

OAST NOTES

March 2026

humble boy



by charlotte jones

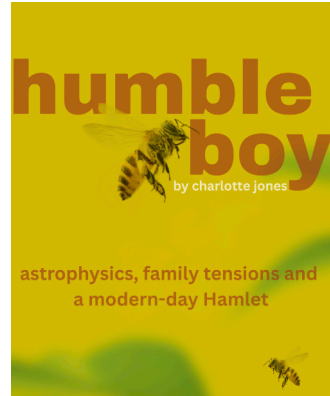
astrophysics, family tensions and
a modern-day Hamlet



7th - 14th March 2026 8pm Sunday performance 3pm

Performances 7th - 14th March

Humble Boy, written by Charlotte Jones and directed by Stuart McCreadie, is a sharp and entertaining, if slightly dark, comedy. Felix Humble takes a break from his Cambridge studies following the death of his father and discovers that his mother is having 'a fling' with a man of whom he disapproves. This is reminiscent of the setting for Hamlet, and there are other echoes throughout the play. But this is definitely not a tragedy. The sharp dialogue and witty observations have been described as Ayckbourn on steroids. The story is thoughtful, poignant, funny, very sad, and emotional. In summary, the excellent cast, who are well into rehearsals as I write, will entertain you. Do come and see it and find out for yourself why it won so many awards.



Charlotte Jones

Charlotte Jones' first play *Airswimming*, debuted in 1997 at Battersea Arts Centre in London. Her other plays include *In Flame*, *The Dark*, *The Lightning Play*, *Martha*, *Josie and the Chinese Elvis*, as well as *Humble Boy*.

She wrote the book for the 2004-2006 West End musical, *The Woman in White*, in collaboration with the David Zippel and Andrew Lloyd Webber.



On television, Jones has written episodes of *Always and Everyone* and *The Palace*. She also created the ITV period drama *The Halcyon*. Jones will adapt Will Dean's *Tuva Moodyson* novels to television, starring Rose Ayling-Ellis in the lead role.

Performances: 27th - 29th March. Janet Young Studio

A play about loss. A play about friendship. A play about who we are. Death is inevitable; it is the only absolute. So how do we make the most of



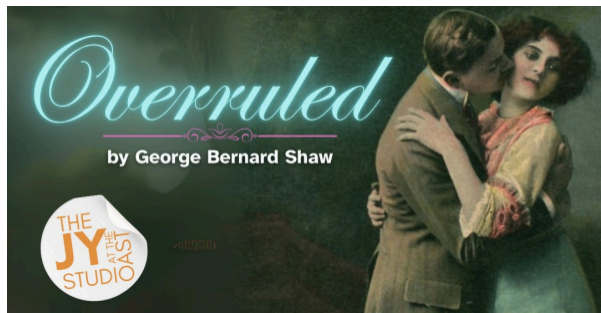
the time we have? What's the point? What's this all for?

Seb, Freddie & Tom were friends at school. Seb moved away in search of bigger things. When Freddie dies, the others

are thrown back together into a whirlwind of emotions. Freddie's death is a great loss to everyone, but it is Seb who has to put that into words. How do you get over someone so important? What do you say in their eulogy? Every attempt seems like you're reducing them to words. Our story is set ten years on, almost to the day. Tom reaches out, but Seb won't let go.

Directed by Louis Robinson.

In Shaw's own words, *Overruled* is about "...how polygamy occurs among quite ordinary people innocent of all unconventional views concerning it."

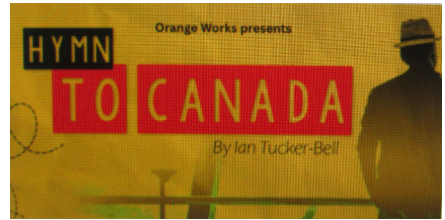


Gregory Lunn and Mrs Juno are in love, having met during a sea voyage. They are both already married, and parting is such sweet sorrow. Then their

respective partners arrive, this could be awkward! Set in a seaside hotel, this is a comedy of errors about two couples who desire to continue their extramarital relationships, but are prevented from doing so by various considerations, and end up negotiating an ambiguous set of relationships.

Directed by Marc Evans

AUDITION



Dates: Wednesday 18th February 7.45pm Bar lounge

Sunday 22nd February 3.00pm Bar lounge

Performances 29th - 31st May Venue: Janet Young Studio

Synopsis

For as long as anyone has known Mike, he has been fascinated by Canada, but for reasons unknown and which he is reluctant to go into. Mike blames it on a fear of flying, but the truth is something else entirely: a long-held secret, and an event that tore a family apart, creating a guilt which has lasted a lifetime. On his seventieth birthday, with his partner, Anne, and his ex-colleague, Sean, the truth is finally revealed. This play is in ensemble style, actors play multiple roles and are on stage all of the time. This play may be taken to festivals later on in the year.

Characters:

Mike - 70s

Anne - 60s

Sean - late 40s

Lauren - late 20s

John - mid 40s

Interested? Contact Director and Writer Ian Tucker Bell

email: ian.tucker-bell@oasttheatre.com

Audition

Dates:

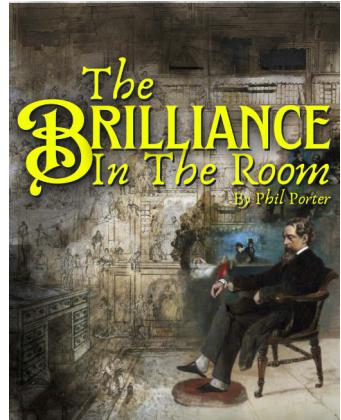
Sunday 8th March 2.30pm Janet Young Studio

Monday 9th March 7.30pm Janet Young Studio

Performances 20th - 27th June - Main Stage

Synopsis:

The Brilliance in the Room is a full-on, period costume, Dickensian extravaganza. Dozens of familiar characters battle the vagaries of fate, living dangerously near the edge of survival while an indifferent and heartless authority looks on. The play is compassionate, deeply poetic and often comic, with many stunning images and numerous special effects.



Characters:

The play is an ensemble piece, so there are no main characters in the accepted sense. There are, though, several cameos: Pip, Sergeant Buzfuz, Mr Krook, Miss Havisham and Mr Crummles to name but a few.

There are two tone poems: *The Yarmouth Storm* and *London Fog*. Both are spoken by one person.

Eight actors, more if possible, play all the parts. The play is gender neutral and all ages are welcome.

Interested? Contact Director - Phil Porter
email: porter077@talktalk.net



Audition

Dates : Sunday, 5th April 2026 @ 2.00p.m.
Monday, 6th April 2026 @8.00p.m.

Location : Janet Young studio

Performances 18th - 25th July Main Stage

Synopsis:

Anne Lister is regarded as the first modern lesbian. She wrote her diaries in code, which contained many revelations about her lesbian love affairs. However, this was only one aspect of Lister's life. She was before her time - an entrepreneurial daring businesswoman who had a bitter and complex feud with prominent industrialist, Christopher Rawson. The play is set in Halifax, Yorkshire and focuses on Anne Lister, her lesbian lovers and her dealings with Christopher Rawson.

Characters:

Anne Lister- Androgynous. Daring, passionate and defiant. 30 years+

Ann Walker - married to Anne. Sensitive and fragile. Independent. 23 years +

Christopher Rawson- A bullying business rival to Anne. 40 years +

Isabella "Tib" Norcliffe -Friend and lover of Anne. Possibly an alcoholic. 30years+

Marianna Balcombe - had a passionate affair with Anne. which continued through her marriage. 30 years +

Arthur Burrell -Historian. Deciphered the code in Anne Lister's diaries 40 years +

John Lister - a philanthropist and politician; a relative of Anne Lister. He managed the family estate. With Arthur Burrell, he deciphered the code in Anne Lister's diaries. 40 years +

The men will require West Riding, Yorkshire accents.

Interested? Contact director: Fiona Dunn

email: fionadunn2004@hotmail.com

Making light of technical stuff

Scene: Art Room. Lights rise. Two men enter and sit. They are Derek Rose and the editor. The interview begins:

Ed: My first question is, when did you join the Oast?

Derek: I think it was about 1982. I remember the first show was *The Art of Coarse Acting*. That was the first show I was involved in, and I've been involved continuously since then.

Ed: What technical changes have you seen during that time?

Derek: There have been significant changes. When I joined, we used reel-to-reel magnetic tape, which we had to cut up and splice together for the sound effects. We had quite an old lighting board at the time. It was analogue, and it had lots of sliders and things, and over time, we've had many different computer controlled devices for the lighting, and that's now the same with the sound. It's the same principle where the computer controls everything, and the operator, once it's set up, only has to press a button. A lot of our lighting still uses filament lamps, but gradually we are migrating to LED lighting, which is quite a high cost to the theatre.

Ed: Would you say it's easier today, or is it a different challenge?

Derek: It's a different challenge because of people's experience in what they see on television. Technology today allows us to do more, so there's a higher expectation in the quality of the productions we put on. Through lighting and sound we can convey different feelings, and we can do more different effects. It's more complicated to set up in the first place, but I think it's important to keep the technology up to date so that we can convey the professionalism which is expected at the Oast.

Ed: Do we get the most out of the equipment?

Derek: I think we do. It does depend on the production. Some don't lend themselves to fancy lighting, but others do. We can convey different

continued on next page

places within the set provided. Added to that, there's the video we can now provide. This allows us to locate different rooms, places, and times without having to rebuild the whole set every time. That gives us more flexibility to do productions which would have been difficult for us to do otherwise.

Ed: What is the demand in terms of time and effort?

Derek: It has become more demanding. That's partly because we've been trying to improve things such as the air conditioning and security alarms. We have to make sure that all the electrical equipment is tested. A lot of it has to be tested annually. The lighting bars on stage have to be load tested every two years. We have a duty of care to make sure everything is safe. This all takes time and effort.

Ed: Do you have other duties at the Oast?

Derek: On the committee, I take the lead on security, both building security and cybersecurity. It's been challenging with building security, having lots of false alarms. Team members have been called out in the middle of the night. We have made changes to stop that. We store a lot of information on the Oast Workspace and have to make sure that it's safe and secure. Last year we upgraded the Theatre data network and WiFi. I have also been helping with the air conditioning and a we've had a few teething troubles with that.

Ed: Where do you see the club going from here?

Derek: My main goals are to provide more training for those people so we can keep a steady flow of people designing and operating, and allow flexibility for people to participate when they want to, so we don't rely on the same individuals.

Ed: Do you still enjoy it?

Derek: Yes, I still do enjoy it. It's enjoyable and rewarding. Especially when you see a production go up, and you know you were part of it.

The end. Lights down.

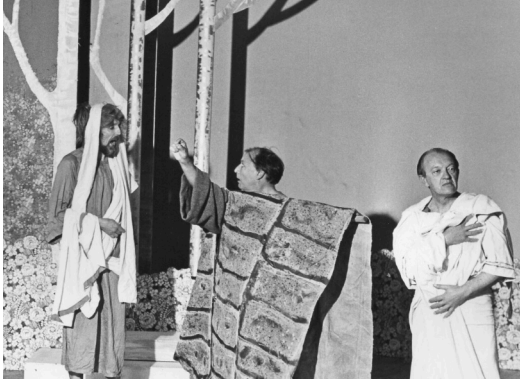
Artist of the Month

Stuart McCreadie has taken time out of his director's schedule to prepare a selection of photographs from the 1970s. These were taken when Stuart was an economics student and a trainee accountant in Glasgow. He co-founded a Photographic Society in his college, as well as being an active member of a local group of photographers. Stuart was also editor of the student newspaper. The pictures on show have nearly all been exhibited before, either at the annual Glasgow District exhibition or locally in Partick, an area of Glasgow which was going through a major urban renewal programme.



The artist for next month.
John Hall

DECADES OF PLAYS



A Midsummer Night's Dream 1977

George Kirk, John McGrath, & Don Cumming



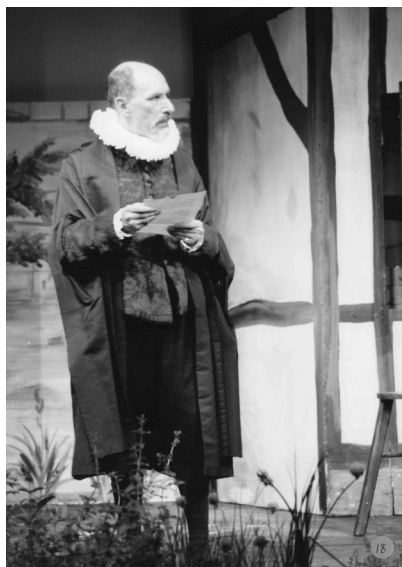
The Merchant of Venice 1990

Phillip Heppenstall, Paul Barnes,
Ian Burns, George Young & Sue Johnson,



Shakespeare Country 1993

Karen Irving, Fiona Dunn,
Frank Foley & Richard Werner



The Herbal Bed 2001

John Mounsey



Humble Boy 2005

David Osbourne, Chris Hix & Babs Smith,



Twelfth Night 2007

Elizabeth Portlock & Elizabeth Taylor-Moon

MURDER MYSTERY AND AFTERNOON TEA

Your Sociable Committee were delighted to see a packed house for the Jane Austen themed murder mystery and afternoon tea in January.

Beti Price wrote: A capacity crowd arrived with anticipation for the Murder Mystery Afternoon Tea. We were not disappointed. Greeted with drinks in the roundel, we were shown to our beautifully decorated tables in the Bar Lounge. The Oast catering ladies, suitably dressed in period maid costumes, served the most delicious sandwiches and cakes. After 'enjoying our tea, the Regency-clad characters in the mystery mingled with the 'audience'. 'Cassandra', the Jane Austen narrator, then began. The characters related their involvement in the story - the dialogue had twists and turns that kept us involved. Was it the lover/the butler/the lady of the manor/the daughter, still in love with her old boyfriend/the family friend who seemed to have connections with all the characters? Or was it the narrator herself!? Each table put forward their idea as to the murderer's identity - there were several suggestions!

'Congratulations to the Sociable Committee and all involved in the production for organising the excellent repast, the excellent acting, and the sheer involvement and enthusiasm of all the members who attended'.

'Thank you all so much for a really fun Regency Tea. We didn't quite know what to expect so it was a very enjoyable surprise and the tea, both sandwiches and cakes, was lovely. Miss Austen would have approved!' (from Maggie Bray, a member of the Jane Austen Society, no less!)

'So much lovely feedback from the actors, some of whom had never been to the Oast before; they felt so welcome'. (from Laura, who provided the cast, and the idea in the first place)

'We've been to several events like this but this one was OUTSTANDING!' (from Caroline, one of our set painters)

'What a fun afternoon we had. The refreshments were fresh and plentiful and there was some impressive acting. (from Jenny Eaton)

'We did pack in as many as we could! It took a lot of work and we were all really tired, but all of it -the cake baking (Social Committee members plus Sandra, and Maggie's Kirsty), the furniture moving (thanks, Mike), the pretty teapots, cups, saucers, plates and lovely tablecloths (Jill and her late mother-in-law), much of the washing up (Jill again and her dishwasher), the waitressing and clearing up (everyone) - it was all so worthwhile. Everyone so good humoured, and a profit for the club of around £250.

Pictures of an Austen Murder Mystery Afternoon



LORD OF THE FLIES REVIEW

On January 15th, 16th and 17th, the Oast Youth Theatre performed *Lord of the Flies*. It is similar to allegorical work, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, written only a few years earlier, William Golding's novel is as relevant today as ever it was, arguably more so. This is in itself a sobering and frightening thought.

Adaptations of seminal literature often make sacrifices and changes to ensure that the production also works for the stage. Nigel Williams' adaptation, originally written for schools in 1991, works perfectly in this regard, especially for a Youth Theatre production. Experiment



Grace Munson & Sky Wells

and have fun on stage, was how the director, Luke Morrison, wanted his actors to approach the play. They delivered this in sticks. As a mantra for theatre generally, and Youth Theatre in particular, having fun on stage shouldn't be restricted to comedy, and Luke approached parts of the play as if it were a game, which ties in perfectly with the final lines of the play.

This was a magnificent show. From the moment that Ralph entered, the audience was gripped, and not once during the three thirty-minute acts did my attention wander. Luke indicated that it's the first time he'd directed a full-length serious play, and that he also didn't know the play. This was probably an advantage, as he brought a fresh approach to a widely known story, and this obviously resonated with his actors. This was ultimately an ensemble piece, delivered by a uniformly excellent cast, amongst whom there were some extraordinarily mature and convincing performances by the leads. Representing the voice of reason, Grace Munson as Ralph and Alice Cruse as Piggy, brought confidence and assurance to the considerable responsibility of opening the show. Sky Wells as Jack and Julia Chermanowicz as Roger (a notably mesmerising performance) were frighteningly convincing as the embodiment of populism and mob rule. The impetus engendered by Luke's direction was sustained and supported by excellent cue bite throughout all three acts, pitch-perfect lighting, sound effects and costumes.

Andy Leggatt

STILL LIFE REVIEW

A play by Noel Coward is always a treat and so the Janet Young Studio production of 'Still Life' was, unsurprisingly, a sell-out. It is one of ten short plays making up 'Tonight at 8.30', which premiered in 1936; written as a vehicle for Gertrude Lawrence and the Master himself, it has been performed many times since, in many places and with many illustrious casts; it was the basis of the celebrated 1945 film *Brief Encounter* starring Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard, and Rachmaninov's wonderful music.



Brian Holmes & Karen Gorbitt

The play tells of the chance meeting, love affair and eventual parting of Alec and Laura, married but not to each other - so much more of an unforgivable social sin then than now; the sadness of their serious and secret affair contrasts sharply with the boisterous and uncomplicated relationships enjoyed by what a friend of mine referred to as 'the lower orders'. The fighting flirtations of the station and refreshment room staff were strongly portrayed - manageress Myrtle (Lizzie Goodall) and her somewhat gormless assistant Beryl (a quite delicious Jessica Harding), and their would-be beaux (Andy Leggatt and William Barnard), were all impressive. Megan Archer and Lynn Short both made the most of their brief but enjoyable appearances.

The energy of this group, though, rather overshadowed the central love story of Alec and Laura. Their wonderful but painful situation was played with sensitivity and quiet sincerity by Brian Holmes and Karen Gorbitt. I would have liked more thirties atmosphere - the cut glass style of speech of ninety years ago from Alec and Laura, perhaps. They had to spend a lot of time facing each other at the cafe table, which meant that they were playing in profile - not the strongest position acting-wise. The costumes, I'm sure, were accurate and suitable, but were to me a bit lacking in period feel as well. Shame that Laura had to exit stage left each time to catch her train, only to have to cross the stage in the half-light and re-enter stage right; however, that's one of the small limitations of playing in our studio theatre (and productions there are getting better and more ambitious every time). Small niggles, that's all.

It was a most enjoyable evening and really lovely to see this classic again; thanks and congratulations to director Fiona Dunn, the cast and all the excellent techies for their expertise in bringing it to the Oast.

Val Armstrong

The Cassettes Review

The second half of the evening featured the Cassettes, last seen in *Murder in the Studio* last year. What a great idea to bring them back together again, and I hope that this becomes a regular event. Clare Lois Hayes, Anna Wood and Sophie-Rose Jackson (**CAS**settes) were ably accompanied on the piano by Andy Leggatt. We were entertained by a great mix of music from the late 1920s through to the 1960s. There were songs by Irving Berlin, Duke



The Cassettes

Ellington and Ray Charles, among many others. We heard great harmonies from the very elegantly dressed trio, with the occasional vocal contribution from Andy. We had great lighting provided by Lauren Barnes, which was subtly appropriate for each song. After the final number, *Putting on the Ritz*, the enthusiastic audience called for an encore, and we were treated to a reprise of *Straighten Up and Fly Right* and *Blue Moon*. Altogether it was a very entertaining conclusion to an enjoyable evening.

Bob Brown

Ticket Analysis

Lord of the Flies

Members 105

Non Members 168

Students 60

% of seats sold 98.43

Still Life & The Cassettes

Tickets sold 135

% of seats sold 100

Barry Nicholls Obituary



The leader of the Oast Theatre's PlayGroup, Barry Nicholls, passed away unexpectedly in late January. He had led the group who are responsible for the design, manufacture and construction of our much-acclaimed sets and bespoke props that have become a feature of our stage productions.

He had succeeded in this role only some 3 years ago, following Ken Smith and, latterly, Geoff Daniels, but had been with the PlayGroup for many years. He had come to the Oast Theatre following the passing of his much-loved wife, with whom he had travelled extensively throughout the world, just to see if "he would like a locally based interest and hobby." He was a skilled model maker, especially of sailing ships, making from scratch every last nut and bolt, capstan and plank, including knitting all the rigging! Many a company Board and Waiting Room hosts his Clipper models in glass cases.

His skills in this area were much appreciated by the directors of Oast productions. The outstanding item that I remember was a working ornate cuckoo clock that he made for one show that the gangster in the cast found so frustratingly irritating that he used his pistol and shot it, the cuckoo falling dramatically and pathetically out of its housing, calling its last and the clock spring sounded a last doi-ong. This had to be repaired each evening after the show to be ready in good order for the next evening's production. Barry led the PlayGroup by example, making not only individual pieces for the sets but also inspiring other members of the group to develop their individual skills in making items worthy of stage display. He was a quiet man with a personality that disguised his achievements, but he helped many Oast Directors to achieve difficult goals that supported their productions admirably. He and his skills will be greatly missed.

Chris Wickham

Gardening Opportunity

A vacancy has arisen for an assistant to help with light gardening.

For more details please contact Bob Maddison
email: maddison.bob77@gmail.com



Front of House Opportunity

Have you ever thought of being part of the Front of House team? If so, read on.

Never fear: full training will be given, and you would work with someone who is experienced, until you're ready to go it alone.

The main duties are:

Meeting and greeting the audience

Audience safety.

Communicating with the backstage team

If you could spare an evening every now and then, contact me,

lyn.porter@oattheatre.com

Correction

We want to apologise for an error in the January issue. In the review of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (Cast 1), it reads, ' Terry Haskell's superb sleigh..' It should have read 'Terry Pascall's superb sleigh..'

100 CLUB WINNERS

£25 Mr & Mrs P Wells

£10 Mrs A Welch

£10 Mr J Perry

£10 Mr J Batchelor

£10 Mr S Walters

You can join the 100 Club for just £13 per year. Call Valerie Shields on 01732 355919 or email 100club@oasttheatre.com

QUIZ

1. 1940s musical based on *Taming of the Shrew*
2. Akira Kurosawa's film based on *Macbeth*
3. 80s song by Dire Straits concerning Shakespearean lovers
4. Name of novel influenced by *King Lear* by Jane Smiley
5. Sci-fi musical based on *The Tempest*
6. A recent film based on a novel by Maggie O'Farrell
7. Ben Elton sitcom based on Shakespeare's life
8. 80s Song - *To Be or Not to Be* is sung by?
9. Rom-com film inspired by *Taming of the Shrew*
10. 1950s musical inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*

Answers next month

Answers for last month's quiz

1. Mountain Language
2. All the President's Men
3. The House
4. Franz Kafka
5. A lettuce
6. The Mask of Anarchy
7. Benjamin Disraeli
8. Stuff Happens
9. The Clockwork Orange
10. Rock 'n Roll

THE OAST THEATRE

Committee members



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Deadline

Please send in any copy you wish to be included in the Oast Notes by the 6th of the month.

Copy sent to Andy Taylor - editor@oasttheatre.com