

Noises OFF

MORE WORK IN PROGRESS

Following on from the update in the last *Noises Off*....

Project 1: Work has continued apace in the Theatre during our current “downtime”, and is well on schedule. Thanks almost entirely to the unstinting work of Mark Lambert, ably supported in his Herculean efforts by Robert Yeo, John Crabtree and Adrian Hole, the entire auditorium wall on the Coombe side, plus the whole entrance door wall (ie facing the stage) have been insulated, re-boarded, re-skirtinged (*is there such a word?* - Ed) and newly painted. The walls to Stage Left and Stage Right have been replaced, and the wall backstage left will have been re-boarded within the next few days. It is already noticeable that the intrusion of sound from outside has greatly reduced. Obviously, our most fervent wish is that, when next winter comes along, casts, crews and audiences will no longer have to endure the arctic temperatures we have become used to!



The Removals Squad - once the work was done!

Project 2: The whole of the auditorium, together with the foyer area (ie in front of the kitchenette and toilets), now has a splendid new floor. The appearance is of appropriately aged timbers, suitable for the character and history of the building - but without the gaps, holes and repairs which we had become accustomed to. The public entrance, and the Stage Door entrance, are both equipped with a matted area for wiping wet soles. The installation was carried out by professionals, but the auditorium had to be completely cleared in advance, and we owe a huge debt of gratitude to all who turned up to help. In particular, Richard Culham is to be thanked for his work in negotiating with the company.

Project 3: An ancient and long-defunct telephone line has been brought back to life, and



The floor before.....



during....



And after!

the theatre is now equipped with strong and reliable wifi coverage. The particular benefit of this will be for audience members to make easier credit card transactions when buying drinks (and, incidentally, to increase our bar takings!) Thanks again to Richard Culham for this one.

Project 4: The cabling which runs between the stage lights and the control desk in the gallery has been stripped out and replaced with state-of-the-art modern cabling, thus improving reliability and safety. This sounds simple, but the work that has gone into investigating all the potential configurations and possibilities has been mind-boggling. We are profoundly grateful to



Spaghetti Junction

Richard Jones and Adrian Hole for this work.

Other projects in the pipeline:

(5) As referred to elsewhere, the access to the front of the theatre is to be radically improved, and the work should be completed by the beginning of July.

(6) The Marston Road side wall of the auditorium will be insulated and re-boarded to match the rest.

(7) We wish also to overhaul the bar area, to reduce overcrowding and improve storage and security. Planning is under way, but is complicated by the simultaneous ambition to replace the existing staircase with a more user-friendly means of access to the gallery - both schemes obviously impact on each other.

(8) Thanks to the funding from the 100 Club, we are very close to placing an order for new audience seating throughout the auditorium. This has been delayed while work on the new floor was completed, but we hope can now get under way before the Autumn.

(9) We wish to address the issue of the build-up of heat during summer performances. We have slightly improved the situation last year with the purchase of a portable air-conditioning unit, but now wish to look at a more permanent and satisfactory solution.

We hope all members are as excited by these developments as we are, and agree that we have made good use of our "downtime" between productions.

GRANT AWARD SUCCESS

As mentioned in a previous *Noises Off*, we were hopeful of success having applied for a grant to improve safety and accessibility to the outside of the theatre, specifically the path and steps leading to the double doors. Adrian Harding and other members of our Capital Projects Group invested a large amount of time and effort into creating an impressive bid, and we are delighted to inform members that **we have been successful!**

Our award of **£4000** was made by the Theatres Trust Small Grants Programme supported by The Linbury Trust, and we are of course enormously grateful.

Here is an extract from The Theatres Trust own press release:

THEATRES TRUST FUNDS VITAL THEATRE PROJECTS ACROSS THE WHOLE UK

"Theatres Trust, the national advisory and advocacy body for theatres, has awarded more than £100,000 in grants to theatres in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales through its Small Grants Programme with The Linbury Trust.

"A record 24 theatres will receive a share of £107,498 in this round of the grant scheme, which supports not-for-profit theatres to be viable and thrive in the future. This is the largest number of projects supported yet by the Small Grants scheme. The theatres being supported include ... (named theatres in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland)... In England, theatres are being funded from the South West to the North East.

“Projects supported include making improvements to accessibility (**Sherborne Studio Theatre, Dorset**, (plus two named theatres in London), sustainability and digital technology use. A large number of recipients in this round are for urgent and essentials repair and maintenance works.

“Jon Morgan, Theatres Trust Director, says, *Theatres Trust is delighted to be able to support more theatres with small projects to make a big impact to their sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity, as well as vital maintenance projects. This is the largest round of this scheme to date, with the high number and wide range of projects demonstrating the demand for investment in the UK’s theatre buildings to ensure they are fit for current and future audiences.*

“Stuart Hoble, Director, The Linbury Trust says, *It’s great to see theatres across the UK benefiting from this grant and utilising this funding to make these incredible places more*

resilient, from reducing utility costs, to improved accessibility. These theatres are a fine example of the vital role played by arts and culture in local communities.”

As a consequence of winning this award, we have commissioned a local groundworks company to undertake improvements to the outside of the front of the theatre. The intention is to make the ground surface smooth and even, and permanently free from weeds, whilst retaining as far as possible the character and story of the building with its Victorian flagstones, and the seating, currently in situ. Above all, access to the doorway will become a great deal less hazardous for those with restricted mobility and/or in wheelchairs.

Work is expected to begin during the course of June.

100 CLUB



We are delighted to welcome another new member to the 100 Club: **Margaret Collier**. We wish Margaret the best of luck in all future 100 Club draws. As we regularly report, the 100 Club exists to give vital support to our fund-raising efforts on behalf of the Theatre, and in its short existence we have already raised a total of **£4126**. This puts us well on our way to our dream of being able to put new seating in the theatre, with work possibly beginning before the end of 2024. But there are plenty of tickets remaining, and more than a half of the total of APS members have not yet joined up - please do so as soon as you can.

Please see “Support Us” on the website, or email sst100club@gmail.com for details.

The most recent draw took place on April 13th, and the lucky winner was awarded a prize of £43.20.

The next draw will take place on June 8th.

GIFT AID

Many of you will have recently received a letter on the subject of Gift Aid. There is nothing sinister about this! We just want to make sure we are claiming everything we are entitled to from HMRC. To do this, we need to ensure that our records of members’ postal addresses are up-to-date, and that you have definitely opted-in to the scheme. Of course it is not compulsory, but, if you have not, we would urge you to do so if you possibly can. Your £20 becomes our £25 - and it doesn’t cost you anything!

If you are not a UK tax payer, none of this applies to you, and apologies for wasting your time!



**Funded by
Theatres
Trust**

**Small Grants
Programme
supported by The
Linbury Trust**

AWARD NOMINATIONS

You will be pleased to hear that APS productions, and those involved with them, continue to receive recognition at both local and regional level. The latest honours include 4 nominations for NODA awards, to be presented at a ceremony in Plymouth on Saturday 18th May:

The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole - Best comedy
Art - Best drama
Twelfth Night - Most innovative production
Twelfth Night - Visual excellence

We hope to have some good news to share with you in the next *Noises Off!*

NEXT PRODUCTION - THEFT

Ticket sales for our next production (June 3rd-8th) have been brisk - thank you to all members who heeded our advice to book early! Rehearsals have been running very successfully for several weeks (see pictures below). The play is directed by Jessica Colson, and features Richard Culham, Samantha Elgar, Andrew Middleton, Sally Ann Matthews and Martin Williams. Should you need reminding, *Theft* is a fast-paced comedy thriller in which five very different

people play an escalating and hilarious game of cat and mouse.

John and Barbara return from a celebratory dinner with their friends Jenny and Trevor, to discover that their house had been burgled. During the course of the evening, a number of uncomfortable truths about the four friends are uncovered by a mysterious fifth, "Spriggs" - they all have guilty secrets, childhood rivalries and character flaws which threaten to disrupt two seemingly happy marriages and a lifelong friendship.

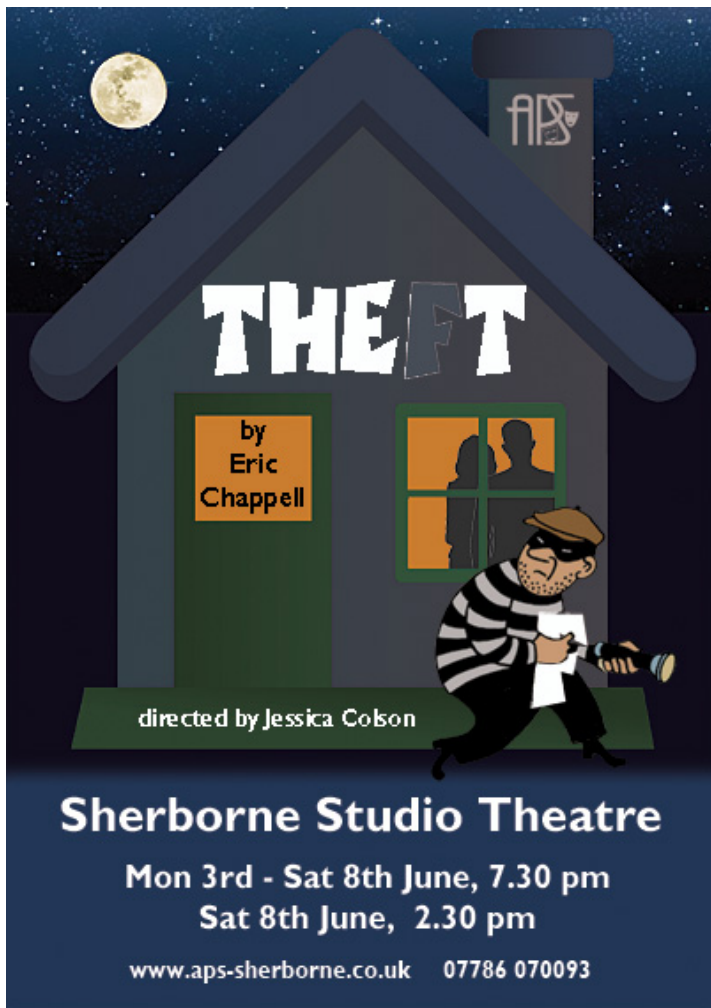
Through shrewd observations and stinging one-liners, Spriggs provides the audience with an entertaining, thought-provoking and witty social commentary on key issues such as marriage, money, morality and crime.

Eric Chappell is best known for his TV sit-com hits *Rising Damp* and *Duty Free*. *Theft* is full of his trademark sharp and funny dialogue.

The show is very likely to sell out - please spread the word amongst your friends, relatives and neighbours!

Tickets are available from the APS website, and, as usual, cost £14/£12 (evenings) or £13/£11 (matinée).

We very much hope that all members will want to come along to enjoy the show, the refreshments, and, of course, to admire our magnificent new floor and walls!



"THEFT" IN REHEARSAL



Spriggs (Andrew Middleton), John (Martin Williams), Barbara (Samantha Elgar), Trevor (Richard Culham) and Jenny (Sally Ann Matthews)



COMING UP....

Our programme for the rest of 2024 has undergone slight amendment, due to the indisposition of Graham Smith, who was to have directed *My Mother Said I Never Should* in September. We wish Graham well for a speedy recovery. Meanwhile, we are very fortunate indeed that Anna Carter-Brown has stepped up to the plate and offered to direct *Constellations*, by Nick Payne. This has been scheduled for performance on September 9th-14th. Anna is an experienced

director; her previous acting involvement with APS was as the formidable Dr Emerson in last summer's award-winning *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* More details of the play, and of audition arrangements, will be published in future *Noises Off* and by email notification to members.

Completing our quartet of plays for 2024 will be Oscar Wild's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, directed by John Crabtree, running from December 2nd - 7th.

