

"THEFT" SPECIAL

NOISES OFF

THEFT

It was a delight to be able to re-open, following our extended break for building and maintenance work, with a very successful production of Theft. Despite the play, not being particularly well known, tickets flew off the shelves as usual, and in fact, Theft proved to be our second best-selling show ever, with only 2 places remaining unsold on Monday, a small handful for the matinée, and with every other evening performance fully sold out.

*We are very grateful to APS member **Roger Gower** for the following article.*



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

'What fun!' a happy theatregoer exclaimed on the way out. And fun it was. A revival of *Theft* which combines the comedic talents of writer Eric Chappell (*Rising Damp* for those of us old enough to remember), echoes of Priestley's *An Inspector Calls*, and the

acting skills of a cast, most of whom are well used to performing in our intimate venue.

APS backstage stalwarts are very much in evidence. Jessica Colson for her expert direction, John Crabtree for his beautifully realised stage set, Adrian Hole and Nick Baker for

lighting and Mark Lambert for sound.

The plot itself is not complicated. A businessman, his wife and guests return home to find their house burgled and the thief still in the house. At first the thief manages to convince them that he's a policeman, which is no more plausible than the plot line in a Shakespeare comedy. But it barely matters.

Martin Williams, another APS stalwart, is entirely convincing in the role of John, the self-righteous businessman - one of life's 'winners', not above cheating on his wife, Barbara, his best friend, Trevor, and doing the dirt on his employees. Trevor, the forever humiliated 'loser'



is played to perfection by another APS regular, Richard Culham. Although the action is very male dominated, it is a woman who walks away with the main prize - financial independence and the freedom to love her husband if she chooses. She becomes the 'winner' and her husband the loser,

despite his infidelity with Trevor's wife. The thief, "Spriggs", played wonderfully by Andrew Middleton, is clever and slippery. He can shift effortlessly from arrogance to pathetic self-pity, and disrupt two marriages and a friendship. Although constantly lying and getting found out, he seems to get away with everything. He also tells the truth. He acts as the characters' moral conscience, and reveals bit by bit their hidden natures and secret betrayals. Samantha Elgar, her first time with APS, and Sally Matthews are excellent as the manipulated and manipulative wives, Barbara and Jenny.

The play is above all a farcical comedy. There is





very little action or slapstick. Its humour lies in the quickfire exchanges between the characters. As the pace increases the laughs keep coming, and the actors perform the witty dialogue with excellent comic timing. Although some obvious anachronisms have been updated, the play as a whole feels fresh and pertinent in today's world. Serious themes are everywhere and give the play depth: the corrupting power of money, materialism generally, the British class system, marital roles, social and moral decay, and many others. In fact, you could say it is a morality play with laughs.

The Sherborne audience clearly enjoyed the experience and showed their enthusiastic appreciation at the end. Well done, APS. You've done it again!

Roger Gower



ANOTHER AWARD!



As reported in the last *Noises Off*, APS had received no fewer than 4 nominations for the 2023 NODA awards. The glittering awards ceremony took place on 18th May, and we are delighted to announce that the Director of *Twelfth Night*, **John Crabtree**, was present to receive the award for “The Most Innovative Production” Many congratulations to John, who has received many awards in recent years for his work with APS.

COMING UP...

The 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 September 9th-14th. Anna is an experienced director; her previous 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 Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, directed by John Crabtree, running from December 2nd - 7th.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is a reminder to all APS members who pay their annual subscriptions by Standing Order. Many of these payments are made on or around the 1st September each year. You may remember that the cost of subscriptions was raised on 1st January 2024, from £15 to £20. We would ask you to contact your bank to amend your Standing Order well before the end of August. If you fail to do this, then we will have to ask you to make an additional payment of £5. Sadly, if the full payment of £20 is not received, then your membership will expire. We don’t want to lose you! Many thanks.

WORK STILL IN PROGRESS - AND SOME GREAT NEWS!

MORE GREAT NEWS...

We reported last time that the Theatre has recently received a new floor, and newly insulated walls - hopefully those of you who attended *Theft* will have been able to admire these. Less noticeable, but still valuable improvements which have taken place are the acquisition of new carpet for the Green Room, and the installation of WiFi (customers at the bar might have noticed greatly improved access to payment by credit card).

Further work is imminent. We expect the outside area to be re-surfaced, and access to the front doors made much easier and safer, within the next few days. We have commissioned an expert carpenter to create and install a new set of stairs leading to the gallery,

replacing the current, perilous arrangement. This will be greatly appreciated by the technical teams who work in the gallery, and should also provide us with a new secure storage area for bar stock. This work will be commenced during July.

Perhaps the best news of all is that, thanks largely to the loyal members of the 100 Club, we have finally been able to place an order for state-of-the-art auditorium seating, to replace the faded, tired and shabby green chairs which have served us for many years.

Our hope is that these will all be in place in time for our September production.

We were amazed and delighted to receive a message from one of our Saturday night *Theft* audience, that very same evening, to say that they had enjoyed the show (and previous APS shows) very much, and were eager to make a substantial contribution to APS funds. The next day, we received the extraordinarily generous donation of **£2000** (which, with Gift Aid, will be worth £2500 to us.)

At a time when we are working on a number of capital projects - including the new seating referred to elsewhere - this is an absolutely fantastic and totally unexpected bonus.

We are, of course, extremely grateful to the generous donor, who has asked to remain anonymous.

THE 100 CLUB

We make no apology for repeatedly advertising the 100 Club and encouraging APS members (and others) to join. It is in very large part due to 100 Club members that we have been able to order new seating for the auditorium (see above), and have the confidence in our financial security to be able to go forward with the various other projects which we have reported in *Noises Off*. These projects are to the direct benefit of the fabric and facilities of the theatre, and not to directly support the staging of productions (which are funded by subscriptions, ticket sales and bar sales.)

Currently, we are delighted to welcome three further new members to the 100 Club: **Sally Matthews**, **Samatha Elgar** and **Andrew Middleton** (all of them fresh from their starring roles in *Theft*.) We wish them the best of luck in all future 100 Club draws.

The 100 Club was launched in March 2022, and in its short existence it has already raised a total of over £4300.



At the same time, 12 different winners have shared total prize money of nearly £900. There are still 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. The cost to you works out at just a few pennies a day.**

Our hope is that the news of the imminent purchase of our new seating will encourage all those who have not yet joined the 100 Club to see what a real difference it is making!

Please see "Support Us" on the website, or email sst100club@gmail.com in order to join.