

# Lympstone Players' NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2025

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#### Our Mission:

*To entertain local audiences with a variety of quality theatrical productions  
by sharing our skills, passions and knowledge and working together  
in a friendly, supportive and fun environment*

#### Our Core Values:

*Respect – Integrity – Community - Excellence*

## Puss in Boots – tickets on sale now

Tickets are selling fast for our pantomime, Puss in Boots – don't miss out! Performances will take place at Lympstone Village Hall at 7.30pm on Thursday 4, Friday 5 and Saturday 6 December, with a matinee performance on Saturday 6 at 2.30. Tickets are £12.50 each, £5 for under 15s, free for under 5s (on laps). You can still reserve seats by emailing us at: [lympstoneplayersboxoffice@gmail.com](mailto:lympstoneplayersboxoffice@gmail.com), letting us know how many tickets you'd like and for which performance(s).

Tickets will also be on sale under the railway arch in the Strand from 10-11.30 am on Saturday 15, 22 and 29 November, if you would prefer to find us there.



*Rehearsals in full swing!*

## Joy of performing taster session

Fancy a fun evening of light-hearted theatre games and improv scenes? Sharon Wayland is running a workshop on **Monday, 24 November at 7pm** in the Community Room of Lympstone Village Hall. This is the taster session of a creative initiative that Sharon would like to roll out next year. The aim is to enable participants to develop performance skills as well as build confidence and communication skills. No experience in acting is required, just a willingness to have fun and experience the joy of performing in a supportive group environment.

Cost: £3.00 per person to cover cost of hall hire. This session is for adults only.

If you would like to book a place and/or find out more: email Sharon at [sharonwayland@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sharonwayland@yahoo.co.uk) or call/text her on 07808 862694.

## Support local theatre

The Estuary Players present the classic comedy *See How They Run* at Matthews Hall, Topsham from 25-28 November. Tickets £12.50 in advance, £14 on the door.

And Salterton Drama Club present *Murder by Misadventure* at the Salterton Playhouse, Budleigh Salterton from 1-6 December. Tickets £14.

## On stage with the Exe Men

Music can trigger the clearest of clear memories; if I hear *Seven Nation Army* (The White Stripes) or *Believer* (Imagine Dragons), I'm immediately transported back to the wings, stage right, at the Northcott Theatre, waiting to go on stage for *Exe Men*, the story of the Exeter Chiefs' path from turning professional to winning the European Rugby Champions Cup in the dark days of lockdown in 2020.

I was lucky enough to be part of the community ensemble of this production, alongside 28 other amateur actors and six professionals, performing 15 shows over two weeks in October. With the five technical and dress rehearsals in the week and before first night, it was a physically and emotionally exhausting experience, but this was entirely offset with the tremendous feeling of teamwork and collective will of all those involved, whether on stage or behind the scenes.

I'd been in a play at the Northcott last year, but this production was very different. For a start, rather than a traditional proscenium arch and apron stage, the sides of the stage that shield the wings from the audience had been removed on both sides, giving a shallow (front to back) and wide (side to side) staging area. There was also 'Sandy Park-style' grandstand seating at the back of the stage (named the 'East Stand' for the show), so the play was effectively in-the-round with VERY narrow (2

metres maximum) wings on stages left and right. Waiting there to go on, we were separated from the audience only by one black drape, which felt very intimate.

I'm not a very experienced actor and I did have some feelings of intimidation about the size and complexity of the theatre itself, the experience of the other ensemble members (lots of amateur theatre companies in and around Devon were represented) and working with professional actors again. These were dissipated so quickly, not least by the approachability and friendliness of the directing staff and the professional actors.

The production was physical with lots of running, lifting other cast, and re-enacting scenes from rugby matches. Each evening, 90 minutes before the start, one of the cast led everyone in a physical warm-up, stretching and voice warm-up session on stage. All included, all abilities ... brilliant.

One very striking thing was how the professionals interacted with each other and the ensemble in making small, but very pertinent, additions or changes to the actions to make the scenes flow more smoothly. For example Rob, the actor playing Rob Baxter, asked me to stay on stage towards the end of one scene at the end of a match and greet him and chat to him as Rob Baxter as he came onstage, to naturalise the transition between two scenes and to reinforce Baxter's character.

It was an eye-opener to see how many staff were integral to the production: director, assistant directors, stage managers and assistants, voice coach, movement coach, sound, vision, set design, wardrobe, set designers, scenery...all working flat out for three weeks from the dress rehearsal to closing night, and nocturnal hours too. I also learned what a Green Room is, how enormous the docking station and backstage area is, how hot dressing-rooms can be, and to get out of the way when a full-size set of rugby posts is descending directly towards where you are!

The theatre was like a little village, very self-contained, friendly, but realising that you have to work together to make something good...and to survive, really!

Martin Berry, the Director and Chief Executive of the Northcott and Barnfield Theatres, has made it his mission to introduce new, West of England community drama to these theatres. If you see the chance to audition at one of these, take it ... hard work, but fun and rewarding!

*Andrew Minter*

## **Exe Men - review**

*Exe Men*, written by Ashley Pharoah and adapted from a book of the same name by Rob Kitson, charts the metamorphosis of Exeter Chiefs rugby team from conception, through the ranks to the pinnacle of winning the European Champions Cup in 2020. It premiered at the Northcott Theatre in October under the direction of Martin Berry with a cast of six professional actors and an ensemble of local performers.

*Exe Men* was cleverly staged, creating a sense of Sandy Park stadium by seating a proportion of the audience across the back of the stage. Scene changes were modest, mainly engineered by cast-members and two dropdown pieces provided new settings. Excellent lighting effects underpinned the performance and assisted the use of the whole auditorium so that the audience became part of the 'crowd'.

As we took our seats it was unusual to feel a sense of some shared history within an audience. Photographs, displayed on the big screens, of players and venues from years past, contributed to this and audible recollections scattered throughout the auditorium.

As the play progressed, the drama of sport was captured both physically, through movement and stillness, and emotionally through comedy, jeopardy and pathos. The physicality of the performance was impressive and choreographed rugby set pieces were skilfully achieved, especially incorporating the community ensemble. However, at times, the individual representations of sporting actions were rather less convincing. The drama of pivotal moments was cleverly highlighted with poignant tableaux.

The style of the play gave it pace, working along a chronological framework, zooming in and out from individual storylines to the wider club history, tied together mainly through the perspectives of the Tony Rowe and Jo Baxter characters. Played by Tim Hudson and Micha Colombo, these two gave such sound performances, skilfully holding the cast and content together with their warmth and precision. However, by broadly using the tool of narration, it could be said that the script robbed us of a greater insight into the main characters.

For two performances director Martin Berry needed to step in to play the key role of Rob Baxter. His portrayal was remarkable; not only word-perfect but his depth and commitment to the character gave the play an added resonance.

Perhaps this production can be the opening of doors, both to the rugby fan unused to going to the theatre and the theatre-goer with no knowledge of rugby - an unexpected legacy of Rob Kitson's work.

I love Martin Berry's commitment to showcasing the South West! His determination to put on plays at Exeter Northcott with content pertinent to the South West and its history; where possible employing writers, directors and theatre staff from the area and including local, amateur actors alongside experts, shows a professional courage that should be lauded. I understand he is keen to hear from local playwrights with good stories from our region which are ready to share. So, time to get writing and supporting all our local theatres!

*Sophie Minter*

## **NODA Summer School**

You may remember that Sharon Wayland wrote about her experience of the [NODA summer school](#) in the September newsletter. If that's inspired you to try it out for yourself, it will take place 1-8 August 2026 at Yarnfield Park, Stone, Staffordshire. Course information will be available from 6pm on 17 November.

## **Contact and follow us**

Do let us know if you have ideas for future workshops or social activities. Should you wish to contact your committee on these or any other matters, please email us at: [lympstoneplayers@gmail.com](mailto:lympstoneplayers@gmail.com). We review the inbox regularly.

We are on Facebook and on Instagram: @lympstoneplayers – do follow us and maybe even give us a few likes.