



Show Report

Sparks Dramatic Society

Home Is Where The Heart Hurts

21 March 2026

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	Home Is Where The Heart Hurts
SOCIETY	Sparks Dramatic Society
VENUE	Hyde Festival Theatre
GENRE	Drama
CAST SIZE	10
CO-WRITERS & CO-DIRECTORS	Kelly Holder and Steven Oliver-Grant
STAGE MANAGER	Charlie Egner
STAGE CREW AND PROMPT	Sue Bradbury
TECHNICAL MANAGER	Daniel Oliver-Grant
SOUND DESIGN	Kelly Holder
LIGHTING DESIGN	Steven Oliver-Grant
LIGHTING OPERATOR	Tom Dodd
COSTUMES	The Cast, supported by Nicky Houghton
SET DESIGN AND PROPS	Kelly Holder, Steven Oliver-Grant, Charlie Egner
MAKE-UP	Mia Grant
ARTWORK & PROGRAMME DESIGN	Dave Ayre
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS	Jem Marshall-Ayre
BAR TEAM AND FRONT OF HOUSE	Hyde Festival Theatre Volunteers

CAST LIST

Alice Broadchurch	Amber Kennerley
Mark Cooper	Andrew Grogan
Jay Moores	Elle Pomfret
Susan Moores	Emily Johnson
Ben Broadchurch	Jack Clare
Mary Howarth	Julie Chetwyn
Abi Howarth	Kimberley Ross
Jess Moores	Melissa Mottershead
DS Browning	Michelle Hollamby
John Moores	Tony Scott George

DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Saturday 21st March 2026
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Monday 23rd March 2026
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA1004

NSA LOGO ON POSTER	Yes
NSA IN PROGRAMME	Yes
PROGRAMME CLASS	Best Original Design

THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT

1847

STRONGEST ELEMENTS

Powerful Performances

- **Elle Pomfret** as Jay Moores delivered an emotional and deeply moving performance, portraying the struggles of addiction with honesty and control. Her strong vocal delivery, combined with compelling physical reactive acting, created a character that was both believable and impactful.

Bold, Intelligent Direction and Structure

- **Direction, sound and lighting design by Kelly Holder and Steven Oliver-Grant** was clear and thoughtful, creating a well-rounded and impactful piece.

Impact of the piece

Home is Where the Heart Hurts explored a range of topics that often carry stigma. The entire cast and production as a whole handled these themes with raw emotion and sensitivity, allowing audience members to really think and talk about subjects that too often remain unspoken.

After watching the very first scene of this hard-hitting play, I knew that my guest and I were in for a truly thought-provoking and emotional night. Performed by Sparks Dramatic Society, Home is where the heart hurts explored challenging and sensitive topics including domestic violence, addiction, infidelity and mental health. From the offset, it was clear that the society aimed to encourage audiences to talk and speak out about these difficult subject matters, requiring a high level of emotional commitment from both the cast and creative team.

When we arrived, my guest and I were warmly welcomed by the host **Sue Bradbury**, who was also part of the stage crew for this production. The volunteers of Hyde Festival Theatre were welcoming and friendly throughout the night.

A welcome speech from co-director **Steven Oliver-Grant** encouraged audience members to stop, think and talk about what they were about to see. The decision to perform in an intimate venue, with two intervals throughout the play, created a strongly reflective atmosphere.

The small but effective cast of ten worked cohesively to create multiple family units that all linked together in different ways. Throughout the production, there was a strong sense of reactive acting from every cast member, with one particular moment of silence when the Moores family unfolded standing out as every character told a story with their facial expressions

and body language. The quieter moments in this play allowed the emotional weight of it to land naturally and sit with the audience, showing a clear understanding of pacing.

Amber Kennerley as Alice Broadchurch brought an emotionally engaging performance, with a broad contrast between the different sides to her character. She first appeared with a quiet but hurt presence that immediately captured attention. Her subtle expression and movement in this scene established a clear sense of vulnerability. This was further developed in her following scenes until a shocking twist in her character was revealed. The shift in character as the story unfolded was handled confidently, with strong projection and diction throughout. In her final scene, there were moments where the portrayal of her character moved into a heightened style, though this remained committed and fully explored the character's darker side.

Andrew Grogan as Mark Cooper acted as a steady voice of reason for John Moores, while also revealing a more complex position as a corrupt pharmacist later on in the play. His interactions helped to drive the plot forward, where his calm delivery and good pacing throughout helped contrast the heightened emotions around him. At times, there were some moments where his delivery felt slightly less natural, though this did not distract from his clear understanding of the character's role within the narrative.

Elle Pomfret as Jay Moores brought a stand-out, compelling and emotionally layered performance, which at times was incandescent in its intensity. She portrayed one of the darkest moments of the show, depicting her character losing his battle to addiction and mental health, with strong emotional truth and stage presence. Strong projection and thoughtful reactive acting supported her portrayal of the character, allowing key emotions to be communicated in both spoken and unspoken ways. The gradual shift in emotional struggle from Jay finding happiness, to his family and relationship breaking down and ultimately his final moments was depicted very well by Elle, creating a sound connection with the audience.

Emily Johnson as Susan Moores, wife to John and mother to Jess and Jay, offered a convincing portrayal with a wide emotional range. Moving effectively between panic, frustration and care for her family. Her monologue in particular showed a clear connection with both her daughter and the audience, showing real vulnerability and desperation in her tone and expression. The contrast in her emotional state between acts added depth to her character and helped to reflect the complexities of family relationships well.

Jack Clare is a new-comer to the society and played the role of Ben Broadchurch. He delivered a strong and emotional storyline with a well-judged sense of realism, initially presenting as a typical "lad's lad" who may have a darker side. This however quickly changed as the complex vulnerability of his story unfolded. His natural delivery allowed the character to be grounded and believable, helping the audience to fully engage and feel the emotion of what he was going through. He also had clear physicality, with subtle details such as leg shaking adding to the underlying tension in his heart-breaking scene. His meeting with Jay before his overdose was also effective, adding an additional layer of emotional truth to the character's journey. I felt the reference of his previous experience of not being believed when reporting his own abuse helped to ground his decision to not report his concerns about Jay, highlighting themes of isolation and difficulty in speaking out.

Julie Chetwyn as Mary Howarth, secret partner to John and Mother to Abi, had a small but effective role, with good 'motherly' stage presence and clear projection. She acted as a nice contrast to Susan's more timid and emotional character, and I left intrigued to know more about her character's story.

The character of Abi Howarth was played by **Kimberly Ross**, who delivered a committed performance with clear emotional engagement throughout. As the play progressed, she made effective use of vocal variety, lowering her register to support a more naturalistic portrayal of the character. There were times where her reactions were more heightened in style, and a more subtle delivery could've supported the realism of her performance. That being said, her overall commitment to the role with good timing and focus contributed well to her overall character.

Tony Scott George as John Moores delivered a very compelling and well-rounded performance, portraying a complex character with many underlying issues including his abusive tendencies and infidelity. He demonstrated a solid emotional range, convincingly showing his feelings of anger, guilt and desperation at different points in the play. His performance stood out within the production, with a clear commitment to exploring the depth of his character being solidified by strong reactive acting throughout. Having previously seen Tony in the society's pantomimes, playing more comedic roles, I didn't know what to expect seeing him step into such a complex part. However, he definitely exceeded my expectations with his serious and grounded portrayal of this challenging role.

Melissa Mottershead as Jess Moores showed clear diction and strong reactive acting throughout her performance. Subtle exchanges with Elle as brother Jay Moores made the sibling dynamic between the pair grounded and believable. The addition of a bone-chilling scream and reaction to a devastating truth towards the beginning of the play stood out, revealing how much presence she could bring to the role. At times, I would've liked to see her explore further variation in her vocal tone, however her overall performance remained consistent and effective.

The addition of DS Browning, played by **Michelle Hollamby**, offered a grounded and level-headed presence, contrasting the heightened emotions surrounding her. Her performance was controlled and clear, allowing the narrative to flow and progress while maintaining balance in such intense moments. Her final scene, where she broke the fourth wall to address the audience directly, was particularly effective, really highlighting the purpose that the co-directors had set out for the play from the very beginning: to spark discussion around topics that often remain unspoken.

Costumes by the cast, supported by **Nicky Houghton** were appropriate to the context and setting of the play. I enjoyed the frequent changing of costume, adding to the realism within the show and supported the progression of the narrative. Small details like DS Browning's name badge added to this and did not go unnoticed. Make-up by **Mia Grant** was very well-executed, with realistic bruises, marks and scars seen on a number of characters, enhancing the visual shock and striking authenticity of the production.

The set design and props by **Kelly Holder, Steven Oliver-Grant** and **Charlie Egner** took a minimal but effective approach, being visually strong while not taking away from the performers or the narrative. The realism of the piece was really well supported by the set, which mainly consisted of the restaurant which stayed throughout and the stage area which allowed for flexible transitions between locations. At times, there was a limited view of the main stage area, particularly in Jay's final scene, but this did not take away from the overall value of the production.

The inclusion of practical elements, such as real food and appliances in the home and even a family portrait and hygiene rating certificate in the restaurant truly heightened the realism and authenticity of the play. One particular moment of John smashing a glass really stood out, with practical effects adding to the emotional tone. Scene changes by stage crew **Charlie Egner** and **Sue Bradbury** were handled smoothly, with strong efficiency and set handling, contributing to the overall pacing of the play.

Lighting design by **Steven Oliver-Grant**, operated by **Tom Dodd**, played an important role in supporting the emotional tone of the play. The use of naturalistic lighting helped maintain realism, while use of fades and spotlights in more intense moments supported the mood and tension. The use of blue lighting to represent someone in a different location but still in the scene, or the passing of time was simple but effective, supporting the clarity of the narrative. The use of blackout transitions maintained pace and contributed positively to the overall performance.

Lighting was complemented well with sound design by **Kelly Holder**, operated by Technical manager **Daniel Oliver-Grant**. Sound supported the production with well-timed and intentional use of sound effects throughout. The quiet use of atmospheric effects like soundscapes, including the hustle and bustle of a shopping centre, birds chirping on an outside bench and the radio playing in the restaurant added depth to the performance and helped to create a believable, authentic setting. Sound levels and the addition of drop mics allowed dialogue to remain clear throughout; I did not miss a single word that any of the characters said. The addition of a heartbeat sound at the end of each act was also effective, adding even more tension to the play overall.

Programme design and Marketing by **Dave Ayre** and **Jem Marshall-Ayre** were strong with powerful visuals and supporting information about the cast, team and production. I particularly welcomed the addition of information about local organisations that people could reach out to for support within the programme and on every table.

Co-writers and co-directors **Kelly Holder** and **Steven Oliver-Grant** should be commended for their purposeful and thoughtful approach to this production. It was very clear that the piece had been carefully crafted to tackle a number of challenging topics in a thought-provoking way, while still maintaining an engaging storyline. Their direction helped the cast to explore the complex layers of these themes with sensitivity and raw emotion. The balance between storytelling and emotional impact was considered, and their commitment to raising awareness and encouraging conversation surrounding subjects that carry stigma was evident. I look forward to seeing where their journey as co-writers and directors takes them in the future.

PHOTOGRAPHS









PROGRAMME



Sparks
Dramatic Society

HYDE
Festival
THEATRE

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART HURTS

EVERY HOME HIDES A STORY.
Behind closed doors, every heartbeat tells a truth
- some filled with **LOVE**, others with **PAIN**.

Written and directed by
Steven Oliver-Grant and **Kelly Holder**
by arrangement with
✓ THEATRE SCRIPTS

Hyde Festival Theatre
Madge Bayes Hall | Corporation Street | Hyde | SK14 1AB

SOUVENIR PROGRAMME

This programme includes information about support services for anyone affected by the themes explored in this production.

Sparks



18+

NODA
For every stage