

5



Decades  
Of  
Swan Theatre

# 50 years

It is 2026, and the Swan Theatre in Yeovil is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

From humble beginnings fifty years ago, a derelict pub was transformed into a 140-seat theatre complete with raked seating, a bar, public facility and a stage equipped to handle everything the theatrical world can throw at it.

Today, the Swan Theatre is run by the members of the Swan Theatre Company. It operates as a self-funding, self-sustaining venue that hosts live drama, musicals, musical events and live cinema. A remarkable achievement by any standard.

Over the past fifty years, the Swan Theatre Company has staged nearly 300 performances, spanning the entire theatrical spectrum from pantomime to Shakespeare and everything in between. In addition to the Company's own productions, visiting theatre and music groups frequently use this unique venue to stage their own work, enriching the artistic life of the local community.

The life of a theatre is incredibly varied, and the building's walls absorb the countless stories they witness. Every production acts out the full range of human emotions, from comedy and tragedy to birth, marriage, and death. Like many historic theatres, the Swan has an atmosphere all of its own - and its own resident ghost. Legend has it that the costume wardrobe is haunted by Annie, a mysterious figure who has never been seen, but whose presence has been felt by many.

These stories transform a simple building into a very special place for the community. The theatre owes its existence to those who were there at the very beginning - simultaneously fundraising, building and acting. For the love of theatre, they, and many others, have built the Swan into what it is today, and the Company now looks forward to a new generation of theatre lovers who will develop this legacy and continue to bring live performance to Yeovil.



# Swan Theatre

# Lit & Dram

The origins of the Swan Theatre Company date back to the early 1930s. In 1932, Rose and George Atkinson, alongside Helen Palmer and a group of friends, formed the Literary and Dramatic Society. Between 1934 and 1939, the society staged plays and hosted various activities, growing its membership to around 80 people. The society continued to meet during the Second World War, gathering at the Cadena Café in Yeovil town centre on Saturday afternoons to put on productions, primarily for charity. Once the war ended, the society restarted formal operations and staged one play a year at the Yeovil Assembly Rooms. However, following the death of founding member Rose Atkinson in 1953, the society was dissolved.

## Yeovil Dramatic & Arts Society

A few years later, the society was revived as the Yeovil Dramatic Society (YDS), thanks to the efforts of Nigel Palmer (son of founding member Helen Palmer), Bill and Eve Snell, Maurice Bramwell, Peter Chapman and Bill Marsden. Meetings were held in a loft above the stables in Bill's garden. While convenient, the location had one major drawback: it lacked electricity, meaning meetings and set-building were often illuminated by Tilly lamps. During this period, the society performed two plays a year at the Assembly Rooms and Summerleaze Park School.

In 1966, a change of ownership forced the YDS to leave the loft. Sid Gorringe subsequently reached an agreement with the brewers Bass Charrington to use a derelict pub on Park Street, called The Swan, as the society's base in return for caretaking the building. It was Sid Gorringe's dream that The Swan would become the society's permanent home. The following year, in 1967, the YDS purchased The Swan Inn from Bass Charrington for £2,250. While plays were still performed at various locations around Yeovil, members began fundraising and undertaking the extensive renovations required to make the building a permanent venue.

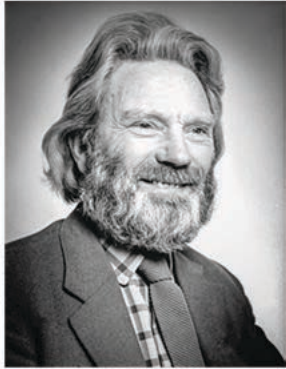
By 1974, plans were drawn up and approved to demolish the buildings in the yard at the rear of the pub to construct a purpose-built auditorium. Sid Gorringe remained the driving force behind the project, supported by a dedicated army of members and volunteers.

The hunt for materials and equipment was a community-wide effort: Seats were salvaged from the old Central Cinema in Yeovil, stage equipment was sourced from the Princess Theatre in Torquay, wooden parquet flooring and a set of doors were reclaimed from the old Yeovil General Hospital. All of these materials had to be collected and installed by volunteers.

In 1976, the Yeovil Dramatic Society changed its name to the Swan Theatre Company, marking the start of a new era and cementing the Company's connection to its permanent home. What was once a run-down pub in a notorious part of town was transformed into a thriving, much-loved theatre, ensuring that live performance remains alive and well in Yeovil.



# Building The Dream



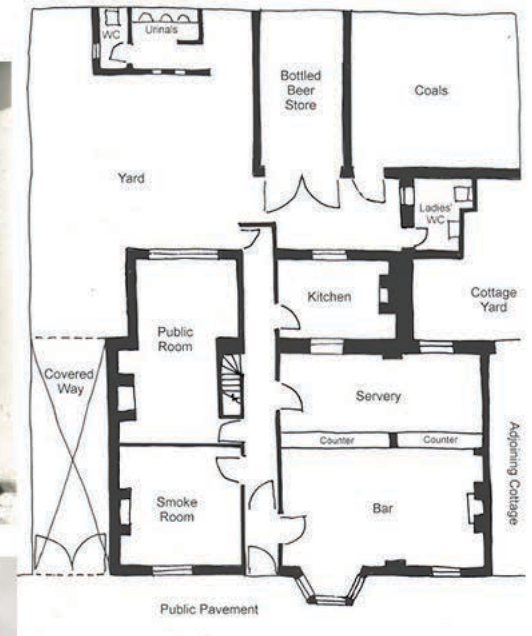
The Swan Theatre is located on Park Street, a road with considerable history. The building itself dates back to 1830, when it was the Swan Inn, one of seven public houses on the street. Historically, the old Park Street had a reputation for being one of the tightest-knit communities in the area, but also one of the roughest parts of town.

Following the purchase of the building in 1967, fundraising and construction work began simultaneously. The main pub building and its adjacent cottage were converted into:

- A green room
- Dressing rooms
- A workshop, wardrobe and properties store
- A committee room and a bar
- A working kitchen

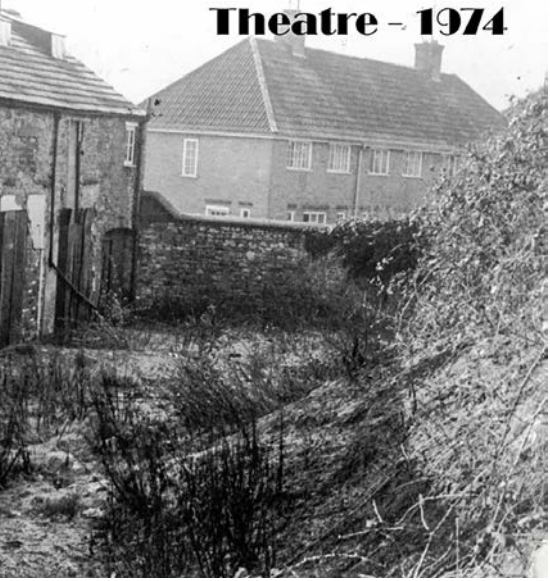
Meanwhile, plans were drawn up to build the main theatre auditorium at the back of the property, where the pub's bottle store, kitchen, toilet block, and yard once stood. An army of volunteers was organised into teams, and work began on constructing a 144-seat auditorium, a stage, a scenery dock, public facilities and a licenced bar. This initial phase of work was completed to a standard that allowed the very first on-stage performance to take place in June 1976.

Today, the Swan Theatre continues to thrive, hosting productions by the Swan Theatre Company, visiting theatre groups, community events, and live cinema screenings.





# Site of Swan Theatre - 1974



# Productions

# 1976-1985

The Caretaker 1981



Plotters of Cabbage Patch corner 1981



A Lily in Little India 1984



The Miser 1983



Black Comedy 1981



Waltz of the Toreadors 1980





Noah 1984



Letter From The General 1979



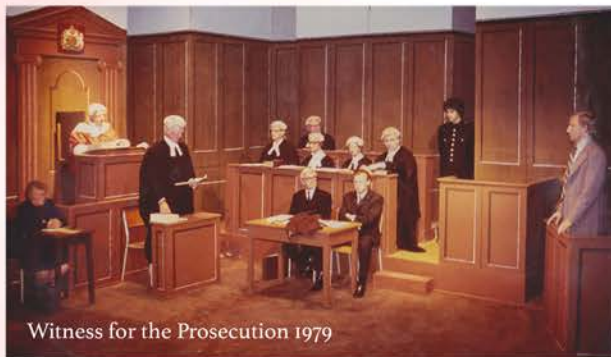
The Good Woman of Setzuan 1979



Pied Piper 1979



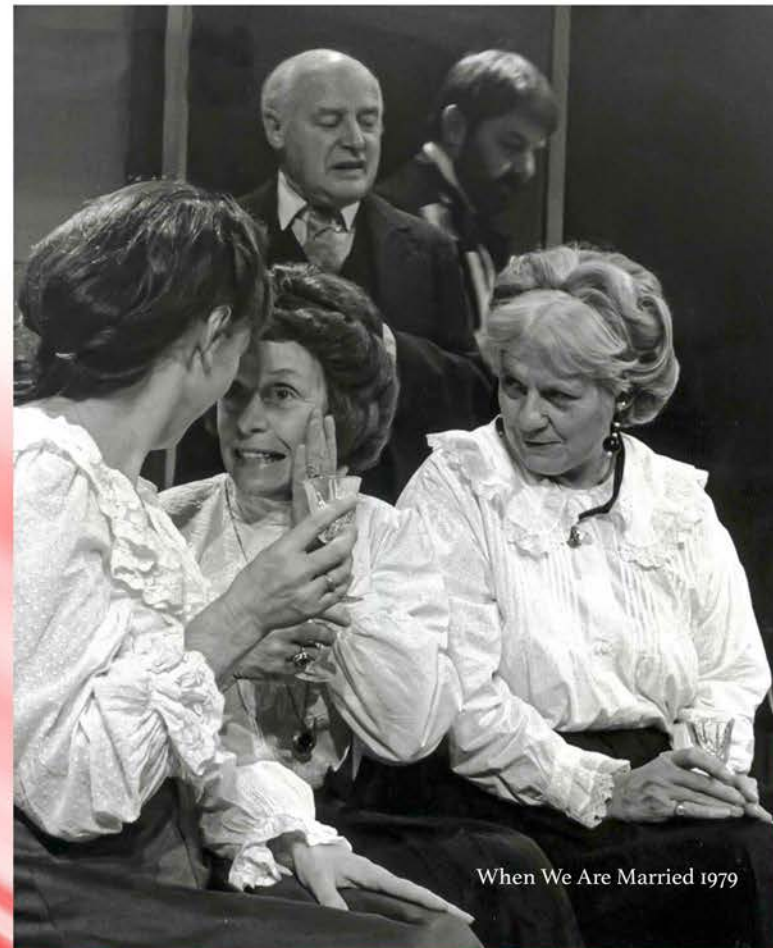
Ghost Train 1979



Witness for the Prosecution 1979



The Winter's Tale 1982



When We Are Married 1979



Bedroom Farce 1982



Hobson's Choice 1983



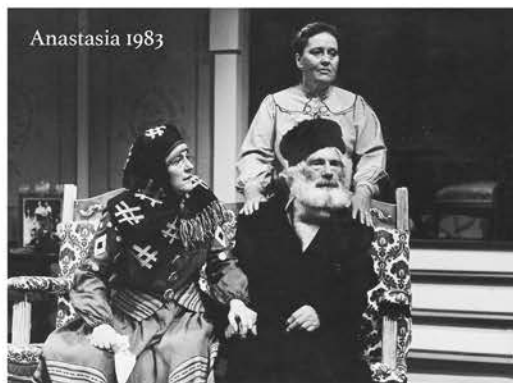
The Deep Blue Sea 1985



The Real Inspector Hound 1981



The Deep Blue Sea 1985



Anastasia 1983



Pinocchio 1984



This Year Next Year 1981



The Miser 1983



The Italian Straw Hat 1985



Not Now Darling 1983



The Gingerbread Man 1985



Lloyd George Knew My Father 1985



Under Milk Wood 1985



A Midsummer Night's Dream 1978

1976-1985

# Productions

## 1986-1995



On Golden Pond 1990



Little Hotel on the Side 1987



The Drunkard 1988



Quest for Whooperdink 1989



Death Trap 1989



Shadowlands 1995



The Maintenance Man 1990



Amadeus 1989



Pack of Lies 1989



Children's Day 1988



84 Charing Cross Road 1991



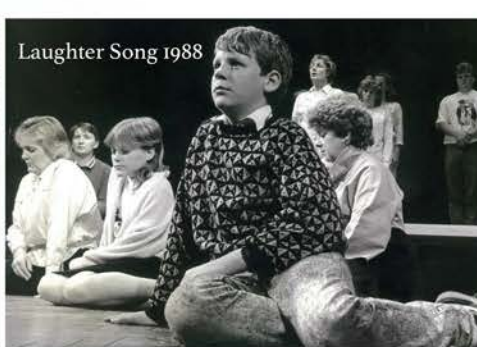
Flare Path 1987



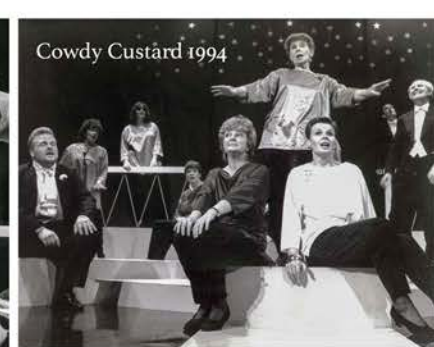
When We Are Married 1995



Children's Day 1988



Laughter Song 1988



Cowdy Custard 1994



A Doll's House 1986



On Golden Pond 1990



Habeas Corpus 1994



The Wind in the Willows 1991



Timt and Time Again 1986



Canterbury Tales 1995

Daisy Pulls It Off 1995



Prime of Miss Jean Brodie 1986



The Lady's Not for Burning 1987



Mr. Macaroni 1988



Flare Path 1987



The Diary of Anne Frank 1995



Canterbury Tales 1995



All In Good Time 1986



I Have Been Here Before 1987



Relative Values 1992



Amadeus 1989



The Lady's Not for Burning 1987

1986-1995

# Productions

# 1996-2005



Death and the Maiden 1998



Sinbad the Sailor 1998



Stepping Out 1997



Shirley Valentine 2005



Tom Jones 1997



Journey's End 1997



Communicating Doors 1999



Present Laughter 2001



Dead Guilty 2002



Bazaar and Rummage 1999



Woman in Mind 2000



Time of My Life 2005



Journey's End 1997



Murder Room 2000



Cat Among the Pigeons 2001



Visiting Christopher 2005



Ladies of Spirit 2002



The Madness of George III 2004

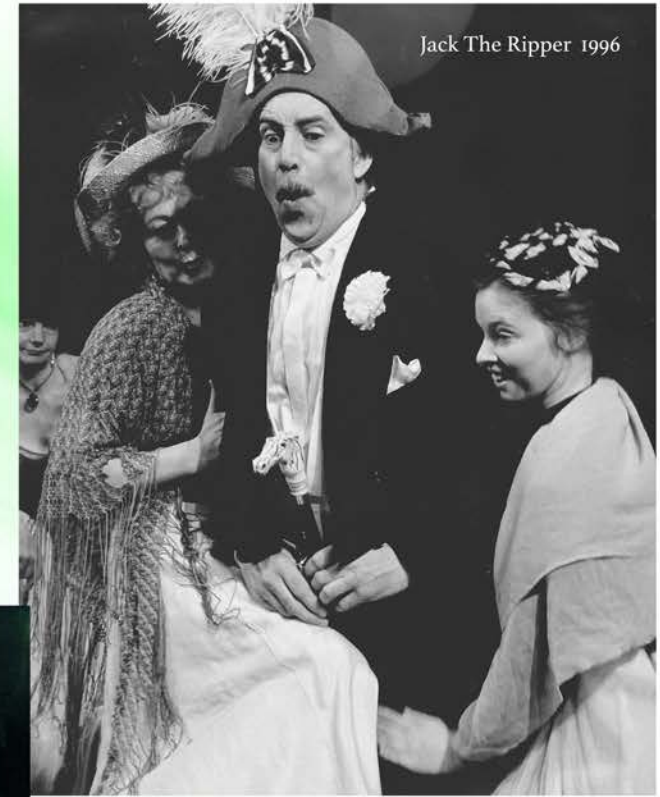
Seperate Tables 1996



Dangerous Obsession 1997



Jack The Ripper 1996



Cold Comfort Farm 1997



The Ghost Train 2001



Educating Rita 2001



Five Finger Exercise 2000



The Seagull 2003



Gaslight 2004





The Importance of Being Earnest 1999



Inseparable 2005



Amey's View 2002



The Cherry Orchard 1998



Our Town 1996



Stepping Out 1997



Dangerous Obsession 1997



Come Back to the 5 and 10 1997

1996-2005

# Productions

# 2006-2015



My Mother Said I Never Should 2014



Hay Fever 2006



Abigail's Party 2011



Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead 2007



Praise of Love 2012



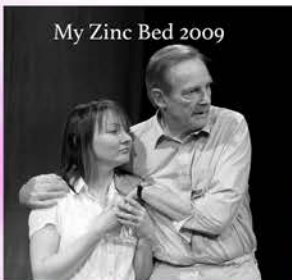
Stevie 2011



Verticle Hour 2010



Heros 2013



My Zinc Bed 2009



Whipping It Up 2015



A Fine Bright Day Today 2014



Under the Stars 2007



Rebecca 2007



Ring Round the Moon 2015



Disposing of the Body 2013



A Murder Announced 2008



Henry & Alice 2007



Noises Off 2007



The Dresser 2007



Lost in Yonkers 2011





Servant of Two Masters 2008



Sextet 2010



Life x 3 2014



Tess of the D'Urbervilles 2011



Twelfth Night 2015



Night Watch 2011



Twelfth Night 2015

2006-2015

# Productions

# 2016-2026





What The Butler Saw 2018



The Unexpected Man 2022



The Thrill of Love 2022



Veronica's Room 2019



Whistleblower 2018



Afterswimming 2024



Proof 2016



The Real Inspector Hound 2025



Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf? 2019



French Dressing 2022



Stepping On My Shadow 2023



4000 Miles 2017



French Dressing 2022



Plaza Suite 2018



The Crucible 2016



Macbeth 2021



Crown Matrimonial 2023



A Brief History of Woman 2023



The Tempest 2018



The Unfriend 2026



Pressure 2026



Night Must Fall 2021



A Hundred Words for Snow 2025



The Hollow 2023



Seasons Greetings 2021



The Thrill of Love 2022



The Reluctant Debutante 2016



Stepping Out 2016



Regeneration 2020



The Real Inspector Hound 2024



The School for Scandal 2019



Sleuth 2025

2016-2026

# Productions for 50 years

**1976**

The Sound of Murder by William Fairchild  
Ladies in Retirement  
by Edward Percy and Reginald Denham

**1977**

Move Over Mrs Markham  
by Ray Cooney and Mark Chapman  
The Owl and the Pussycat Went to Sea  
by Sheila Ruskin and David Wood  
Relatively Speaking by Alan Ayckbourn  
Witness for the Prosecution by Agatha Christie  
Our Town by Thornton Wilder

**1978**

Flibberty and the Penguin by David Wood  
Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward  
A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare  
Three One-act plays:  
Master Dudley by Phillip Johnson  
Miaow! Miaow! By R.F. Delderfield  
Knightsbridge by John Mortimer  
Hay Fever by Noel Coward  
Sweeney Todd by Brian J. Burton

**1979**

Pied Piper  
Everything in the Garden by Edward Albee  
When We Are Married by J B Priestley  
Trap for a Lonely Man by Robert Thomas  
A Month in the Country by Ivan Turgenev  
Waltz of the Toreadors by Jean Anouilh  
Goldilocks and the Three Bears by John Morley  
How the Other Half Loves by Alan Ayckbourn  
Ghost Train by Arnold Ridley  
A Letter from the General by Maurice McLoughlin  
The Good Woman of Setzuan by Bertolt Brecht  
Busybody by Jack Popplewell

**1981**

The Plotters of Cabbage Patch Corner by David Wood  
The Caretaker by Harold Pinter  
Arms and the Man by George Bernard Shaw  
Double Bill:  
The Real Inspector Hound by Tom Stoppard  
Black Comedy by Peter Shaffer  
This Year Next Year by Jack Ronder  
Who Killed Santa Claus by Terence Seely

**1982**

The Incredible Vanishing by Denise Coffey  
Post Horn Gallop by Derek Benfield  
The Winter's Tale by William Shakespeare  
Bedroom Farce by Alan Ayckbourn  
Anybody for Tennis by Jack Last  
All Our Sons by Arthur Miller

**1983**

Quest for the Golden Key by Geoffrey Thornber  
Hobson's Choice by Harold Brighouse  
The Miser by Moliere  
The Potting Shed by Graham Greene  
Anastasia by Marcelle Maurette  
Not Now Darling by Ray Cooney and John Chapman

**1984**

Pinocchio by John Morley  
A Lily in Little India by Don Haworth  
The Importance of being Earnest by Oscar Wilde  
Any Number Can Die by Fred McMichael  
House Guest by Francis Durbridge  
Noah by Andre Obey

**1985**

The Gingerbread Man by David Wood  
A Life by Hugh Leonard  
An Italian Straw Hat  
by Eugene Labiche and Marc Michel  
The Deep Blue Sea by Terence Rattigan  
Lloyd George Knew My Father  
by W. M. Douglas-Home  
Under Milk Wood by Dylan Thomas

**1986**

The Man in the Moon by Allan Cullen  
The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie by Jay Presson Allen  
Time and Time Again by Alan Ayckbourn  
A Nightingale Sang by Cecil P. Taylor  
A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen  
All in Good Time by Bill Naughton

**1987**

The Singing Swans by Dilys Gater  
Arsenic and Old Lace by Joseph Kesselring  
I Have Been Here Before by J B Priestley  
The Lady's not for Burning by Christopher Fry  
Flare Path by Terence Rattigan  
A Little Hotel on the Side by Georges Feydeau

**1988**

Mr Macaroni and the Exploding Pizza Pie  
by John Gardiner and Fiz Coleman  
Love on the Dole  
by Ronald Gow and Walter Greenwood  
The Drunkard by Brian J Burton  
Laughter and Song (Variety Show)  
Dandelion Time by Patricia Wood  
The Chalk Garden by Enid Bagnold  
Children's Day by Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall

**1989**

Quest for Whooperdink by A. C. Teacey  
Death Trap by Ira Levin  
Pack of Lies by Hugh Whitmore  
Amadeus by Peter Shaffer  
A Chorus of Disapproval by Alan Ayckbourn

**1990**

The Big Noise at Fort-Issimo by Bernard Goss  
Last of the Red-Hot Lovers by Neil Simon  
Ring Round the Moon by Jean Anouilh  
On Golden Pond by Ernest Thompson  
The Maintenance Man by Richard Harris

**1991**

The Wind in the Willows  
by Kenneth Grahame, adapted by John Morley  
Hard Times by Charles Dickens  
Taxpayers Waltz by Peter Coke  
84, Charing Cross Road by Helene Hanff  
Confusions by Alan Ayckbourn

**1992**

Hijack Over Hygenia by David Wood  
Relative Values by Noel Coward  
The House on the Cliff by George Baston  
The Winslow Boy by Terence Rattigan

**1993**

James and the Giant Peach by Roald Dahl  
The Rape of the Belt by Ben W. Levy  
Lord Arthur Saville's Crime by Oscar Wilde  
Ghosts by Henrik Ibsen  
Plaza Suite by Neil Simon

**1994**

Florence Nightingale by John Bowen (100th Play)  
The Thwarting of Baron Bolligrew by Robert Bolt  
Cowardy Custard by Noel Coward  
Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward  
Habeas Corpus by Alan Bennett

**1995**

Canterbury Tales by M. Starkie and N. Coghill  
The Diary of Anne Frank  
by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett  
Daisy Pulls It Off by Denise Deegan  
Shadowlands by William Nicholson  
When We Are Married by J. B Priestley

**1996**

Our Town by Thornton Wilder  
The Odd Couple by Neil Simon  
Jack The Ripper by Ron Pember and Denis de Marne  
Murder at the Vicarage by Agatha Christie  
An Evening with Anton Chekhov  
Separate Tables by Terence Rattigan

**1997**

Dangerous Obsession by N J Crisp  
Cold Comfort Farm  
by Sally Hedges and Stella Gibbons  
Stepping Out by Richard Harris  
Journey's End by R. C. Sheriff  
Tom Jones by Joan Macalpine

**1998**

Sinbad the Sailor by John Morley  
An Inspector Calls by J. B Priestley  
The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov  
Happy Families by John Godber  
Death and the Maiden by Ariel Dorfman

**1999**

Bazaar and Rummage by Sue Townsend  
Come Back to the 5 and Dime, Jimmy Dean,  
Jimmy Dean by Ed Graczyk  
Communicating Doors by Alan Ayckbourn  
Breaking the Code by Hugh Whitmore  
The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde

**2000**

The Anastasia File by Royce Ryton  
Five Finger Exercise by Peter Shaffer  
The Murder Room by Jack Sharkey  
Woman in Mind by Alan Ayckbourn  
Giraudoux's Amphitryon 38

**2001**

The Ghost Train by Arnold Ridley  
Whose Life is it Anyway? by Brian Clark  
Present Laughter by Noel Coward  
Educating Rita by Willy Russell  
Cat Among the Pigeons by Georges Feydeau

**2002**

Mort by Terry Pratchett  
 Ladies of Spirit by Georgina Reid  
 Amy's View by David Hare  
 All My Sons by Arthur Miller  
 Dead Guilty by Richard Harris  
 Dear Octopus by Dodie Smith

**2003**

Misery by Stephen King  
 Lettice and Lovage by Peter Shaffer  
 The Seagull by Anton Chekhov  
 Rumours by Neil Simon  
 Copenhagen by Michael Frayn  
 The Accrington Pals by Peter Whelan

**2004**

Talking Heads by Alan Bennett  
 Steel Magnolias by Robert Harling  
 Somerset One-Act Play Festival  
 Oh! What a lovely War by Joan Littlewood  
 A Letter of Resignation by Hugh Whitmore  
 Gaslight by Patrick Hamilton  
 The Madness of George III by Alan Bennett

**2005**

Shirley Valentine by Willy Russell  
 The Old Ladies by Rodney Acland  
 Time Of My Life by Alan Ayckbourn  
 Double Bill:

Visiting Christopher by Jason Hepple

Inseparable by Jason Hepple

Betrayal by Harold Pinter

See How They Run by Philip King

**2006**

Separation by Tom Kempinski  
 Hay Fever by Noel Coward  
 One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey  
 Hedda Gabler by Henrik Ibsen  
 Talking Heads Book 1: by Alan Bennett  
 Noises Off by Michael Frayn

**2007**

Secret Lives of Henry and Alice by David Tristram  
 Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead

by Tom Stoppard

Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier

Under the Stars by Richard Crane

The Dresser by Ronald Harwood

**2008**

The Real Thing by Tom Stoppard  
 Democracy by Michael Frayn  
 Old Dogs by Steve Raw  
 A Murder is Announced by Agatha Christie  
 The Servant of Two Masters by Carlo Goldoni

**2009**

Art by Yasmina Reza  
 My Zinc Bed by David Hare  
 My Boy Jack by David Haig  
 Les Liaisons Dangereuses  
 by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos  
 The Sunshine Boys by Neil Simon

**2010**

The Vertical Hour by David Hare  
 Out of Order by Ray Cooney  
 Vincent in Brixton by Nicholas Wright  
 Sextet by Michael Pertwee  
 The Memory of Water by Shelagh Stephenson

**2011**

Stevie by Hugh Whitmore  
 Night Watch by Lucille Fletcher  
 Abigail's Party by Mike Leigh  
 Losing Louis by Simon Mendes da Costa  
 Single Spies by Alan Bennett  
 Tess of the D'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy

**2012**

In Praise of Love by Terence Rattigan  
 Duets by Peter Quilter  
 A Man for All Seasons by Robert Bolt  
 Lost in Yonkers by Neil Simon  
 Calendar Girls by Tim Firth  
 That Face by Polly Stenham

**2013**

Heroes by Gerald Sibleyras (200th Play)  
 Play On by Rick Abbot  
 Billy Liar by Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall  
 The Lady in the Van by Alan Bennett  
 My Mother Said I Never Should by Charlotte Keatley  
 Disposing of the Body by Hugh Whitmore

**2014**

A Fine Bright Day Today by Philip Goulding  
 She Stoops to Conquer by Oliver Goldsmith  
 45 Minutes by Anya Reiss (Swan Youth Theatre)  
 Unravelling the Ribbon by Mary Kelly and Maureen White  
 Bedroom Farce by Alan Ayckbourn  
 Life x 3 by Yasmina Reza  
 The Ladykillers by Graham Linehan

**2015**

Whipping It Up by Steve Thompson  
 The God of Carnage by Yasmina Reza  
 Spring Awakening  
 by Frank Wedekind (Swan Youth Theatre)  
 Ring Round the Moon by Jean Anouilh  
 The 39 Steps by Patrick Barlow  
 Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare  
 Funny Money by Ray Cooney

**2016**

Proof by David Auburn  
 The Crucible by Arthur Miller  
 Stepping Out by Richard Harris  
 Ghost Writer by David Tristram  
 Foxfinder by Dawn King  
 The Reluctant Debutante by William Douglas-Home

**2017**

4000 Miles by Amy Herzog  
 A Passionate Woman by Kay Mellor  
 Private Lives by Noel Coward  
 The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's  
 Guild Dramatic Society Murder Mystery  
 by David McGillivray and Walter Zerlin Jr  
 Entertaining Mr Sloane by Joe Orton  
 Arcadia by Tom Stoppard

**2018**

Whistleblower by Adrian Harding  
 Brontë by Polly Teale  
 What The Butler Saw by Joe Orton  
 Plaza Suite by Neil Simon  
 The Tempest by William Shakespeare  
 The Last Five Years by Jason Robert Brown  
 And Then There Were None by Agatha Christie

**2019**

Veronica's Room by Ira Levin  
 Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf by Edward Arlbee  
 The School for Scandal by Richard Brinsley-Sheridan  
 It Runs in The Family by Ray Cooney  
 Regeneration by Pat Barker

**2020**

Constellations by Nick Payne

**2021**

Night Must Fall by Emlyn Williams  
 Macbeth by William Shakespeare  
 Season's Greetings by Alan Ayckbourn

**2022**

Di and Viv and Rose by Amelia Bullmore  
 Go Back for Murder by Agatha Christie  
 French Dressing by Georges Feydeau  
 The Thrill of Love by Amanda Whittington  
 The Unexpected Man by Yasmina Reza  
 Let It Be Me by Carey Jane Hardy

**2023**

Glee and Me by Shaun Slade  
 The Hollow by Agatha Christie  
 Stepping On My Shadow by Adrian Harding  
 Crown Matrimonial by Royce Ryton  
 A Brief History of Women by Alan Ayckbourn  
 Amadeus by Peter Shaffer

**2024**

Things I know to be True by Andrew Bovell  
 A Splinter of Ice by Ben Brown  
 Airmimming by Charlotte Jones  
 Double bill:  
 The Real Inspector Hound by Tom Stoppard  
 A Handbag by Anthony Horowitz  
 Duet for One by Tom Kempinski  
 The Haunting of Hill House by Leslie F Andrew

**2025**

Kindertransport by Diane Samuels  
 Colder Than Here by Laura Wade  
 Sleuth by Anthony Shaffer  
 A Hundred Words for Snow by Tally Hennessy  
 Terra Nova by Ted Tally

**2026**

Pressure by David Haig  
 The Unfriend by Steven Moffat

# Swan Productions 1976-2026



The Swan Theatre  
138 Park Street  
Yeovil  
Somerset  
BA20 1QT  
swantheatre@gmail.com  
Box Office  
swantheatreboxoffice@gmail.com  
07500 376031  
01935 428646

1976-2026





The Swan Theatre  
138 Park Street  
Yeovil  
Somerset  
BA20 1QT  
swantheatre@gmail.com  
Box Office  
swantheatreboxoffice@gmail.com  
07500 376031  
01935 428646

1976-2026

5



Decades  
Swan Theatre