



Show Report

Altrincham Little Theatre

Same Time Next Year

30 September 2025

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	Same Time Next Year
SOCIETY	Altrincham Little Theatre
VENUE	Altrincham Little Theatre
GENRE	Drama
CAST SIZE	2
DIRECTOR	Lisa Barker
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	Michael Russell
STAGE MANAGER	Lisa Barker
SET DESIGN	John Newman & Lisa Barker
LIGHTING DESIGN / OPERATOR	Jan Taylor
SOUND DESIGN / OPERATOR	Jan Taylor
WARDROBE	Alt Theatre Wardrobe & Cast Members
CONTINUITY & PROMPT	Janet Reidsma
PROPERTIES	Martin Carrick & Lisa Barker
SET BUILD	Alan Reidsma, Don Hines, John Howe, Andy Peate, John Newman, Martin Carrick & Paul Blackwell
SET BUILD ASSISTED BY	Pauline Glover, Stephen Glover & Lisa Barker

CAST LIST

GEORGE	Alex Clarke
DORIS	Sarah Kirk

DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Tuesday 30th September 2025
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Wednesday 1st October 2025
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA0003
NSA LOGO ON POSTER	Yes
NSA IN PROGRAMME	Front Cover Logo Only
PROGRAMME CLASS	Best Essential Information Design

THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT

1384

STRONGEST ELEMENTS

Holding the Stage with Ease

- Carrying the weight of a dialogue-heavy two-hand play is no easy task, yet both **Alex Clarke** and **Sarah Kirk** rose take the challenge with confidence. Their command of the script ensured the story flowed seamlessly, and not once did we hear the presence of a prompt.

Costumes that Told a Story

The costumes were thoughtfully chosen to reflect the passing decades, providing visual cues that supported the audience's understanding of time and change. Each outfit enhanced the storytelling, subtly marking character development while anchoring the play in its era.

Hospitality that Stood Out

The evening was made all the more enjoyable by the warm and professional welcome from the Altrincham Little Theatre team. Their evident collaboration and shared passion for the production and the theatre itself created a positive atmosphere that extended from the front of house to the stage.

Same Time, Next Year by Bernard Slade is a romantic comedy that tells the story of Doris and George, who meet unexpectedly at a country inn and begin a secret love affair. Despite both being married to other people, they agree to meet once a year at the same location. Over the course of 25 years, these encounters provide an intimate window into the evolution of their relationship, while also reflecting broader social and cultural changes in society. The play combines humour, poignancy, and reflection, highlighting both the personal and societal shifts that occur over the decades.

Before the performance began, there was a welcoming announcement from **Altrincham Little Theatre's** Chair, **Steven Smith**. In the brief time before the show, Steven had been running the box office, managing the bar, and personally welcoming guests, proving remarkable dedication. He shared that the society is set to celebrate its 130-year anniversary in February 2026, a milestone that underscores the longstanding tradition and contribution of amateur theatre to the local community.

This was my first visit to Altrincham Little Theatre, and the hospitality from the team, particularly Steven, was exemplary. During a short tour of the theatre, Steven shared fascinating insights into the building's history and the developments that have taken place over the years. Of particular

interest was the society's extensive collection of props, furniture, and costumes, all of which is available for hire, demonstrating both the depth of resources available and the care with which they are kept. This collection is clearly an asset for future productions, and the professionalism and knowledge of the team ensured a warm and welcoming start to the evening.

Alex Clarke delivered a committed performance as *George*, tackling a role that is both dialogue-heavy and emotionally nuanced. The character of George is a charming yet often anxious accountant, whose vulnerability and humour reveal a man quietly wrestling with responsibility, change, and his own search for fulfilment. Clarke's command of the script was clear throughout the performance; even when minor slips occurred, he recovered quickly, maintaining the pace and flow essential to this two-hander.

Clarke's American accent was convincing in parts, though at times it slipped back into his natural voice. Nevertheless, he managed to convey George's emotional journey effectively, with glimpses of depth particularly evident in Act 2 Scene 1. Vocal variety could have been more pronounced in key moments, such as Act 1 Scene 2, which might have added further emotional resonance. A small, missed cue involving an early adlib about a phone ringing was managed adeptly, though a subtler adjustment could have ensured the moment went unnoticed by the audience. Overall, Clarke showed commitment and timing, providing a solid foundation for the role and leaving room for further refinement in future performances.

Sarah Kirk delivered an assured and engaging performance as *Doris*, emerging as the more confident of the two performers. Doris is a warm and open-hearted woman whose wit, vulnerability, and growing self-assurance chart her journey through love, personal change, and the shifting times. Kirk's portrayal allowed the audience to witness this character's development over the years, reflecting careful work on the role and a deep understanding of the character's arc.

Like Clarke, Kirk handled the fast-paced dialogue with ease, delivering sharp comebacks and one-liners with excellent comic timing. Some moments of conflict, however, remained understated, with arguments rarely building to their full intensity. Greater emotional contrast in these scenes could have heightened the impact of quieter, tender moments and made the reconciliations that followed more affecting. Nevertheless, Kirk's ability to remain fully present and responsive throughout the performance was impressive. Her American accent was consistent, and her natural chemistry with Clarke lent authenticity to their partnership, enhancing the audience's connection to the story.

Together, Clarke and Kirk formed a credible and engaging on-stage partnership. The duo sustained the demands of this play with confidence, pacing, and energy, ensuring the audience remained fully engaged throughout. Their rapport was evident in subtle gestures and

interactions, including the small, endearing moment of Clarke kissing Kirk's hand in the blackout at the end of scenes. Whether intentional or not, this action reflected the mutual respect and enjoyment the performers shared, and it added a layer of authenticity to the relationship at the heart of the play.

Lisa Barker's direction showed a clear and cohesive creative vision. Every element of the production, from performance to technical design, contributed to a unified and compelling interpretation of the play. Barker's sagacious guidance of the actors enabled them to inhabit their roles fully and maintain the pace and rhythm essential to a dialogue-heavy duologue.

The costumes, which were put together by the **cast** themselves along with support from the **Society's Wardrobe team**, effectively reflected the changing periods over the 25-year span, with each character undergoing six or seven distinct outfit changes. Attention to detail helped convey the era and character development, though small touches – such as a pair of chinos that could have been accessorised with a belt – might have further elevated the execution..

The set, designed by **John Newman** and **Lisa Barker**, was largely static, with only minimal adjustments made between scenes. Despite its simplicity, it conveyed the necessary sense of place effectively. A hand drawing of the set by Barker, seen during our theatre tour, clearly translated onto the stage, demonstrating careful planning and a strong creative vision. Small details, such as suitcases positioned near the proscenium arch and switched between scenes, helped signal the passage of time, while era-specific touches – from groovy 1960s motifs to 1970s Electro Rock styling – were charming and effective. The decorative tiles forming the fireplace surround added character and authenticity, convincingly suggesting a real hearth.

While these elements were successful, further adjustments could have enhanced the depiction of time. Slight changes to the room, such as swapping throws on the sofa, updating bedding, adding era-specific pictures to the walls, or introducing a rug to complement the painted tiled floor, would have reinforced the passage of years. Scene changes were intentionally slow to accommodate costume adjustments, and the stage crew worked efficiently to ensure props and bedding were in place. Even so, more subtle tweaks – such as multiple curtains to reflect changing fashions or rearrangements of furniture – could have strengthened the sense of evolving time and added depth to the static set.

The lighting and sound, designed and operated by **Jan Taylor**, effectively enhanced the production without drawing attention away from the performers. Music reflecting the eras depicted in the play accompanied scene changes and were well chosen; the addition of chart-topping hits from each decade might have more immediately transported the audience to the specific year.

The use of working lights on stage – including two small fittings on the back wall and a lamp, which faded out during blackouts – was impressive, though these could have been used more creatively during the performance. Warm lighting to suggest sunlight streaming through the window was effective, and variations in colour or movement could have suggested changes in weather or the passage of the day, further enriching the visual storytelling. Overall, both lighting and sound were simple but effective, complementing the narrative and supporting the actors without distraction.

The staging, set, and props effectively highlighted the passage of time, while lighting, sound, and costumes enhanced the atmosphere and supported the storytelling. Barker's direction ensured a seamless balance between humour, emotional depth, and reflection, engaging the audience intellectually and emotionally. The production flowed naturally, with each element working in harmony to bring the narrative to life. Her clear oversight allowed both performers to flourish and provided the audience with a polished and cohesive theatre experience.

Same Time, Next Year was an enjoyable and well-executed production. The combined strengths of Clarke and Kirk's performances, Barker's clear directorial vision, and the thoughtful use of technical elements created a cohesive, engaging, and emotionally resonant piece of theatre. The production balanced humour and poignancy effectively, with each aspect – from set and props to lighting, sound, and costume – working together to support the storytelling. The audience was consistently engaged, both intellectually and emotionally, and the care and collaboration evident in the production contributed to an overall memorable performance. Altrincham Little Theatre can take pride in presenting a charming and heartwarming show and thank you to the society for their warm hospitality and I cannot wait to return.

PHOTOGRAPHS









ALT: Same Time, Next Year.

Sept 2



PROGRAMME

