The Circular
September 2026

"Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns." **George Eliot**

Hard to believe the long, hot summer's really over – it's been such a memorable one for us this year, with the many joys of ***Calendar Girls the Musical*** (currently nominated for a major award – find out more about that later in this Circular!), ***Handbagged*** and ***The Trial of Romeo Oscar*** playing to busy houses at every performance.

You still have a few days left to see ***Romeo Oscar*** if you're quick – it ends here on Saturday 3 October, before heading to the ***Victoria Wood Theatre*** (formerly the Old Laundry Theatre) in Bowness (13 to 17 October) and the ***New Vic*** in Stoke (21 to 31 October).

And you can still catch ***Calendar Girls the Musical*** at the ***Octagon Theatre Bolton*** from 8 to 31 October.

And now we're looking forward to welcoming ***All at Sea***, Alison Carr's fascinating new play inspired by the story of the 'Canoe Man', John Darwin, who was apparently lost at sea during a canoeing trip from Seaton Carew, only to turn up in Panama several years later – turns out the whole thing was an insurance scam.

Alison's play speculates on what might have been said between John and his wife Anne – in the play, they're Colin and Deborah – in the period in between, when, unbeknownst to everyone including their sons, he was hiding next door in a property connected to their house.

All at Sea is currently playing at Live Theatre in Newcastle – they're our co-producers on this one – ending there on 10 October and making its way to us for a 16 to 31 October run.





Attendees enjoyed a lovely event on the Friday night at which we welcomed some familiar faces from the past to talk about working with Alan, including **Robin Herford**, a regular member of the acting company and, in the late 80s, our Artistic Director and the man who commissioned ***The Woman in Black***.

He was joined by actor/director **Antony Eden** (seen here in ***A Brief History of Women, Taking Steps*** and ***Family Album***, and also Associate Director to Robin on ***The Woman in Black***); choregrapher **Sheila Carter**, and our ever-popular Company Stage Manager **Fleur Beeley**.

After the interval, they were joined by the cast of Sunday afternoon's rehearsed reading, ***Welcome to the Family***: **Eileen Battye, Terence Booth, Georgia Burnell, Bill Champion** (Antony Eden was also part of that company).

If you enjoyed the day and fancy a memento, check in with our box office – there's still a number of pieces of memorabilia available.

Thank you!

To all of you who supported our most recent fundraiser, the **Welcome to Pendon** weekend.

This annual event (keep an eye out for announcements on next year's in the not-too-distant!) raises crucial funds towards our new work, including the commissioning of a new play by our Director Emeritus, **Alan Ayckbourn**.



More more-or-less Shakespeare

If you enjoyed the hilarious mayhem of our two previous more-or-less Shakespeares, (***The Comedy of Errors*** and ***Love's Labour's Lost***), you won't want to miss our next!

As You Like It (more or less) will play in our Round from 19 March to 3

April next year – and in the words of director Paul Robinson: *"We're taking the sharp wit, pop music, and physical comedy that our audiences loved in the previous shows and bringing that distinct style into the magical, transformative world of the Forest of Arden."*

Co-adaptor (with Nick Lane) Kat Rose-Martin adds: *"I love a bit of the Bard. I also love wrestling, loads of gags, and banger tracks that make you want to get up and boogie. We've been packing all that together and giggling every step of the way.*

"Expect a sprinkle of what you might know, with a gravy of fun and frolics on top!"

As You Like It (more or less) is our third co-production with Shakespeare North Playhouse and will play there from Friday 9 April to Saturday 1 May.

New shows

We were talking to someone the other day who was surprised to discover how far ahead we all work here at the SJT. At the moment, of course, ***All at Sea*** is occupying a large percentage of the theatre's hive mind.

But alongside that there are hundreds of little mental outriggers in every department across the building planning for future shows – this Christmas's ***Puss in Boots*** and ***Hairy Bob's Christmas Jumper***, of course, but also all our autumn visiting work.

And even further ahead, we're working on our SJT productions for 2027 (we'll be telling you all about those soon) and beyond, and on our visiting work for next year.

With an average of around 50 visiting productions a year, from relatively simple one-person stand-up comedy nights to more complex, longer runs of shows from friends like the **John Godber Company, Blackeyed Theatre** and **Claybody Theatre**, there's always plenty to do!

It's always exciting to bring you word of new shows incoming, and this month, we've got four lovely treats for you.

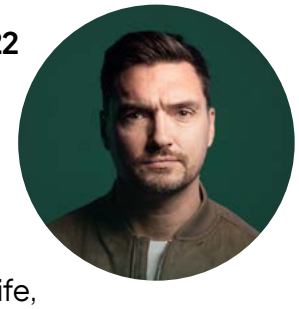
As always, as a valued Circle member, you have **priority booking from 10am on Friday 2 October to 10am on Monday 5 October**, when general booking opens. The new shows are:



Alicia's Amazing Adventure to find the first Black Britons* (27 February):** A magical, time-travelling family show that begins with one big question... "Why do people have different coloured skin?" Children ask questions. Big ones. Awkward ones. Important ones. And sometimes, grown-ups don't know how to answer. In this joyful and imaginative new theatre show, Alicia (McKenzie – Cora in ***Calendar Girls the Musical) sets out to find the truth – journeying across time, meeting historic heroes, hidden heroines, and uncovering surprising stories from Britain's past. Perfect for children aged 7+ and their grown-ups.



***Rise and Fall* (8 and 9 March):** Meet all manner of balloons from small floating moons to vast bouncing orbs. Forever expanding and contracting, balloons are free to float, fly and sway. Hold your breath and go sailing away. *Rise and Fall* is a poetic and intriguing performance for young audiences about holding on and letting go. Suitable for ages 2+, it's a non-verbal show, making it accessible to a range of children, including d/Deaf, hard of hearing and non-English speakers.



***Jack Skipper: Nothing Heavy* (22 April):** After a sell-out debut tour and an appearance on **Live at the Apollo, Jack Skipper** is back with his brand-new show, *Nothing Heavy*. Expect more of Jack's brilliantly relatable stand-up, as he tries to make sense of life, getting older and everything in between. Come and have a laugh. Nothing heavy.



Vacuum* (27 to 29 May):** Claybody is a relatively new company which has only played here once before, earlier this year. But we think it's safe to say they established themselves as firm SJT favourites with that show – ***The Grand Babylon Hotel.

Next year, they're bringing ***Vacuum***, and we're delighted to tell you that it'll be performed by one of our all-time favourite actors, **Bill Champion**, and **Michael Hugo**, whose brilliantly versatile comedic talent was a highlight of ***The Grand Babylon Hotel***.

It's the end of a long weekend for financial adviser Ray as he steps out of the rain into the dingy little vacuum repair shop, hoping for a straightforward conversation about money and investments with the proprietor. But as he's drawn deeper into Mr Ashburner's twilight world, the fabric of his own life starts to unravel.

Vacuum is a touching, darkly comic and surreal thriller about what it means to live a good life.

In case you missed it…

We're so thrilled that our hugely popular production of ***Calendar Girls the Musical*** has been shortlisted for Best Musical Production in the upcoming UK Theatre Awards.

The show is a co-production with Keswick's **Theatre by the Lake**, the **New Wolsey Theatre** in Ipswich and the **Octagon Theatre Bolton**.

It opened here in late June – and we all had a wonderful first night when we were joined by original Calendar Girls Angela, Tricia, Chris and Lynda, along with their husbands.

It then went to Keswick throughout August, and the New Wolsey in September. It will be at the Octagon throughout October.

But it all started here, created by our team led by director **Paul Robinson**, who says: *"Being nominated for a UK Theatre Award is an incredibly proud moment for us in Scarborough. It reflects not just the work on stage, but our shared commitment, alongside our vital regional partners, to bringing high-quality and engaging storytelling to local audiences. This production simply wouldn't have been possible without the immense trust of Tim Firth and Gary Barlow; allowing us to take their beautiful show and create its first-ever actor-musician version was a huge leap of faith. I am immensely proud of our spectacular, multi-talented cast and crew, and our visionary creative team who pushed all the boundaries to bring our ambitious vision to life."*

The awards will be announced on Monday 12 October – please keep your fingers crossed for us!

Availability check

Just a heads up on some of our best-selling shows this coming autumn:

Simon Evans: Staring at the Sun (21 November): We've opened up some restricted view tickets on this one – apart from a couple of singles, all the unrestricted seats have gone.

Haus of Games – the Isolation Creations' Halloween offering on 1 November is sold out, but their Christmas special on 20 December has, at time of writing, only three tickets left, if you fancy a bit of saucy festive fun!



And it goes without saying that our two annual Christmas treats are both rapidly heading towards selling out. **A Pleasing Terror – two ghost stories by MR James** on 9 December currently has 15 tickets available, and ***Holly at Christmas*** on 10 December has 81, but they are restricted view seats.



The **Raven** concert on 6 December, meanwhile, is sold out – as ever, we have a waiting list up and running if you want to be added to it.



There's still availability for the following, but we don't expect it to stay that way for long – they're all selling well: ***Daniel Kitson: Thrum*** (4 November); ***How Soon is Now?*** (6 & 7 November); ***Andy Parsons: Please #@!$ off to Mars*** (12 November), ***Oasiz*** (14 November) and ***Hammonds Brass Band*** (10 January).



Circle Cafés

Members met the cast of ***The Trial of Romeo Oscar*** at August's Circle Café, and enjoyed a lively event with topics ranging from working with **Alan Ayckbourn** to working in the Round.

Circle Cafés are getting 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 coffee to make, how much cake we need – all the important stuff! Thanks for your help.

Thursday 22 October: Meet the cast of **Alison Carr**'s intriguing new play, ***All at Sea***.



Thursday 12 November: Meet our Marketing 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 as the company will be on stage performing at our usual time).