AWARDS SPECIAL

NOISES OFF

AWARDS GALORE!

GREAT BRITISH **THEATRES** AWARDS

Great Amateur Theatre **Winner**

We have the greatest pride in announcing that Amateur Players of Sherborne, and their home, the Sherborne Studio Theatre, have been successful in no fewer than FOUR prestigious competitions for 2026.

Firstly, as reported in the last *Noises Off,* the Theatre had been shortlisted for the national Theatres Trust award: **"Great Amateur Theatre"**. The Theatres Trust has *"for 50 years worked to protect theatres, recognising their importance as homes for live performance as well as vital cultural spaces at the heart of our communities."* Four of our members attended the awards ceremony at the Westminster Central Hall, on November 2nd and



were delighted to hear Sherborne Studio Theatre named as winner of the **Great Amateur Theatre Award,** *"recognising the work of local volunteers in transforming a former chapel into a welcoming community theatre".*

The award was presented by actress Su Pollard at a ceremony at Central Hall Westminster on Monday 2nd November, with Sherborne's theatre recognised alongside some of Britain's best-known cultural venues, such as the National Theatre, Citizens Theatre Glasgow, and the Chichester Festival Theatre.

The Great British Theatres Awards, organised as part of the Theatres Trust's 50th anniversary celebrations, recognise the buildings and people that sustain Britain's theatrical life, rather than individual productions or performances. We were recognised for the ways in which our building has developed and been improved by the introduction of new seating, a hearing loop, better accessibility and insulation, creating a more comfortable, inclusive and energy-efficient venue for performers and audiences.



Almost 200 nominations were received from across the country, with awards covering everything from major theatre renovations and new buildings to community engagement and environmental sustainability.

For Sherborne Studio Theatre, the award is national recognition of the work carried out by volunteers to preserve and improve a small local venue, ensuring that amateur theatre continues to have a home in the town.

But that's not all!....

Coming first in the chronology of our various awards - on 25th May - came the awards for 2025 made by NODA (the National Operatic and Dramatic Association). NODA supports and celebrates amateur theatre across the UK by publishing reviews of performances and making annual awards. As well as acting and performance, NODA "*acknowledges excellence in specific craft elements, including programme and poster designs, and scenic and stage design.*" We were delighted (but not surprised) to be awarded the Wilfred Roe Trophy for Stage Decor, for the set designed by John Crabtree for our December 2025 production of ***She Stoops to Conquer***. John's sets are always magnificent, and never fail to gain the admiration of audiences, and of visiting professional critics. John has a superb way of creating spacious acting areas out of what is a challengingly small stage, and of "nailing" the location, atmosphere and historical period required by the Director. Congratulations once again, John.

Only a few days after the national Theatres Trust award in London, came, on November 6th, the nearer-to-home awards given by the Somerset Fellowship of Drama, whose mission is *to ensure that amateur drama is alive and well in Somerset (and Dorset) and that all members have access to the best resources possible to help them develop their skills and grow.*

Huge congratulations go to **Hazel Perrett,** who bagged the award for Best Youth Under 21, for her portrayal of Julie Jackson in our March production of *Pack of Lies*. We are especially proud that such a talented actress as Hazel is very much "one of ours", and despite her still-tender years, has appeared in a large number of APS





productions in recent times.

Finally, November 15th saw the annual Rose Bowl awards in Bristol. The Rose Bowl awards are designed to encourage excellence in amateur theatre in the South West. As reported above, *She Stoops to Conquer* had already scooped the NODA awards for Stage Decor, and so it is a wonderful and well-deserved achievement that John Crabtree's production was also awarded the **Joan Hawkins Rose Bowl Award for best Shakespeare, classic or restoration play.** Well done John, and, of course, the whole cast and crew of *She Stoops to Conquer.*

It would be wrong not to add, after congratulating these award winners, our recognition of the large number of nominations which APS additionally received. Well done, then to:

Pack of Lies (Best set; Best props)

Our Country's Good (**Charlotte Berry**, Best female actor; **Maureen Nethercott**, Best supporting actor; Best set; Best Costumes; Best Creative Lighting; Best sound design)

Hedda Gabler (Best drama production)

The 39 Steps (Best comedy production)

Bouncers (Most innovative production; **Freddie Wopat,** Best supporting actor)

…and to the directors of these productions: **Adrian Harding, Jane McKenna, Graham Smith and Sarah Webster.**

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA



It was a very great pleasure to welcome Exeter Opera Group to perform Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* on our stage on October 10th. The group performed to an appreciative full house,

and it was certainly a wonderful experience enjoying the beautiful performances of the two principal singers. To quote a professional reviewer of the group's production: *At the heart of the production is a superb cast of soloists. Iryna Ilnytska's Dalila is captivating, combining vocal warmth, dramatic intensity and seductive charm to create a character of remarkable depth and complexity.*



Opposite her, Robert Felstead's Samson is both powerful and moving, meeting the immense vocal and emotional demands of this iconic role with impressive strength, stamina and sensitivity.

No-one would disagree with that assessment, and we owe a great debt of gratitude to Irina and her team for making the journey to perform for us.

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 well over £10000. 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. Without the contribution of 100 Club members, it is doubtful if we would have earned the national Great Amateur Theatre Award.

Our thoughts are now turning towards improving and updating our stage lighting, as well as doing something about the temperature in the building - 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 email sst100club@gmail.com in order to join.

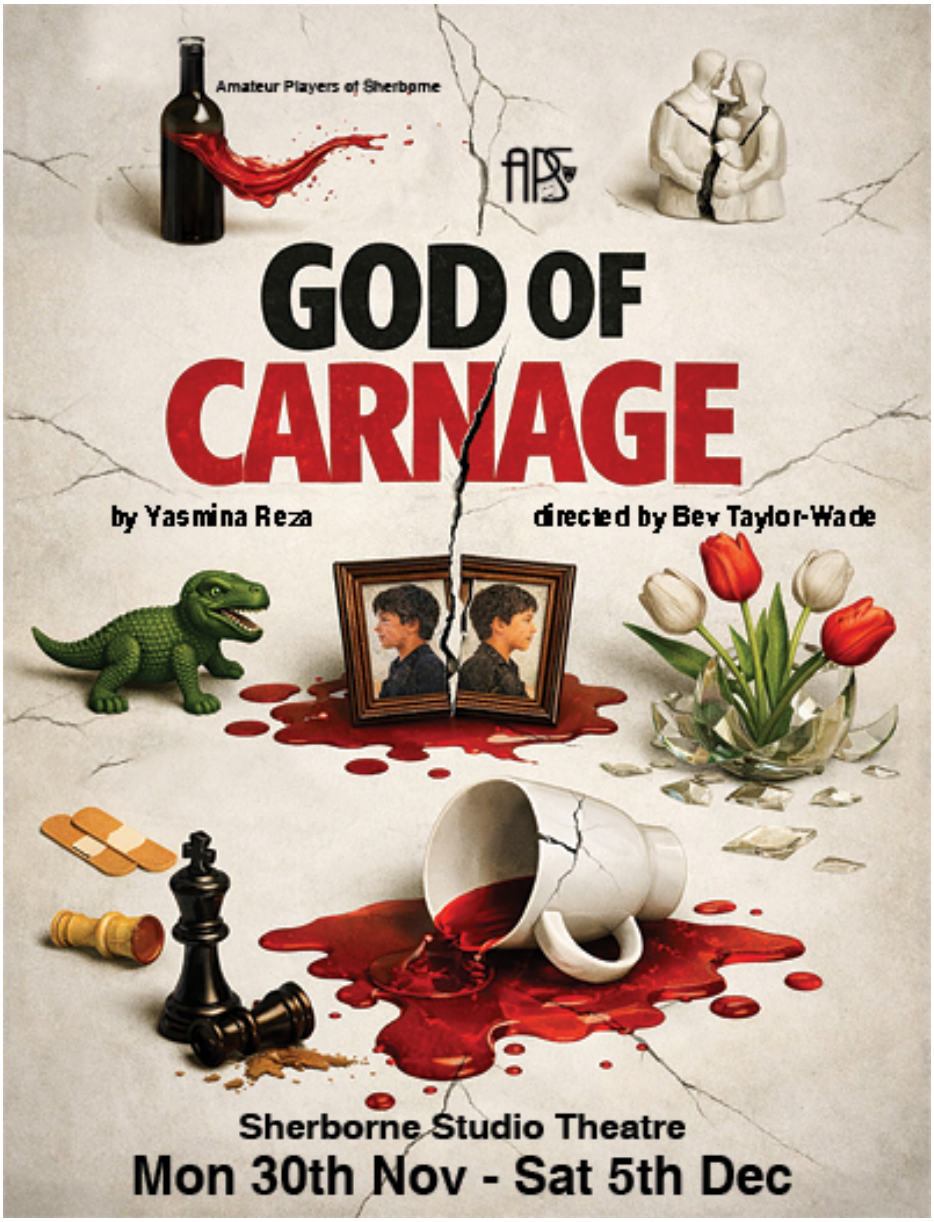
Since the last *Noises Off,* we are pleased to welcome **Robert Rakison** as our latest member to join the 100 Club.

The most recent draw took place on October 10th, and the lucky winner took home £50.70. Next time this could be you!

The next draw will take place on December 12th 2026, and as well as the two-monthly prize, will also include the **Annual Bumper Christmas Prize,** which this year will be around an estimated £300.

A Happy Christmas for one lucky 100 Club member!

COMING UP...



God of Carnage dives deep into one of the most dangerous places on Earth: parenthood. Two sets of parents meet up to deal with the unruly behaviour of their children, Ferdinand and Bruno. During an argument in a public park, resulting from Ferdinand refusing to let Bruno join his "gang", Ferdinand has knocked out two of Bruno's teeth with a stick.

What happens? A calm and rational debate between four grown-ups about the need to teach kids how to behave properly? Unfortunately not: in the event, the parents become increasingly childish and the meeting descends into a chaotic night of name-calling, tantrums and tears before bedtime.

Boys will be boys, but the adults are worse - much worse. Using irrational arguments, their discussion becomes increasingly hysterical as each parent loses their inhibitions and reveals hitherto suppressed thoughts and feelings. *God of Carnage* is a comedy of manners - without the manners.

Tickets are going fast - at the time of writing, two of the midweek performances are sold out, and there is just a handful of tickets remaining for the other shows. Hurry to get yours before they all go!

Please be aware that this play contains some strong language. It is a one-act play and there will

OUR SPRING PRODUCTION



Our Spring production is to be *One Servant, Two Masters*, directed by Martin Williams. Based on a translation of an 18th century Italian play rooted in the "Commedia dell'Arte" tradition, the production promises to be enormous fun from start to finish.We are pleased to say that the play has been fully cast, and rehearsals will start very shortly after *God of Carnage.*

Performance dates are March 8th - 13th 2027

THE CHRISTMAS 'DO'



All APS members, friends and families are warmly invited to to attend our Christmas Gathering at The Sherborne Studio Theatre on December 11th from 7pm.
The bar will be open - including our well-known mulled wine - with a free small buffet, and the chance to look around the theatre.

We will have our play selection for 2027 on display, and you will be able to talk to the directors, and find out how you can become involved both in front of and behind the curtain.

Please do join us for a friendly informal evening, and support your local theatre.

THE GREEN ROOM

It is quite possible that many APS members are very familiar with our theatre auditorium and the public parts of the stage, but have never ventured beyond those double doors at the front, leading to the Stage Door and other secret areas (with the exception of the two loos, maybe!) In that case, you may not be aware of our small (but perfectly-formed) kitchenette, and our Green Room.

The astonishing thing about the Green Room is that it is no more than a handful of square metres in size, and yet, during a performance, it can be forced to accommodate a dozen or more actors, many of whom have more than one costume to change into, as well as, often, various members of the backstage team. It needs to provide space for the actors' own clothes and belongings, for all the costumes required (often including headgear and/or wigs), and for any number of

props. A curtained-off area provides a small amount of privacy, along with a basin and the traditional mirrors with surrounding lightbulbs for make-up and hair adjustments. Not to mention the sundry goodies associated with the performers' welfare - chocolates, biscuits, good luck cards, flowers etc. There is also a TV monitor providing a live link to what is happening on the stage, and double doors lead straight into the wings on Stage Right. Sadly, the Green Room has always been a rather neglected part of the theatre, as we have, until now, concentrated our efforts on enhancing the experience of the audiences. What was there to be found in there? - A few tatty and uncomfortable plastic chairs, a dilapidated window frame, and temperatures which seem to know no middle ground between arctic and tropical. A bare concrete floor only recently covered with a re-purposed secondhand carpet.

Therefore, not long ago, and quite rightly, members of the Committee decided that it was time to make some investment into the comfort and experience of the actors and backstage crew.



We are delighted to announce that the work has now been completed, and that, although we were not able to do anything about the size of the room, it is now infinitely more comfortable. With freshly painted walls, beautifully padded new chairs, storage and an excellent new fitted carpet, we finally feel that the Green Room is no longer the poor relation, but is as welcoming and attractive as the auditorium we are so proud of.

Enormous thanks go to Jessica Colson and Sarah Webster for carrying out all the work so magnificently.

Other renovation work has also been carried out in the foyer, with the installation of a new cupboard for cleaning materials, and a new table for use of the cast and crew during performances, and which accommodates our recycling bins underneath. Many thanks to Mark Lambert for this work.

As ever, we are grateful to members of the 100 Club, whose continuing support allows us to keep up our rolling programme of improvement and renovation (so recently recognised by winning the national Great Amateur Theatre Award).