

PARTY TIME!

Friday December 12th at 7.30pm - We are planning an evening of fun, music and laughter to follow on from the success of *She Stoops*, and, of course, to greet the festive season. The bar will be open, food will be available and entertainment on offer! In fact, if you have a festive (or not!) story, poem, joke or even a sketch that you would like to share then please let Jessica Colson, our APS Chairperson, know at :- jessica@ridgewayfarm.co.uk

Free admission, food available, and (paying) bar!

This is always a lovely opportunity for old and new APS friends to get together and celebrate the festive season, the old year and the promise of the new one! We hope that you will be able to join us.

If you are a patron, but not yet an APS member, please feel free to come and meet us, and let us persuade you to join!

Amateur Players of Sherborne
CHRISTMAS PARTY

Friday 12 December 7.30pm

at the Studio Theatre

Marston Road, Sherborne

**AN EVENING OF FUN, MUSIC AND LAUGHTER
 TO CELEBRATE THE SEASON**

Light-hearted, comedy, musical, festive (or not), and great food!

Come and join the fun!

NEW MEMBERS

The following new members have joined APS since the last edition of *Noises Off*. We are delighted to welcome you, and hope that you will have a long and productive association with the Players.

- Gregory Hoskins**
- Claire Kenyon**
- Hilary Quinlan**

The total membership now stands at 91, higher than it has been for a considerable time. How good it would be to reach 100! What about persuading some of your friends or loved ones to join? Or if you are a patron but not a member - isn't it time you joined us? Just go to aps-sherborne.co.uk/join-us.html Most of our members are not actors, but folk who just want to support the APS and keep in touch with our activities.

ROSE BOWL TRIUMPHS!

With no fewer than four nominations for awards for APS, hopes and expectations were high that we would be carrying at least one gong home from the Rose Bowl Awards ceremony in Bristol on November 30th.

After all, as a society that regularly punches above its weight, firmly established as one of the leading amateur groups in the South West, APS has a good track record when it comes to honours and awards.

Our 2025 nominees were **Sarah Nias**, for Best Actress in *Hedda Gabler*, **Freddie Wopat**, for Best Supporting Actor in the same play, **Hazel Perrett** for Best Young Actress in *The 39 Steps*

Steps, and the same play's **silhouetted chase** effect was nominated for the Coup de Théâtre Award.

not only the Coup de Théâtre Award came our way, but also that Sarah was named Best Actress! This was the third time Sarah had been nominated



And the outcome? Successes! We are proud and delighted to report that



(*Educating Rita* in 2022 and *Betrayal* in 2023, with all three plays directed by Graham Smith), and is certainly a case of “not before time”!

Many congratulations to Sarah, and to Jane McKenna, the visionary director of *The 39 Steps*, pictured here with Sarah, and, next page, with the show’s cast members. Freddie, of course, as well as his nomination for *Hedda Gabler*, also played a leading role alongside Hazel in *The 39 Steps*.



ROSE BOWL - CITATIONS

Sarah Nias (Best Actress):

"Hedda is such a complex character and you managed to show us the whole range of emotions churning inside her. On the surface, Hedda is controlling, selfish, power-crazy and manipulative. Under all of that, she was frightened, vulnerable and sad. Once she began to see that her power was being taken away, she crumbled, and that was sensitively portrayed. Your voice was perfect for this role and echoed through the space; your movements around the stage supported all that we were beginning to understand about this character.

Many will have wondered why you ever married Tesman, but of course we soon learn that this was a cry for help - to buy some respectability and security - a price that proved too high. For without love, none of that matters. This was a superb performance and you absolutely deserve this Award."

The 39 Steps (Coup de Théâtre):

"This hugely inventive and laughter-filled production of "The 39 Steps" was performed at the tiny Sherborne Studio Theatre, where, on a stage of less than 12 square metres, a cast of four played 40 characters with 68 costume changes and 300 sound and lighting cues. However, all this was then topped with a dramatic chase across sweeping Scottish moorland, including an



aerial pursuit, portrayed by use of back-projected shadow puppetry that wowed adjudicator and audience alike."



SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER

APS had been due to perform Oliver Goldsmith's masterpiece back in the Autumn of 2017, but the project was abandoned due to the difficulty of casting the play. Fast forward to 2025, and no such problem was apparent as John Crabtree succeeded in staging a lively, sparkling rendition making full use of what one visiting critic described as APS's "deep well of talent". What is so encouraging for the future of our Society is the fact that half of the cast occupying said "well" were new recruits to APS, delighting and enthralling the audiences with their energy, youthfulness and obvious zest for the stage. More of that later.

John has, of course, a long and distinguished track record of directing memorable and (in many cases) award-winning plays with APS. This was up there with his best. The 18th-century dialogue

seemed to leap off the page, the richness of its sounds and cadences given full justice by the cast, the wit and humour of every line pacy and delicious. Lighting, sound (with an original composition by Mike Stanley) and costume were on point, as always, but most of all the set was stunning in its versatility, fully naturalistic and able to be converted in seconds (by the very efficient stage crew) from house, to inn, to garden and back again.

It is impossible not to be uplifted by *She Stoops*, and like any classic, it is as relevant today as always. Who could fail to enjoy Marlow's absurd class and gender prejudices being exposed and stripped away by Kate, or the ability of love to cross (even fictitious) class boundaries? Or the ways in which Marlow's - and Mrs Hardcastle's - weaknesses



are handled as endearing characteristics, to be cherished and appreciated, while we keep some of our loudest laughter for the buffoonish - soon to be wealthy and even more idle - Lumpkin, the perfect "entitled twit"? The reactions of the Sherborne audiences, and the very real warmth of their comments when departing, showed that the director and cast perfectly hit the sweet spot of the play's enduring appeal.

With a cast about as large as our Green Room can accommodate - even with doubling-up - it is hard to comment on individual performances without leaving unfair omissions. So, while giving a nod to the great performances of the evergreen APS favourites present, the warmest of welcomes should be given to





space around him, while the clarity and purity of Catarina’s voice was a delight to hear. Both actors made their unlikely romance totally plausible, with Sam appearing one minute suave and confident, the next a gibbering klutz, and Kate stepping effortlessly from the witty, feisty “well-bred and beautiful” daughter of the house (think Viola, Portia or even Elizabeth Bennett) to the persona to which she needs to “stoop” - that of the key-wielding lowly barmaid.

the newcomers - Olivia Kippax, Christiana Bingley, Peter Sangston, Cameron Thrower (actually a welcome returnee after several years’ absence), all of whom are now firmly established as APS stars in their own right. Most of all, the other two newcomers - Sam Frost and

Catarina da Silva - playing the main characters of Marlow and Kate, proved what “finds” they are, as, both individually and as a couple, they held the audience in the palm of their hands. Sam’s physical presence (in every sense of the word) dominated the



This production of *She Stoops* brought warmth and laughter to our cold little theatre on a week of wet, dark December evenings, and, to judge from the audience reactions, is sure to take its place among our ever-growing collection of hits. Nobody could fail to agree with Charles Marlow’s observation to Kate: “I was always willing to be amused. The folly of most people is rather an object of mirth than uneasiness.”

Martin Williams



MUCH ADO ABOUT FALSTAFF

Giles Shenton, who won us over last year with his one-man performance of *Three Men In A Boat*, made a very welcome return to Sherborne in October with *Much Ado about Falstaff*.

It was a lively and irreverent parody that reimagined the legendary and dubious exploits of Sir John Falstaff with wit and affection. Written specifically for Giles by Simon Downing, the show dives into the chaotic life of Falstaff, painting a portrait of a penniless, lovable rogue whose greatest talents are drinking, starting fights he never finishes, and endlessly running away from trouble and – above all – a motley army of creditors. *“It would sooner snow in hell than your purse be full”*. Giles (and Georgie Taylor, playing the hapless Mistress Quickly), captured our hearts from the outset with their endearing but inexplicable mutual devotion.

The show’s comedic highlights were nearly all based on unpleasant bodily functions, yet the narrative



was peppered with clever wordplay and physical humour. It was also a comic exploration of the morality of the time, making it a true celebration of Shakespearean farce.

The production explored Falstaff’s many faults—his fondness for sack (both wine and the bed), his impecunious state, and his endless hedonistic appetite – *“If you know of greater things than food, drink, and fornication, pray tell”*. Yet, beneath the belching, farting, cowardly glutton, Giles wanted us to have a genuine affection for his character “made of sturdy English oak” as the audience is invited to love him despite (or perhaps because of) his flaws. Mistress Quickly,

brilliantly played by Georgie as a perfect counterpoint to the old scoundrel – lists his manifold failings but sums it up with: *“Yet I do love him. I*



do so wish to eke out our final years together”

Overall, *Much Ado about Falstaff* was a spirited homage to one of literature’s great comic figures, and the parody didn’t shy away from poking fun at the unforgivable bad behaviour and the endless cycle of misadventures that define Falstaff’s existence.

With Falstaff and Mistress Quickly, Giles and Georgie ensured that the Sherborne audience all enjoyed their journey back in time to share in the revelry.

Adrian Harding



JOHN BOWLES



It is with sadness that we report the death of a former member, John Bowles, who passed away peacefully at home on November 18th.

John joined The Players in the mid 1980s. He took part in a range of productions and the roles he played were Max in *Ten Times Table* (1986), Harris in *After Magritte* (1987), Arthur Harnam in *The Day After the Fair* (1989), Geoffrey Day in *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1991), Ray Turnbull in *Dead Ringer* (1992), John Fearnley in *Moving* (1994), Stingo in *She Stoops to Conquer* (1995), Trevor Farrington in *Theft* (1999), Corin in *As You Like It* (2000), The Vicar in *Confusions: Gosforth's Fete* (2006), Mr Shanks in *Habeas Corpus* (2007), Herbert Soppit in *When We Are Married* (2009) and Badger in *The Wind in the Willows* (2010). He was to have played Caesar in *Julius Caesar* (2007), but unfortunately had to pull out due to ill health. John was a kind, gentle and thoughtful man. He is sadly missed by those who knew him, and our condolences go to his family.

Mark Lambert

APS GIFT VOUCHERS



Give your friends or family the gift of live theatre

You can buy APS gift vouchers in groups of up to 4 tickets. The price is £14 plus postage if applicable.

To request a voucher, please send an email to admin@aps-sherborne.co.uk and we will get back to you. We will need to know the number of tickets that you want include on the voucher, and your telephone number.

APS gift vouchers are valid for 1 year and can be used for any production at the Sherborne Studio Theatre. Vouchers may not be used in conjunction with any other offers or discount codes.

THE 100 CLUB

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 little over £8000. This has enabled us to complete various projects - new auditorium seating, new floor and insulation, improvements to the bar area, new doors, installation of a hearing loop

and wifi - and plenty more too. Our thoughts are now turning towards improving and updating our stage lighting - and we hope to realise this dream in the not too distant future, thanks largely to the 100 Club. But there is plenty of room for new members, and more than a half of the total of APS members have not yet joined up - please do so as soon as you can. However, you do not have to be an APS member to join the 100 Club. Please see "Support Us" on the APS website, or e-mail sst100club@gmail.com in order to join.

The next draws will take place on December 13th. The winner of the regular bi-monthly draw will win an estimated £43, and the lucky winner of the annual bumper Christmas draw will win an estimated £280. It's not too late - it could still be you!

The following draw will take place on 14th February 2026.



FILM QUIZ NIGHT



The air was thick with anticipation as six teams gathered on November 7th for another APS Quiz, expertly compiled by Gilly Savage.

Ten themed rounds tested our film and television knowledge across the decades. There was also a picture round, with photographs to identify, ranging from Barbara Stanwyck to Ed Harris and everyone in between.

We also had to come up with 20 Disney movie titles. Even though we were given the number of letters per word in each title, our team were not the only ones to fall into the trap of focusing on just the animated films. Can you complete this one? 5 1 6 3 4? No we didn't either!

A shout went up half way through the evening –

Richard Culham had arrived with our supper.

Everyone's meal arrived fully labelled which meant within 5 minutes there was a bit of hush as we all tucked in. Jessica Colson re-opened the bar, whilst Gilly, assisted by Helen Smith, tallied up our scores for the half way point.

It was a very enjoyable evening, lots of scratching of heads, and cries of 'I knew that!' when the answers were revealed, and congratulations to 'The 39 Steps' who were declared the winning team.

Grateful thanks to Richard and Ruth Culham for organising the supper, Jessica Colson who managed the bar (aided by Richard) and of course Gilly for a thoroughly entertaining evening.

Sarah Webster

OPERA AT SST

Although this is very much an advance notice, we are keen to let readers know that, for one night only, we are to host the Exeter Opera Group performing Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte* next October.

Featuring the noted Ukrainian mezzo-soprano Irina Ilnytska, five other soloists and a small chorus, this will of course be an abridged version of Mozart's much-loved opera, adapted for a small stage.

This represents a unique opportunity, and with only one performance, it can be expected that tickets will be in huge demand. We will look into ways to ensure that APS members are given priority. The performance will take place at 7.30 on Saturday 10th October 2026. Make a note in your diary (if you've got one yet!)

**W.A. MOZART
COSÌ FAN TUTTE**

10/10/26
7:30pm

EXETER OPERA GROUP PRESENTS

Sherborne Studio Theatre
Marston Rd
Sherborne
DT9 4LB

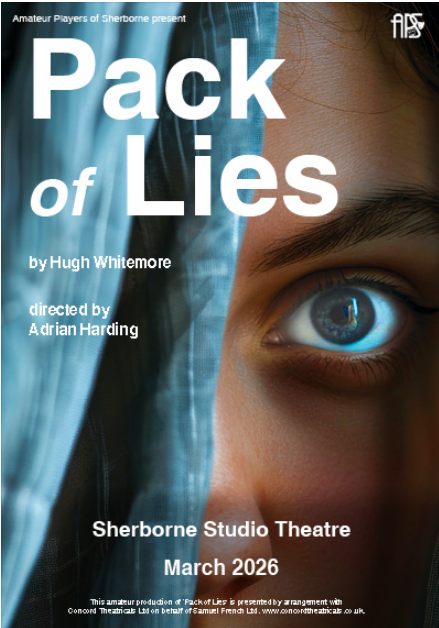
Fiordiligi - Rachel Phillips
Dorabella - Irina Ilnytska
Guglielmo - Peter MacKay
Ferrando - Robert Felstead
Despina - Clare Northcott
Don Alfonso - Nick Young
Chorus of EOG

Director - Irina Ilnytska
Music Director - Stephen Moseley
Piano - Richard Lutens
Tim Laurence-Otten

TICKETS: £12 and £14
via www.aps-sherborne.co.uk

PRODUCTIONS COMING UP...

PACK OF LIES



Following a successful play-reading evening and audition process, we are looking forward to getting *Pack of Lies* by Hugh Whitmore, (directed by Adrian Harding) under way as soon as *She Stoops* is over. What is the play about? Imagine... You are Barbara Jackson, living with your husband and your teenage daughter in a semi in suburban Ruislip. Five years ago, a colourful Canadian couple moved in just down the road – the Krogers. They became your best friends. You are close

to Helen in particular; she is your trusted confidante, sure to listen sympathetically to your worries and secrets. Part of your family, almost. One tiny problem...Helen never mentioned that she was a Colonel in the KGB.

Based on a true story, *Pack of Lies* is a gripping psychological thriller grips you like a ratchet. Performances are on March 9th - 14th, and tickets will go on sale on January 26th.

OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD

Our production for Summer 2026 will be *Our Country's Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker, (directed by Jane McKenna). A ship, sailing 15,000 miles to Botany Bay, Australia, is crammed with British convicts – a punishment for their crimes. After a life-threatening voyage they arrive in 1788 but keeping the colony disciplined is a brutal job and cruelty is rife. To keep the convicts in line and attempt to

'civilise' this often desperate, violent, poverty stricken group, a young ambitious lieutenant, Ralph Clark, decides they should perform a play. *Our Country's Good* tells the extraordinary true story of the convicts and their commanding officers. It explores themes of empathy, humanity, justice, and the healing power of theatre. A powerful drama with comedic scenes – don't miss it!

A play-reading will be held on January 8th at 7.30pm in the SST, and all are welcome to attend.

Auditions will be on January 25th and 27th. More information, and audition details, will be circulated to APS members in due course. Performance dates are 8th - 13th June 2026.

