

Circular March 2022

Welcome...

...to the March 2022 issue of the Circular, the newsletter exclusively for members of the Stephen Joseph Theatre's membership scheme.

Read on to find out how you can get 2-4-1 tickets for *Jane Eyre*; be the first to hear about new shows for June and July; and discover the history of the Brontës at the SJT over the years.

Did someone say free tickets?



We're delighted that, due to the generosity of the National Lottery, we've been able to extend the Love Your Local Theatre scheme throughout April.

Buy a ticket for any performance of *Jane Eyre*, *I Am No Bird*, or our family show during the Easter holidays, *WOLF!*, and you'll get a second ticket free courtesy of the National Lottery.

All you need to do is enter the code LYLT22 when booking online, or quote it when booking by phone or in person at the box office. The offer will expire at the end of April, or when our allocation of lottery money runs out, whichever comes first!

For more information on the scheme, take a look here: <https://www.loveyourlocaltheatre.com>

April at the SJT



Jane Eyre in rehearsals © Tony Bartholomew

April is always such a lovely month, but we're extra thrilled to see it arrive at the SJT this year. It brings with it our first in-house production of 2022, *Jane Eyre*, alongside a festival of related events around the Brontë family.

Jane Eyre is a new adaptation from the incredibly talented Chris Bush, whose star is very much in the ascendant at the moment. Her innovative new show *Rock/Paper/Scissors* will help Sheffield Theatres celebrate its 50th anniversary this summer, while the show for which she's probably best known, *Standing at the Sky's Edge*, returns to Sheffield Crucible this Christmas before heading to the National Theatre in early 2023.

But first, she's all ours, with a thrilling new adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's classic novel. It's performed by a fabulous cast including Eleanor Sutton as Jane, and Sam Jenkins-Shaw (many of you will remember him as Richard Hannay in *The 39 Steps*). They're supported by Nia Gandhi, Sarah Groarke, Tomi Ogbaro and Zoe West, and directed by Zoë Waterman. There's some gorgeous traditional songs, too, set to new music by our super-talented Associate Artist Simon Slater – you can catch one of those songs here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ew_dUlf0cUE

You can see *Jane Eyre* from 8 to 30 April.



I Am No Bird in rehearsals © John Sargent

We also have a wonderful programme of supporting events, including *I Am No Bird*, from Stute Theatre. With live looped spoken word, soaring vocal harmonies and an unexpected twist, this modern adaptation shines a new light on the artistry and resilience of three remarkable Yorkshire women.

Catch it from 27 to 30 April.



From left to right: Rowan Coleman, Sassy Holmes, and Tim Tubbs

There's also a series of fascinating talks – from Tim Tubbs, a Scarborough speaker with a huge following; Sassy Holmes, from the Brontë Parsonage; and Rowan Coleman, author (under the nom de plume Bella Ellis) of the best-selling Brontë Mysteries books.

You can follow in the footsteps of the Brontës on our new audio walk, created by Lisa Cagnacci. For a cost of £3 (£5 after the end of April), you can download it via a QR code available from the box office, or for a £5 deposit, borrow an MP3 player with the walk loaded on it. There's a shorter and a longer version, both touching on points of interest connected with the Brontë family and both ending, of course, at Anne's grave in St Mary's Churchyard.



Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon in *Wuthering Heights* (1939)

We're screening a couple of rarely-seen movies – the 1939 William Wyler version of *Wuthering Heights*, with a stellar cast including Laurence Olivier, Merle Oberon, David Niven, Dame Flora Robson and Leo G Carroll, and *Les Sœurs Brontë*, a 1979 French film starring the two great acting Isabelles, Adjani and Huppert, and Marie-France Pisier, as the three sisters.

And just to make sure all the family is covered, actor Sarah Pearman (you'll remember her from *Stepping Out*) is

leading a couple of *Brontë Babies* sessions – creative play sessions for the tiniest members of the family inspired by the sisters' work.

Non-Brontë events for April include *WOLF!*, a new show from Kitchen Zoo, who entertained our younger audiences a couple of years back with *The Tin Foil Astronaut*; and a wide and varied range of streamings and films. These include a special tie-in with Sci-Fi Scarborough: a one-night-only screening of the classic 1971 family favourite *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* followed by an exclusive Q&A with Veruca Salt herself, Julie Dawn Cole. We can't wait to ask what it was like working with Gene Wilder!

For more on all of the above, take a look here: <https://www.sjt.uk.com/whatson>

We've been expecting you, Mr Blofeld...

As you know, as a Circle member, you get priority booking on all of our shows. From now on, we're going to announce new shows when we can via the Circular. So, have a read below to be among the first to find out about five fantastic new shows that, as a Circle member, you can book from tomorrow until Friday 8 April – after that, booking will open to the general public. As ever, all tickets are priced from £10.

Full English



© Karol Wyszynski

Us kids aren't English, they aren't Pakistani. They're ours. And we love 'em for it!

Full English explores personal histories from the Canterbury Estate in Bradford, where Natalie Davies grew up, along with her mother and her Nan, Cath - a reggae-loving dance enthusiast.

Back in the late 50s, migrant workers started to arrive from Pakistan and Bangladesh. These young men soon met and started to fall in love with local lasses, including Natalie's Nan - Cath.

Using first hand stories, Full English is a poignant, funny and life-affirming homage to the strength of women. Those who married Pakistani men and brought up mixed-race children. Those who struggled with their identity. Those who never really belonged to any particular culture or race. Those who constantly had to stand up against racists. Those who just didn't care.

Because, let's face it, who is full English anyway?

More info: https://www.sjt.uk.com/event/1360/full_english

Potatohead



Potatohead is a hilariously bizarre solo show and adaptation of Doctor Faustus and the Seven Deadly Sins. An original piece of new writing by puppeteer and performer Freddie Hayes, saturated with potato puns from start to finish, *Potatohead* tells the story of a humble spud who dreams of becoming a cabaret superstar.

But how does a couch potato grow to become a golden wonder? With elements of kitsch cabaret and old school entertainment, this original new writing blends puppetry, clowning and comedy for a highly entertaining and joyful performance. *Potatohead* is an unadulterated celebration of silliness.

More info: <https://www.sjt.uk.com/event/1353/potatohead>

We Should Definitely Have More Dancing



The amazing adventures of a woman with a fist in her head.

Clara Darcy is fit! She's also (almost) carefree, (kind of) happily single and joyously dancing through life but, little does she know, her world is about to be turned upside down thanks to the arrival of a fist – slap-bang in the middle of her head.

Based on her real-life story and performed by the actress herself with friends, *We Should Definitely Have More Dancing* explores the things that define us, that fill us up and make us who we are – a cautionary postcard from the edge of life stuffed full of heart and love and dancing.

Clara Darcy co-writes with Ian Kershaw, whose *The Greatest Play in the History of the World*, performed by Julie Hesmondhalgh, was the show we reopened with last year after the January to May lockdown.

More info: https://www.sjt.uk.com/event/1363/we_should_definitely_have_more_dancing

My Dear Old Things – An Evening With Henry Blofeld



Being confined to the pavilion for the past couple of seasons has given Henry time to reconnect with his Norfolk roots and reflect on a truly extraordinary life. This reflection inspired the online film, *At Home With Henry*, and this new theatre show.

In *My Dear Old Things*, Blowers recalls his days as a young England hopeful, how an Eton bus knocked him off his stride – and his bike – recoiling from a career in the City to work as a cricket journalist before finding his way into the TMS box.

There are hilarious tales of Johnners, Arlott and other larger-than-life characters in the box and on tour with England. Henry also has plenty of hysterical stories from his post-retirement appearances on *Would I Lie to You?* and *The Real Marigold Hotel*.

Backed by film and rare personal pictures on our big screen, *My Dear Old Things* is an absolute treat for the cricket connoisseur and a wonderfully engaging evening for all.

More info: https://www.sjt.uk.com/event/1362/henry_blofeld_my_dear_old_things

Showing Poetential



Cult performance poet JB Barrington is a Salford-born award-winning performance poet renowned for his searing and satirical poetry, snarling delivery of strong sentiments, and sharp rhymes. His funny, endearing and nostalgic poetry has made him one of the most powerful performers on the UK scene.

Showing Poetential delivers a rollercoaster of emotions with a brilliant and imaginative display of poetic writing covering social issues, economics, class and loss.

Barrington's unique, gritty style has won him several high-profile fans, including the bands Sleaford Mods and Reverend and The Makers who he has supported extensively on tour. Suggs from Madness was so impressed by Barrington's book *Woodchip Anaglypta And Nicotined Artex Ceilings* he took a copy on stage with him at Kendal Calling 2016 during the sell-out Madness Saturday night headline show and read out one of the poems.

More info: https://www.sjt.uk.com/event/1361/jb_barrington_showing_poetential

Help us do our little bit to save the planet

We've had a couple of emails recently from our paper suppliers about an approaching problem in the supply chain. We'll let them explain in an extract from one of those emails:

- *Scandinavia buys additional pulp from Russia; sanctions have now prevented this.*
- *A lot of paper is made in Finland, and they have been on strike since December.*
- *Russia is a big supplier of trees for pulp; this has now ceased due to worldwide sanctions.*
- *American/Indonesian markets do not want to supply the UK as they get a better return in their own markets.*
- *Paper component increases (energy, pulp, shipping, bleaching): all costs are increasing.*

What better time to sign up for emails if you can? You can join our main mailing list here: <https://www.sjt.uk.com/maillinglist-signup>

That will bring you a weekly newsletter, usually on a Friday, with information on everything that's coming up.

And you can update your Circle membership details by dropping a line to our Fundraising and Development Officer, Stephanie Dattani, at stephanie.dattani@sjt.uk.com

Ukraine appeal

Some of you may have seen on our social media that we were keen to help out in our very small way following the terrible recent events in Ukraine. We acted as a drop-off point for a local charity which was collecting items to be sent to Ukrainian refugees in Moldova – such was the response that we had to form a human chain of staff to get all the bags to the waiting vehicles.

And we held a bucket collection after our live shows – we were delighted to be able to contribute £??? to the much-needed humanitarian work co-ordinated by the Disasters Emergency Committee.

Corporate partners

We're delighted to announce that we have a new Corporate Partner. Joining existing partners Clock's Home and Garden Centre and Bibelot Bee Giftorium, Lloyd Dowson Chartered Accountants and Pinkney Grunwells Lawyers LLP is Eaglei.

Led by communications trainer and author Duncan Lewis, Eaglei provides personal development training.

Duncan says: "I began my career in professional theatre, including working at the SJT. To be in a position to offer my supported to an organisation entirely committed to celebrating the performing arts is an opportunity and privilege I had to grasp."

Corporate partners' contributions are used towards community work across the Borough of Scarborough. They also receive a range of annual benefits, including a number of complimentary tickets which they can use for staff or clients.

The SJT's Fundraising and Development Officer, Stephanie Dattani, says: "Becoming a corporate partner by supporting the SJT is a chance to give back to the local community here in Scarborough, offering much needed financial assistance towards valuable and essential cultural engagement in areas of need, while at the same time aligning your brand with a highly engaged cultural audience and an exclusive package of benefits to use as you choose."

Dates for your diary

We do hope you can join us during 2022 for our popular Circle Café events – we'll be announcing more as the year goes on, but there's a starter for ten below...

Circle Cafés (all 10.30am arrival for an 11am start):

Thursday 21 April – members of the *Jane Eyre* company

May 19 – Simon Murgatroyd, archivist to both Alan Ayckbourn and the SJT

June 23 – Kash Arshad – your chance to meet our new Carne Associate Director, fresh from his Olivier nomination for 10 Nights (Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre)

July 14 – TBC

August 11 – members of the *Brief Encounter* company

September 15 – members of the *Family Album* company

The Full Brontë

by Simon Murgatroyd

[Tom – pics are here: h]

Charlotte Brontë's classic novel *Jane Eyre* is coming to the SJT in April with a brand new adaptation by Chris Bush of the great literary romance.



Wuthering Heights 1956 – Stephen Joseph 'directing' in the North York Moors
© Scarborough Theatre Trust

It's not the first time, though, that the Brontës have taken to the stage in Scarborough, either through adaptations of their famed works or dramas chronicling their own lives in Haworth.

Here we take a look back through the history of the literary family at the SJT, which practically goes back to when the company was founded in 1955.

The following year, Stephen Joseph directed an adaptation of *Wuthering Heights* by Jurneman Winch. Jurneman was actually the pseudonym for Joan Winch, who wrote all her plays under a male pen name, presumably as she felt it gave her a better chance of her writing being noticed.

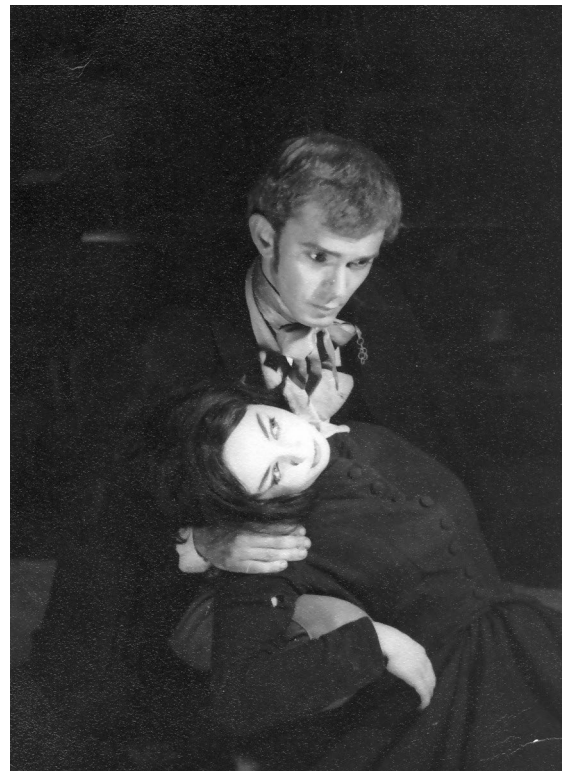
In that, of course, she was similar to the Brontë sisters who were all initially published under pen names: Charlotte as Currer Bell, Emily as Ellis Bell and Anne as Acton Bell.

As mentioned in a previous article, *Wuthering Heights* marked the first time the company organised a press shoot with Stephen Joseph accompanying its two stars, Shirley Jacobs and John Rees, to the Moors for photographs of him 'directing' the pair.

Stephen Joseph obviously enjoyed Joan's adaptation of the play as he revived it in 1960 as one of two revivals to mark the company's fifth anniversary.

This time the role of Heathcliff was taken by Alan Ayckbourn – then only just beginning his journey as a playwright and more interested in acting. *The Stage* review noted that 'Alan Ayckbourn makes a bold and vigorous Heathcliff' and the play's run was extended after another revival – *Prentice Pillar* – had its own run cut short.

Alan recalls the rather poor review the *Scarborough Evening News* gave him, though, and how he promptly called the editor demanding to speak to the reviewer. Somewhat awkwardly, the editor said that was not possible until after 4pm. Why, demanded Alan. That would be because she was in school...



Wuthering Heights 1960 with a young Alan Ayckbourn playing Heathcliff © Scarborough Theatre Trust

It transpired the normal reviewer had had to cover a football match at the last minute and had asked a girl he knew to review the play. Somewhat deflated at having been given one of his poorest reviews by someone not yet out of school, Alan let it be.



Brontës 1975 © Scarborough Theatre Trust

We now skip forward 15 years to the first of two plays produced by the company portraying the life of the famed family. *Brontës* was written by Bob Eaton and Peter Clough and opened at the Library Theatre in September 1975.

Notably, Malcom Hebden – a long-standing member of the company and later of *Coronation Street* fame – made his acting debut with the company, playing the brother, Branwell.

The play was written to tie in with a Brontë festival being held in Scarborough that year and featured a number of the sister's poems set to music and sung.

The play was reported to have been a notable success by several newspapers, which – sadly – is more than can be said for its successor.

A decade later in 1985, the theatre decided to put the sisters centre-stage again with a hugely ambitious production, *The Brontës of Haworth*.

This was a two-part play adapted from Christopher Fry's popular 1973 television series of the same name. It featured the largest company to have performed at either the Stephen Joseph Theatre in the Round or the Library Theatre with 18 actors playing 55 different roles!

One of the essential elements in promoting the play was the hope it would attract school parties on the matinee performances. Unfortunately, there were mass teachers' strikes that year and Alan Ayckbourn, who directed it, recalls there were frequently less people in the audience than on-stage!



*The Brontës of Haworth with Christopher Fry
© Scarborough Theatre Trust*

Reviews were mixed and those that did see it – if the several letters published in the Scarborough Evening News are to be believed – enjoyed the show, but it was regarded as a substantial and high profile failure for the company.

Our final home-produced Brontë work is a curious piece – relatively recent but probably not well remembered - and arguably one of the least well-known Brontë works.



Villette 2005 © Tony Bartholomew

Villette opened at the SJT in October 2005 and was this company's first and final collaboration with the renowned physical theatre company, Frantic Assembly.

The piece, written by Lisa Evans, was an unusual dance/drama hybrid adaptation of Charlotte's novel. The reviews weren't bad, but it failed to strike a note with audiences and was, sad to say, not terribly successful.

There was also a rather unusual look at the lives of the Brontës in 2011, presented by the Northern Broadsides. Blake Morrison's *We Are Three Sisters*

essentially re-imagined Chekhov's classic *Three Sisters* in Haworth with the Brontës as the titular characters. It had a cameo by Barrie Rutter, which was sure to be a performance of quiet subtlety...

Scarborough itself, of course, has its own famous, if somewhat tragic, connection to the Brontës.

Anne regularly came to visit the town as a governess between 1840 and 1844 and became very fond of the place, using it as an inspiration for her own writing. Later, with her health failing after a diagnosis of tuberculosis, Anne decided to 'take the waters' at Scarborough Spa in 1849, arriving on 25 May and staying at Wood's Lodging - the site upon which the Grand Hotel stands today.

She visited the Spa on 26 May but collapsed outside her lodgings on the way back and the next day a doctor confirmed her death was imminent. She died on Monday 28 May 1849, aged 29 - not 28 as was incorrectly recorded and then put on the gravestone.

Despite being buried at St Mary's Church, notably Anne's funeral service took place at the long since demolished Christ Church on Vernon Road, next to what would later become the Library Theatre.

PS: our press officer, Jeannie Swales, wanted to add her own story to Simon's fascinating round-up of tales of the Brontës at the SJT:

In 1985, I was a young trainee reporter on the *Scarborough Evening News* – and as recent English Literature graduate, very aware of Christopher Fry's work. So I was both excited and terrified when I was sent to the then Stephen Joseph Theatre-in-the-Round at Westwood to interview the writer, then in his late 70s.

He was, of course, completely charming, and it was thrilling to talk to someone who casually referred, for instance, to what 'Tom' had said to him one day back in the 1930s – turns out that was one TS Eliot.

But the most extraordinary moment was when I asked him why he was interested in writing about the Brontës in the first place, and he replied that, when he was a young man, a family friend had been an elderly lady who, when she was a young woman, had known Charlotte Brontë.

I still reel from that – I've met a man, who was friends with a woman, who was friends with the writer of *Jane Eyre*.

Jane Eyre can be seen at the Stephen Joseph Theatre from 8 to 30 April. Tickets are priced from £10 with concessions available to Circle members. There will also be a Brontë Festival, with films, talks and an audio walk celebrating the lives and works of the three sisters: visit the SJT website for more details.