

*"That sounds entirely like Nan. Still calling the shots. I'm surprised she didn't write her own eulogy, to be honest."*

**These Majestic Creatures**

# Welcome...

...to the September issue of the Circular, the newsletter just for members of the SJT Circle.



## Constant Companions

Depending on when you're reading this, there's probably still a week or so of opportunities to see Alan Ayckbourn's **Constant Companions** left.

This stunning show – Alan's 89<sup>th</sup>, no less! – wowed the national critics, with four stars each from *The Guardian* (which had particular praise for Leigh Symonds' 'desperately tender performance') and *The Daily Mail* ('very much on the money... highly amusing').

*The Yorkshire Post* also awarded four stars, enjoying important themes 'wrapped in laughter, empathy and compassion'.

*The Times* was a little more conservative with its stars, awarding three, but still had much good to say of the show: "In his 89<sup>th</sup> play, Alan Ayckbourn takes serious themes and, not for the first time, gives them an engagingly light treatment... It includes some of the biggest laughs of recent Ayckbourns..."

Meanwhile, our own *Scarborough News* (which doesn't operate a star system) called it 'prophetic, profound and pertinent'.

Don't want to miss this important new play? Book now at [www.sjt.uk.com](http://www.sjt.uk.com)

# These Majestic Creatures

## These Majestic Creatures

20 October  
– 4 November



Andrina Carroll



Ingrid Bolton-Gabrielsen

We started rehearsals earlier this week for our next exciting new show – *These Majestic Creatures*, which plays in our McCarthy auditorium from 20 October to 4 November. This tender and heartfelt new play by Emma Geraghty will strike a chord with anyone who has had, or has been, a mum.

We're delighted to welcome back our former Carne Associate Director, Kash Arshad, to direct actors Ingrid Bolton-Gabrielsen as Max and Andrina Carroll as Pam.

A whale has washed up in Scarborough, and Max has come back to see it – or at least that's Max's story and they're sticking to it. Max's mum Pam isn't convinced.

Pam still runs the B&B that has been in the Vaughan family for generations, but Max's return brings up memories that she doesn't want to deal with, especially anything to do with Pam's own mum, Edith.

Max wants Pam to listen when they're talking. Pam wants to move on. And Edith? Well, we're not talking about Edith.

*These Majestic Creatures* takes us back and forth between the past and present of the Vaughan family – relationships made of old photos, an inherited love of *Strictly* and insults that only a mother could throw. After all, nobody knows you like your family!?

# Incooooooooooming!!!!

We're delighted to bring you news of some exciting new shows for 2024 – and as a valued Circle member, you have priority booking from 10am on Friday 29 September until 10am on Wednesday 4 September, when the shows will go on sale to the general public. They are:

**Feel Me** (27 & 28 February): Who do you care about and why? This new interactive theatre show from The Paper Birds UK leaders in devised verbatim theatre. *Feel Me* asks, via your mobile phone, who and what you care about from the stories unfolding live on stage in front of you. A stunning mixture of live performance, film, projection, dance and music, *Feel Me* will explore the different lenses through which we are told, and connect to stories in the modern digital world.

**The Light House** (29 February): Love is a complicated business. It gets even more complicated when the person you love doesn't want to be alive. Tender, funny and defiantly hopeful, Alys Williams' *The Light House* is a real life story of falling in love and staying in love, even when the lights go out and you're lost in the dark: a love letter to life.

**Behold Ye Ramblers** (5 March): The latest from the ever-popular Townsend Productions, this is the story of the Clarion Ramblers, their contribution to the Right To Roam and to the health and wellbeing of working people over a hundred years ago. The movement comprised readers of *The Clarion* newspaper that formed clubs for leisure and educational pursuits – cycling, rambling, Scouts, choirs, and more, to promote Socialism. Songs from *The Clarion Song Book* will provide a backdrop for the show.

**Oh What a Lovely War** (6 to 9 March): Blackeyed Theatre has built a solid following amongst our audiences over the last few years, with shows like *Sherlock Holmes: The Sign of Four*, *Sherlock Holmes and the Valley of Fear*, *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. This year marks the 60th anniversary of this cornerstone of modern musical theatre and one of the greatest stage satires: an extraordinary theatrical journey bringing to life the folly, farce and tragedy of World War One.

**Fat Chance** (13 March): "I'm not saying I'm not beautiful. I'm saying I'm fat AND beautiful." Meet Rachel – a 20-something actress from Boro whose funny, celebratory and politically powerful one-woman play explores her true-

life experience of weight gain from size 8 to 18. From audition nerves and throwaway comments to literally breaking a leg this play is for anyone who's felt like they had to shrink themselves; anyone who's adapted to be more palatable to others; anyone who's ever put on or lost weight and been treated differently; anyone who had free school dinners; anyone who feels they don't fit.

**Aly Bain and Phil Cunningham** (17 March): Aly Bain is widely regarded as Scotland's supreme fiddler – arguably the finest of all time. Phil Cunningham is a world famous accordion player and composer, once nominated by *The Scotsman* as one of 'Scotland's most influential people'. They've toured together since 1986 to packed concert halls all over the world: witty and humorous banter sitting alongside tunes that tug the heartstrings, and joyous reels and melodies that get feet tapping.

**Brian Bilston** (21 March): Described as the Banksy of poetry, and Twitter's unofficial Poet Laureate, and with over 400,000 followers on social media, Brian Bilston is one of the UK's most beloved modern poets – we're expecting this one to sell fast!!

**Snake Davis** (22 March): An unforgettable evening with one of the world's most sought-after saxophonists, renowned for his legendary solos on tracks like Lisa Stansfield's *Change*, M-People's *Search For A Hero* and *Moving On Up*. He's collaborated with a diverse range of artists from James Brown and Tina Turner to Paul McCartney, The Eurythmics, and Amy Winehouse. Expect a mix of original compositions and beloved sax classics like *Baker Street* and *Night Train*.

**Eliza Carthy** (21 June): If there's one musician who embodies the dynamism and vitality of the current English folk revival, it's Eliza Carthy MBE. As the daughter of folk legends Martin Carthy\* and Norma Waterson, Eliza grew up immersed in the world of traditional music and from an early age was championed by John Peel, Andy Kershaw and Billy Bragg.

\*Interesting fact: Martin Carthy started his career as an assistant stage manager, including on Alan Ayckbourn's *Love After All* at the Library Theatre in 1960... [click here](#).

We'll be announcing more shows for 2024 in the next issue of the Circular at the end of October, so keep those eyes peeled...



# Season of mists and exciting new shows...

As well as the tail end of *Constant Companions*, and the first glimpse of *These Majestic Creatures*, October brings with it a variety of visiting shows, ranging from nostalgic radio drama to an exciting new play for young people. Look out for:

**Hancock's Half Hour** (2 and 3 October): from Apollo Theatre Company, who a few years ago brought their sell-out production of *Round the Horne*, the great comedian's classic radio show will be recreated on stage by a cast of talented actor/impersonators.

**Brown Boys Swim** (9 and 10 October): An Edinburgh Fringe hit, winner of the prestigious Popcorn Award and *The Scotsman's* Fringe First Award, this exhilarating new play about fitting in and striking out examines the pressures faced by young Muslim men.

**Betty Blue Eyes** (12 to 14 October): remember *A Private Function*? If you loved the 1980s film, you'll adore the musical based on it! *Betty Blue Eyes* marks the first outing at the SJT for Scarborough Theatre Company, and the start of what we hope will be an ongoing and productive relationship.

**Alfie's First Fight** (28 October): Written and performed by Oliver Sykes and based on his book of the same name which was published in 2022 and won 'Best Indie-Published Young Illustrated Reader' at the 2023 Children's Literature Festivals Book Awards. Featuring boxing action, surprising plot twists, compelling characters and an inspiring boy-hero, this funny and heart-warming one-man show is inspired by Oliver's own experiences growing up in a low-income, single parent family of boxers.

For more information and to book, visit our website: [www.sjt.uk.com](http://www.sjt.uk.com)



# Welcome, James!

You may have heard by now our exciting news that we're welcoming a patron – our first ever! – in the form of actor James Norton. You might know him as the villainous Tommy Lee Royce in *Happy Valley*, or as the heroic Reverend Sidney Chambers in *Grantchester* – two of many roles which show the extraordinary breadth of his talent.

What you may not know is that James, now 38, was brought up in Malton and credits at least part of his interest in theatre to a week of work experience at the SJT when he was 15.

Our Artistic Director, Paul Robinson, says: "James has always been remarkably generous in crediting the SJT as such an influence on his career, so when we started talking about a patron, he was our obvious first choice."

We're all keeping our fingers crossed that this remarkably in-demand actor can find time to pop up and see us all soon!



## UK Theatre Awards



We're thrilled to have been nominated in two categories at this year's UK Theatre Awards, the only nationwide awards to celebrate outstanding achievements in theatre across the UK.

Our fabulous *The Comedy of Errors* (more or less), a co-production earlier this year with Shakespeare North Playhouse, is up for Best Play Revival, while Antony Eden is nominated for Best Supporting Performance in a Musical or Play for his star turn in last summer's *Family Album*.



The awards will be announced at London's historic Guildhall on Sunday 8 October 2023, at an event hosted by Musical Theatre star Zoe Birkett. Watch this space, and meanwhile, please keep everything crossed for us!

# Backstage secrets

*In the latest of our series of backstage secrets, our Company Stage Manager, Fleur Beeley, writes:*

The first thing you do as a stage manager on a production is read the script. Sometimes you find great stage directions such as: Adam enters with an open bottle of champagne. And sometimes you find something like this, from Alan Ayckbourn's latest, *Constant Companions*.

*DON returns from the bathroom. He is now slightly breathless from all his exertions.*

*DON: (as he enters) Yes. Looking good... Looking good... Now.*

*With difficulty, he lifts one final very heavy square box out of his crate which is, of course, the head. He heaves the box over to the chest of drawers and places it on top. He removes the outer casing to reveal the head itself encased in a transparent inner shell.*

*DON: Hello, there, my beauty!*

*From a pocket inside the crate, he locates a remote control which he points at the head. After a couple of tries, it responds, revolving in its transparent casing through a series of jerky movements culminating in 360 degrees. Simultaneously, the *Kompanion*'s pre-recorded introduction starts playing from the head.*

Then, you sit in a meeting with the director, designer and production manager. All decisions come down to priority, and, of course, money. We knew that the large crate that the *Kompanion* robot came in would cost us a lot of money to look new, and professional.

Also, it's onstage for the whole of the first act, so has to stand up to scrutiny. Kevin, our designer, had designed a head that turned in its perspex box. Talking through the requirements, Alan said he would love it to 'talk' and 'blink'.

Now, at this point you usually put this out to a prop maker. Due to the budget, we didn't have that luxury, so we talked through what was achievable. Alan conceded that it didn't have to



talk or blink: shame, but OK. After further talk, we came to the conclusion that if she looked a bit 'funny' we could frost the inside of the box, so she couldn't be seen that well.

I thought that would be a shame, and Alan seemed a little down about it. So, in my infinite wisdom I took it upon myself to make the all-singing, all-dancing head you may have seen on the stage. It's not my first rodeo: I have previous form in the realm of budget animatronics. I made a fluffy hedgehog that played tiny pianos and wiggled his feet for our production of *The Snow Queen* a few years ago. How hard, then, could it be to make a lifelike head that spoke and blinked?!



Well, thankfully, we have in this building a team of amazing people with the most diverse range of skills. In the end it was a collaboration between:

Workshop, who built the wooden box that she sits on and also hides all the electronic gubbins and batteries.

Our Production Manager, who built the perspex box that sits over her.

Our technicians, who made her spin and made the servos (the tiny motors that push and pull the levers to make the eyes and mouth work) talk to the lighting desk so she 'talks'.

An ex wardrobe technician who popped in to 'style' her hair.

And me, who took it upon herself to build a head. It is entirely unglamorous if you look closely her face is stretched with bulldog clips from the base of her neck. She is built from aluminium strips and bolts; the servos have been taken from another older project and repurposed. In the end she cost me the price of her 'face', a lot of sweat (thankfully no tears), a couple of sleepless nights – and the promise that I won't accept challenges on behalf of the whole building ever again!

## Dates for your diary

Our packed September **Circle Café** saw members meet all the cast of *Constant Companions* plus three members of the backstage team for some fascinating insights into how the show came together.

Company Stage Manager Fleur Beeley, Deputy Stage Manager Sue Volans and Assistant Stage Manager Anna Reid explained some of the technical wizardry, while actor Richard Stacey revealed how a SatNav inspired the creation of his character. Andy Cryer discussed the perils of having to pretend to be asleep, on a comfortable bed, through 14 pages of dialogue, and Naomi Petersen told us how hard it can be to keep an expressionless android face.

Our Circle Cafés are usually held on Thursdays, which is also matinee day for both live shows and in our cinema, so why not make a day of it? Your Circle membership entitles you to a generous 10% discount in Eat Me @ The SJT, and you could catch a show or a film afterwards.

Circle Cafes are getting increasingly popular, so **please** make sure you book a free place via the box office in advance so that we can predict numbers and make sure we have enough seats!

**Circle Cafés (starting at 10.15am, so please aim to arrive between 10am and 10.15am) include:**

**Thursday 26 October:** meet the *These Majestic Creatures* company

**Thursday 23 November:** meet our new(ish!) Head of Production, Simon Bedwell

**Thursday 14 December:** meet the *Beauty and the Beast* company. Please note that, as the cast will actually be on stage performing at the usual 10.15am start time, this December Circle Café will be in the Boden Room, with a later start at 1pm – please try to arrive between 12.45pm and 1pm).