



More than 40 women from all over Dorset are taking part in *Unearthed*

Unearthing remarkable women DORCHESTER AND POOLE

A NEW play by Stephanie Dale, writer of two of Dorset's successful community plays, uncovers stories of some of the remarkable women from Dorset's past. *Unearthed* has its premiere with Dorchester Arts at the Corn Exchange on Friday 24th and Saturday 25th July, followed by two more performances at Poole's Lighthouse arts centre on Friday 31st July and Saturday 1st August.

Months of research, writing, workshops and casting have gone into the production, by the theatre collective Women of Dorset. Now the cast of 45 women, aged between eight and 82 are preparing to bring it to the stage. It is the story of Sam, a contemporary young woman who finds herself caught up in an extraordinary party. Plied with cake and tea by women from Dorset's past, she comes to realise that her life is perhaps not as drab and unfulfilling as she previously thought.

Stephanie Dale wrote the 2023 Dorchester community play, *Spinning the Moon*, set at the end of the Wars of the Roses; and the Poole play *Salt* (also 2023) which was set between 1681 and the present day, highlighting the historic relationship between Poole and Newfoundland.

With this new work she has created a play that aims

“to celebrate women who have lived, survived and thrived from across our county.”

Unearthed is directed by Penny Levick, an experienced community play director. She says: “It is inspiring to see the play take shape and come to life off the page.” The designer is photographer Jayne Jackson and the costumes are being made by Arts University Bournemouth students.

Tilda Samson, who takes the pivotal role of Sam, recently took her A levels at Thomas Hardy School in Dorchester: “It's a big (and slightly scary) project but I'm looking forward to it. I see a lot of myself in Sam, especially her worries about our modern world and her overall sense of humour and attitude. While, unlike the others, Sam's not yet lived her big moment, she is vital in bringing all the women (and the story) together.”

Stephanie said: “We want to illuminate the stages and streets of Dorchester and Poole with the faces of women past and present and celebrate their achievements—and we are hoping people will help us achieve this. Donations will ensure that the community benefits from the highest production values and works with a professional creative team.” A crowd-funder has been launched by Women of Dorset to enable the cast and crew to put on the best possible show.

Performances at both venues are at 7.30pm, with a 2.30 Saturday matinee at Dorchester (25th July).

[Murder, mayhem and masterpieces.](#) [Sidmouth](#)

PICTURESQUE Sidmouth is not only a delightful seaside resort and home to the country's oldest folk festival, it also has the longest-running traditional summer rep season, at the Manor Pavilion theatre, this year continuing to Saturday 19th September.

For three months, with a week out for Sidmouth Folk Festival, the theatre has a weekly professional rep, including, in July, Alan Ayckbourn's dark comedy *Neighbourhood Watch* (to 4th July), Francis Durbridge's *Sweet Revenge*, from 6th to 11th July, and a stage adaptation by Jeremy Sams of the much-loved television series, *The Good Life*, from 13th to 18th July.

Neil Simon's classic comedy, *Plaza Suite*, runs from 20th to 25th July, followed by Hugh Janes' *The Haunting*, a dramatisation of some of Charles Dickens' ghost stories.

The rep season continues after the folk festival, from 10th to 15th August, with *Changing Rooms*, a farce by Marc Camoletti, best known as the writer of *Boeing Boeing*.

The mood turns darker with James Cawood's *Stone Cold Murder*, from 17th to 22nd August. And then there is one of the perennially popular comedies of the last 50 years, Richard Harris' *Outside Edge*, a classic comedy look at the ups and downs of life on and off the cricket pitch.

Over the years, the programming at Sidmouth has moved on from the typical farce and mystery fare to include much more challenging and contemporary plays. This year's festival includes Joe Orton's *Loot*, a dazzling and satirical black comedy about what happens when two thieves hide stolen money in a coffin, after removing the corpse. *Loot* is on from 31st August to 5th September, and is followed, from 7th to 12th September, by Daphne du Maurier's drama of love, jealousy and family loyalties on the coast of Cornwall.

The season finishes with one of Noel Coward's funniest and most popular plays, *Blithe Spirit*, the story of a selfish man, his new wife, his late wife, and a medium who raises more spiritual mayhem than she expected. End the Manor Pavilion play festival on a note of high laughter, from 14th to 19th September.

[All the world's a stage](#)

[LYME REGIS](#)

A FEW miles east along the Jurassic coast, the Marine Theatre at Lyme Regis also has a summer play festival, featuring the professional Gilroy Theatre Company, in a six-week season, from 28th July to 28th August.

The first of the five plays, is *The Late Edwina Black*, a classic and very atmospheric Victorian-set thriller by William Dinner and William Morum, running from Thursday 23rd July and Friday 24th to Monday 27th, Tuesday 28th and Wednesday 29th (this is the running period for all five plays; there are concerts and other

events at the weekends).

Set in 1895, this murder mystery, which opened in London in 1949, takes place the day before the funeral of Edwina Black, a domineering woman whose sudden death is discovered to have been caused by arsenic poisoning. Inspector Martin calls to interview her husband Gregory, her companion Elizabeth, and her housekeeper, Ellen. Gregory has long endured the domination of his wealthy wife, but is in love with Elizabeth. Edwina's death gives them freedom, but at what cost?

Alan Ayckbourn's time-travelling, black comedy-thriller, *Communicating Doors*, runs from 30th July to 5th August, followed by George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, from 6th to 12th August. This is the classic comedy of the "chocolate cream soldier." In this play, subtitled *An Anti-Romantic Comedy*, Shaw makes fun of romantic ideals of love and warfare, satirising conventions of love, military honour and class.

Dead Guilty, by Richard Harris, from 13th to 19th August, is a tense psychological study of guilt and obsession. And the season ends with *Ladies Day*, Amanda Whittington's funny and poignant story of four fish-filleting women who head for Ladies Day at Royal Ascot, the year it relocated to York. It runs from 20th to 26th August.

[Mapping the folk scene](#)

[BUCKLAND NEWTON AND VILLAGES](#)

RENOWNED folk singer, cellist and viola player Rachael McShane comes to Dorset for three dates in July, including Sunday 23rd at Buckland Newton village hall, with her band, The Cartographers.

Hailing from the north east of England, McShane rose to prominence as a founding member of the award-winning folk big band Bellowhead. Alongside her work with that internationally acclaimed ensemble, she has built a successful solo career, releasing her debut album *No Man's Fool* in 2009 and later signing to the prestigious Topic Records, the world's oldest independent record label.

The Cartographers are guitarist Ian Stephenson (Kan, Baltic Crossing) and melodeon player Julian Sutton (who has performed with artists including Kathryn Tickell and Sting). Together, the trio creates a rich and vibrant sound, combining expressive vocals with intricate instrumental arrangements.

Blending traditional folk roots with contemporary influences, their music is both powerful and playful, bringing new life to familiar material while introducing original compositions full of energy and warmth. Known for their engaging stage presence and musical chemistry, The Cartographers have built a loyal following through live performances and critically acclaimed recordings.

The other performances are on Saturday 18th at Studland village hall and Sunday 19th at Marnhull.

[Baroque delights with Ceruleo](#)

CONCERTS IN THE WEST

MUSIC by some of the lesser-known baroque composers, including Barbara Strozzi, feature in July's series of Concerts in the West, when Ceruleo ensemble come to Bridport Arts Centre for the coffee time concert at 11.30am on Friday 10th July, Ilminster Arts Centre at 7.30pm that evening and Saturday 11th at 7.30pm at Crewkerne Dance House.

Described as a group that “feels more like a Baroque chamber ensemble than voices and accompaniment,” Ceruleo are two sopranos, Jenni Harper and Emily Owen, and three instrumentalists, Kinga Gáborjáni, viola da gamba, Satoko Doi-Luck, harpsichord, and Toby Carr, lute and guitar.

Formed in 2014 at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Ceruleo create dramatic programmes using spoken text alongside music for two sopranos and continuo. Every member of the group performs as a soloist, and they use all available combinations of instruments and voices to create innovative and captivating performances. They specialise in the music of Restoration England and 17th century Italy.

The programme for their July series includes several pieces by Barbara Strozzi, and works by Girolamo Frescobaldi, Tarquinio Merula, Alessandro Piccinini and Biagio Marini.

Ceruleo's most recent project, *Burying the Dead*, funded by Arts Council England, was a staged show about Henry Purcell, by scriptwriter Clare Norburn and directed by Thomas Guthrie. It was performed at several festivals including Buxton International, Lake District Summer Music, Baroque at the Edge at LSO St Luke's, and early music festivals at Brighton and York.

They released their first album of the music of Henry Purcell, *Love Restor'd*, on Resonus Classics in 2022.

[Jazz Jurassica at the EP](#)

BRIDPORT

BRIDPORT's glamorous Art Deco theatre, the Electric Palace, hosts a Jazz Jurassica event on Saturday 18th July at 3pm, that will be a treat for fans of the Blue Note sound and the history of jazz.

The Sound of Blue Note—the band—takes its name from a sound that shaped jazz history. It's a sound that jazz buffs will recognise straight away—catchy, stylish and full of swing. The sound comes from the legendary Blue Note Records, the label that, in the late 1950s and early '60s, captured a style that still feels fresh today.

This show brings the two together—a band named after the sound, playing the music that defined it. The repertoire draws on some of the great names of the

label—Horace Silver, Art Blakey, Freddie Hubbard and Hank Mobley. It's music that is direct, expressive and built to swing, a defining moment in jazz history. The musicians are Andy Urquhart, trumpet, Terry Quinney, saxophone, Phil Doyle, piano, Ben Taylor, bass, and Andy Chapman, drums.

The original Blue Note sound still matters because it set a standard and backed artists who shaped modern jazz. It valued originality as much as technique and created recordings with a balance of discipline and freedom that became part of the language of jazz.

Blue Note still records new artists and new music—musicians such as Robert Glasper, Gregory Porter and Norah Jones carry that legacy forward, blending new influences with the label's roots in jazz, soul and groove.

[Summer music at the manor](#)

DORCHESTER

WHITCOMBE Manor, the beautiful home of best-selling crime and historical novelist Minette Walters, and her husband Alec, is the venue for the annual Dorchester Arts summer party with music, on Sunday 19th July from 1pm.

The entertainment will be provided by the acclaimed vocalist Liza Pulman. Following her sold out appearance earlier this year at Dorchester Corn Exchange, audiences will again be able to enjoy Liza's effortless vocals and distinctive musicianship.

She is joined by award-winning jazz pianist, guitarist and composer Gareth Williams, for what will be a relaxed and elegant summer experience in beautiful surroundings.

As always, tickets include a complementary glass of bubbly and a delicious picnic lunch—everything you need for a perfect Sunday afternoon of food, fun and music!

[Back and bigger than before](#)

HONITON

POPULAR Cornish bluegrass band Flats & Sharps are back, with an expanded programme, coming to the Beehive Centre at Honiton on 17th July at 7.30pm.

Born on the coast and raised on the road, the high energy quintet have built a reputation for lightning-fast picking, pristine vocal harmonies and an electrifying live show. With deep roots in Cornwall and fans across the globe. Flats & Sharps are driving their sound into an exciting new era.

For more than a decade, since their humble beginnings busking on the rainy streets of Penzance as teenagers, the band now plays sell-out shows world-wide, at venues including the Royal Albert Hall and major festivals.

Known for their mix of traditional bluegrass and original song-writing, their live shows are a blend of virtuosity, humour and passion. With new music in the works, fresh collaborations and tours planned at home and abroad, Flats & Sharps are dedicated to bringing their music to new audiences while keeping their long-term fans dancing, laughing and singing along.

[Surviving impossible odds](#)

BRIDPORT

MRS Danvers is a name that tends to strike fear if you only know her as the terrifying housekeeper in Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*. But for actress and writer Heather Alexander, she is a woman who is determined to survive against impossible odds, a story told in her solo show, *Becoming Mrs Danvers*, at Bridport Arts Centre on Saturday 18th July, at 7.30pm.

Mrs Danvers' mantra is: "Power. Money. Survive" This is a dark, new theatre work that fuses a contemporary interrogation of mental health with the tension of a psychological thriller. Sinister, intimate and relentlessly gripping, the piece draws audiences into a world of locked doors, secret rooms and fractured realities, where money, power and manipulation determine who is heard and who is erased.

At its heart is a young woman trapped within a system that has shown her no mercy. As she bucks against institutions designed to control and silence, she finds increasingly inventive ways to beat the system. Through role play, creative writing and fantasy, she claws back her humanity; but what begins as resistance skews into obsession.

Heather Alexander's previous solo plays include *Havisham—The Story that Dickens Left Out*, and *Room—A Journey into the Creative Mind of Virginia Woolf*. *Becoming Mrs Danvers* is directed by Tina Pelini.

[Music under the Giant's gaze](#)

CERNE ABBAS

THIRTY five years ago, the Dorset born clarinettist Richard Hosford and the internationally renowned Gaudier Ensemble founded the Cerne Abbas Music Festival. The musicians have been returning every year since then delighting audiences with an unrivalled breadth of Chamber music from the 18th century to the present day. This year's festival, now scaled back to one weekend, takes place at the village's St Mary's Church from 9th to 11th July.



Becoming Mrs Danvers is at Bridport Arts Centre in July

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Screen Time

with Nic Jeune

Top Six at the Flix

Bridport Arts Centre

Amelie (2001) 25th Anniversary Re-release. Thursday 2nd July 7.30 pm. This is a film that will put a goofy grin on your face from the opening frame, through to the credits. Film Threat. Ross Williams.

Bridport Electric Palace

Tuner (2025) Thursday 9th July @ 7.30 pm. *Tuner* is a small film, but one that will leave a big impact. It truly is one of the most delightful surprises of the fall and deserves to be seen on a big screen with the loudest sound possible. Screen Rant. Graeme Guttmann.

Disclosure Day (2026) Friday 17th July @ 7.30 pm. This movie is made for a world that has us spending most of our time looking down, whether metaphorically, heads buried in our own work and struggles, or literally, absorbed by the phones that have overtaken our lives. Screen Rant. Alex Harrison.

Marine Theatre. Lyme Regis.

The Christophers (2025) Saturday 4th July @ 7.15pm. With Ian McKellen in superbly crotchety form and Michaela Coel exuding chilly cunning. The Daily Beast. Nick Schager.

Weymouth Pavilion

Toy Story 5. (2026) Sunday 19th July – Thursday 23rd July, various times. Pixar Chief Creative Officer Pete Docter, who was a writer and animator on the original movie, recalled how *Toy Story* was a make-or-break project for the studio. ‘We showed them a screening. And they said, “This is just not working. Shut it all down, fire all your animators.” Luckily, somebody wisely said, “Give us one more shot.”’

Virginia Woolf's Night and Day (2026)

Monday 13 July & Wednesday 15 July, various Times. It is such a sweet story and guilelessly eccentric – a butterfly fluttering just beyond the wheel of realism. The Guardian. Peter Bradshaw.



Artistic director Richard Hosford creates concert programmes ranging from intimate solo performances to mixed ensemble work, featuring not only established international colleagues but also outstanding young professionals at the start of their careers and students who comprise the next generation of professional musicians.

This year's ensemble includes names that will be familiar from previous Cerne Abbas festivals, from Concerts in the West and from other chamber music concerts. They are: Scottish pianist Alasdair Beatson, violinist Stephanie Gonley, the leader of the English Chamber Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and a soloist with many leading orchestras, Richard Hosford, clarinet, Dutch viola player Iris Juda, cellist Sally Pendlebury, a member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and the Vellinger String Quartet, Stephen Stirling, horn, principal horn player with several chamber orchestras, including the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, and double bass player Stephen Williams, who has been a guest principal with the LPO and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, has recorded with the Tippett Quartet, and worked with Adele, Billie Eilish and Josh Groban. He plays an Italian bass made in the 16th century.

The festival programme is: Thursday 9th—St Mary's Church, 6pm, Crusell, *quartet in C minor for clarinet and strings*, Brahms' *trio in E flat major for violin, horn and piano*, and Schumann, *quartet in E flat major for piano and strings*;

Friday 10th—6pm, Schubert, *string trio in B flat*, Mozart, *quartet in G minor for piano and strings*, Dohnanyi, *sextet in C major for piano, clarinet, horn and string trio*;

Saturday 11th—3pm, Schumann *Fantasy Pieces for clarinet and piano*, Bruch, *Four Pieces for clarinet, viola and piano*, Schubert, *Trout Quintet*.



Boiler Room Six: A Titanic Story comes to Dorchester in July

[Surviving the Titanic.](#) DORCHESTER

THE story of the sinking of the Titanic is one of the best-known in maritime history. A remarkable one-man play, coming to Dorchester Arts at the Corn Exchange on Tuesday 14th July at 7.30pm, tells a less familiar tale—told through the voice of a stoker who survived the horror of the heat and freezing Atlantic waters below deck.

Charlie Sheepshanks plays Frederick Barrett in *Boiler Room Six: A Titanic Story*, written and directed by Tom Foreman, based on the evidence and testimonies Barrett gave to the official inquiries immediately following the disaster. This harrowing true account pays tribute to the working men who sacrificed their lives to keep the ship's lights and pumps running.

Frederick Barrett was the lead fireman stationed in Boiler Room Six. On the evening of 14th April, 1912, as the Titanic struck the iceberg, his boiler room suddenly ripped open, causing the freezing Atlantic water to come crashing through. He and his crew fought in 50-degree heat to shovel coal, keep the boilers running and manage the steam to power the ship's electrical dynamos. Their efforts ensured the ship's distress signals were sent and delayed the sinking, allowing hundreds of passengers to escape.

Barrett eventually managed to escape the flooding below decks, reached the upper decks, and was placed in charge of Lifeboat No. 13, surviving a terrifying launch.

GPW

The Young Lit Fix

The Lions' Run

By Sara Pennypacker

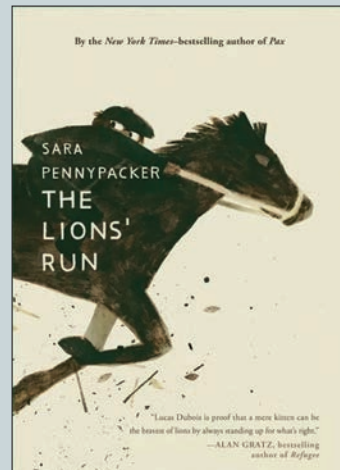
Cover illustration and header art

by Jon Klassen

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Review by Nicky Mathewson



SET in Lamorlaye, Chantilly, in occupied France in 1944.

Lucas is a local orphan who is being raised at the abbey until he is of age to be called upon by the Germans to work or fight for them.

He attends classes and makes deliveries for the greengrocers and he craves a few moments solitude, away from the clamour of boys or German boots.

After rescuing some kittens from drowning Lucas needs to find a place to hide them and comes to an abandoned stable, at least that's what he thought. There's a teenage girl there who is also using the stable to hide something. Her name is Alice and her secret is a beautiful and majestic horse named Bia.

Whilst delivering to the local maternity hospital called a Lebensborn, Lucas discovers more secrets. Not everything is as it seems at the Lebensborn and Lucas finds himself in some deep trouble. Can his new friend Alice help him to hide a secret? One that could risk both their lives?

Sometimes you find a book that is simply perfect. This is that book.

Historical fiction at its best, full of action and tension, love and loss. I adored it.

Perfect for confident readers age 10+.

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