancelot** in PVCC's production of *Spamalot*, and he is slated to play **George Hay** in PTP's *Moon Over Buffalo*, which is currently on hold due to the pandemic.



### Author's Notes

First, a giant thank you to Tom Green, to the Persimmon Tree Players and Victory Hall Players, and Scottsville's Center for the Arts and the Natural Environment, for putting on the World Premiere of *Birthday Club*! Samuel French will be publishing *Birthday Club*, and I'm happy to say that your credits will go in the published play.

Another big thanks to PTP for putting on my play, *A Nice Family Gathering*, a story about my Scandinavian family in Minnesota.

I'm dedicating *Birthday Club* to my girlfriend, Nancy. I was the designated driver and observer of her Birthday Club for several years. Nancy has a close-knit group of loyal friends, with different personalities and backgrounds, who get together to celebrate, commiserate and support each other while partaking in a glass or four of wine.

I won't mention what parts of the play actually happened. However, one of her friends got drunk, dropped her Spanx, and peed in the yard. That's all I can say.

It was extremely entertaining and often times hysterical to be a "fly on the wall" and hear the candid conversations between these accomplished women. It was so entertaining that I asked Nancy if it would be okay to write a play about it, and with her permission and blessing, I wrote *Birthday Club*. Thank you, Nancy.

-Phil Olson

### Kristin's Notes

Roughly a year ago the world was turned upside down with the advent of COVID19. A global pandemic was something that none of us had ever dealt with in our lifetimes, and there were so many unknowns. Precautions were necessary, but in so doing, live theatre took a substantial hit.

Over the course of the last year, we've seemingly learned to adapt. Theaters across the globe have found new and creative ways to continue their missions and entertain audiences. Although a digital performance can never be as engaging, or intimate, as a live performance, it does allow us to continue telling stories, often to an even wider audience.

*Birthday Club* is *Victory Hall Players* first online virtual performance. There was definitely a learning curve when it came to all of the digital aspects, but we were able to meet them head-on with our amazing team.

Even though the script does not specify any particular time and place, we chose to set our production in 1992 central Pennsylvania. It seemed fitting. We hope you enjoy the inaugural production of Phil Olson's *Birthday Club*.

### Courtney's Notes

There is something very special that happens when women get together and bond over the ridiculousness of everyday life. It is true behind closed doors, and it is true in the days of old when we could all go to a winery or a downtown restaurant or simply gather together in each other's homes.

There is a special kind of bond that women friends can hold together when wine snorts out their noses and someone purges a cackle and the whole group no longer cares how loud they are in public places. *Birthday Club* rehearsals have been a fond reminder of what it feels like for friends to be able to get together and have a good laugh and sweet proof that we could find that capability even when not physically in the same room. May it prove to be that for our audiences as well.

Grab a drink, sit back and relax for the show and I'm sure that it will.

### Producer's Notes

It is worth noting that Phil Olson is an award-winning playwright, and we are thrilled to be the premiere production of this heartwarming story. What began as an informal Zoom reading this summer with Phil became this amazing opportunity to be the first companies to officially produce this show. Further proof that great opportunities can come from challenging times! I feel so fortunate to be a part of it!

Enjoy the show!