

The Circular

September 2025



“October, crisp, misty, golden October, when the light is sweet and heavy.”

Angela Carter



Stop press! We've just heard that Janie Dee is going to be a guest performer at *Play on Words* on Saturday 18 October (more on that show later in this newsletter). Olivier Award-winning Janie is much-loved by our audiences, having appeared here in Alan's shows *Dreams from a Summer House*, *Comic Potential* and *House & Garden*, plus the West End premieres of *House & Garden* and *Woman in Mind*.

As you read this, we're heading rapidly towards the end of our busy summer of SJT shows – *Pride and Prejudice* and *Noises Off* have been and gone, and *Earth Angel* has just a few days left with us before it heads out on a short tour.

No rest for us yet, though – we've got a busy season of visiting work coming up in October and November, followed in December by our two lovely festive family shows – *Sleeping Beauty* and, for the under-sixes, *Wonkey Donkey and the Magic Christmas Carrot*. They're both selling well already, so we recommend you get your Christmas diaries out now and get booking!

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

There's only a few days left now to catch Alan Ayckbourn's *Earth Angel*, so if you're undecided, let's see if some of our critics can change your mind.

First out of the starting blocks was *The Sunday Times*, whose writer Dominic Maxwell thinks that 'aged 86, [Alan is] still well worth a journey to Scarborough'.

The Guardian's Mark Fisher praised the show as a 'plea for decency', saying: "It is a humane and, in the final scene, touching vision."

Charles Hutchinson from *The Press* calls it 'a mystery and state-of-the-nation's morals litmus test wrapped inside a domestic drama

set in West Yorkshire', adding: "It affirms that opening sentiment of the good still being there if you look for it. It feels a nourishing finale, in more ways than one."

And Sue Wilkinson, writing in *The Scarborough News*, says: "The sensational six [actors] provide laugh-out-loud comedy, deliver hilarious one-liners, serious showdowns and moments of contemplation and tenderness. There are tears, laughter, love, hate, big ideas, division, reconciliation, small-town life, little victories and a huge heart in *Earth Angel*."



You can catch it here until 11 October, after which 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.

And you can hear Alan, and actors Iskander Eaton and Russell Richardson, talking about the show on BBC Radio York here (from 1 hour and 11 minutes in – link expires on 5 October): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002hlwr>



More new shows for 2026

We're steadily building our programme for 2026 and are delighted to bring you news of not only five new visiting shows, but also the first of our very own SJT productions!

As a valued Circle member, you have priority booking **from 10am on Wednesday 1 October** until 10am on Wednesday 8 October, when general booking opens.

Murder for Two (28 March to 18 April): A hilarious fast-paced musical whodunit, our first SJT production for 2026 is a madcap murder mystery with a twist. Two actors play 13 characters... and the piano. They put the laughter into manslaughter!

When famous novelist Arthur Whitney is found dead at his birthday party, it's time to call in the detectives. The only problem is, they're out of town. Enter Officer Marcus Moscovicz, a neighbourhood cop who dreams of climbing the ranks. With the clock ticking, it's up to Marcus to prove his super sleuthing skills and solve the crime before the real detective arrives. This award-winning Broadway show is gloriously silly, devilishly clever and fantastically funny.



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! *Tales from a Little Laughing Lesbian* is an electrifying one-woman show packed with stand-up, improv, and clowning, all delivered with 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!). Are you ready to laugh, reflect, and maybe even see yourself in a whole new way?

Martin Carthy and Eliza Carthy (21 February): Martin and his daughter Eliza are true national treasures. At 84, Martin recently became the oldest artist ever to be nominated for a coveted Mercury Music Prize. He's a legendary ballad singer and guitarist who has influenced generations of artists, including Bob Dylan and Paul Simon. She has been nominated twice for the Mercury Music Prize and is a multiple award-winner at the BBC Radio Two Folk awards. Together, they'll perform an eclectic range of songs and tunes from their vast family repertoire, drawing from the



traditional canon as well as selections from a more contemporary songbook. In this duo format, each artist showcases their unique individual musical talents, as well as highlighting their symbiotic bond, with instinctive and sensitive arrangements and accompaniment for each other.



Night & Day: Sam Jewison sings Cole Porter (7 March): Our favourite pianist/vocalist, Sam Jewison, returns with the songs of the great Cole Porter in what Jazz Journal called ‘an evening of superlative material and performances that put a huge smile on the collective face of the audience’. *I Concentrate on You* and *Just One of Those Things* feature alongside other reimagined highlights from Porter’s trailblazing musicals, including *High Society*, *Anything Goes* and *Kiss Me Kate*.

The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists (16 April): Townsend Theatre are always popular, and of all the shows they’ve ever brought to us, this is the one that we most often get asked to bring back. Townsend’s take on Robert Tressell’s classic socialist novel is one not to be missed.



An October cornucopia!

We have SO many exciting and varied visiting shows for you to choose from in October!

Alas, Poor Fred/The Disguises of Arlecchino (3 October): The Lost and Found Collective, a new company founded by Scarborough theatre expert Paul Elsam, perform two rarely seen shows from the SJT’s back catalogue. In James Saunder’s *Alas Poor Fred* 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...? *The Disguises of Arlecchino* is by Clifford Williams. Meet 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).



Into the Light (16 October): Recently nominated for two National Dance Awards (Best Independent Company and Emerging Choreographers), PCK Dance has quickly risen to become one of the UK’s most exciting contemporary dance voices. Having toured to major stages across Asia, Europe, and the USA, the company brings its latest bold and emotionally charged production to the SJT.

Play on Words (18 October): Multi-accomplished performer, composer and lyricist Hal Cazalet honours the Broadway career of his step great-grandfather, PG Wodehouse – find out more about Hal later in this issue of the Circular.



We are the Lions, Mr Manager! (22 October): From the ever-popular Townsend Productions, the remarkable story of Jayaben Desai, the inspirational leader of the 1976–78 Grunwick Strike. The show will feature a performance from the Whitby Community Choir.

Grace Petrie: This is No Time to Panic (24 October): Like protest songs? Neither does Grace Petrie – and she’s been singing them for 15 politically disastrous years. No longer able to meet the deadened eyes or desperate hopes of leftwing audiences, she reckons there’s no better time for a feel-good show! Depressed by fascism, misogyny and eco-destruction? Sounds like *your* climate needs a change!

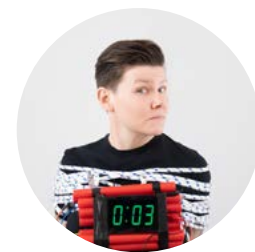
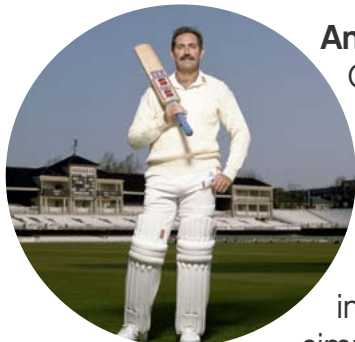


Image: Terry O'Neill / Iconic Images



An evening with Graham Gooch (25 October): England cricketing legend Graham Gooch OBE is the highest run-scorer of all time, and his 67,057 runs across first class and limited-overs cricket is more even than Sachin Tendulkar’s tally. One of only 25 players to have scored over 100 first-class centuries, he’s a three-time Ashes winner, captained England to a World Cup final, and his famous 333 against India is the highest Test score ever at Lord’s. In 2012 he became England’s batting coach, working with greats including Kevin Pietersen and Joe Root. Gooch’s experience of the game simply can’t be bettered, and he has the stories to prove it!

Ordinary Decent Criminal (28 October): With terrific reviews from its recent Edinburgh outing under its belt, this gripping prison drama, written by Ed Edwards and performed by Mark Thomas, heads our way for one night. *The Guardian* gave it four stars, praising its ‘time bomb humour’ and ‘subtle analysis of the social and cultural reasons these damaged men are behind bars’. And it gained five stars from *The Arts Desk*, which said: “[It’s] a breathtaking, often breathless achievement, a show that manages to appall, to amuse and to provoke. And bringing it all to vivid life is Thomas’s brilliantly committed and thoroughly convincing performance.”



Queer Spaces (29 October): A one-off night of sparkling new stories that imagine a better world through a queer lens. Written and performed by local LGBTQIA artists trying out new work for the first time, this unique performance is presented by award-winning company Roots.

Baga Chipz – Chip Off the Old Block (30 October): A [RuPaul’s Drag Race UK](#) and [RuPaul’s Drag Race: UK vs. the World](#) veteran, drag queen Baga Chipz brings her unique sense of style to the SJT with an evening of live vocals, big band ballads, disco classics and songs you’d sing down the pub, plus a special segment dedicated to her dear friend The Vivienne.



Everybody Dance!

Braeburn Primary Academy, Sherburn Church of England Primary Academy
Luttons Community Primary, Filey C of E Nursery and Infants School, The Brave Project, Hatton Performing Arts, Hatton College, York College, Acro with Emma...

If you have friends or family who attend or are involved in any of the above, make sure you keep Friday 7 November free. That’s when performers from all these organisations will come together on our stage to showcase and celebrate



dance in schools and community settings across the county.

The *Everybody Dance Festival* is a chance for young people to come together in a joyous and moving event. This is its second year here – last year's event was a huge success and sold fast, so grab your tickets now!

We've also slid in a last-minute treat this month – **Daniel Kitson's *Maybe a Ghost Story*** on 17 October. We'll let Daniel explain the show in his own, inimitable, fashion:

"I don't believe in ghosts and I'm not really comfortable with (or good at) frightening people.

"One Halloween, more than 40 years ago, me, my mum and my brother turned off every light in the house and waited just inside the front door for my dad to get home from work so we could frighten him. We'd made some frightening lanterns from turnips and learned a pretty frightening song about witches.

"But when my Dad walked in, he wasn't frightened. He was, if anything, visibly relieved. Now, this was a long time ago, so I don't remember all the details but apparently my Dad, having pulled round the corner to see the house in total darkness, was confused and a little concerned as to the whereabouts and, by extension, the wellbeing of his family. So, walking in to find two small boys brandishing candle lit vegetables and singing a song about how they were the ugliest witches he'd ever seen was in an odd way, quite reassuring.

"Later, he said he'd been worried by all the lights being off and I felt bad about causing that worry. I still do."

This singularly seasonal story by Daniel Kitson is definitely funny, potentially frightening and maybe, just maybe, a ghost story.



Spotlight on... Hal Cazalet

A member of our team who loves those oh-so-fabulous old-school movie stars was recently watching a documentary about Elizabeth Taylor and was puzzled as to where she'd seen one of the 'talking heads' before – a man discussing the great star's friendship with his Aunt Sheran as he browsed through old family photos, including one of Liz adjusting Sheran's wedding veil.

The penny dropped – it was Hal Cazalet, who visits us in October with his show *Play on Words*, part of which is dedicated to the Broadway career of his step great-grandfather, PG Wodehouse. This man is seriously connected!

Hal performs in opera, musical theatre and cabaret. He has appeared at almost all of the major operatic venues, with roles including Nicholas in *Death and the Powers* at the [Monte Carlo Opera](#), Gerard in *Les Enfants Terribles* by [Philip Glass](#) at the [Brooklyn Academy of Music](#) Opera House and Charles in *The Music Programme* at the [Royal Opera House](#). He's also performed at the Lincoln Centre, Weill Hall, Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall and the Kennedy Center, and with [English National Opera](#) and [Glyndebourne](#) Touring Opera.

His visit to us on 18 October, though, will see him very much with his cabaret head on, rather than opera – as well as Wodehouse, he'll also be celebrating the birth of the American musical with theatrical writing highlights of the last 120 years from Gershwin, Kern, Rogers & Hammerstein, Noël



Coward, Stephen Sondheim and many more.

You can read about Hal in more depth here: <https://www.yorkshiretimes.co.uk/article/A-Musical-Tribute-To-A-British-Comic-Genius-Comes-To-Scarborough>

You can see him performing here: https://sjt.uk.com/events/play-on-words#book_now

And if you'd like to see him talking about Elizabeth Taylor in that documentary, click here – it's in the first 10 minutes of the programme: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000vc82/a-life-in-ten-pictures-series-1-3-elizabeth-taylor>

Availability check

Just a reminder that a lot of our shows do sell out in advance, so it pays to book early. Tickets are currently going particularly quickly for *Black Tie Ball* (12 to 15 November), *Kevin Quantum: Unbelievable Magic for Non-Believers* (18 November) and *Holly at Christmas* (16 December).

And two ever-popular Christmas shows are rapidly approaching complete sell-out – at time of writing, there are just three single tickets left for the Raven concert on the afternoon of Sunday 7 December, and nine tickets for *Count Magnus* (this year's MR James treat from Robert Lloyd Parry) on 12 December.

It's story/dance/music time!

If you walk past our Meeting Point on Northway on the right day, you can enjoy the joyous sight of some very small people having a very good time – perhaps listening to a story, busting some moves, or creating some music.

We started our Story Maker sessions for pre-schoolers last year, with generous support from Circle member Judi Watkinson, and they've been so popular that we've added Move Maker and Music Maker.

Judi's ongoing support means that the monthly Story Maker sessions are free – we charge a nominal £2 per child for Move Maker and Music Maker, which take place every other month.

And there's a nice social aspect for the grown-ups, too, with tea and biscuits once the sessions are over.

So if you care for a little one, and want to see them get creative, why not join us? You can find out more here: <https://sjt.uk.com/takepart/young-people>



Backstage secrets – Alex's padded suit

Our Company Stage Manager, Fleur Beeley, shares another backstage secret...

It's always fun reading a new script and finding out what the writer wants you to achieve. *Noises Off* was no different, with some really big challenges hidden in the script.

My favourite was in one of the stage directions. Belinda (Valerie Antwi) is standing on the balcony holding a tea set in a box. She is surprised by a fellow cast member and the stage direction simply says 'the tea service rains down onto the floor below'.

A simple instruction, I'm sure you'll agree, but fraught with danger in the round. Flying crockery and adjacent actors. In the proscenium arch version, which is how this show is usually done, this is much simpler. The china would be dropped into a waiting box behind the sofa, and most of the dancing Denby would be contained. Make sure no actors are near the sofa, and everyone's out of danger. If you saw the show, you'll know how we got around this, and, as always, the simplest solutions are the best. It's what we call in the round 'string technology'.

Our other mammoth challenge was that actor Alex Phelps, as Garry Lejeune/Roger Tramplemain, had to fall down a flight of stairs, live, in front of you, the audience – and twice on a matinee day! In a traditional proscenium house, the stairs would be part of the set, so some thin foam and a couple of layers of carpet would take the sting out of the fall.

However, we used our auditorium stairs and clad them in wood, so they couldn't have been harder if we tried! We had a wonderful fight director, Kaitlin Howard, who put together this beautiful fall, all the while asking the questions of how flexible and 'up for it' Alex was (answers: very, and very).

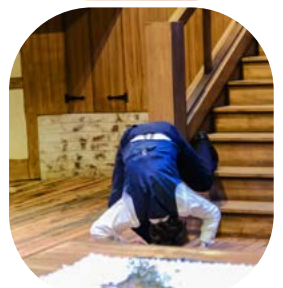
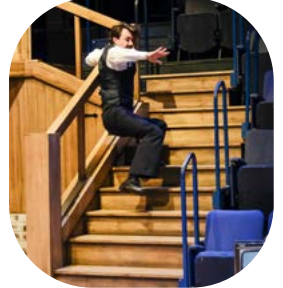
It came to a bit of a crunch when Kaitlin wanted him to do a roll across the landing, and then again at the bottom of the stairs. How do you protect an actor so that he doesn't hurt himself, all the while not compromising the action, the direction or the costume, which was an original 1960s wool suit from a charity shop?! (Heat exhaustion anyone??)



The answer is hex padding. This is the thinnest padding you can buy, is used for athletes, sports players (think rugby) and horse riders (think three-day eventing). We bought a job lot of it and our wonderful wardrobe department made Alex a padded undersuit for the fall scene. Unfortunately, another layer meant more heat – but also less bruises!

Over the tech and the first few shows Alex fed back to us about where he needed more padding – you can see from one of the photos that he needed more padding on the right side of his spine than on his left. I assume he rolled over his right shoulder.

But however good the padding is, it's the actor and the fight director who take the plaudits. The fall is like a dance: it's done exactly the same every night, and we practised it before each show. Any deviation from the



'dance' could have consequences for the actor and maybe also for other members of the cast who interact with him in that moment.

Alex is an amazing actor – I never heard one moan from him even though we basically asked him to throw himself down a flight of stairs twice or three times a day. Getting covered in sardines became very mundane by comparison – but maybe that's a story for another day.

You might enjoy seeing the whole thing from Alex's point of view, too! <https://www.instagram.com/p/DOMDJJPDRQu/>

Circle Cafés

Thanks to those of you who came to our August Circle Café and met the *Earth Angel* team, who told us of the joys of working in the round ('You can actually hear the audience listening!' said Iskandar Eaton, who's experiencing the round for the very first time), and of working with Alan ('The best director I've ever worked with' according to Liza Goddard – and with a CV like hers, she should know!)

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).

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)