

"June is bustin' out all over."

– Oscar Hammerstein II

Welcome...



..to the June issue of the Circular. We're just heading into the busiest period of the year with pretty much back-to-back SJT productions for the next six months: **Dracula: The Bloody Truth** is up first throughout July, followed by **Brassed Off** in August. September brings the latest Ayckbourn (his 90th, no less!), **Show & Tell**. Then a short break (filled, of course, by visiting work!) before **The Whitby Rebels** in late October and early November and our festive version of **Aladdin**, plus a new Christmas show for under-sixes, **Captain Cliff and the Seagull Squad**.

It's shaping up to be our best year yet, and we can't wait to share it with you!

Dracula is absolutely fang-tastic and that's the Bloody Truth!

We've stolen our headline from the Manchester Theatres website following the press night of our next show, [Dracula: The Bloody Truth](#). Along with other reviewers, they saw it at our co-producer, the Octagon Theatre Bolton, earlier this month – it's flying our way from 3 to 27 July.



Here4You magazine was also enthusiastic, describing the show as “comedy at its best... a two-hour hurricane of totally compelling theatre”.

One of our favourite reviews was in The Bury Times: “*Dracula: The Bloody Truth* is silly, unashamedly silly, gloriously silly. This production is a hoot from start to finish and will see you leave the theatre with a giant smile on your face.”

You're probably getting the picture by now, but just in case, here's what The Stage had to say about this “very funny” production:

“Audiences will be coming to be entertained rather than for a faithful adaptation of Stoker's tale. Helen Coyston's set – with period-accurate furniture slowly being destroyed and replaced by whatever scenery the cast finds lying around – and sound designer Simon Slater's comedically misfiring sound cues completely deliver on that front, as does the committed cast.”

Not booked yet? Pay a visit to our website [here](#) or call the box office on **01723 370 541**.

The Manchester outlet gave the show four-and-a-half stars, adding that it's “pure, unadulterated farce of the highest order”, “so much fun”, “a combination of irreverence, silliness and eccentricity that had me – and the rest of the audience – laughing out loud” and “a great evening's entertainment that I can heartily recommend!”.

They weren't alone in loving the show. The British Theatre Guide found it “very funny” and had high praise for the cast, calling them “exceptional physical comedians” in “an affectionate tribute to theatre... performed by a committed and highly skilled cast”. (Top) hats off to actors Chris Hannon, Annie Kirkman, Alyce Liburd and Killian Macardle!

Theatre Reviews North awarded it five stars, calling it a “funny, witty, fast paced physical production” and advising readers “for some bloody good fun, get on your hearse and fly to the Octagon” (Or in your case, the SJT!).



Mr A's Amazing Days

If you haven't yet got your tickets for our annual gala weekend in September, we advise you to hurry! Friday evening's [Everything Including the Kitchen Sink](#) is all but sold out – at time of writing, there were just eight seats left. The evening will feature a talk from Alan's Archivist, Simon Murgatroyd, who many of you will know as the fount of all Ayckbourn knowledge.

That'll be followed by an exclusive new film currently being made by our Press Officer, Jeannie Swales, and our Digital Media Producer, Daniel Abell. They've spent several happy afternoons over the past few months sitting with Alan at his kitchen table at home and talking about – well, everything. Including the kitchen sink.

Sunday's event, the reading of [Father of Invention](#), is in the Round, so has a bit more availability, but is still selling fast. We're aiming to announce the cast for that soon – just a few loose ends to sort – and we promise you'll spot some old favourites in there. The show is one of several which Alan wrote during lockdown, and this will be its first ever public airing.

All the money raised at these gala weekends goes into our New Work Fund. This fund enables us to fulfil our commitment – started by Stephen Joseph himself, all those years ago, and still very close to our, and Alan's, hearts – to new work on our stages, plus talent development.

New work includes Alan's new play each year and our annual Christmas shows, plus things like our new spring slot, in which we aim to alternate between a new adaptation of a literary classic and a Shakespeare-with-an-SJT-twist – think *Jane Eyre* and *The Comedy of Errors* (more or less).

If you haven't booked yet and would like to support our new work and have a brilliant – and very exclusive – Sunday afternoon out, grab your tickets online [here](#)!

Or call our Box Office on **01723 370 541**.



Absurd Person Singular



A long-lost radio recording of one of Alan Ayckbourn's most popular shows, *Absurd Person Singular*, has resurfaced and is currently available online as part of BBC Radio 4's *Hidden Treasures* project, which rediscovers recordings returned to Auntie by collectors.

First broadcast in March 1977, it stars SJT favourite Christopher Godwin as Sidney Hopcroft – something of a role reversal, as Chris originated the role of Sidney's nemesis, Ronald Brewster-Wright, in the original stage production at the Library in 1972. He returned to the SJT in 2022 to play Ronald again in our Ayckbourn gala weekend, which featured a reading of *Absurd Person Singular* to celebrate its 50th anniversary.

Other parts in the radio recording are played by Frances Jeater (a member of our summer company in 1989, appearing in *The Revengers' Comedies* and *June Moon*), Jane Knowles, John Rowe, Stephen Murray and Judy Parfitt (Sister Monica Joan in the enormously popular *Call the Midwife*).

And two characters usually heard but not seen, the infamous Dick and Lottie, are here elevated to main cast – this is radio, after all! They're played by Leslie Heritage and Sheila Butler.

The BBC website calls it "one of Alan Ayckbourn's funniest plays", adding: "Ayckbourn is one of the most successful comedy writers in the theatre and this play – like most classic comedies – reveals not only his wit but also the wicked and dark observations behind his humour."

Hurry if you want to hear it – it's only online until 28 June and you can find it [here](#).

The Meeting Point

If you've walked along Northway recently, you may have wondered about the work happening in the rooms down there.

It's all for an exciting new project called The Meeting Point, which will see those rooms revamped and refurbished as a community space and function room for small groups to hold discussions, meetings and events.

We're already working with our latest Corporate Partner, Home Instead, on a series of companionship cafes, which are public events based around a need or skill – and a cuppa!

The Meeting Point will open in September: if you're thinking of setting up a group, or already run one that's in need of a new home, get in touch on engagement@sjt.uk.com

Backstage tours

You may remember that, for many years, we ran backstage tours for those of you interested in the mechanics behind the magic. Like so many things, they fell foul of Covid – but now, finally, we're ready to start them up again in a slightly new format, each one tailored around the current show. They're on Saturdays from 12.30pm, last around 45 minutes, and cost £10 a head. The first batch is:

Dracula: The Bloody Truth – 20 July
Brassed Off – 24 August
Show & Tell – 28 September
The Whitby Rebels – 26 October

As ever, to book, visit [here](#), or call the Box Office on **01723 370 541**.

Happy Feet all round!

We know that many of you love our Royal Opera House streamings, so we're delighted to bring you [news of their next season](#). These are:

From the Royal Opera:

The Marriage of Figaro, Tue 10 Sept, 6.30pm
The Tales of Hoffman, Wed 15 Jan, 6.45pm
Turandot, Tue 1 April, 7.15pm
Ballet to Broadway: Wheeldon Works, Thu 22 May, 7.15pm

From the Royal Ballet:

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Tue 15 Sept, 7.15pm
Wolf Witch Giant Fairy, Thu 31 Oct, 1.45pm
Cinderella, Mon 16 Dec at 7.15pm
The Nutcracker, Sun 22 Dec, 1.30pm
Swan Lake, Thu 27 Feb, 7.15pm
Romeo & Juliet, Thu 20 March, 7.15pm

And on the theme of music, how about a summer selection of uplifting movies featuring some of the greatest dance sequences of all time? Our **Let's Dance** season brings you a selection of the best (all at 7.45pm except *Happy Feet*, which is at 2.45pm; and all Saturdays apart from *The Red Shoes*, which is on a Friday):

Footloose (1984) – 6 July
Singin' in the Rain (1952) – 13 July
Billy Elliot (2000) – 20 July
Dirty Dancing (1987) – 27 July
Happy Feet (2006) – 3 Aug
The Band Wagon (1953) – 10 Aug
Step Up (2006) – 17 Aug
Flashdance (1983) – 24 Aug
The Red Shoes (1948) – 30 Aug
Sweet Charity (1961) – 7 Sept

To book any of the above, visit [here](#), or call the Box Office on **01723 370 541**.

Contactless payment

Don't be alarmed by strange new devices popping up around the theatre in the near future – they're perfectly friendly! We're installing some very easy-to-use contactless donation points, which are screens where you can find out more about our fundraising and make a donation of your choice with the simple tap of a card.



Paul Todd

We were saddened to hear of the death recently of Paul Todd, musical director at the Stephen Joseph Theatre in its Westwood days, from 1978 to 1988. Paul worked extensively with Alan Ayckbourn, as either composer or musical director, on many shows including the original productions of *A Chorus of Disapproval*, *Woman in Mind*, *Way Upstream* and *Season's Greetings*.

Alan's Archivist, Simon Murgatroyd, remembers: "*Paul wrote nine musical revues and two musicals with Alan. He was also responsible for introducing lunchtime and late-night concerts at Westwood – and the rock nights! Those wonderful evenings in the studio where much beer was slopped (looking back, they probably weren't recalled that fondly by the cleaning staff).*"

"He also created that incredible final sampled composition for Henceforward... long before most of us knew what sampling was. I still recall it vividly and the astonishing effect it had on the audiences. One of my great theatre moments!"

Paul subsequently went on to work as a musical director at the National Theatre, and also published a book for children. He remained a great supporter of the SJT – our Facebook page won't seem the same without his regular comments, usually sending us lots of kisses.



Dates for your diary

Circle members at our June Circle Café heard from our Joint Chief Executive Caroline Routh about some of our plans for the future, both artistically and practically – and they had some searching questions for her!

We hope you can join us for our next Circle Café on 11 July to meet our fabulous *Dracula: The Bloody Truth* company – let's see how these creatures of the night fare in the morning light...

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

Thursday 11 July: The *Dracula* company – you can't live on the North Yorkshire coast and not be familiar with this great gothic tale – but this is a vision of the vampire as you've never seen him before: hilarious and madcap (think *The 39 Steps*!).

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.