

"PACK OF LIES" SPECIAL

NOISES OFF

PACK OF LIES

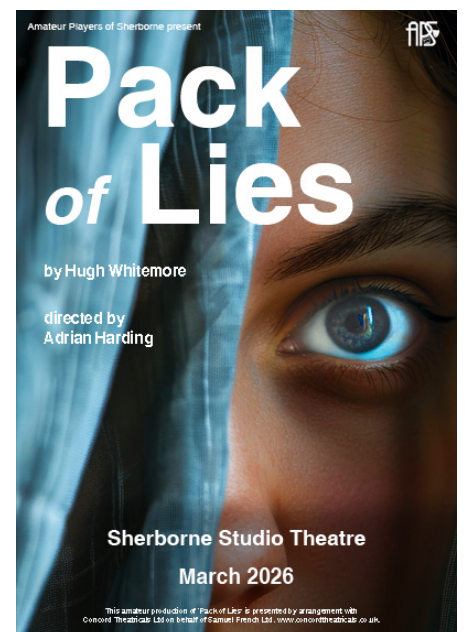
Last performed by APS in 1987, this was an ideal choice of play - having as its context a time of international tensions, mistrust and state-sponsored criminality. Ideal, too, for our Sherborne stage, with a cast of just 8, and a single interior setting.

Based on a true story, the play is set in 1961 and centres on Bob and Barbara Jackson and their teenage daughter Julie. The Jacksons are friendly with their neighbours, Peter and Helen Kroger, until that couple is arrested and charged with espionage. It is revealed the Krogers have in fact been working with a fellow spy,

photographing and encoding various pieces of material which they then send to their colleagues in Russia, as part of a Soviet espionage network. (This became known as the Portland Spy Ring - and it had been successful in penetrating the security of the Royal Navy.)

However, what gives the play relevance today is less to do with the details of espionage and Cold War shenanigans, but the moral complexity facing the characters as their lives are disrupted by politics, and their personal loyalties and friendships are undermined by notions of civic duty. The play is no

fast-paced thriller but a deeply human drama about trust, betrayal, morality and emotional conflict, and its strength lies in the psychological realism of ordinary



people caught up in geopolitical forces.

This "ordinariness" was superbly captured, in



the energy, style and pizzazz of the transatlantic neighbours, Helen (Hilary Quinlan, making her impressive and very welcome début with APS) and APS regular Richard Culham as Helen's husband Peter - second fiddle to Helen, but just as seemingly glamorous.

their cosy domestic routine-based existence, by Bob (Peter Sangston, in only his second outing with APS), Julie (Hazel Perrett, now firmly established as an APS old hand, despite her tender years), and above all by Barbara, played to perfection by Sarah Webster, who has very often trodden the APS boards, and handsomely repaid the confidence of the Director in this demanding and major role. The threesome made a totally plausible early-sixties family - Bob, quietly-spoken in slippers and cardigan (and doubtless would have been smoking a pipe, in a different age);

Julie, all wide-eyed eagerness to please and enthusiasm, while harbouring a motor-bike owning boyfriend in the shadows (we just know that, a few years later, she would have been riding the early waves of pop and rock & roll); and Barbara, dressmaking, tea-making, dabbling in painting. It comes as no surprise that they are all (especially the females) taken in and swept up by



Into this set-up comes the mysterious Mr Stewart (Robert Brydges, a familiar face at APS since his award-winning début in 2023). Policeman? Civil servant? He is all politeness, suavity, with a tone of apparent regret at the seemingly impolite and terribly un-English intrusion into the household. As the play progresses, however, and his real motives are



revealed, a sinister power comes to the fore, and our innocent family resists it in vain. The parents are confronted with reality ahead of their daughter; her being faced with, and reacting to, the abuse of her trust and loyalty at the very end of the play provides a powerful climax.

The ensemble was completed by two plain-clothes officers tasked with carrying out the surveillance. Sally and Thelma, played by Samantha Elgar and Alison Maynard-Griffin (another very welcome newcomer to APS), were in some ways unwitting agents of the state, carrying out their jobs



while gradually becoming increasingly accepted into the sort of household they do not themselves feel comfortable in. Their unusual jobs gave us an opportunity to reflect further on the question of duty and the betrayal of trust.

The small stage of the Sherborne Studio Theatre as usual presented John Crabtree and the set construction team with considerable challenges;

the set comprising kitchen and living room with a solid, end-on dividing wall, was a triumph, decorated and furnished with pieces redolent of another (but recent) age, perfectly enhanced with well-chosen backing music of the time, and costumes which spoke of a dowdy, post-war era not yet fully over.

APS clearly continues to go from strength to



strength, and *Pack of Lies* has delivered another massive hit with the Sherborne playgoing community. All performances were fully sold out within days of tickets going on sale, and, as always, our audiences gave consistently warm and enthusiastic feedback. So, another triumph, and huge congratulations to the Director, Adrian Harding, and the whole cast and crew.

Martin Williams



NEXT PRODUCTION

Our next production will be *Our Country's Good*, by Timberlake Wertenbaker. The performance is directed by Jane McKenna, who had such a success at APS with her award-winning production last year of *The 39 Steps*. Following a very successful play-reading evening and audition process, Jane has assembled a strong cast, and, with rehearsals due to begin shortly, we look forward to another stunning show.

Our Country's Good tells the extraordinary true story of a group of convicts and their commanding officers. Based on the novel *The Playmaker* by Thomas Keneally, it explores themes of empathy, humanity, justice, and the healing power of theatre.

A ship, sailing 15,000 miles to Botany Bay, Australia, is crammed with Britain's 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.


With a mostly illiterate cast, rising mistrust amongst the

ranks and the leading actor facing the gallows, this is a one of a kind theatre production... Don't miss it! Performance dates are 8th - 13th June 2026, and tickets will be on sale from April 27th.

Amateur Players of Sherborne present

OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD

by Timberlake Wertenbaker directed by Jane McKenna



Sherborne Studio Theatre
 Mon 8th - Sat 13th June, 7.30 pm
 Sat 13th June, 2.30 pm

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.

Tim Barton
Sue Bradshaw
Katherine Pinsent
Pamela Dodge
Kelly Stephens

Total curent membership: 92

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 over £8500. This has enabled us to complete



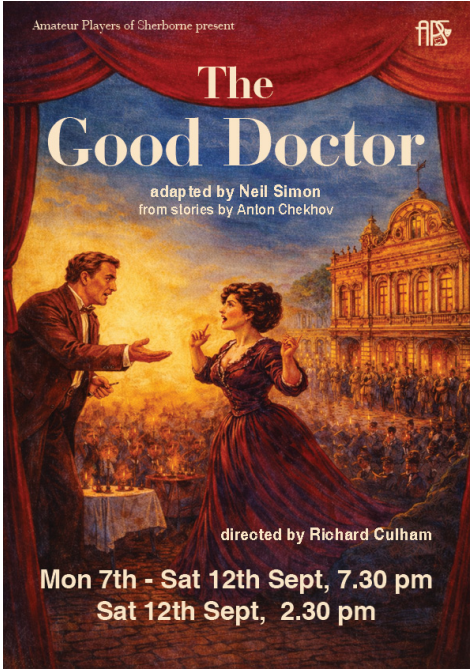
various projects - new auditorium seating, new floor and insulation, improvements to the bar area, new doors, installation of a hearing loop and wifi - and plenty more too. Our thoughts are now turning towards improving and updating our stage lighting - and we hope to realise this dream in the not too 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 email sst100club@gmail.com in order to join.

The most recent draw took place on February 14th, and the lucky winner took home £48.70. Next time this could be you!

The next draw will take place on 11th April 2026.

COMING UP...

Our Autumn 2026 production will be *The Good Doctor*, adapted by Neil Simon, and directed by Richard Culham. In this sparkling collection of short plays, Neil Simon reimagines the stories of Anton Chekhov with wit, warmth and a generous dose of theatrical mischief. A narrator guides us through a gallery of eccentric



characters: flirtatious ladies, anxious husbands, overworked governesses, duelling egos and tender romantics – all navigating love, pride and the glorious complications of being human.

By turns comic, poignant and sharply observed, *The Good Doctor* reminds us that while fashions change, people do not. Their hopes, vanities and vulnerabilities are as familiar today as they were in 19th-century Russia.

There will be an informal playreading of the script on Monday April 20th at 7.30pm in the Theatre, and auditions will be held from 7.30pm on Wednesday 6th May and at 2.30pm on Sunday 10th May, also in the Theatre. A reminder of these dates, and further information, will be sent out to members by email nearer the time. **Performance dates are September 7th - 12th.**