



Show Report

St Herbert's Amateur Dramatic
& Entertainment Society

Business Affairs

26 June 2026

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	Business Affairs
SOCIETY	St Herbert's Amateur Dramatic & Entertainment Society
VENUE	St Herbert's Parish Centre
GENRE	Drama
CAST SIZE	8
PRODUCER	Simon Chown
Director	Jane Pearson
Set Construction	Seymour Francis
Technical	Simon Chown
Costumes	Cast
Tickets	Joan Wood, Simon Chown
Photos	David Jones

CAST LIST

Stanley Bigley	Mike Waldron
Norman Harris	Simon Thompson
Hilda Bigley	Jenny Taylor
Rose Harris	Mel Jones
Kurt Hoffman	Martin Taylor
Sven Uberg	Nick Lowe
Valerie	Jess Clegg
Sabrina	Jane Pearson

DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Friday 26th June 2026
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Saturday 27th June 2026
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA0003

NSA LOGO ON POSTER	No
NSA IN PROGRAMME	Yes
PROGRAMME CLASS	Best Original Design

THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT

1440

STRONGEST ELEMENTS

Norman Knows Best

- **Simon Thompson** was the standout performer of the evening as Norman Harris. His boundless energy, excellent physical comedy and wonderfully awkward characterisation made him consistently entertaining and ensured he remained at the heart of the production's biggest laughs.

Farcical Fun

- **Jane Pearson** and **Simon Chown**'s directorial debut successfully captured the fast pace and escalating chaos that are the hallmarks of a classic British farce. The comedy flowed naturally, keeping the audience laughing from start to finish without the action ever feeling desultory.

Community Spirit

- From the warm welcome on arrival to the nostalgic sight of the interval tea trolley rolling through the hatch, **S.H.A.D.E.S.** embodied everything that makes community theatre so special. Their hospitality was every bit as memorable as the performance itself.

It was Friday evening and, despite what was arguably the hottest day of the year so far, nothing was going to stop my guest and me from another trip to the theatre. This time our adjudication took us to both a new venue and a new society as we visited St Herbert's Parish Centre to watch **S.H.A.D.E.S.** present **Business Affairs**.

We were warmly welcomed by **Joan Wood** and the front-of-house team, whose hospitality immediately set the tone for an enjoyable evening before showing us to our seats in the parish centre auditorium.

Business Affairs is a classic British bedroom farce centred on two northern businessmen desperately trying to sell their struggling haulage company from the confines of a smart London hotel suite. As wives, prospective European buyers and hired "ladies of the night" descend upon the room, mistaken identities, misunderstandings and increasingly frantic attempts to keep everyone apart ensure the situation spirals into gloriously chaotic comedy.

As the curtain rose, the audience were welcomed into the hotel suite that served as the setting for the entire play, a hallmark of the farce genre where the comedy relies on characters entering and exiting at precisely the right moments. Designed by **Seymour Francis**, the set successfully captured the feel of an early-1990s hotel suite, with a central sofa and coffee table flanked by occasional chairs, a well-stocked drinks cabinet and two-bedroom doors positioned

either side of the stage, all of which would become integral to the action as the evening unfolded. Personally, I would have liked to have seen a little more decorative detail on the walls to enhance the sense of place, but this is very much a matter of taste rather than a criticism of the design.

Business Affairs marked the directorial debut of **Jane Pearson** and **Simon Chown**, who admitted in the programme that bringing this fast-paced, dialogue-heavy farce to the stage had been both a challenge and a joy. It is easy to see why. Farce can easily descend into something that feels desultory, where the pace is maintained but the purpose is lost. Under Jane Pearson and Simon Chown's direction, however, every misunderstanding and mistaken identity remained clear, ensuring the audience stayed with the story as the chaos escalated

The first characters we met were Stanley Bingley and Norman Harris, played by **Mike Waldron** and **Simon Thompson** respectively. From the moment they stepped onto the stage, their relationship was immediately established. Mike's Stanley embodied the larger-than-life northern salesman with shades of Del Boy, while Simon's more reserved Norman provided the perfect foil. Both projected well and developed a believable partnership that felt rooted in genuine friendship rather than simply a business relationship, making their predicament all the more engaging.

Mike delivered a confident and assured performance, displaying a strong command of both his dialogue and the play's quick-fire pace. However, it was Simon Thompson who particularly caught my attention. His boundless energy rarely dipped throughout the evening, and his instinctive physical comedy consistently landed with the audience. His portrayal often brought to mind Jim Bell from Friday Night Dinner, famously played by Mark Heap, sharing that same wonderfully awkward charm and endearing eccentricity without ever becoming an imitation. Simon's performance balanced comic exaggeration with believable characterisation, making Norman one of the standout performances of the evening.

Jenny Taylor and **Mel Jones** took to the stage as Hilda Bigley and Rose Harris, the long-suffering wives of Stanley and Norman. The pair provided a pleasing contrast, with Jenny portraying the more assertive and commanding Hilda, while Mel's Rose brought a gentler, more innocent quality to the relationship.

Both performers appeared a little reserved during their initial scenes, but it was rewarding to watch them grow in confidence as the play progressed, settling comfortably into their roles and allowing their personalities to shine through. There were some lovely comic moments throughout, with Mel, who was making her debut with the society, delivering several well-timed one-liners that were warmly received by the audience. Looking ahead to future performances, I'd encourage both actors to make even greater use of background acting during scenes where the focus shifts elsewhere. In a farce, the audience's attention is rarely confined to the character speaking, and maintaining reactions and engagement at all times helps keep the world of the play alive. Similarly, there were one or two occasions where reactions to whispered conversations or telephone calls arrived a fraction later than expected. These are very small

observations, but refining those split-second responses would add even greater pace and polish to an already enjoyable partnership.

Martin Taylor and **Nick Lowe** entered the fray as European businessmen Kurt Hoffman and Sven Uberg, bringing another layer of confusion to the increasingly chaotic plot. Both maintained convincing accents throughout, with only the occasional lapse that never distracted from their characterisation. The pair worked well together and established a believable partnership, while also interacting confidently with the rest of the cast. Both embraced the larger-than-life nature of their characters, leaning into the eccentricity without losing sight of the story. While Nick perhaps appeared the more assured of the two, Martin complemented him well, and together they generated many of the evening's laugh-out-loud moments as the chaos unfolded. One small point to consider for future performances would be stage positioning. There were a few occasions where Martin became side-on to the audience during the busier ensemble scenes, making some of his facial expressions and reactions harder to appreciate. Maintaining a slightly more open body position would ensure the audience can fully enjoy the character work taking place throughout the scene.

Jess Clegg, who was making her debut with the society, and director **Jane Pearson** took to the stage as Valerie and Sabrina, the two "ladies of the night" whose arrival added another layer of comic chaos to the proceedings. Boldly costumed and full of confidence, both immediately established their characters and embraced the larger-than-life humour of the roles.

Jess delivered her dialogue confidently, maintaining a consistent Australian accent throughout the performance, a commendable achievement, particularly for someone new to the society. If offering one point for future development, I would encourage slightly stronger projection in places, as a handful of lines were quieter than the surrounding dialogue. Nevertheless, she gave a thoroughly enjoyable and assured performance. Jane Pearson contrasted this well with an entertaining portrayal of Sabrina, using a convincing Cockney accent to capture the character's bubbly, slightly ditzy personality. She made excellent use of the stage, remained fully engaged with the action around her, and her reactions often added an extra layer of comedy even when she wasn't the focus of the scene.

Costumes, sourced by the cast themselves, reflected each character well and helped reinforce the play's broad comic stereotypes. The lighting and sound design were necessarily uncomplicated but entirely effective for this style of production. I was particularly impressed by the precision of the sound cues; telephone rings stopped the moment they were answered, a small detail perhaps, but one that contributes enormously to maintaining the pace and illusion of a farce. Credit should go to **Simon Chown** and **the technical team** for their accuracy throughout.

The production was prompted and, while there were one or two occasions where I felt a prompt came very quickly, potentially before an actor had the opportunity to recover independently, this was the final performance of the run. The prompt knows the production and its performers far better than any visiting adjudicator, so these may well have been established cues or deliberate decisions to preserve the pace of the play. Either way, they were handled discreetly and without disrupting the performance.

Overall, my guest and I had a thoroughly entertaining evening and found ourselves laughing throughout. There is something wonderfully nostalgic about a traditional British farce; the rapid-fire dialogue, chaotic entrances and exits, escalating misunderstandings and unapologetic innuendo continue to delight audiences' decades after they were first written, and Business Affairs proved exactly why the genre remains so enduring.

Finally, I can't finish without mentioning one of my favourite moments of the evening. As the interval began, the kitchen hatch opened and out rolled the tea trolley, instantly transporting me back to watching community theatre with my grandparents. It was a wonderfully nostalgic touch that perfectly captured the warmth and community spirit of S.H.A.D.E.S. and St Herbert's Parish Centre.

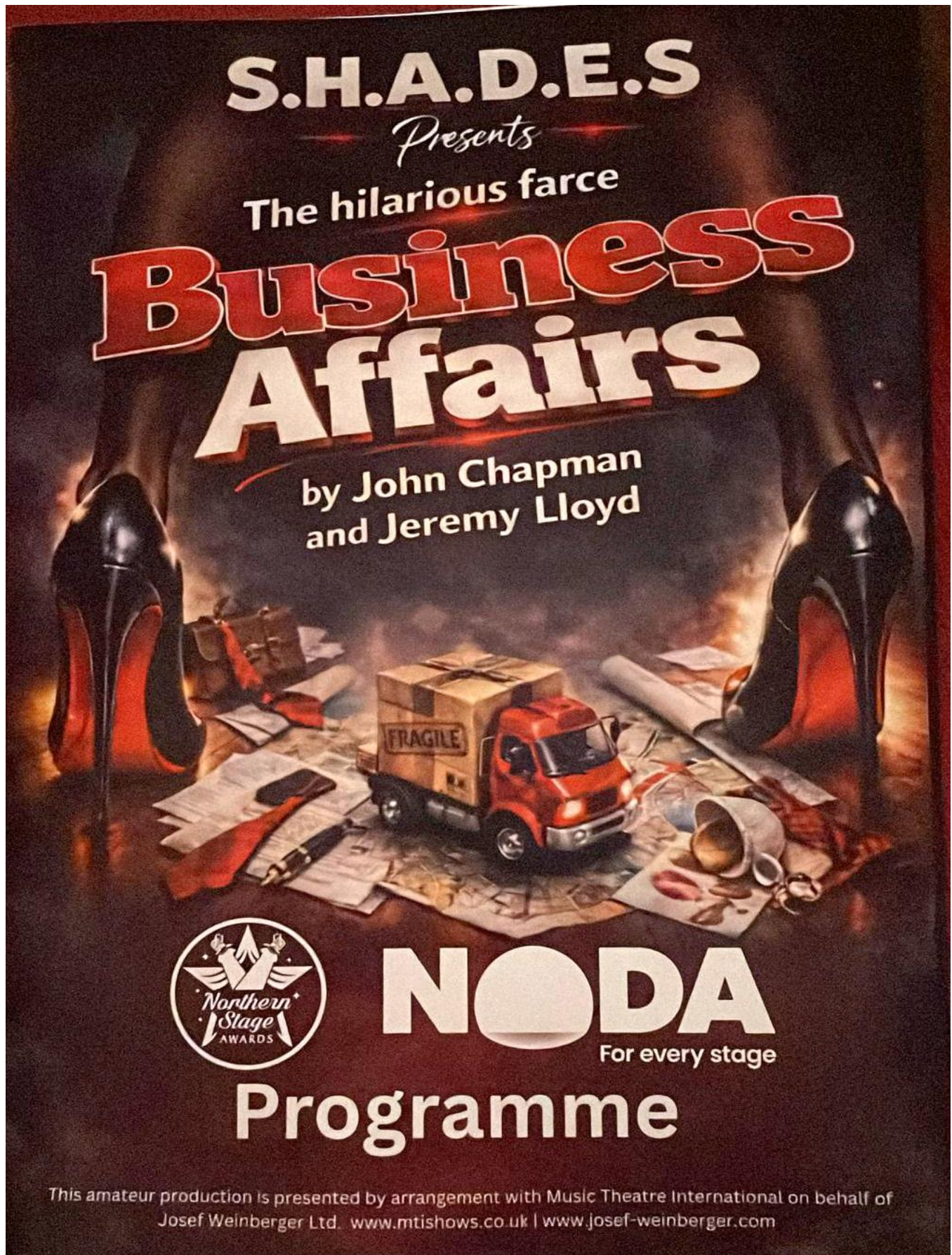
Thank you to everyone at S.H.A.D.E.S. for your generous hospitality. It was a pleasure to visit both your society and your venue for the first time, and I look forward to seeing what you bring to the stage next.

PHOTOGRAPHS





PROGRAMME



S.H.A.D.E.S
Presents
The hilarious farce
Business Affairs
by John Chapman
and Jeremy Lloyd

 **NODA**
For every stage
Programme

This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Music Theatre International on behalf of Josef Weinberger Ltd. www.mtishows.co.uk | www.josef-weinberger.com