

# Welcome...



...to the final Circular of 2022. It's been another whirlwind of a year: we went into it cautiously, having had to cancel nearly two weeks' worth of performances of last year's Christmas show *Jack and the Beanstalk* due to Covid, and uncertain what the next 12 months might bring.

But all turned out well. Our spring production *Jane Eyre* was a triumph, and it was followed by a series of shows that were also loved by audiences and critics alike: *Brief Encounter*, *Family Album* and *Constellations*.

And here we are again – another Christmas, and already we're looking forward to next year's shows. Work on those starts well in advance – we were briefing our poster designer back in September before some of the scripts were even written!

Thank you so much for all your support this past year, whether that's through membership, donations or supporting our shows – we really appreciate each and every one of you. We wish you and your loved ones the best Christmas ever, and look forward to seeing you all in 2023.

# Show reports!



You may not realise this, but after every show, the DSM, or deputy stage manager, writes a show report which is circulated round the team. Most of it is about the many little practicalities inherent in a live show, such as how long that particular performance ran, this lighting cue was a little late, that actor has a loose button on their costume that needs attention – but it also gives an overview of the general feel of the show, such as whether or not the audience was generally enthusiastic or quiet.

At this time of year, our audiences are very mixed in age, so the show reports can often be very entertaining. We thought you might enjoy the following extracts from some of the *Cinderella* show reports so far:

***“A child in C block threw their cuddly toy tiger onto the stage during the final scene, as Flarf refuses to get married. It was unclear if this was accidental or deliberate.”***

***“One little girl looked Roger [Parkins, who plays Pumpkin] in the eye and said: “I like pumpkins.”***

***“Roger got his glasses chain caught on his fairy hat deely-bopper during his Act One change into Delightful and was not able to untangle them in time for his entrance. In solidarity, David took his hat off too so both Charming and Delightful were hatless for their appearance before the transformation.”***

***“The perfect school audience this morning, the exact balance between order and chaos with just the right level of anarchy to make the show fun.”***

And finally, only in the world of theatre will you find a sentence in an otherwise fairly serious report that reads: ***“The magnets failed to hold the bat onto Blob’s wig today so Roger wore it as a necklace and then carried it off with him when retrieving the duck in Vom 1.”***

If you haven’t yet seen [Cinderella](#), which is once again sponsored once again by our generous friends at Boyes, time is running out – book before the clock chimes for midnight!



# The Woman in Black



The news that *The Woman in Black* is closing in the West End in March after 33 years and over 13,000 performances came just as we were thinking about content for this issue of *The Circular* – we'd already decided to write about the show as this month marks 35 years since its world premiere at our former home at Westwood.

*The Woman in Black* (or WIB as it's generally called within these four walls) was a real Scarborough affair from the start – based on the novel by locally-born author Susan Hill, it was ingeniously adapted for the stage by Stephen Mallatratt, then our writer in residence, and directed for the first time (and many, many times since) by Robin Herford, our Artistic Director at the time, filling Alan Ayckbourn's shoes while the latter was taking a two-year sabbatical to work at the National Theatre.

That first production, starring Dominic Letts and Jon Strickland, was both intimate and terrifying. I'm Jeannie, by the way – now press officer at the SJT, but back then a young reporter on the daily *Scarborough Evening News*, still dazzled by the opportunity to be 'there' on first nights, and rubbing shoulders with reviewers from the nationals.

I remember it so well – I'd read the novel, and was bemused by how such a complex and many-charactered story could possibly translate successfully into the hands of just two actors (well, that's not strictly true, of course – but you need to see the show to find out why),

onto a stage that was essentially just a platform at the end of a former schoolroom usually used as an overspill seating area for the theatre's bistro, and on a genuinely shoestring budget.

I soon found out. There were moments that first night when the hair crawled on the back of my neck; moments that genuinely gave me nightmares for years to come, to the extent that, when the SJT revived the show in 1997, I was simultaneously thrilled and full of dread – would I have the guts to sit through it again? Turns out that, of course, things aren't quite so scary when you know they're coming – I've seen it many times since, and never quite achieved the heights of terror that the first performance brought. It's always been a great night's entertainment, though.

Robin Herford went on to direct it again and again, right across the world, and through many casts at the Fortune, where, if you're quick, you can still catch it until 3 March. His first outing, though, was with two Scarborough regulars – Jon Strickland and Dominic Letts. It opened on 13 December 1987, and Robin, looking back in the programme for the 1997 production, says it was conceived as a simple 'Christmas stocking filler'.

Some stocking filler. In the same 1997 programme Stephen Mallatratt remembered: "*The first night reviews gave us the insights that reviews generally do – The Times saying it was probably rather good and The Guardian saying it was certainly bad – but the next day something happened that you always hope will, and so seldom does. The box office phones started to ring and queues began to form.*"



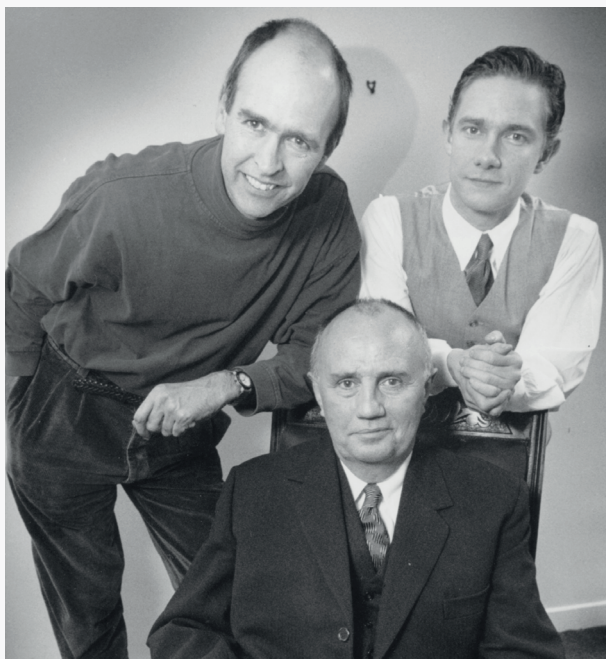
*"By the end of the short run we'd squeezed in extra chairs for every performance – this by shifting the percussion desk out to the adjacent bar – and we'd added three or four late night performances, selling out every time."*

By 1989, the Woman had taken up residence in the Fortune and was to terrify audiences there for over three decades. But we at the SJT also continued our association with the show, and with Robin. He directed our tenth anniversary production in 1997, by when we had moved to the former Odeon cinema, and our cast of two (or possibly three) was regular Peter Laird and a very young Martin Freeman, years before he was famous as Tim Canterbury, Dr Watson, Bilbo Baggins or Everett K Ross.

And we brought it back again in 2015, again with Robin directing, and this time with the unique father-and-son cast of Christopher and Tom Godwin – the pair went straight from Scarborough into the Fortune to join a long line of acting duos playing the roles of Arthur Kipps and The Actor.

In that 1997 programme Stephen Mallatratt also talked about the unexpected success of the play, and how, even then, only ten years in, it had already played to audiences in 41 countries around the world. He couldn't have foreseen that it would still be pulling in audiences 25 years later, and sadly, he wouldn't live to see it. He died, aged just 57, from leukaemia in 2004.

Dominic Letts is also no longer with us – he died at the age of 60 back in 2017. Both of them are very much missed, and I for one will be thinking of them when the Woman takes her final bow at the Fortune in three months' time.



## The Crafty Art of Ayckbourn



In last month's Circular, we brought you news of an exciting weekend of events that will give you a unique opportunity to get into the mind of our internationally famous Director Emeritus, Alan Ayckbourn, and raise funds for us at the same time.

[\*The Crafty Art of Ayckbourn\*](#), taking place over the weekend of 15 to 17 September 2023, will include a series of events which can be booked individually, or as one of two special packages.

The first event, [\*The Crafty Art of Playmaking\*](#) will see Alan live on stage with two of his favourite actors to discuss his book of the same name and demonstrate some of his top tips. It's on Friday 15 September 2023 at 7pm in the McCarthy, and costs £25.

[\*Truth Will Out\*](#) is a special rehearsed reading of 'the one that got away' – the new Ayckbourn play which was supposed to be on our stage in the summer of 2020, but... well, we all know what happened there. It will be directed by the author – and rumour has it he's eyeing one of the roles for himself! It's on Sunday 17 September 2023 at 2.30pm in the Round and tickets are £25.

Then there are two packages – both include the two events above, plus tickets to this year's new Ayckbourn, [\*Constant Companions\*](#), at either 2.30pm or 7.30pm on Saturday 16 September, plus:

**Package A – VIP:** A post-show gala event in Eat Me Café on Sunday 17 September, attended by Alan Ayckbourn and the cast, to include a buffet and a glass of prosecco; premium seats for [\*Constant Companions\*](#) on Saturday 16 September at either 2.30pm or 7.30pm; souvenir programme. Cost: £150 per person

**Package B – VIP plus Behind The Scenes Experience – limited to 15:** Lunch with Alan and the actors from the Constant Companions company; extra sessions with behind-the-scenes access at the SJT; a talk from Alan's Archivist, Simon Murgatroyd. Cost: £550 per person

We're delighted that all the events are selling well – more than half the places for Package B have gone already! Don't miss out – the individual events can be booked [via our website](#) and packages can be booked by emailing our Fundraising and Development Department on [supportus@sjt.uk.com](mailto:supportus@sjt.uk.com)

## January

As ever, we'll be running a limited programme throughout January so our team has time to do some maintenance on the building and forward planning for the rest of the year.

But there'll still be a great selection of movies on offer in our cinema, and the annual new year visit from the [Hammonds Band](#) on Sunday 8 January – it's their 25th year at the SJT and they're celebrating with a new CD called Scarborough Fayre.

And don't forget that your next Circular will be with you towards the end of February, with all the news that's fit to print!

## Dates for your (shiny new 2023) diary...

...will be coming soon! Our team are working on dates for 2023 Circle Cafès and more, and will be in touch very soon.