



Show Report

SOUP Productions

Off-Track

4 July 2026

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	Off-Track
SOCIETY	SOUP Productions
VENUE	St Johns United Reformed Church
GENRE	Drama
CAST SIZE	9
WRITER & DIRECTOR	Sam Duxbury and Michael Pirks
SET DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION	Ruth Gosney, Drew Gosney, Michelle Drinkwater, Colin Drinkwater, Emmett Drinkwater
LIGHTING AND SOUND	Michael Pirks
PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHER	Colin Drinkwater at Jorube Portrait Photography
POSTER DESIGN	Samantha Jayne-Twigg
PROGRAMME DESIGN	Olivia Pryer

CAST LIST

Train Clerk	Lisa Rhodes
Jayne	Michelle Drinkwater
Millie	Corynne Dittrich
Garry	Dave Flanagan
Gabby	Barbara Hebden
Sister Judy/Doctor	Janine Roberts
Giggles The Clown	Michele Dean
Clair Voyant/Boss	Lesley Hall
Voice Of Mother Superior	Samantha Jane-Twigg

DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Saturday 4th July 2026
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Monday 6th July 2026
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA1002

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

THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT

1441

STRONGEST ELEMENTS

Outstanding On-Stage Partnership

- Dave Flanagan and Barbara Hebden created a believable and emotionally engaging relationship that remained authentic throughout.

Commitment to Character

- Janine Roberts' unwavering commitment and attention to detail made Sister Judy an unforgettable character.

Humour Meets Humanity

- Samantha Duxbury and Michael Pirks crafted an original script that balanced laughter with poignant real-life themes.

It is always a pleasure to return to SOUP Productions. After thoroughly enjoying their pantomime, Pantoville, I was excited to see what they would present next. This time, the company brought another original work to the stage with Off Track, written by **Samantha Duxbury** and **Michael Pirks**, who also directed the production.

Off Track tells the story of a group of strangers from very different backgrounds and circumstances, all brought together by one shared objective, catching a train at Warrington Central. Set against the backdrop of a delayed train, the play captures the zeitgeist of modern society, exploring the diversity of personalities, perspectives and everyday experiences that can unexpectedly collide in a shared public space. As tensions rise and relationships begin to form, the audience is left wondering exactly how this unexpected journey will unfold.

Lisa Rhodes, as the Train Clerk, made an immediate impression by entering through the auditorium, checking audience members' tickets before reaching the stage. This was an excellent directorial choice that immediately immersed the audience in the world of the play. I even found myself being "fined" for not having a ticket, and the light-hearted interaction demonstrated Lisa's confidence and ability to engage naturally with the audience. Lisa remained fully committed to her role throughout, with her characterisation never wavering. As a constant presence on stage, Lisa provided continuity and delivered a confident, engaging performance from start to finish.

Michelle Drinkwater gave a heartfelt performance as Jayne, a character navigating the recent loss of her husband while providing guidance and wisdom to those around her. A particular highlight was her eulogy, which was delivered with genuine emotion and proved to be a moving moment that brought a tear to both my eye and my guest's. Michelle's commitment to the role extended beyond her dialogue, remaining fully engaged even in the quieter moments. At times, I would have liked to see a greater range in her vocal choices to add further contrast to the character. However, this did not detract from an otherwise sincere and convincing

performance, and Michelle remained a warm and engaging presence throughout the production.

Millie was a vibrant and engaging character, and **Corynne Dittrich** captured her social media obsessed 'influencer' persona with conviction. Her American accent remained consistent throughout, and she demonstrated strong physicality and a confident stage presence. The emotion at the reveal surrounding Millie's mental health was handled with sincerity, and her closing monologue was both heartfelt and moving. During the panic attack, I felt the emotion could have been slightly tightened to maintain the flow and pace of the scene, allowing the dialogue to have even greater impact. That said, Corynne's commitment to the role was evident throughout, and she delivered a thoughtful and emotionally engaging performance.

Dave Flanagan and **Barbara Hebdon** shared outstanding chemistry as Garry and Gabby, creating a completely believable husband and wife relationship. Their storyline, centred around a couple attempting to repair their marriage through counselling before celebrating their anniversary with a weekend away, felt authentic and was portrayed with warmth and honesty. The revelation that their marital breakdown stemmed from something as seemingly trivial as a ham sandwich became a brilliant running gag, providing plenty of laughs while still allowing the audience to appreciate the deeper issues within their relationship. Dave settled into the role quickly, displaying excellent comedic timing, expressive facial expressions and strong reactive acting. His delivery felt natural, balancing the humour of the character with the more sincere moments.

Barbara complemented this beautifully, giving a genuine and engaging performance. She demonstrated excellent comedic timing, believable characterisation and a wide emotional range, ensuring Gabby felt like a fully rounded character throughout. What impressed me most was how naturally they worked together. Their dialogue flowed with ease, they listened and reacted to one another truthfully, and their relationship felt established from the outset. Even when they were not the focus of the scene, both remained completely engaged in the action. Their subtle background acting around Millie's mental health struggles was particularly effective, adding another layer of emotion to an already powerful moment, genuinely giving me goosebumps.

Janine Roberts showcased excellent versatility in her dual roles as the Doctor and Sister Judy, creating such a clear contrast between the two characters that I found myself checking the programme to confirm they were played by the same actor. As Sister Judy, Janine delivered a hilarious and thoroughly engaging performance, portraying the nun's departure from her faith with excellent comedic timing and characterisation. Her a cappella rendition of 'Amazing Grace' was vocally strong and beautifully controlled, culminating in a perfectly judged comedic ending that was met with great appreciation from the audience. One of Janine's greatest strengths was her consistency. She remained completely in character throughout, never dropping her performance.

Michele Dean brought great energy to the role of Giggles the Clown, delivering a fun and engaging performance. Her physicality was particularly strong, helping to establish the character from the moment she appeared on stage, and her characterisation remained consistent throughout. Despite performing beneath heavy clown makeup, a large wig and the iconic red nose, Michele's facial expressions still shone through, allowing the audience to connect with the character and enhancing both the comedy and emotion of her performance.

From her first appearance, **Lesley Hall** established two distinctly different characters in the roles of Clair Voyant and Boss. As Clair Voyant, she fully committed to the role, delivering a wonderfully believable and entertaining character. Her attention to detail was particularly impressive, remaining in character throughout by reacting to unseen voices and constantly listening to "the other side". Her measured pace of speech suited the character perfectly, and her audience participation was a particular highlight, generating plenty of laughter and creating some truly memorable moments.

Although not physically appearing on stage, **Samantha Jane-Twigg** made a strong impression as the voice of Mother Superior. Her voiceover created a commanding omnipresence, ensuring the character's authority was felt throughout. Her diction was clear, her vocal choices suited the role perfectly, and the strength and conviction of her delivery made Mother Superior a memorable presence despite never being seen.

Samantha Duxbury and **Michael Pirks** should be commended for both their writing and direction of Off Track. It was particularly fascinating to learn from Samantha that the inspiration for the play came while she was herself waiting for a train. From such an everyday experience, the pair have created an original script that takes the audience on a genuine rollercoaster of emotion. The writing skilfully blends comedy with more poignant themes including marital breakdown, grief, mental health and the cost of living. Despite tackling a number of real-life issues, the script never felt overwhelming, with moments of humour carefully placed to provide a balance and allow the audience time to reflect.

The set, designed and constructed by **Ruth Gosney, Drew Gosney, Michelle Drinkwater, Colin Drinkwater** and **Emmett Drinkwater**, immediately immersed the audience in the world of the play. From the moment you entered the auditorium, the realistic Warrington Station sign established the location, while the LED lights below it added atmosphere throughout the performance. Attention to detail was very evident, with photographs of different areas of Warrington Station displayed around the auditorium, further enhancing the sense of place. The addition of the 'Platform 1' signage across the front of the stage completed the illusion, creating a believable and effective station environment that perfectly supported the action on stage.

Michael Pirk's lighting and sound design supported the production well. The lighting, although simple, created atmosphere throughout, with perfectly timed blackouts and fades. The sound cues were equally well executed, ensuring smooth scene transitions and enhancing the action on stage.

The programme, designed by **Olivia Pryer**, was thoughtfully produced. With subtle nods to the train station theme incorporated into the design, it complemented the production well and provided an attractive introduction to the performance.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to **Michael Pirks** and **Samantha Duxbury** for their warm hospitality throughout the evening. It was clear from the moment we arrived that SOUP Productions is much more than a theatre company, it is a welcoming, supportive family, and the sense of camaraderie was reflected both on and off the stage. Off Track was a thoroughly enjoyable original production that balanced humour with heartfelt moments, tackling real life issues with sensitivity while never losing its entertaining spirit. It was a pleasure to watch such a committed company bring this story to life with such enthusiasm and authenticity. I look forward to seeing what they create next, and I have no doubt it will be just as imaginative, ambitious and enjoyable.

PHOTOGRAPHS



PROGRAMME

SOUP PRODUCTIONS
PRESENTS



NODA
For every stage

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY
WRITTEN BY SAMANTHA DUXBURY &
MICHAEL PIRKS

OFF TRACK