

# The Circular

## January 2026



*"Thirty days has September,  
April, June and November.  
Unless a leap year is its fate,  
February has twenty-eight  
but all the rest have three days more,  
excepting January  
which has six thousand,  
one hundred and eighty-four."*

**Brian Bilston**

We know just how Brian feels, especially this January which had such an exceptionally cold and snowy start. But it's nearly February, and our new season of visiting shows is about to kick in and brighten those almost-spring days. Read on to find out more about what we have planned for you for the next month!

If you'd like to book for any of our shows, please visit our website: [www.sjt.uk.com](http://www.sjt.uk.com), call us 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.



### Honk!

Talking of spring incoming, this April marks our 30th year in this building (and, coincidentally, the building itself will turn 90 on 28 March!). Those of you who remember the 90s might recall one of our earlier productions, the joyous musical *Honk!*

We world premiered this delightful show by George Stiles and Anthony Drewe, and it's since gone on to over 8,000 productions across the world and won many awards, including the Olivier for Best Musical in 2000 – so what better way to celebrate a couple of big birthdays than to revisit it?

Ugly looks quite a bit different from his darling duckling brothers and sisters. The other animals on the farm are quick to notice and point this out, despite his mother's protective flapping. Feeling rather foul about himself, the little fowl finds himself on an adventure of self-discovery, all the while unknowingly outwitting a very hungry Cat. Along the way, Ugly meets a whole flock of unique characters and finds out that being different is not a bad thing to be.

If the story sounds familiar, it's because it's based on the life-affirming story by Hans Christian Andersen.

We'll be presenting *Honk!* in concert on the afternoon of Sunday 12 April\* as a fundraiser. All money raised will go towards our New Work Fund, helping us to put new work on our stages and nurture new talent (we are a registered charity, number 253606). Watch this space for details of our cast, which we're working on right now.

\*Also by coincidence the 87th birthday of our Director Emeritus, Alan Ayckbourn!

### February treats

*Glitch: The True Story of the Post Office Scandal* (6 & 7 February): **There are limited tickets available** for this play based on the real-life story of Berkshire sub-postmaster, Pam Stubbs, as she finds herself caught in the Horizon Post Office scandal.



*Teechers* (9 to 12 February): You might recognise two of the three-strong young northern cast of John Godber's reboot of his classic *Teechers* – Hull's Jo Patmore was in our production of *Love's Labour's Lost* (more or less) in the spring of 2025, while Levi Payne, from Doncaster, was in the Godbers' visiting production of *BlackTie Ball* last autumn. New to our stage is Sophie Suddaby, who also hails from Hull.



*The Em Show: Tales from a Little Laughing Lesbian* (13 February): Step out of your boring night in and into a night of unstoppable laughter! This electrifying one-woman show is packed with stand-up, improv and clowning, all delivered through Em Stroud's signature energy and joy.



From therapy to parenting, marriage to motorbikes, no topic is off-limits in this hilarious journey of self-discovery. Uplifting, bold, and wildly funny, this is a show for everyone (yes, even non-lesbians!). So, are you ready to laugh, reflect, and maybe even see yourself in a whole new way?

*Eliza Carthy & Guests* (21 February): Sadly, we have to update you that this event has changed. Please see the message from Eliza below:



"Dear everyone,

*A month ago, Martin, at 84, was diagnosed with late-onset Alzheimers Disease. While his doctor initially suggested that Dad would and should be able to tour in the Spring, and we were hoping to use the tour to say goodbye to Dad's many fans, it now appears that this won't be possible or advisable for his health.*

*Dad sends his love and regrets to everyone hoping to see him one more time. Eliza will fulfil these shows, and will try to honour his legacy as much as possible. Our family thanks you for your patience and love."*

We wish Martin and his family all the best.

*We're Not Getting a Dog* (24 February): This delightful show comes to you from ex-SJT staff member, Sam Freeman – find out more about him further on in this Circular...

*Sherlock Holmes: The Hunt for Moriarty* (26 to 28 February): If you've seen either of Nick Lane's previous adaptations of Sherlock Holmes stories for Blackeyed Theatre – *The Sign of Four* and *The Valley of Fear* – you'll know how good he is at this stuff! Based on the work of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes: The Hunt for Moriarty* is a world premiere combining powerful performances, a haunting soundscape and innovative design for an exhilarating theatrical experience. The game is afoot!



## Share your views on proposed projects for Scarborough

Scarborough is set to benefit from £20 million in government Pride in Place funding to help drive regeneration and improve the health and wellbeing of communities. Following engagement with residents, businesses and community groups, Scarborough Neighbourhood Board have identified 11 potential projects that could receive this investment, of which the SJT is one. They are now asking local people to share their views to help us shape the final plans.

The consultation is open from the 8 January to 13 February. Take part at: [www.northyorks.gov.uk/pride-in-place](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/pride-in-place)

Your input will help ensure this funding goes where it matters most.

## Unlocking memories

We were delighted to welcome BBC journalist Fiona Callow to one of our dementia-friendly film screenings just before Christmas – the result was this lovely piece on the BBC website: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0i9505062yo>

Fiona met with our Head of Creative Engagement, Rob Salmon, and with Tim Tubbs, who presents the musical films, and



Mike Padgham, executive chair of Saint Cecilia Care Group, which regularly brings care home residents to the monthly screenings (and is an SJT corporate partner), to get different perspectives on the events. She also enjoyed watching George Cromack introduce December's film, *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street*.

If you know someone living with dementia who you think might enjoy a trip to the cinema, our films for the first half of 2026 are (all dates are Fridays, and the films start at 1pm):

***West Side Story*** (30 January)

***Mary Poppins*** (27 February)

***Godspell*** (20 March)

***Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines*** (17 April)

***A Star is Born*** (22 May)

***A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*** (12 June)

The screenings are part-funded by Councillor Rich Maw's locality budget allocation, and by donations from Circle member Sue Standard-Sheader.



Dementia-friendly films are fun social events for people living with dementia and their friends, family and carers. Musicals include will have a short introduction by Tim Tubbs and Bill Scott, and singalongs before the screening and at the interval; non-musicals are introduced by George Cromack. Tea and coffee are provided free of charge at the break. Tickets are £6; companions go free.

Please note that due to the limitations of our listed building we only have a limited number of spaces for wheelchair users in cinema. Please ring Box Office on [01723 370541](tel:01723370541) in advance to check on availability.

## Spotlight on... Sam Freeman

Sam Freeman, who brings his show *We're Not Getting a Dog* to us on Tuesday 24 February, grew up in Scarborough and attended Newby Primary and Scalby Secondary schools, and Scarborough Sixth Form College.

His first stage appearance was here, in *An Honest Trade*, and the first show he wrote (for Rounders, our youth group at the time) was *Three Cheers for HRH*. He says: "I grew up wanting to be Alan Ayckbourn (which, when you think about it, is weird) or Tim Firth."



Sam also worked front of house at the SJT for around two years, and you may also have seen him play music locally – he was in the EASY Band.

*We're Not Getting a Dog* (A Story Largely Not About Dogs) is a storytelling show: Sam says his shows are a mix between a BBC Radio 4 Radio Drama and a live audio book. We asked him to tell us a bit more about it...

"It started when I found myself recently writing really worthy stories and, frankly, they were selling horrifically poorly (particularly in Wolverhampton). So I decided I'd write something slightly more populist, but unfortunately (yet again), that's not really happened. You see, I fully intended on writing a show about dogs – it was going to be in the first person, I even researched man-sized dog costumes and building a set that included a giant dog basket. But then as I was writing, what emerged was something different. It morphed into a story about finding your place, about love, and finding a home. Which was lucky because costumes and giant dog baskets are crazy expensive for a 6ft man."

**So how do you write your shows?**

"I have a notebook of ideas – some single words, others full pages or scribbles – and I wait for something to feel

**"I even researched man-sized dog costumes"**

right. Sometimes I'll write one, 10, maybe even 30 pages and then realise it's just not me, or I've accidentally re-written the plot to Star Wars or The Godfather. When an idea feels right and flows as I write it then I power through and write a big first draft – usually around 20,000 words in total – then I cut it down by half and yeah, a show (I hope).

*"Cutting material is really depressing in a way, but I tend to keep everything – so, for example, around 3,000 words from this show will become something else. Seven words in this show are outtakes from my first show, curiously."*

### Do you like dogs?

*"I'll be honest, I never used to. I think I was a little afraid of them. Whereas now I think they'd kind of incredible – they have an honesty that's great."*

### Did you have a list of reasons not to get a dog?

*"Yes. I wrote several. It was mostly the obvious stuff – picking up poo/lifestyle choices/responsibility/picking up poo. It was a fairly rock-solid list apart from one fairly major flaw: my partner really wanted a dog. I think the list made sure my eyes were very open and made me really aware that I want to be sure that if I am getting a dog, then I want them to live the best possible life, and that means compromise for me. Turns out that compromise has only been positives. But it's also worth saying: the show's now mostly not about dogs."*

### Circle Cafés

A brand-new year, a brand-new list of dates for your diary! Circle Cafés start up again in February, and we're really looking forward to a year of entertaining conversation from the creatives who bring great shows to our stages.

Circle Cafés are getting busier and busier by the month, so it really helps us if you can **book your tickets in advance of the day**. That way, we arrive first thing that morning knowing how many people to expect, how many chairs to lay out, how much cake and coffee we need – all the important stuff! **(Also, we really should know for fire regulations.)** Thanks for your help.

We've yet to pin down a couple of Circle Cafés, but do put the dates below in your diary for 2026

– all Thursdays, and all a 10am arrival (the building isn't open until then) for a 10.15am start, apart from the December event.

**And please remember that there isn't a Circle Café in January!**

### Thursday 12 February:

Meet the company of John Godber's classic *Teechers*, which he has refreshed for 2026!



### Thursday 19 March:

We're delighted to welcome Claybody Theatre, formed by former Northern Broadsiders Deborah McAndrew and Conrad Nelson. They're rooted in the unique cultural heritage and contemporary lives of the people of Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire, so what better show for them to

bring on their first visit to us than *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, adapted from the comic novel by that great champion of the Five Towns, Arnold Bennett?



### Thursday 9 April:

It's our first SJT production of the year: *Murder For Two* promises to be a riot!

### Thursday 21 May:

TBC



### Thursday 18 June:

Meet Ernie Acquah, our Creative Engagement Co-ordinator, who's also a freelance sound designer. Ernie will educate and entertain us with a sound workshop.







**Thursday 9 July:** Your chance to meet the multi-talented company of our second SJT production: *Calendar Girls the Musical*.

**Thursday 6 August:**  
Those SJT productions come in thick and fast at this time of year! Meet the company of *Handbagged* and find out what it's like to play two of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most iconic women – the Queen and Margaret Thatcher.



**Thursday 10 September:** It's Alan Ayckbourn's 92<sup>nd</sup> play – the *Trial of Romeo Oscar* company isn't cast yet, but it's bound to feature a few familiar and much-loved faces.

**Thursday 8 October:** TBC

**Thursday 12 November:** Meet our fantastic Marketing and Sales Department team and find out what they do!

**Thursday 10 December:** Meet the sparkling *Puss In Boots* company (please note that this will be an afternoon Circle Café at 1pm).

