

"Listen. We've got national semis coming up in Halifax. And we're capable, I mean well capable, of going through to London for the first time in our history. In over a hundred years. The Albert Hall!"

– Brassed Off

Welcome...



Welcome to the July issue of the Circular. Depending on when you're reading this, you may just have time to catch one of the final performances of our hit show, **Dracula: The Bloody Truth** – it ends on Saturday 27 July. It was an amazing start to our summer, playing to sell-out audiences and attracting great reviews from both the media and our audiences – and we're happy that the show that follows hot on its heels is already selling fast. Find out more about *Brassed Off* below!

Brassed Off



It's been a long haul but **Brassed Off** is finally making it onto our stage next month. It's a show that's been on our radar for a long time, but the sheer size of it (for which read 'expense'!) has meant it kept sliding down our 'to do' list. For starters, it has a cast of ten, plus two children and a (small) brass band...

But doing it as a co-production with our regular partners, Theatre by the Lake at Keswick and the Octagon Theatre Bolton, has made it affordable and we're thrilled to be bringing it to you this summer. It's a show that's close to our hearts – the original screenplay by Bridlington-born Mark Herman was adapted for the stage by our very good friend, Paul Allen. A broadcaster and writer – many of you will remember Paul as one of the lead presenters of BBC Radio 4's flagship arts programme *Kaleidoscope* – Paul has always been a great supporter of ours and was on our board for many years.

And we're thrilled that our Gloria (the role played by Tara Fitzgerald in the movie) is (almost) a local girl. Hannah Woodward is from Kirkbymoorside and, until she went to drama school and became a professional actor a couple of years ago, was a long-standing member of the town band which her mum still conducts. We're expecting some serious flugelhorn from Hannah!

We've settled into a very efficient routine with our two co-producers over the last few years. We take it in turns to lead on a big summer show – last year for instance, Bolton led on *The Blonde Bombshells of 1943* – and their lead producer looks after the casting, rehearsing, etc, and also

opens the show. This year's lead was TBTL, so *Brassed Off* opened in the Lakes at the end of June, meaning we get the benefit of finding out what their audiences and media thought before the show comes our way. See below for the Lakeland verdict so far...

"[Liz] Stevenson's in-the-round production is gripping...hitting every note of tension, sadness and black humour perfectly." **The Stage** (★★★★★)

"This sense of community is reflected by a reconfigured auditorium at TBTL with the audience sitting on four sides. It is a practical decision for a show co-produced by the in-the-round theatres in Bolton and Scarborough, but it also chimes with a story about the impact of political decisions on a whole village: those who stand up for class solidarity, those who buckle under the offer of redundancy money, and those carried along by the tide of history."

The Guardian (★★★★★)

*"It is distinctly northern, wonderfully British and truly presents us at our absolute best as a nation. Deep and real, *Brassed Off* manages to fill the theatre with joy and hope right to the end. You have got to see it."* **Northern Arts Review** (★★★★★)

"The dust off this coalpit drama masterfully executed by this talented cast will linger long in the mind." **The Whitehaven News**

"...generous with its laugh out loud comedy moments... uplifting music, raucous humour... a highly spirited cast."

The Cumberland News (★★★★★)



Father of Invention

A gaggle of familiar faces will take to our stage in September for our gala reading of Alan Ayckbourn's previously unseen (and unheard – this will be the first time the author hears it read aloud by actors) play, **Father of Invention**.

Take a look at their roll call of Ayckbourn-written-and-directed shows – we reckon they've racked up an impressive 41 between them (we haven't counted last year's reading of *Truth Will Out*, just shows that had a full production either here at the SJT or at The Old Laundry – including *Show & Tell*). Mind you, that's still not quite half of the Ayckbourn canon of 90!

The cast will be led by our old friend Liza Goddard (*If I Were You*, *Snake in the Grass*, *Life & Beth*, *Communicating Doors*, *Life of Riley*, *The Divide*).

She'll be joined by, from the cast of **Show & Tell**:

Bill Champion (*Comic Potential*, *Haunting Julia*, *GamePlan*, *FlatSpin*, *RolePlay*, *A Chorus of Disapproval*, *Intimate Exchanges*, *Woman in Mind*, *Absurd Person Singular*, *Surprises*, *Arrivals & Departures*, *Farcicals*, *Henceforward...*, *No Knowing*, *By Jeeves*, *Season's Greetings*, *The Girl Next Door*, *Welcome to the Family*, *Show & Tell*).

Paul Kemp (*This Is Where We Came In*, *Drowning on Dry Land*, *Private Fears in Public Places*, *The Champion of Paribanou*, *Woman in Mind*, *My Wonderful Day*, *The Divide*, *Show & Tell*).

Frances Marshall (*A Brief History of Women*, *Joking Apart*, *Season's Greetings*, *Family Album*, *Truth Will Out*, *Show & Tell*).

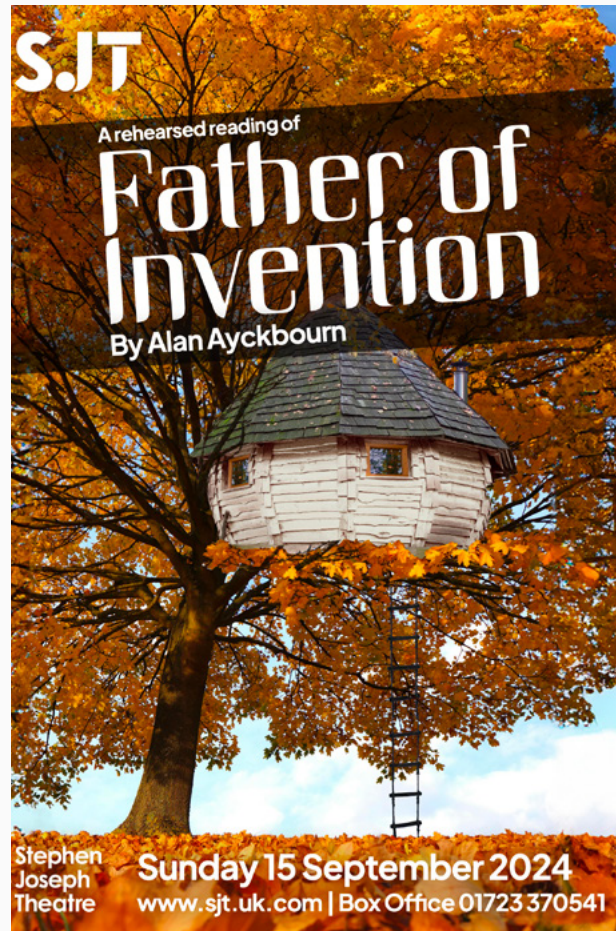
Plus:

Laurence Pears (*Taking Steps*, *A Brief History of Women*, *Joking Apart*, *Better Off Dead*, *Things We Do For Love*).

Elizabeth Boag (*Arrivals & Departures*, *Farcicals*, *Roundelay*, *Confusions*, *Hero's Welcome*, *The Divide*, *Family Album*, *Truth Will Out*).

Naomi Petersen (*By Jeeves*, *Joking Apart*, *Better Off Dead*, *Birthdays Past*, *Birthdays Present*, *Haunting Julia*, *The Girl Next Door*, *Constant Companions*, *Truth Will Out*).

If you haven't yet booked for this joyous afternoon with the master and some of his favourite actors, there's still time, although tickets are selling fast: [Click here to book](#) or call our box office on **01723 370541**.



Do I Love You?



If you missed it last time – or saw it, and would love to catch it again – you'll be pleased to know that John Godber's ode to Northern Soul, **Do I Love You?**, is making a welcome return to our stage next year.

The show, which played here earlier this year to packed houses and long waiting lists, will be in the Round on Friday 9 and Saturday 10 May 2025.

As ever, as a Circle member you have priority booking from 10am on Wednesday 31 July; general booking opens a week later, at 10am on Wednesday 7 August.

Can't wait that long for your next Godber fix? His 1998 play *Perfect Pitch*, a comedy drama set on a campsite and originally commissioned by this theatre, is with us from 13 to 16 November this year. The cast is Laura Jennifer Banks, Tom Gibbons, Frazer Hammill, and the actor currently tearing up our stage in the title role of *Dracula: The Bloody Truth*, Annie Kirkman – she just can't keep away!

To book for either, visit our website: www.sjt.uk.com or call the box office on **01723 370541**.

Hurrah!!

We were delighted to hear that we've been awarded a Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Award, which means we're in the top 10% of things to do worldwide. It's based on reviews left by our customers, so means a lot to us – a huge thank you if you were one of those who left a review!

Backstage secrets

Our company stage manager, Fleur Beeley, reveals some of the secrets behind the special effects in *Dracula: The Bloody Truth* - this month we're tackling bodily fluids, specifically onstage blood and vomit!

Stage management always loves a challenge, and we had two corkers for our production of *Dracula: The Bloody Truth*. Well, in truth, we had many more on this show, but the Circular would be much longer if I covered them all.

So, let's start with the vomit. In this show one of the characters, Van Helsing, drinks a cup of 'tea' from a rusty bucket that has been used to mop up some blood. If you haven't seen the show, please come, this will make much more sense if you do! Van Helsing then throws up in Dr Seward's bag, just as the doctor goes to get the smelling salts from it for Lucy, who has fainted.

In the past we've used vegetable soup for the colour and the lumps. However, Killian is a vegan, and even though the product wasn't going anywhere near his mouth, we wanted to respect his choices, so had to find a vegan alternative. After speaking to the director and designer, it became apparent that the primary consideration was texture. So, we settled on lemon jelly, which had a fairly chunky appearance as it fell onto Killian but was safe to have near his mouth and eyes.

We then thought about the old adage that 'there's always carrots in it'. So, we introduced some fruit cocktail, to give a little colour and some slightly more solid chunks. (Who knew I would spend today writing about this?!)

So, just to fill you in on the technical aspect of this: we have a small tub inside the doctor's bag with the smelling salts bottle and the jelly/fruit concoction in it. Annie (as Dr Seward) reaches in, grabs the bottle and a small handful of jelly, and drops it carefully on the side of Killian's face. When he exits from the scene, we are there with wet wipes to clean him up, so he doesn't end up sticky for the rest of the show. In fact, it sometimes feels as though the whole show is sponsored by wet wipes - they are on every table, in every vom, filling the pockets of cast and crew.

Shall we move onto blood?? Now, this can be a really tricky thing to get right onstage: the colour, texture, etc. Also, you have to take into account where it comes from, and where it goes to. Trick knives that spill blood as they are drawn across a chest, a nosebleed onto the stage: each element has to be contained before and after the scene. We can't have an actor have a nosebleed into their hand and then stay in the scene placing bloodied handprints on actors and set as they perform.

Many meetings were had, prototypes were built, blood printing blocks were fashioned, many pipettes and syringes were bought. Tests of washable blood were done on costumes and skin to make sure that even when we had worked out our bit, it could be washed off people and out of (predominantly white) costumes.

We had a bit of luck when the Octagon Bolton, our co-producers, got in touch and told us they had two tubs of Pigs Might Fly blood. Pigs Might Fly is a company based in Wiltshire which makes top-of-the-range, fully washable and non-staining theatrical and TV/film blood. This product is usually way out of our price range, but it's incredible to work with and does exactly what it says on the tin.

We slathered it onto white shirts and Victorian nightdresses, handkerchiefs and skin, and off it came like it had never been there! That was one issue we didn't need to deal with. In the past, we've had to make blood that could be washed out of a pure white counterpane for Alan Ayckbourn's *Haunting Julia*. In that instance we used clear washing-up liquid and cake-makers' colouring gel. Yes, it washed out, but it still stained skin and you couldn't get it anywhere near your mouth. If you want edible blood, you can use golden syrup, but still, there is a skin-staining problem!!

So, there's a quick rundown of some onstage bodily fluids. Each show has its own raft of problems that need to be solved, as you know by now. So, next time may be how do we make a wine glass drain by itself? It has been done and we know how to do it!

Romeo and Juliet

Our apologies to those of you who had booked for the visiting production of **Romeo and Juliet** in September – due to issues at their end, the company have had to postpone their visit to us until next year, so they'll be with us on 17 and 18 March 2025 instead.

If you'd booked, you should already have heard from our box office about moving your tickets, getting credit on your account, or a refund – please do let us know if you haven't.

Dates for your diary

Members enjoyed a very lively July Circle Café with the fabulous cast of *Dracula: The Bloody Truth*. We found out how they identify a member of the audience to join them on stage, and how they cope with all the quick changes, amongst other backstage secrets.

We hope you can join us for our next Circle Café on 8 August to meet the cast of *Brassed Off* (or at least some of them – we're not sure we'll have room to fit them all in!)

2024 Circle Cafés (starting at 10.15am, so please aim to arrive between 10am, when the building opens, and 10.10am) include:

Thursday 8 August: The *Brassed Off* company – adapted by our good friend and former board member Paul Allen from the film by Bridlington-born Mark Herman – with a pedigree like that, we've been wanting to do this show for years... it'll be worth the wait.

Thursday 26 September: The *Show & Tell* company – the 90th play from the pen of our Director Emeritus, who turns 85 in April – he doesn't do things by halves...

Thursday 31 October: The *Whitby Rebels* company – you may remember the almost unbelievable story of Captain Jack Lammiman, the Whitby skipper who in 1991 set off from Whitby Harbour with a very motley crew to place a plaque on an Arctic island honouring whaling captain William Scoresby. This affectionate retelling of the story is by Bea Roberts.

Thursday 14 November: The visiting *Perfect Pitch* company will join us this morning to talk about working with John Godber and, of course, camping and caravanning.

Thursday 12 December (time TBC, but this will be an afternoon event as the cast will be on stage in the morning): The *Aladdin* company – our annual visit to the strange and wonderful brain of Nick Lane as he retells a traditional tale in his own inimitable style.