



## The Circular

### August 2020

Hello and welcome to the August 2020 issue of the Circular, the newsletter just for our Circle members. In this month's issue, you can meet our Creative Producer, Amy Fisher and hear about the 'lost summer' of 1966...

...but first – a big announcement!

### Live theatre is coming back to the SJT!

We'll shortly be announcing our autumn/winter season. It's a little more pared back than you'll be used to, to help us keep you safe and well within social distancing guidelines. But we hope you'll find plenty in there to tempt you back and keep you entertained throughout the coming months.

Keep an eye on your inbox early next week for full details – and, of course, as a Circle member, you'll get priority booking from Tuesday 8 September.

You can find a sneak preview here: [www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/aug/19/scarborough-stephen-joseph-theatre-reopens-for-autumn-john-godber](http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/aug/19/scarborough-stephen-joseph-theatre-reopens-for-autumn-john-godber)

You may already know that our cinema has re-opened, and that we've welcomed into the building our friends from Eat Me Café, who have taken over our first floor bar lounge to give them a properly socially distanced venue.

You can find our film programme here: [www.sjt.uk.com/whatson](http://www.sjt.uk.com/whatson)

And there's more information on Eat Me @ The SJT here: [www.sjt.uk.com/were\\_back](http://www.sjt.uk.com/were_back)

We know, too, that many of you are still shielding or prefer to stay at home, and we're aiming to provide entertainment for you as well. There'll be shows in the autumn season that will work for you – and read on for more on a few things that you can enjoy at home.

## Poetry in motion

As part of our recent Summer School, our OutReach Director Cheryl Govan commissioned a series of short films from our friends, poet and actor Nadia Emam and filmmaker Brett Chapman.

They feature nine leading poets from across the UK: Toby Champion, Martin Daws, Hayley Green, Ray Hearne, Zara Jayne, Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan, Otis Mensah, Nima Taleghani and Beverley Ward.

In each of the three films, Nadia talks to three of the poets about their work, and they each read a couple of their poems, ranging from the whimsical to the hard-hitting. We think they're brilliant – see what you think!



You can find them here until midnight on 15 September: [www.sjt.uk.com/poets\\_and\\_their\\_poems](http://www.sjt.uk.com/poets_and_their_poems)

## Dancing in the streets

A series of short films showcasing Scarborough's dance moves will be available on our website from 4 September.

The *#goggledance Scarborough* films have been made as a co-production with our latest associate company VOXED.

The films feature people from around the town watching, commenting on, and joining in with professional dancer Alethia Antonia as she gives bespoke performances outside their houses. The results are, we think, uplifting, inspiring and occasionally hilarious.

The films have been made by James Williams, and are narrated by self-proclaimed 'Irish loudmouth', Sarah Blanc, whose show *My Feminist Boner* was a huge hit at the SJT earlier this year.

They will be released at 5pm each Friday for five weeks from 4 September via our Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube accounts.

#goggledance Scarborough is supported by McCain Foods.



## Script doctor

Our relaxed and friendly online script reading sessions have proved hugely popular over lockdown – the next batch starts on Tuesday 2 September.

Led by our Carne Trust Associate Director Chelsey Gillard, over five sessions you'll read and chat about a varied collection of scripts that playfully explore the themes of truth and illusion.

From laugh-out-loud comedies like Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, to Pirandello's much celebrated tragicomedy *Henry IV*, each week the sessions will explore character, themes, writing styles – and your opinions!

Digital copies of all the plays will be provided and participants will be given a link to join each weekly session on Zoom.

The classes cost £5 per week or £20 if you book all five.

Spaces are limited so please make sure to book early!

[www.sjt.uk.com/event/1039/script\\_reading\\_classes - online](http://www.sjt.uk.com/event/1039/script_reading_classes_online)

## Staff profile – Amy Fisher

*Meet Amy, our Creative Producer. Amy joined the SJT nearly two years ago, and is responsible for producing our in-house work, and programming, planning and organising all our touring activities, both companies coming to us, and our visits to other venues.*

I was born and raised in Wigan, Lancashire. It's where my parents and grandparents on both sides were also born and raised. Scarborough reminds me of Wigan in a lot of ways: if you're from here, you can say what you like about it, but if you're not local and you're caught badmouthing the town, you're in for it!

I always loved drama as a child. My mum used to say that that if I threw a tantrum I would position myself in front of a window or mirror so I could watch my performance. I enjoyed drama at school, did all the local groups and drama GCSE and then went on to college. It was only once I got to a good sixth form that I realised that although I wasn't a bad performer, I wasn't anywhere near as talented as some of my peers. People always talk about the buzz of performing, but I found I got that just as much from sitting in the audience as standing on the stage. I was much better at writing and talking about theatre than doing it, so I went off to university to do a Drama and Theatre studies degree.

I was the first in my family to go to university and graduated with a First Class Honours so now I'm the favourite grandchild. I bring this up a lot to my brother!

After going to uni in London I moved back up north and back in with my parents because I was skint. Everyone acted like it was a huge mistake to leave London and that a career in theatre could never take off, but that didn't make sense to me. I'd never seen a show in London until I went to university. I'd grown up watching plays at Bolton Octagon and the Royal Exchange in Manchester. I also still felt like I didn't belong in the south.

When I moved back I wrote emails to all the theatre people I could find an email address for. The drama school ALRA has recently opened a Wigan campus and someone told me they were looking for an administrator. I had no admin skills but I knew the local area really well and at the interview I told them: whatever you need me to do, I'll learn.



I worked at the school for two years before doing an intro to producing course at the National Theatre. I found it really interesting and they could tell I was good at organising things so they asked me back to look after a piece they were developing in the studio. After that I think people were misreading my CV because I started getting interviews for actual producing jobs...



I finally got a job, which meant re-locating to Peterborough for 10 months to produce a community show, involving 100 members of the public, for *Eastern Angles Theatre Company*. It was my contacts from this job that brought us the brilliant *Ballad of Maria Marten* at the start of 2020.

After that I worked as a freelance producer, mainly with a couple of companies at a time. I produced touring work for Box of Tricks Theatre in Manchester, who taught me everything I know about working with new writing. I worked at Theatre Royal Plymouth on the Jeremy Deller project to commemorate the centenary of the battle of the Somme. I worked with 20 Stories High in Liverpool on a play that performed in peoples living rooms.

I had a brilliant time but there are downsides to being freelance. Income is unreliable, everything relies on funding, it's a lot of uncertainty. I still really wanted to try working in a venue for a bit but I got a bit stuck because I had too much experience for assistant producer roles and not enough to be a producer.

I eventually took a one-year role at Northern Stage as their Associate Producer. I was living in York by this point so it was a lengthy commute but I loved it. I was only six months into my role there when the job at SJT came up. It was more senior than other roles I'd gone for and I'd never been to Scarborough but I applied anyway. I was hooked immediately after my interview and I've honestly loved every moment of my first 18 months.

I can't really believe this is what I do: it's completely my dream job. I cried like a baby when we had to cancel the shows when the pandemic first hit. So much work from so many people goes into making and programming the season and it really broke my heart that our audience wouldn't get to see it.

I found being off on furlough difficult because producing is normally all-consuming. I'm used to being in all the conversations and making things happen. I think lots of people who work in the arts have trouble separating their identity from their jobs. I am however hugely grateful for the support I've had from my colleagues and the wider industry. That support is what makes the SJT stand out for me. It's the thing that people always comment on if they've worked here.

I can't wait to get back in the building. I can't wait for the first live show gets its round of applause. There's nothing quite like it. I hope I'll see you there and that it will give you the same buzz it always gives me.

# The Other Lost Summer...

by Simon Murgatroyd

2020 marks the first summer there has been no theatre at the Stephen Joseph Theatre since it was founded in 1955. Except...

There's always an exception, isn't there? For, you see, 2020 isn't quite as unique as you might think.

The SJT has another missing summer and one that also has its own exceptional set of circumstances. For in 1965, the Library Theatre was officially closed by Stephen Joseph, only for it to re-open in 1967.

Consequently, there was no professional summer season during 1966. Instead, there was a full season of amateur theatre-in-the-round featuring local companies.

So, whilst 2020 could be accurately considered the first summer season without any theatre, it is actually the second season without professional theatre.

As the Circular has previously explored, Stephen Joseph definitively closed the Library Theatre in the winter of 1965. But one man had other plans, that being Ken Boden. He had been inextricably involved with the Library Theatre since it had opened during 1955 and essentially managed the Library Theatre. And he wasn't about to lose more than a decade of work.

He began formulating plans for professional theatre to resume, but he knew that it would be impossible to set everything up for the summer of 1966 summer. To that end, Ken came up with another idea. There needed to be continuation, but there was no time, finances or resources to perform a professional season at the Library. But an amateur season?

Ken was a leading member of Scarborough Theatre Guild, itself part of the British Drama League, which Ken persuaded to take on responsibility for a summer season at the Library Theatre. Intriguingly, to maintain a connection to what had gone before, the season was kept in-the-round.

Ken hoped this would give him the time to formulate plans for a resumption of professional performances whilst also keeping the Library Theatre in the public eye; Stephen Joseph himself had previously noted that he doubted the Library Theatre would survive in the town if it took a year off.

Very little is held in Archive for the summer season of 1966, but we know what was performed and who performed it – indeed, some of the companies still exist today. The 1966 summer season was advertised as 'The British Drama League present a summer season of plays [at the] Library Theatre'. It ran from 7 July to 10 September and featured four plays in repertory culminating in the seventh In The Round Festival.

The plays were each performed twice, each time for a week: *Doctor In The House* by Ted Willis, performed by The Cresta Players; *Intent To Murder* by Leslie Sands, performed by Filey Drama

## The British Drama League

Patron: H.M. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother  
N. R. Yorkshire Coastal District Officials:  
Chairman: Maurice L. T. Ploes  
Organising Hon. Secretary: Kenneth Boden  
Hon. Treasurer: Dorothy Ruff  
Stage Director: Peter Boden  
Box Office: Hubert N. Ruff



present a  
Summer Season of Plays

## LIBRARY THEATRE

July to September, 1966

Nightly at 7.45

WEEKLY REPERTOIRE OF PLAYS  
to be presented by local dramatic societies:

JULY 7th - 13th and AUGUST 4th - 10th

**Doctor in the House**

JULY 14th - 20th and AUGUST 11th - 17th

**Intent to Murder**

JULY 21st - 27th and AUGUST 18th - 24th

**Bonaventure**

JULY 28th - AUGUST 3rd and AUGUST 25th - 27th

**Father Matthew**

SEPTEMBER 3rd - 10th

**Seventh in the round Festival**

Adjudicator: Rodney Wood Nightly at 7.15

PROGRAMME 6d.

SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED IN THE THEATRE

Club; *Bonaventure* by Charlotte Hastings performed by Phoenix Drama Club; *Father Matthew* by Aubrey Colin, performed by Outsiders Drama Club.

The season came to a close from 7 to 10 September with the annual In The Round Festival, adjudicated by Rodney Wood; who had previously introduced Alan Ayckbourn to the company in 1957.

Whilst we have few other details pertaining to the season, it was confirmed in The Stage newspaper on 23 June as being an in-the-round season with prices the same as for previous professional seasons.

Despite these unusual circumstances, theatre-in-the-round went successfully ahead at the Library Theatre that summer, whilst Ken Boden worked hard behind the scenes to restore professional theatre.

From what few records survive, it's not clear if Stephen Joseph was aware of Ken's long-term plans nor whether he would even have approved of them, as Ken Boden noted: *"I decided to keep it [the Library Theatre] going. At first, Stephen wasn't very pleased. I think he thought I was trying to show him how to run a theatre. But, eventually, he realised that I only wanted to keep the theatre open."*

With Stephen's blessing to run an amateur season, Ken turned to the Arts Council, Scarborough Town Council and the Libraries Committee as well as other key figures associated with the company over the years. He soon ascertained there was not only support for a revival, but that there were probably finances available too.



Stephen was probably informed of these plans during the summer of 1967, by which point he had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. His attitude was now changed and he was broadly supportive of the plans – particularly given Scarborough Council agreed to restore funding to the Library Theatre from 1967 and guaranteed to cover any losses.

In October 1966, Scarborough Theatre Trust reconvened for its first meeting for a year with Stephen Joseph stepping down as Chairman. Significantly, he agreed to write off the company's debts of £50. Later that evening, the Scarborough Theatre Trust AGM took place where Dr Nathan Walsh was appointed as Chairman. It was agreed professional theatre would relaunch during the summer of 1967 with Rodney Wood as the Director of Productions.

And so it did, beginning an unbroken run of summer – and later winter – seasons until 2019.

Which goes to prove, one must always have hope. At the end of 1965, it seemed there was no future for theatre-in-the-round in Scarborough. The end appeared set in stone. Yet within two

years, professional performances at the Library Theatre were back and, within five years, the company once more thriving.

These are bleak times for the SJT and the UK's theatres, but we must have hope too. Even now there are glimmers of light and cautious steps forward.

This company came back from the brink during the 1960s to become even more successful than it had ever previously been. There is no reason to believe the SJT cannot do this again and that the summer of 2020 – like that of 1966 – is just a bump in the continuing extraordinary story of the SJT.

*Simon Murgatroyd is Alan Ayckbourn Archivist's and also the Honorary Archivist of The Bob Watson Archive at the Stephen Joseph Theatre.*

## **Membership renewal**

Thank you to all of our members who have continued to renew their memberships. Please be assured that your membership renewal has gone through on our system, but there will be a delay in getting your physical packs out to you.

We will be posting all packs out to members who have renewed during this period as soon as possible. Thank you for your patience at this time.

## **Keeping in touch**

We're doing everything we can to keep in regular contact with all of our customers, especially Circle members and those who may not have access to the internet.

You should be receiving regular emails or mail-outs from us, keeping you up to date with all our news – if for any reason you're not, please do tell us!

And if you know anyone else who you think would like to hear from us, now's the ideal time for them to sign up to our mailing list here: [www.sjt.uk.com/maillinglist-signup](http://www.sjt.uk.com/maillinglist-signup)