

The Circular

July 2025



"August is the border between summer and autumn: it is the most beautiful month I know."

Tove Jansson

Hard to believe that autumn isn't that far away! We're still celebrating summer, though, with one of the funniest comedies ever – read on to find out more about *Noises Off*, some exciting shows for 2026, and a look back at our 70th birthday celebrations...

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.

Noises Off

You've probably heard us say this elsewhere, but we just wanted to reiterate: our production of *Noises Off*, which opens next month, is – to the very best of our knowledge – the first ever in-the-round version.

To understand just how momentous that is, you'll have to have seen the show before – it's a pure farce, with all that entails. As arts writer Vanessa Thorpe tells us, in an article which The Guardian has kindly allowed us to reproduce in our programmes:

"The idea first came to Frayn while watching, from behind the scenes, a one-act play he had written for Lynn Redgrave and Richard Briers. It was a pastiche of a five-character farce which, with a cast of just two, involved silly quick-changes and theatrical illusions. 'I thought I would like to write a farce seen from backstage like this. It was a simple thought to have, but it turned out to be fiendishly difficult to do,' he says."

Now, hearing one of our greatest playwrights say that his play is 'fiendishly difficult to do' (and that's before you throw in the roundness!) is, of course, catnip to our Artistic Director Paul

Robinson. He's wanted to do *Noises Off* for years and has been planning with set designer Kevin Jenkins (this is his first non-Ayckbourn outing with us) to make it work.

We do hope you'll come and see if they've succeeded – take a look at our rehearsal pictures to see what fun they're having in the meantime!

Noises Off can be seen from Saturday 9 August to Saturday 6 September.



Alas, Poor Fred/ The Disguises of Arlecchino

In our 70th birthday year, we're delighted to welcome The Lost and Found Collective, a new company founded by local theatre expert Paul Elsam, to our McCarthy stage. They'll be presenting two rarely seen shows from our back catalogue at 7pm on Friday 3 October. **Your priority booking opens at 10am on Tuesday 5 August**; general booking is from 10am on Tuesday 12 August.

In *Alas, Poor Fred* by James Saunders, something funny has happened to Fred. Not funny... odd. Quite odd. Will Ernest ever get to the bottom of it? As Ethel knits, the clock ticks... but what day is it? Does November really come before September? And where actually is Fido...?

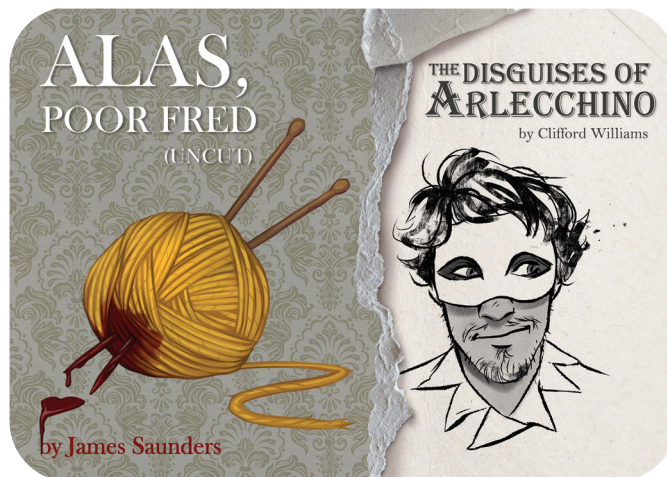
Finding its roots in theatre of the absurd, this funny, moving show nods to Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco. It explores echoes of the past and the memory of memories. A heavily edited version of *Alas Poor Fred* was produced by Stephen Joseph in 1958; this is the first full staging of the original, uncut play. With thanks to the estate of James Saunders and the Stephen Joseph Theatre.

Alas Poor Fred will be performed by Dan Henley and Georgie Samuels.

In the second half of the evening, you can see *The Disguises of Arlecchino* by Clifford Williams. Perhaps you know Harlequin? Or maybe modern anti-hero Harley Quinn is more your style. We present: Arlecchino – the original anarchist! – a savvy Italian manservant with a talent for disguise and an instinct to Get Rich Quick (then promptly lose it all again).

Arlecchino is a key character of the Commedia dell'Arte, a now little-remembered genre of theatre that always entertains – madly! – while also punching upwards.

Playwright Clifford Williams – clearly a fan – wrote just this one small original play (performed briefly in Scarborough in 1956),



before becoming an internationally-acclaimed theatre director. Luckily, we have still the original copy...

With thanks to the estate of Clifford Williams and the Stephen Joseph Theatre.

The Disguises of Arlecchino will be performed by Gui Sa Pessoa, David Lomond, Hannah Grace and Dan Henley.

February face...

February can be a bit of a bleak month, really, can't it? Well, not for us, or you, next year! We've two absolute gems for you to brighten up February 2026 – plus two other great new shows in March – and as a valued Circle member, you have **priority booking from 10am on Tuesday 5 August** until 10am on Tuesday 12 August, when booking opens to the general public.

First up is John Godber's *Teechers*, which introduces us to three fifth form students who, through their end-of-term play, tell the hilarious story of an idealistic new teacher in his perilous first days inside a local comprehensive school.



Former drama teacher John says:

“At the heart of Teechers is the very real assertion that the arts, and especially drama, should form an essential part of the school curriculum. It also attempts to demonstrate the effect that exposure to the arts has on young people. The conceit is that Gail, Salty and Hobby have invented the play Teechers, which the audience is watching; during their drama lessons they have become skilled and analytical story tellers and observers, able to comment on society as they live through it.”

Teechers is in our Round from Monday 9 to Thursday 12 February, with performances at 7.30pm each evening, plus a 10.30am show on the Tuesday, and a 1.30pm on the Wednesday.

The cast includes Jo Patmore, who you'll remember from our recent production of *Love's Labour's Lost* (more or less).

We also know how much you love a good Sherlock Holmes story, as adapted by our very own Nick Lane and performed by Blackeyed Theatre, so we weren't going to miss out on their next outing together – *Sherlock Holmes: The Hunt for Moriarty*.



London, 1901. As the British Empire wages war in the name of a Queen whose health is failing, a series of mysterious events reveals a crack in the high corridors of power: a crack that threatens to destabilise monarchy, government and Empire. And

at its centre, controlling the flow of information and influence, a shadowy figure plans a final deadly move. Drawn into the game and unsure who to trust, Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson find themselves confronting figures from their past in a desperate race against time, aware that the most powerful person in the world could be in the pocket of one of the most corrupt. But just how much is Holmes willing to sacrifice as he faces 'checkmate'?

Writer and director Nick Lane says:

"After working with Blackeyed on two previous adaptations of Conan Doyle novels (*The Sign of Four* and *The Valley of Fear*), it was really exciting to be asked back to create something a little different for our third Holmes collaboration. We've pulled together a handful of the wonderful short stories – or 'adventures', as Conan Doyle called them – and interwoven them into one singular, thrilling tale featuring Holmes' most feared, but little-seen, adversary, Professor Moriarty. It's been fun capturing the pace, the spirit and the character of Doyle's original adventures, and our hope is that, like the stories themselves, *The Hunt for Moriarty* will keep audiences gripped – and guessing – along with the great detective himself, right to the last."



You can see *Sherlock Holmes: The Hunt for Moriarty* from Thursday 26 to Saturday 28 February. Shows will be at 7.30pm each evening, with a 1.30pm matinee on the Thursday, and a 2.30pm show on the Saturday.

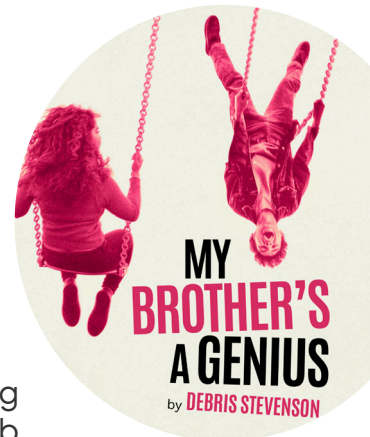
My Brother's a Genius sees poetry, grime and dance unite in an explosive new play from Debris Stevenson about learning to fall, fail and find our own ways to fly. Daisy and Luke are twins navigating life in a high-rise estate, where ambition and self-doubt collide. Both twins have labels thrust upon them: Daisy the "idiot" and Luke the "genius". But will their bond and shared dream of flying launch them up together or crash them apart?

A Sheffield Theatres, Theatre Centre and National Youth Theatre of Great Britain production, you can see *My Brother's a Genius* on Thursday 5 March at 1pm & 7.30pm, and Friday 6 March at 11am.

And finally, news of an evening of stand-up comedy with Rob Rouse – you might remember him as Shakespeare's manservant Ned Bottom in David Mitchell's lovely spoof, *Upstart Crow*. Since winning the prestigious Channel 4 So You Think You're Funny Award at the Edinburgh Festival in 1998, Rob has toured the world: fortunately, over a quarter of a century in 'the biz' hasn't made him in the slightest bit sensible.

Funny Bones is his brand-new stand-up show: a relentlessly funny and daft evening of comedy, from a one-man whirlwind who pulls the audience into his craftily spun tall tales with bucketfuls of manic energy, first-class stagecraft, eerily convincing characters, and a barrage of brilliant one-liners.

You can catch *Funny Bones* at 7.45pm on Saturday 21 March.



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 – who knows where that one might go!!

On the Sunday afternoon, it's the main event: Alan will direct and preside over a reading of a never-before-heard play, *Men, Meals & Me*. This fascinating delve into one woman's psyche was inspired by the 1981 musical revue *Me, Myself and I*, which Alan co-wrote with his then musical director, the late Paul Todd, with the central character represented by three actors playing different aspects of one woman.

Our very limited VIP packages (Package B includes tickets to both shows, plus a choice of the Saturday matinee or evening performance of *Earth Angel*, the post-show gala on the Sunday, and a souvenir programme, while Package A has all that, plus some exclusive behind-the-scenes insights) are almost gone – there are just a couple of tickets left for each.

And you can, of course, choose to come to just one of the events if you prefer, although *It's All Relative* is now sold out (you can join the waiting list, though!).

All the money raised goes towards work on our stages, particularly new work.

Happy 70th birthday to us!

Our 70th birthday has been and gone, and didn't we have a wonderful time!

We were joined on Sunday 13 July by ten actors who

ACTORS, AUDIENCES and AYCKBOURN

had a history with us:

Christopher Godwin first joined us in 1971 to play Leonard in *Time and Time Again* and has since become one of the very few actors to have performed at all three of our homes.

Andy Cryer was born and brought up in Scarborough and started his professional career here as a 14-year-old in 1983, playing the title role in *The Winslow Boy*.

Jacky Naylor first joined our company to play in John Godber's *Lost and Found* back in 2012 and returned last year as flighty Edna Whelan in *The Whitby Rebels*.

Tayla Kovacevic-Ebong helped us to re-open after Covid – he was in Alan Ayckbourn's *The Girl Next Door* in 2021, our first full production post-pandemic.

Valerie Antwi was the 'material girl' in the first of our off-the-wall adaptations of Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors (more or less)*, co-produced with Shakespeare North Playhouse in 2023.

Sarah Pearman was the Wicked Stepmother in our magical 2022 Christmas production of *Cinderella*, and high kicked her way through *Stepping Out* a couple of years earlier. She's also played a swan and, er, a table in *Adventure Playground*.

Annie Kirkman first came to the SJT when she was 10, to see Alan Ayckbourn's *Whenever*, and decided that one day, she would act on this stage – 20-some years later, she's been in four of our recent shows.

Along with Annie, Charlie Ryan was in our UK Theatre Award-winning Christmas show, *Beauty and the Beast*, back in 2023. And along with Annie, Chris, Andy and Valerie, he's currently in rehearsals with our Artistic Director, Paul Robinson, for our next production, *Noises Off*.

Adrian Rawlins hasn't been in an SJT production, but we feel he's one of ours nonetheless – he was in Alan Ayckbourn's National Theatre company in



the 80s, appearing in his highly acclaimed productions of *A Small Family Business* and *A View from the Bridge*. He's appeared in two different film versions of *The Woman in Black* and was until recently Artistic Director of the East Riding Theatre in Beverley.

They were all hosted masterfully by the lovely Laura Doddington, who took a break from her busy schedule as *EastEnders*' latest baddie, Nicola Mitchell. Laura appeared here in many shows in the early 2000s, including *Miss Yesterday*, *Time and Time Again* and *Improbable Fiction*.

And if you're wondering what happened to Tamzin Outhwaite, who was due to be part of our company for the day – she had to withdraw due to personal issues. We're hugely grateful to Sarah and Adrian who, after a bit of a casting rejig, stepped in at the eleventh hour to plug the gap.

The company performed extracts from each decade of our existence, plus a couple of extras: *Circle of Love*, *Little Brother*, *Little Sister*, *Taking Steps*, *The Woman in Black*, *Neville's Island*, *The Swing of Things*, *The Last Train to Scarborough*, *Build a Rocket*, *The Girl Next Door*, *The Comedy of Errors* (more or less) and finally, a play not yet seen on our stage, but a future possible from our Playwrights '73 writer-on-attachment, Kat Rose-Martin – *Cheap as Chips*.

Thanks to all of you who were there on the day – all the money raised will go towards work on our stages and in the community. And if you missed it, you can still buy special souvenirs of the day from our box office: a bumper programme which includes a year-by-year history of the theatre (£20), a mug (£10), or a T-shirt (£25 – available in sizes M, L, XL or XXL).

Green stuff

We've mentioned the Theatre Green Book before – an industry-wide initiative to work more sustainably in response to the climate crisis, which is something we're very committed to.

That commitment extends beyond the obvious stuff – recycling sets, sourcing props sustainably, and so on. We also like to help out other theatres where we can.

We were delighted, for instance, when the set designer for Theatre by the Lake's upcoming production of *Di and Viv and Rose* came to see *Pride and Prejudice* recently, she spotted a telephone box in *Eat Me* that would be perfect for her set and asked to borrow it. We were very happy to help – especially as it featured on the set of, yes, our version of *Di and Viv and Rose* back in 2017 (and made a more recent reappearance on the harbourside in last year's *The Whitby Rebels*).

Talking of Whitby, if you go to see Whitby Amateur Dramatic Society's new production of *The 39 Steps* (at the Whitby Pavilion from 8 to 10 August), keep your eyes peeled for a few familiar props – they've borrowed a handful of props from us including a lamppost, a pitchfork and a set of handcuffs!



SJT Stephen Joseph Theatre

70th Anniversary merchandise

LIMITED EDITION
70th Anniversary Tshirt
£25

LIMITED EDITION
70th Anniversary history book
£20

LIMITED EDITION
70th Anniversary mug
£10



A choir of lions

If you're coming to see Townsend Productions' *We are the Lions, Mr Manager* on 22 October, you'll get a nice added bonus – a song from Whitby Community Choir at the end of the show.



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.



Circle Cafés

Thanks to those of you who came to our July Circle Café and met some of the cast of *Pride and Prejudice*, who, amongst other things, revealed some of the soggy secrets behind that memorable and moving final scene. Do join us in August to meet members of the *Noises Off* cast.

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).



13 November – meet 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).



14 August – it's widely believed to be one of the funniest comedies ever: come and meet some of the company and find out what challenges *Noises Off* brings entails.

25 September

– meet the cast of Alan

Ayckbourn's

91st play, *Earth*

Angel, which explores what makes someone a good person.

