

The Circular

August 2025



"All the months are crude experiments, out of which the perfect September is made."

Virginia Woolf

So many of us love September – the weather is still (hopefully!) good enough that we don't need the heating on yet, and the days are mostly still on the right side of the Autumn Equinox (22 September this year, in case you were interested!). It's a month that feels like one of new beginnings: we're still hard-wired by school terms, even after many years as fully-fledged adults. Time for that new pencil case... and our autumn season.

If you'd like to book for any of our shows, please visit our website: www.sjt.uk.com, call our box office on 01723 370541, or drop by – our box office is open from 10am until at least 7pm (closing time depends on the start time of that night's show/film) every day except Sunday.

Earth Angel

Funny and touching (more than one person was reaching for the tissues at the end of the read-through earlier this month), *Earth Angel* is in rehearsals and opens in September.

As ever, writer and director Alan Ayckbourn has assembled a wonderful cast, with three veterans of many of his past shows here – Elizabeth Boag, Stuart Fox and Liza Goddard – alongside Russell Richardson, who was in *Brassed Off* last year, in his first Ayckbourn, and two complete newcomers to our stage, Iskandar Eaton and Hayden Wood.

Alan says: *"We have to remember there are still good things floating about in the world today, though it's often hard to see them. But the good is still there if we look for it."*


Intrigued? You can catch the show here from 13 September to 11 October before it heads out on a brief tour to the New Vic, Newcastle-under-Lyme, from 14 to 25 October and the Old Laundry Theatre in Bowness-on-Windermere from 4 to 8 November.






Noises Off

Noises Off is on its last legs – er, leg – running until Saturday 6 September, so there's still time to catch this hilarious comedy – or even see it for a second time!



It's been a huge success, vindicating director Paul Robinson's conviction that it could be done in the round. The reviews have been universally positive – check out the quotes below – and audience feedback has been excellent.



And we were delighted to be featured on BBC Radio 4's flagship arts programme *Front Row* on 19 August – Paul was on live discussing the show with Nick Ahad. If you didn't hear that, you can catch it here: www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002h9wp (from 31 minutes in).




What the critics said:



"Pure, unadulterated joy..."
Yorkshire Post

"A classy, bold affair that **will tickle your funny bone as well as blow your mind.**"
The Recs



"Frayn's farce is so good that frankly it is indestructible, but Robinson and Jenkins' thoroughly rounded production makes it even more joyous. **Chaos conducted with precision and audacity.**"
The Press


"The in-the-round production of Noises Off is performed at a pace that **leaves the audience breathless with laughter** at a cast that has lost the plot."
Scarborough News

"Director Paul Robinson and designer Kevin Jenkins pull it off with the aid of a cast on top form... the physical comedy... is **played to perfection.**"
Theatre Reviews North




"Paul Robinson's **remarkably accomplished** production [is] wonderfully inventive..."

Reviews Hub



"A thoroughly entertaining show, **laugh-out-loud funny, expertly and inventively staged** – I had a cracking time with Noises Off at the SJT!"
Northern Theatre News



"This then is a **daring exploit which comes off well** – a joyous opportunity to see a new angle on Frayn's irresistible joke machine."
British Theatre Guide



Sleeping Beauty cast

We've probably mentioned this before (at least once!), but our brilliant 2023 Christmas show, *Beauty and the Beast*, won Best Show for Children and Young People at last year's UK Theatre Awards – and when you think about just how many Christmas shows are out there, you'll hopefully forgive us for being particularly proud of that achievement!



Jacob Butler



Amy Drake



Annie Kirkman



Oliver Mawdsley



Kiara Nicole Pillai

We're delighted to tell you that we've reunited four of the five cast members from that show for this year's festive treat, *Sleeping Beauty* – Amy Drake, Annie Kirkman, Oliver Mawdsley and Kiara Nicole Pillai. And just to shake things up a bit, they'll be joined by the wonderful Jacob Butler, who not only played the title role in our 2021 Christmas show, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, but also stepped in at very short notice when last

year's production, *Aladdin*, was hit by an awful 'flu bug – he ended up playing, across the course of the show's last couple of weeks, not just *Aladdin*, but also the Genie and villain Barcaza, so safe to say he's versatile!

And for the first time, our Christmas show will be directed by its author, Nick Lane. Over the past 10 years, Nick has become a firm favourite with both staff and audiences at the SJT, but he's never directed anything specifically for our stage (although he's directed his own adaptations of Sherlock Holmes stories and Victorian Gothic novels for Blackeyed Theatre, which have been popular here). We can't wait to see what he does with *Sleeping Beauty*... buckle up!

New shows for 2026

We're delighted to bring you news of more great shows for next year – and as ever, as a valued Circle member, you get priority booking from 10am on 3 September until 10am on 10

September, when booking opens to the general public.



Glitch: The True Story of the Post Office

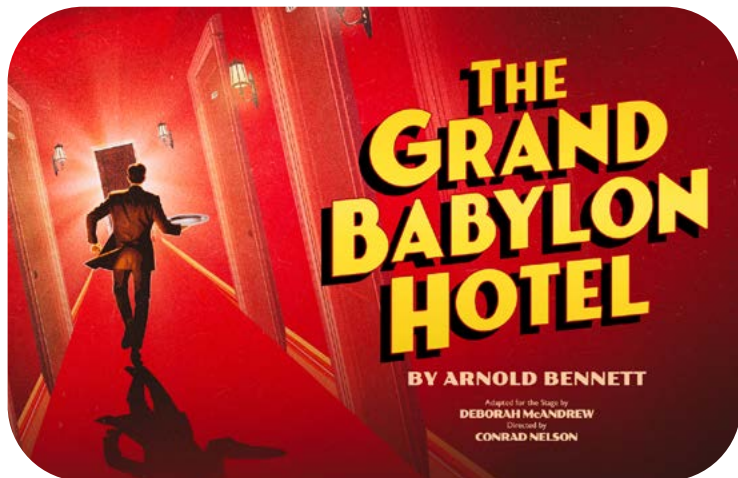
Scandal (6 & 7 February): Pam Stubbs has been sub-postmistress of Barkham Post Office for 20 years, respected and loved by the community. But when unexplained discrepancies start appearing in her accounts, Pam finds herself at the heart of the biggest miscarriage of justice in English legal history. This inspirational true story, based on the experiences of Pam and her colleagues, was created with sub-postmistresses and masters affected by the events and key members of the legal process. It was commissioned from Rabble Theatre by the University of Reading.



We're Not Getting a Dog (24 February): A story about passive aggressive letter writing, early morning jet washing and making a house a home. It's about those who live, laugh and love metres from us, but who really, we barely know at all. A couple run through the rain to catch a bus. A man stares at a blank laptop screen in desperation. A woman opens an envelope to find a photo inside. A new house on a new street with new neighbours. A roughly 72-minute show, read from a little black book, by a scruffy, bearded, glasses-wearing man in a red check shirt and black jeans who does not own a pressure washer. A new storytelling show by Sam

Freeman (*Every Little Hope You Ever Dreamed, Every Time I Close My Eyes*).

(This show has minimal references to dogs.)



The Grand Babylon Hotel (18 to 21 March) is a riotous evening out from our friends at the New Vic Theatre in association with Claybody Theatre.

Former Northern Broadsiders Deborah McAndrew and Conrad Nelson – she’s adapted, he directs – have teamed up to bring Arnold Bennett’s rollicking comedy thriller to the stage.

Nella Racksole wants steak and beer for her birthday treat, but they’re not on the menu of the exclusive Grand Babylon Hotel – so her American railroad millionaire father buys the hotel. However, The Grand Babylon isn’t all it seems, and Theodore Racksole soon discovers there’s more than a juicy steak on his plate – with kidnapping and murder for starters! Have they bitten off more than they can chew?

The Grand Babylon Hotel features a virtuoso cast of five – including Shelley Atkinson, who you might remember from our 2019 production of *Martha, Josie and the Chinese Elvis*, and Thomas Cotran, who was with us earlier this year for *Love’s Labour’s Lost (more or less)*. They’re joined by Michael Hugo, Adrian Pang and Alice Pryor to bring you many faces, chases, glamour, intrigue, and a couple of German princes thrown in for good measure.



The Mumford & Sons Story (28 May): A tribute to the award-winning folk-rock band, this show recreates the incredible tale of the floor-stomping folk-rock band who took the world by storm. Four masterful live musicians come together in waistcoats, skinny jeans and bushy beards to celebrate the best of Mumford & Sons’ iconic music and their explosive rise to fame. With all the very best hits, including *Little Lion Man*, *I Will Wait*, *The Cave*, *Rushmore* and many more, this is a stomp and holler not to be missed!

September treats

As we head into autumn, we hand our stages over to visiting companies for a few weeks (no rest for our production and stage management teams, though – as *Earth Angel* finishes here on 11 October then heads out on tour, they’re already thinking ahead to the end of the month, when *Sleeping Beauty* rehearsals start).

Our autumn visiting programme this year starts in late September, with a couple of very different shows – *Kailey*, and *Round the Horne*.

Kailey (23 September) is a bold new play that shines a light on society’s forgotten young people whose parents are in the prison system, and is inspired by writer Kerry Wright’s own lived experience.

Kailey’s mum’s is in prison, and she needs to grow up – fast. She’s just turned 18; first job, her own place, big nights out. This might just be freedom after all. But when you’re young and your parent is taken away,



who do you turn to when things get a little too messy? Funny and searingly honest, *Kailey* doesn't ask for sympathy; it demands you look closer. *Kailey* is directed by Tess Seddon, and the Associate Director is our very own Chantell Walker.



Round the Horne (29 and 30

September) takes you back in time to the BBC's Paris Studios in the mid-1960s, when, every Sunday afternoon, audiences of up to 15 million people would gather around the wireless to listen in to a half hour of razor-sharp wit and shameless innuendo from Kenneth Horne, Kenneth Williams, Hugh Paddick, Betty Marsden and Bill Pertwee. With its infamous movie spoofs and hilarious regular characters such as Rambling Sid Rumpo, Charles and Fiona, J. Peasemold Gruntfuttock, and Julian and Sandy – all scripted by comedy legends Barry Took and Marty Feldman – *Round the Horne* still feels fresh today, 60 years on.

If the stage versions of *Hancock's Half Hour* and *Dad's Army Radio Show* were right up your street, you'll love this!

Actors, Audiences and Ayckbourn

That's the title for this year's autumn fundraising weekend (26 to 28 September). These weekends have become an eagerly anticipated SJT staple in recent years, and the emphasis this year is on that happy synthesis between audience and performer which creates a perfect evening at the theatre.

The weekend will kick off on the Friday with a show we've called *It's All Relative* – an informal evening of two halves, starting with a talk from Alan's Archivist Simon Murgatroyd followed by a fascinating chat with some of Alan's favourite actors – and with Georgia Burnell, Tanya-Loretta Dee, Christopher Godwin, Frances Marshall, Richard Stacey and Leigh Symonds signed up, who knows where that one might go!!



On the Sunday afternoon, we've had a little change of plan. Instead of *Men, Meals and Me*, we're going to have a rehearsed reading of one of Alan's classics, *Relatively Speaking* – which is also the subject of Simon's Friday evening talk, having reached its 60th birthday this year (that's *Relatively Speaking*, not Simon). It'll be read by three of the *Earth Angel* company – Liza Goddard, Russell Richardson and Hayden Wood – with the addition of Georgia Burnell, who you'll remember from, most recently, *Constant Companions*.



"I've seen tough rugby-playing men cowering amid the screams in the auditorium"

Have a guess which of our past productions is being discussed in that quote from a recent *Guardian* article? There can be only one, really, can't there – *The Woman in Black*.

And *The Woman* is abroad again, haunting regional theatres across the country from 24 September to 18 April in a new production

directed by our dear friend, regular company member, former Artistic Director, and the show's original director, Robin Herford.

Robin and the author of the original book, Scarborough-born-and-bred writer Susan Hill, gave some fascinating insights on the genesis of the show to *The Guardian* in this piece published in early August: www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/aug/04/how-we-made-the-woman-in-black - we particularly enjoyed Susan's story of a friend's sister typing up the tale all those years ago!

And if you'd like to see the show, you can check out its tour here: thewomaninblack.com

Circle Cafés

Thanks to those of you who came to our July Circle Café and met pretty much the entire *Noises Off* team - all nine actors, plus four stage management meant it was a lively one!

Our Circle Cafés are getting busier and busier by the month so it really helps us if you can **make sure you book your tickets in advance, and ideally, before the day**. That way, we arrive that morning knowing how many people to expect, and therefore how many chairs to lay out, how much coffee to make, how much cake we need - all the important stuff! Thanks for your help.

Dates for your diary (all Thursdays and, December excepted, a 10am arrival for a 10.15am start, please - we need to finish by 10.50am latest to give Eat Me Café time to clear for their reopening at 11am).

25 September - meet some of the cast of Alan Ayckbourn's 91st play, *Earth Angel*, which explores what makes someone a good person



30 October - a chance to chat with Chantell Walker, our Associate Director, and director of the folk horror *Birdwatching*, which played to great acclaim at last year's Edinburgh Fringe - it visits us the following week, on 3 November



13 November - meet some of the cast of the John Godber Company's latest, *Black Tie Ball*, in which writer and director John turns his laser gaze onto the glitziest night of the year



11 December - meet the *Sleeping Beauty* company (and please note that, as they'll actually be on stage in front of a schools audience at our usual time, this will be an afternoon Circle Café with a 1pm arrival time for a 1.15pm start)

