



## **Circular July 2021**

### **Welcome...**

...to the July issue of the Circular, the newsletter exclusively for members of the Stephen Joseph Theatre's membership scheme.

As we're sure you know, the rules around Covid safety changed from Monday 19 July, with responsibility for what we do shifting away from the government and over to us.

It's a big jump for us, and we've thought long and hard about what we should do. We've come to the inevitable conclusion that our main priority is safety – yours, ours, and that of our actors.

We're also really conscious that, if any of our actors shows symptoms and has to isolate, we could lose the entire show for the rest of the run.

So, at least for now, many of the Covid security measures you've become familiar with recently will remain in place.

All our staff who come into face-to-face contact with the public will be wearing masks, and we'll be asking you to continue to wear a mask when moving around the building or when watching a show or film, at least for the time being.

We'll still be taking temperatures on arrival, and asking you to sanitise your hands, and our one-way system will remain in place. Seating in our auditoria will remain socially distanced.

We'll be scaling back our track-and-trace system – there'll be just one QR code on display, which you can use if you wish, or, if you prefer pen and paper, forms will still be available at the box office.

And we're not planning on reopening our bar just yet – we'll still be taking pre-orders for pre-show and interval drinks. We know from feedback that that will make a lot of you very happy – you've loved our at-seat service!

We will of course be reviewing all of this on a regular basis, and promise to keep you posted.

Thank you, as ever, for all your wonderful support – and here's to a happy and healthy future for all of us!

## Home, I'm Darling



*Home I'm Darling - from left to right: Vicky Binns, Sandy Foster, and Sam Jenkins-Shaw © Ellie Kurttz*

You'll probably know by now that we've had to cancel a few of the upcoming performances of our latest show *Home, I'm Darling* due to several company members testing positive – it will be back on our stage from Monday 2 August.

The good news is that they're all feeling well, are in good spirits and can't wait to get back to work!

The show (a co-production with the Octagon Theatre, Bolton and Theatre by the Lake in Keswick) certainly went down well with the *Yorkshire Post*, which gave it five stars, saying: "The staging is brilliant, the acting first class and the play rich... and ultimately uplifting."

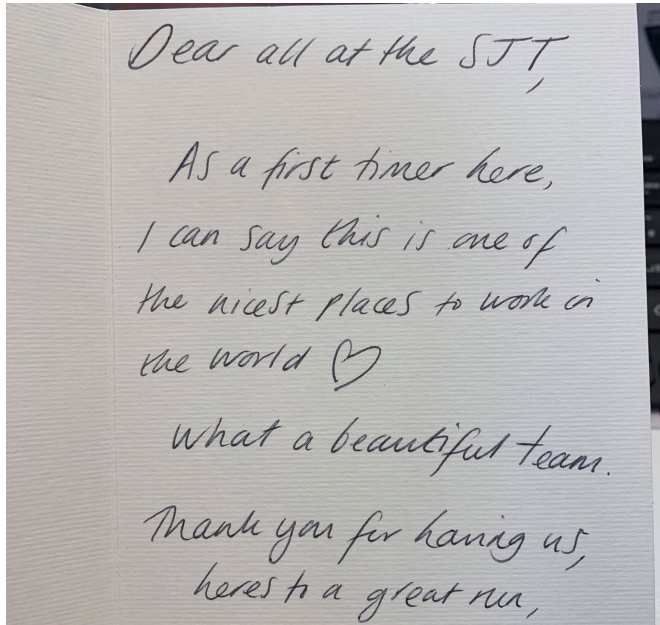
The online Reviews Hub awarded four stars, calling it an 'exuberant satirical comedy', while the *Scarborough News* praised it as 'triumphant and joyous'.

The *Guardian* weighed in with 'a clever, needling play... a provocative thought experiment and a stern challenge to rose-tinted politics'.

This sparkling comedy is by Laura Wade, who you might know better as the writer of the play *Posh* and the film version of it, *The Riot Club*.

[https://www.sjt.uk.com/event/1132/home\\_im\\_darling](https://www.sjt.uk.com/event/1132/home_im_darling)

## A sweet bouquet



While we're on the subject of Home, I'm Darling – well, we try not to blow our own trumpets too much, but we just had to share this with you – a card from a member of the company. It sums up just beautifully what we'd like to think we're about...

## The Girl Next Door

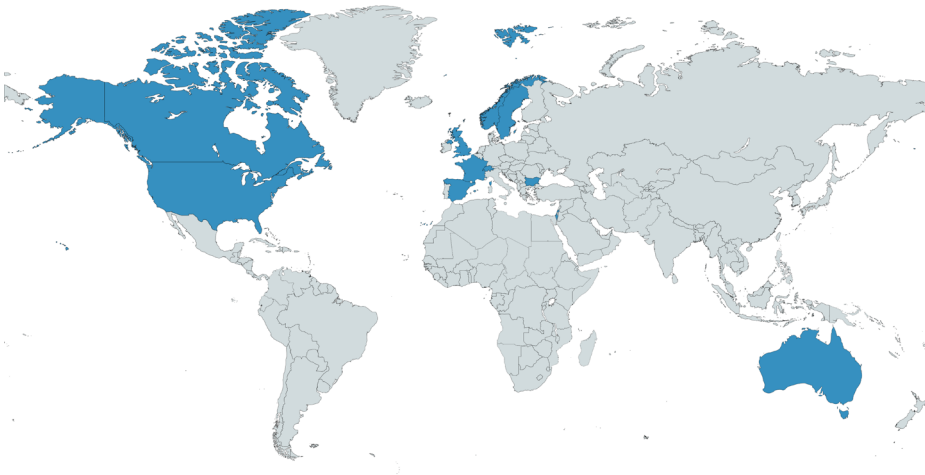


*The Girl Next Door* production shots © Tony Bartholomew

If you haven't already seen it, there's another chance to catch Alan Ayckbourn's hugely popular *The Girl Next Door* in our Round – it's coming back for just six performances from 1 to 4 September, before heading off to our 'sister' theatre, the New Vic in Newcastle-under-Lyme, from 7 to 18 September.

We've also filmed the show, of course, and we know that many of you who can't get to us for whatever reason enjoyed that – and not just in this country! Our map on the next page shows where around the world it was watched.





To book here: [https://www.sjt.uk.com/event/1131/the\\_girl\\_next\\_door](https://www.sjt.uk.com/event/1131/the_girl_next_door)

And for the New Vic: <https://www.newvictheatre.org.uk/productions/the-girl-next-door/>

## Lighting a Fuse



*Fuse Youth Theatre © Tony Bartholomew*

We're delighted that we've been able to start our Fuse sessions again after a long and, of course, enforced break, and made possible by funding from a local trust.

Fuse is an inclusive youth theatre for young people with learning disabilities (ages 14-25) and those from mainstream education (age 14-18). We run weekly session encouraging ensemble work, problem-solving, independent thinking, creativity, communication both verbal and non-verbal, helping participants to have the confidence to be themselves and feel that their voice is heard.

Fuse is about respect, joy and loads of fun. Sometimes the group creates and puts on performances too.

Our Fuse sessions are led by our Associate Director (Young People & Community), Cheryl Govan, who says: "Starting back after being off for 15 months was like putting on your comfiest shoes. We had an absolute blast and have already created an original song which will form part of a story yet to be made. These young people are truly astonishing, funny and filled with joie de vivre. Friday evening has again become one of the highest of highlights of the week."

## Dates for your Diary

As things slowly return to normal, we're starting to reinstate our popular programme of Circle Cafés, where you can meet cast, crew and SJT staff for an insight into what happens behind the scenes. We'll be confirming our guests later, but for now, pop the following dates in your diary...

Thursday 12 August  
Thursday 9 September  
Thursday 21 October  
Thursday 18 November  
Thursday 16 December

For those of you who haven't been to one of these events before, they're very relaxed. We ask you to arrive between 10.30am and 10.50am for an 11am. Tea and coffee is provided, and we usually wind up at around 11.45am. We look forward to welcoming you!

## Near and Far: touring and the SJT

by *Simon Murgatroyd*

With the exciting news that all three of this summer's SJT productions are touring\*, it seemed appropriate to explore our rich history of touring over the decades.

Touring has been an integral part of this company's existence virtually since its creation in 1955 and has seen productions touring not only throughout the UK, but also to North America, Europe, even Australia!

Stephen Joseph began touring from the Library Theatre in 1958 for a very specific reason – he wanted to find a permanent home for the company. Scarborough was initially conceived as a temporary home before a hoped for move to a more permanent base.

So between 1958 and 1962, the company toured to towns and cities without municipal theatres – such as Newcastle-under-Lyme, Birmingham, Leicester, Hemel Hempstead, Hull, Southampton and Totnes – largely in the hope that one might be interested in creating a purpose-built theatre-in-the-round.

Stephen nearly found success in Newcastle-under-Lyme, which did approve plans for a new theatre. When these collapsed, though, Stephen decided to move the company to Stoke-on-Trent anyway, opening the Victoria Theatre – now known as the New Vic and where we continue to tour to to this day.

This led to the end of touring in Scarborough for more than a decade as most of the company's money had gone to Stoke, leaving Scarborough to struggle on for the rest of the decade with just a summer season.



*1974 Confusions - Whitby Pavilion © Scarborough Theatre Trust*

When Alan Ayckbourn was appointed Artistic Director in 1972, he was keen the theatre not only become a year-round concern once again, but it also tour out. This began in 1974 with the world premiere of *Confusions* which toured to Hull, Workington, Ulverstone, Kendal and Lincoln.

It was followed by a local weekly tour to Filey and Whitby which had an extraordinary schedule: at Filey Sun Lounge (Tuesdays), performances were

in-the-round; at Whitby Pavilion (Wednesdays and Thursdays), it was endstage; then back at the Library Theatre (Fridays and Saturdays), it was performed three-sided in the old Lecture Room as the traditionally used Concert Room was unavailable. A tour full of confusions indeed!

## CULTUREEL CENTRUM AMSTELVEEN

donderdag 25 maart - 20.15 uur  
enige voorstelling in Nederland

entree: f 13.50 - f 11.50 en f 8.50. CJP - studerende en Pas 65 f 4.25.  
kaartverkoop vanaf 18 maart bij de VVV van 9.00 - 18.00 uur. Tel. na 11 uur nr. 45 84 44.

The British Council presents

## The Scarborough Library Theatre Company in

### Just Between Ourselves



A new play by **ALAN AYCKBOURN**

1976 *Just Between Ourselves* Tour

when the company toured not only the UK but extensively across Canada with Alan's play *Time & Time Again*. The following year, *Henceforward...* went out to Europe and then kept going, taking in Istanbul, Ankara, Alexandria, and Cairo. As an Archivist, I find it delightful to imagine a Scarborough company performing Ayckbourn plays in the capital of Egypt!

With the onset of the '90s, attention was largely focused on the development of the SJT, but in 1992 a new tradition began with the first tour to the newly built Old Laundry Theatre in Bowness-on-Windermere. Interesting fact: this was founded and designed by Alan Ayckbourn's frequent designer Roger Glossop and is practically a carbon-copy of the layout of our former home at Westwood. It was conceived with the idea that Scarborough would regularly transfer its productions there – which it continues to do to this day.

Touring from the new SJT did not really gather pace until 1999 when *Haunting Julia* set the template for extensive UK endstage tours as well as a regular in-the-round circuit comprising of the Old Laundry, the New Vic and Bolton Octagon.

During the 2000s, smaller scale tours of regional rural venues also found success presenting the SJT's lunchtime programme of new works by up-and-coming writers.

In 1976, the company crossed the channel when the British Council began to support touring. Alan's play *Just Between Ourselves* and Stephen Mallatratt's play *An Englishman's Home* toured to Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany.

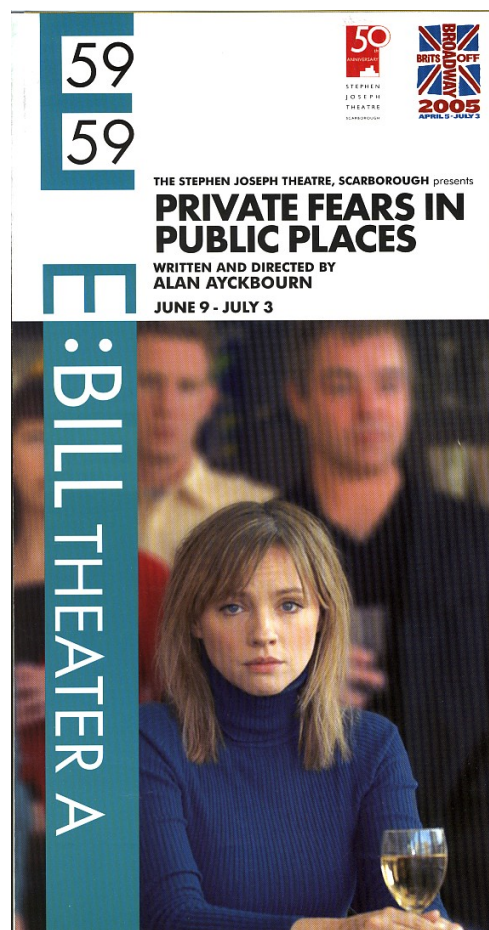
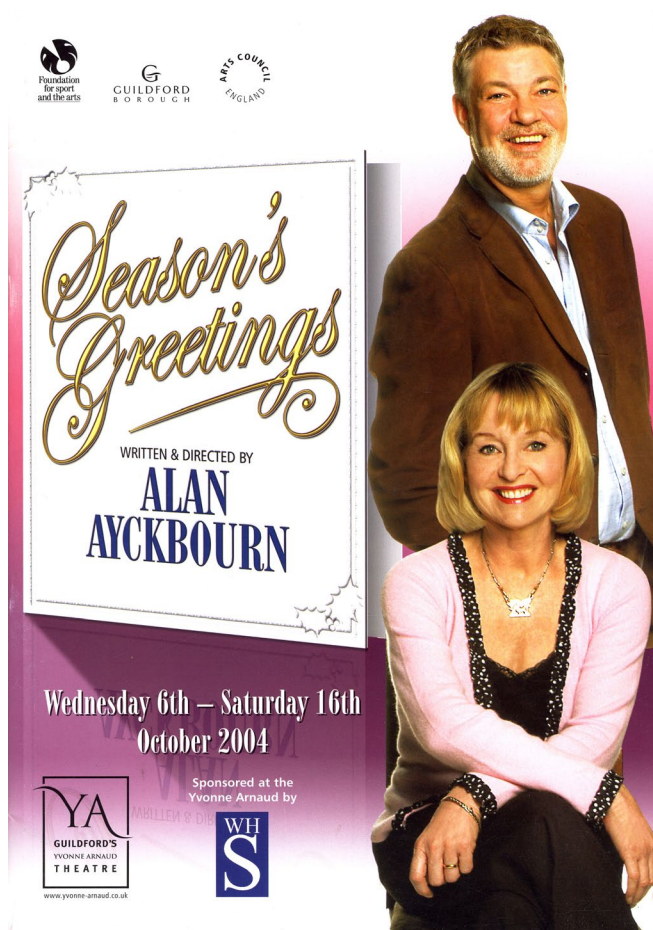
The European excursions continued between 1979 and 1980 visiting the likes of Brussels, Rotterdam, Arnheim, Amsterdam, Cologne, Luxembourg, and Düsseldorf.

By the early 1980s, Alan was also becoming increasingly disenfranchised by the West End and sought a means to bypass it by taking his Scarborough productions directly into London, first to The Round House (1980-81) and, later, Greenwich Theatre (1984). Sadly, this was a short-lived and unsuccessful venture which was ill-received by critics.

Despite this, the company excelled in 1982 when it toured to the Alley Theatre, Houston. Of course, when touring across the Atlantic, the sensible option would be to take a compact production. So, obviously, Alan toured *Way Upstream* for a month... And it was a huge success complete with flooded stage and moving cabin cruiser.

This ambitious approach was repeated in 1987





2004 Season's Greetings Cover and 2005 Private Fears in Public Places 59E59 Cover

On the other end of the scale, an ambitious team-up with the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre in Guildford in 2004 saw Alan direct a production of *Season's Greetings* specifically for larger end-stage theatres, starring Liza Goddard and Matthew Kelly. It was hoped this would become a regular tour circuit, but sadly never progressed past the first year.

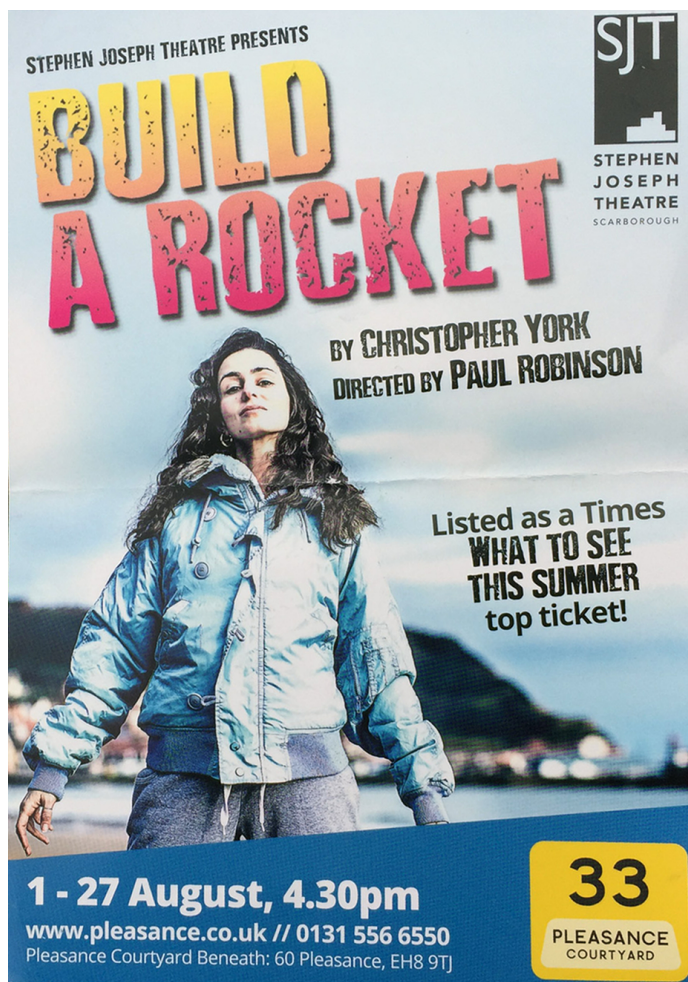
More successful was a financially risky decision to tour *Private Fears in Public Places* to New York as part of the *Brits Off Broadway* festival at the 59E59 Theatres.

The risk was more than worth it and the play was critically acclaimed and broke box office records – there were even ticket touts, apparently, as it was such a hot ticket! This began a strong relationship which has seen the SJT tour to 59E59 Theaters every couple of years. It is a relationship both the SJT and Alan Ayckbourn are very proud of.

The high point of this period arguably came in 2011 when *Neighbourhood Watch* began a tour in New York, before coming returning to the UK and climaxing in a month-long residency at the Tricycle Theatre, London. Scarborough, New York, London – not bad.

But there was little other innovation in touring and a slow decline began. The rural tours ended in 2010 due to funding cuts and the endstage circuit consistently became smaller, culminating in just a handful of venues in 2017. The nadir was, arguably, a poorly received tour of Chris Monks' *Cox & Box* during 2015.

The company's founder, Stephen Joseph, argued theatres should be blown up every 10 years: in essence, they should re-invent themselves to stay fresh. With the appointment of Paul Robinson as Artistic Director in 2017 came a fresh approach to touring.



*Build A Rocket - Edinburgh Fringe Festival*

The idea was to tour more of the SJT's repertory out and with more focus. This launched with *Goth Weekend* and *The 39 Steps* but took off – pardon the pun – with *Build a Rocket* by Scarborough playwright Chris York, which went where the SJT had never gone before.

It was the first production to tour to festivals taking in both Latitude and – particularly notably – the Edinburgh Festival where it won the Holden Street Theatre's Edinburgh Fringe Award leading to it tour to Adelaide in Australia!

An extraordinary achievement which was followed by the most extensive UK tour ever organised by the company.

And that, pretty much, brings us to the present day and, going forward, a renewed emphasis on touring and co-productions which will see the majority of the SJT's programme going out on tour, taking our plays out across the country. This year will see *The Girl Next Door*, *Home*, *I'm Darling* and *The Offing* all touring - even during these most challenging of circumstances for theatres.

Hopefully, they will pave the way for even more exiting and extensive ventures and tours from the SJT in the year to come.

\**The Girl Next Door* can be seen at the New Vic, Newcastle-under-Lyme, from 7 to 18 September; *Home*, *I'm Darling* is a co-production with the Octagon Theatre Bolton and Theatre by the Lake, Keswick and will be seen at those theatres in the autumn (Bolton: 1 September to 2 October, and Keswick: 6 to 30 October); *The Offing* is a co-production with Live Theatre in Newcastle and will be on their stage from 3 to 27 November.

*Simon Murgatroyd is Alan Ayckbourn's Archivist and the Administrator of his official website [www.alanayckbourn.net](http://www.alanayckbourn.net).*