

"It's the most wonderful time of the year..."

– Edward Pola and George Wyle, via Andy Williams

Welcome...



...to the late November issue of the Circular – and it's a bumper edition, with lots of news on another great year of entertainment at the SJT in 2025.

If you'd like to book for any of the shows below, or anything else at the SJT, please visit our website: www.sjt.uk.com, call our box office on 01723 370541, or drop by – our box office is open from 10am until at least 7pm (closing time depends on the start time of that night's show/film) every day except Sunday.

Aladdin

Our super-talented cast – David Ahmad, Jessica Dennis, Matthew Koon, Carl Patrick and Ash Weir – are having so much fun in rehearsals for our Christmas show, [Aladdin](#). Take a look at our pics to see just how much!

And if you want to hear more about the show straight from the Genie's mouth, have a listen to their chat with BBC Radio York reporter Bek Homer [here](#) (from just after 45 minutes in – and this link will expire on 4 December).



Captain Cliff & The Seagull Squad

Following the success of last year's *Thor's Great Big Adventure*, we've once more teamed up with the talented students on the CU Scarborough Acting course to bring you ***Captain Cliff & the Seagull Squad*** (a 'seaquel'?).

On a busy day down at Scarborough's South Bay, the judges from Britain's Best Beach are due to arrive but, after a big rush of tourists, the bins are overflowing with rubbish. Who can save Scarborough? It's Captain Cliff and the Seagull Squad to the rescue! Can they clear up all the mess in time?

Our annual Christmas show for under-sixes follows the adventures of the Captain and his team as they complete four missions, one for each season. As always, there'll be songs, silliness and festive fun.



Three dates for your shiny new 2025 diary

Next year, we've got not one, not two, but THREE special fundraising events for you!

Raven: After two sell-out Christmas shows, your favourite girl group is back with us for a fund-raising spring spectacular on 11 May.

Celebrate our 70th birthday with us! *Circle of Love*, the very first play presented at its first home, the Library Theatre, opened on 14 July 1955. We'll be marking our 70th birthday in style on Sunday 13 July 2025, with, amongst other things, a cornucopia of extracts from some of our favourite plays from those seven decades, performed by some of our favourite actors – we hope you can join us! Keep coming back here for more information as our plans develop.

And in September, we'll once again be presenting a weekend-long event celebrating our Director Emeritus Alan Ayckbourn. ***Actors, Audiences and Ayckbourn*** (26 to 28 September) will include a rehearsed reading of a previously unheard play by the author, ***Men, Meals and Me***, which takes its inspiration from a revue Alan wrote, with Paul Todd, in the early '80s, and which some of you may remember – *Me, Myself and I*. There's also be a talk by Alan's Archivist, Simon Murgatroyd, and the chance to hear from some of the renowned writer's favourite actors – more information coming soon!

The SJT is a registered charity, and all proceeds from these events will go to theatre funds.

New shows for 2025



Exciting news – we’ve announced our Sjt productions for 2025! In case you missed it, they are:

Love’s Labour’s Lost (more or less)

(27 March to 19 April): A stag do in Ibiza. A hen do in Menorca. What could go wrong? *Everything...* The stags have made a solemn promise to each other: this is a boys’ weekend. Don’t talk to any girls, don’t even think about any girls, and most importantly, *do not* contact the hens.

Shakespeare’s riotous comedy is brought to life in the nineties, featuring belting musical numbers in the era of boy bands and Girl Power from the team who brought you *The Comedy of Errors (more or less)*.

Pride and Prejudice (3 to 26 July): Jane Austen’s most iconic love story is brought dazzlingly to life on stage. When it comes to the subject of marriage, headstrong Lizzy Bennet is determined to resist the mounting pressures and expectations from society. But can she resist love, especially when the infuriatingly intriguing Mr Darcy keeps popping up at every turn?!

With sharp humour and sparkling dialogue, this witty stage adaptation brings to life the classic story of love, misunderstandings, and second chances (with plenty of music

and dancing). Lose yourself in the world of Regency parties and courtship, as hearts race, tongues wag and passions swirl around the English countryside. This UK premiere production is adapted by award-winning playwright Kate Hamill and directed by the Octagon Theatre Bolton’s Artistic Director Lotte Wakeham.

Noises Off (9 August to 6 September):

One of the greatest British comedies ever written, *Noises Off* is a hilarious and heartfelt tribute to the unpredictability of life in the theatre. Called ‘the funniest farce ever written’, it follows the on- and off-stage antics of a touring theatre company as they stumble their way through the fictional farce, *Nothing On*. Across three acts we witness the shambolic final rehearsals, a disastrous matinee seen entirely from backstage and their brilliantly catastrophic final performance.

Directed by Paul Robinson, this will be the first ever in-the-round production of Michael Frayn’s comedy masterpiece.

Earth Angel (13 September to 11 October):

Gerald recently lost his wife of many years. Amy was the light of his life, almost heaven-sent. It’s tricky thinking about life without her but he’s trying his best to put a brave face on things, accepting help from fussy neighbours and muddling along as best he can. Then a mysterious stranger turns up at Amy’s wake. He seems like a nice enough chap, washing the dishes and offering to shop for Gerald, but is he all that he appears? Directed by the author, Alan Ayckbourn’s 91st play digs deep into one of life’s greatest mysteries – what makes someone a good person? And, in this day and age, can you ever really be sure...?

Sleeping Beauty (28 November to 28 December): Have you ever had one of those dreams...? You know the ones... the one where you’re running but you can’t get anywhere? Or the one where you really need the loo but people keep getting in your way? What about the dream where you’re

a child and you get cursed by a wicked fairy to prick your finger on your eleventh Christmas Eve and fall asleep for a hundred years?

The team who brought you UK Theatre award-winning *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin* invite you to join Molly on a night-time adventure filled with songs, laughs and festive nonsense.

And finally, the theatre's Creative Engagement team are busy preparing for three great shows from our talented youth groups next year. The Youth Arts Festival brings together the SJT Drama Club and Youth Theatre to perform ***Mystery at the Museum*** (12 and 13 February). Things have been going missing at the Museum! The woolly mammoth has wandered off, the Grecian urns are nowhere to be seen, and King Tut's beard is a thing of the past. Join Detective Davies and his assistant Archie to get to the bottom of it all.

Education, Education, Education (11 to 15 March) is the second production from the SJT's Young Company; a play from The Wardrobe Ensemble, it's a love letter to schools. It's May 1997. Tony Blair has just won the election, Katrina and the Waves have just won Eurovision. Britain is the coolest place in the world...

And three Youth Theatre groups will collaborate on David Wood's musical adaptation of Edward Lear's classic poem. ***The Owl and the Pussycat Went to See**** (29 to 31 May) sees The Owl and, yes, the Pussycat set off on a magical adventure for all the family! They set sail in a pea-green boat for the mystical land where the Bong-Tree grows, and on the way they meet a whole host of charming characters including the Plum Pudding Flea, The Runcible Spoon and Head Jumbly. Our intrepid travellers long to be married, but will they get a happily ever after? Perfect for adventurers aged 5+.

*Before you all shout at once, that is correct for this version – 'see', not 'sea'!

And more visiting shows...

Bull (1 February) is from the pen of Mike Bartlett, the writer of the hugely successful TV series *Doctor Foster*. It was originally performed at the Crucible Studio Theatre in Sheffield where it won the 2013 UK Theatre Award for Best New Play. It's a razor-sharp show about the fine line between office politics and playground bullying, offering ringside seats as three employees fight to keep their jobs.



Egg and Spoon (19 and 20 February): This delightful show for young children returns after a successful visit in 2023. The very young won't sit still to watch a show and Lyngo Theatre doesn't expect them to. *Egg and Spoon* is an interactive romp through the seasons where the audience comes in and out of our magic circle and get to open all the gifts of nature.

Showstopper! The Improvised Musical (15 May): With 15 years as an Edinburgh must-see phenomenon, a BBC Radio 4 series, a critically acclaimed West End run and an Olivier Award to their name, The Showstoppers create a brand new musical comedy from scratch as audience suggestions are transformed on the spot into all-singing, all-dancing productions with hilarious results.



Marshmallow Me (19 May): “Well, I couldn’t treat you to your iced bun. Maybe next time, eh?” The heartfelt and hilarious story of Rosie, a young Scarborough girl who moved to the big city in pursuit of her acting dreams. Along with the bright lights and opportunities came a few bumps in the road. This uplifting debut play will leave you laughing, crying and rooting for Rosie every step of the way.

PopOdyssey: A Dance Opera (30 May): *Love Island*, an inflatable Trojan horse and a thirst trap bot dressed up like a nymph. This epic storytelling show collides ancient Greece with modern pop culture in a high energy reworking of the *Odyssey*, told through text and movement. A journey to find a home, a father and our place in this mad, complex world of fake lips, telling fake news in deep fake utopias. Written and directed by Joseph Mercier and presented by Glitterbomb Dancers and Northern School of Contemporary Dance.



Sam Jewison in Concert (14 June): The dazzling young musician returns to us for a third concert! Scarborough-born singer and pianist Sam Jewison has toured internationally. He headlined the 2020 ReGeneration Festival in Florence and the BBC Radio 3 Christmas Special in 2021. Sam has performed at iconic venues including Camden’s famous Jazz Café, Westminster Abbey, and the Royal Opera House.

Pulman and Stilgoe: A Couple of Swells (25 June): The inspired pairing of two unique entertainers: Liza Pulman, songstress, comedienne and one-third of the iconic *Fascinating Aida*, and virtuoso pianist, songwriter and singer Joe Stilgoe. Together they combine humour and musicianship at the very highest level, making old songs sound new and new songs feel like you’ve known them all your life.



As a Circle member, you have priority booking from **10am on Wednesday 27 November**; the shows will go on general sale at **10am on Wednesday 4 December**.

Awards season

How's this for an early Christmas present – we can't tell you how thrilled we all were when we heard we'd won the UK Theatre Award for *Beauty and the Beast*!

Our Executive Director, Caroline Routh, and the show's writer, Nick Lane, attended the awards ceremony in London at the end of October, and within minutes of the announcement, the news had spread round our team via the company WhatsApp group – it made a lot of people's days on a rainy Sunday afternoon!

The show, directed by our Artistic Director Paul Robinson, was named *Best Show for Children and Young People* at the 2024 UK Theatre Awards, which celebrate the very best of theatre across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, recognising creative excellence and outstanding work both on and off stage.



Nick Lane says: *"I'm chuffed, I really am. Mostly because it's a proper team effort. I'm so lucky – every year, there are amazing actors, a phenomenal creative team and just the best audiences ever."*

"Something like this is great recognition, and if winning this award means we get to keep making more daft stuff for the people of Scarborough, then whatever one up from chuffed is, I'll be that!"

Paul Robinson says: *"For Scarborough this award is really meaningful, as it demonstrates that a show that was made entirely for them is also worthy of a national award. It's about pride."*

"This is for everyone who works at the friendliest theatre in the country and all the brilliant freelancers, without whom we are nothing – Nick Lane, Helen Coyston, costumes by Julia Perry-Mook, composer Simon Slater, lighting designer Tigger Johnson, choreographer Stephanie Dattani, the brilliant tech team led by Simon Bedwell, our casting director Sarah Hughes and, of course, the insanely talented cast of Amy Drake, Annie Kirkman, Oliver Mawdsley, Kiara Nicole Pillai and Charlie Ryan, whose hilarious multi-roling showed quite how talented they are."

"We'd like to dedicate this award to all the great, original Christmas shows and children's work across the country which is made purely with their local audiences in mind."

The friends of Captain Jack

We were delighted to hear from several people with very different connections to the show during the run of *The Whitby Rebels*.

First up was Max Schietaert, who owned the original bell from the *Helga Maria*, the boat that the 'rebels' sailed to the Arctic Circle. He'd bought it at auction some years ago, and brought it in to show the cast, who were thrilled to have their picture taken with a piece of ephemera from the actual voyage.

We subsequently heard from Helen Wilkinson, the granddaughter of Edna Whelan – Edna was one of the two 'mature ladies' who sailed on the *Helga Maria*, and was played by Jacky Naylor in our production. Helen had heard two other cast members, Keith Bartlett (Captain Jack) and Jacqueline King (Pat Stubbs), talking about the show on the radio – they were guests on the Rima Ahmed show on BBC Radio Leeds, which broadcast live from the Yacht Club in Scarborough Lighthouse on Friday 25 October.

Helen had been unaware of the show but managed to grab two in-demand tickets for the final matinee performance on Saturday 2 November, and met up with Jacky after the show.

And a real friendship has formed between the Reverend Paul Burkitt and the actor who portrayed him, Duncan MacInnes. It was Paul's remarkable tape archive that formed the basis of much of the research for the show, and Duncan was delighted to return all the cassettes to him towards the end of the run; the pair are planning to stay in touch.



Making a difference locally

We were delighted recently to receive a donation of £1,000 from local supermarket chain Proudfoot's Make a Difference Locally fund.

Proudfoot director Valerie Aston says: *"Proudfoot recognises the benefit of having a local theatre and the invaluable work it does for our community. The SJT offers drama, films, music and comedy, available year-round, for all ages, for all the family. But they are also visible in the local Scarborough community offering sessions particularly aimed at youth and the elderly."*

"This is why Proudfoot wanted to support the SJT ongoing, so they can continue and grow the amazing work they do. The Proudfoot Group is a family-run supermarket group committed to serving the local community. Through our Making a Difference Locally (MADL) initiative, we actively support organisations that enhance the lives of Scarborough residents."

December fun

December is one of our busiest months at the SJT, with two family shows running alongside each other – in the Round, and aimed at families with children aged six and over (although a lot of younger children will enjoy it), we've Nick Lane's off-the-wall take on [Aladdin](#); and in the McCarthy, and aimed at the under-sixes (although a lot of older children will enjoy it, too), Rob Salmon's gentle story of seafront fun, [Captain Cliff & The Seagull Squad](#).

A thought, though – don't feel excluded from all the fun if you don't have handy children to bring. A lot of our regulars come to see our Christmas show in the Round with their partners or friends and have a great time!

Also, take a look at our visiting programme – although we'd recommend you hurry. The two fundraising shows (In Conversation with James Norton, and the Raven concert) sold out almost immediately. The Isolation Creations Haus of Games Tinsel 'n' Turkey afternoon also sold out quickly, and our annual ghostly tales from Nunkie Theatre sold the last tickets at the weekend. Buddy Holly and The Cricketers in Holly at Christmas had, at time of writing, just two seats left.

There's plenty of seasonal fare on our big screen, too, including [It's A Wonderful Life](#) (6 December), Andre Rieu's 2024 Christmas Concert: [Gold and Silver](#) (7 and 14 December); from the Royal Ballet and Opera, [Cinderella](#) (16 December) and [The Nutcracker](#) (22 December), and our final Moviedrome screening of the year, [Labyrinth](#) (27 December).



Spotlight on... Robert Lloyd Parry and M.R. James

For those of us who are fans of a traditional ghost story, Christmas is the perfect time. Who can forget those half-hour BBC2 classics that screened late at night in the 1970s, including Michael Hordern in *Oh Whistle and I'll Come to You*, or Robert Hardy in *The Stalls of Barchester Cathedral*?

It's a festive tradition picked up more recently, and very ably, by Mark Gatiss, who last year introduced us to Arthur Conan Doyle's *Lot No. 249*, which included a veiled reference to a rather more famous Conan Doyle character...

But while TV adaptations may win hands down on production values (for which read: budget!) there's nothing to compare to the thrills of a live telling of a great story. There are a few names in the canon of ghost story writers that stand out as reliable bone-chillers: Charles Dickens (*The Signalman* is an absolute classic – and, of course, the longer-form *A Christmas Carol*); Sheridan le Fanu (*Wicked Captain Walshawe of Wauling* – the tale of a haunted candle, no less – is a particular favourite) and Thomas Hardy (maybe not quite a ghost story per se, but really, read *The Withered Arm* – it will haunt you!) all spring to mind.

But perhaps the greatest of them all – if you're into, as Robert Lloyd Parry (more on him later) puts it, 'men in tweed coats smoking pipes, steam trains and demons' – was M.R. James.

For the last few years, his eerie stories, read by the aforementioned Robert Lloyd Parry, have filled our McCarthy theatre close to Christmas with those looking for, shall we say, a little more edge to the festive season.

To find out more about Robert, and why he's so inspired by James, we turned to the excellent *This is Horror* website. We reproduce a brief extract from their interview with him below – to read the full version, [visit here](#).



When did you first read the work of M.R. James and what was it that drew you in?

When I was about 13, I think, my dad thought I might like a look at his copy of *The Collected Ghost Stories*. He was right. I was into Sherlock Holmes and Dungeons and Dragons at the time and James's tales chimed with those interests and tastes. Fantasy. Men in tweed coats smoking pipes. Steam trains. Demons.

What is your favourite M.R. James tale and why?

It's hard to single one out as an absolute favourite – there are probably half a dozen or so, most of them early ones, that I think jostle for position. One that I hold a special affection for is *Canon Alberic's Scrapbook*. It was the first fully fledged ghost story that we know James wrote, the first he published anyway, and it was the one that got me hooked on him. All the things that I love about his stories are there already fully formed at his first attempt – the humour, the

gradual build-up of tension, the terrific and weirdly convincing detail, the marvellously described setting. It was also the first of his stories I performed and committed to memory. I've probably performed it nearly two hundred times now and it still manages to thrill.

M.R. James was very forthright in what he thinks constitutes a great ghost story, he likes a familiar setting, characters that are relatable and an antiquarian object. For you what is it that makes his work able to stand the test of time?

I think his deep antiquarian knowledge, filtered through his unique, playful imagination. Also his mastery of the English language – he was an effortlessly good writer I think.



Dates for your diary

Those who came to our October Circle Café met the cast of *The Whitby Rebels* and heard about the challenges of that enormous set and learning how to tie nautical knots onstage. Hot on its heels – sometimes programming means we can't wait a neat month between events – was November's Circle Café, in which the visiting Perfect Pitch company discussed their dream roles, and working with the show's writer and director, John Godber.

Our Circle Cafés are getting busier and busier by the month – we've had record numbers this year – so it really helps us if you can make sure you **book your tickets in advance**. That way, we arrive for the day knowing how many people to expect, and therefore how many chairs to lay out, how much coffee to make – all the important stuff! Thanks for your help.

There's only one Circle Café left this year, on Thursday 12 December. **Please note that this event is a 1pm arrival for a 1.15pm start and will be held in the Boden Room**, where we'll be joined by our super-talented *Aladdin* company.

And keep an eye out in your next Circular, towards the end of December, for next year's diary dates for Circle Cafes – we don't have one in January, but they'll start up again in February.