

The All-England Theatre Festival



The All-England Theatre Festival has a history dating back to 1919 when the British Drama League was formed. By June 1923 there were 360 affiliated societies which included amateur and professional bodies. In 1938 the final of the National Festival was held outside London for the first time, following the invitation of the Scottish Community Drama Association. Entries totalled 602.

The war brought a significant reduction in the League's membership but activities continued as best they could throughout. The emphasis changed somewhat to encourage Youth Clubs and military units for educational purposes. The All-England Theatre Festival organises an eliminating series of festivals which leads ultimately to the English Final.

England is divided into four Areas for the purposes of this Festival: Northern, Central, Eastern and Western. Each Area is also divided into a number of Divisions according to the size and/or history of the areas.

The winner of the English Final goes on to compete against the winners of similar festivals in Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

VERLINGUE

Verlingue is proud to sponsor SCDF. Privately owned and locally based, the Verlingue ICB Group is amongst the top twenty independent insurance brokers in the UK, providing insurance and risk management services to businesses and individuals. If you would like to know more about these services, please contact Maia Olesen on 0208 282 8510 or email maia.olesen@verlingue.com

Regulated and authorised by the FCA

Festival Information

Venue

Barn Theatre

Bluehouse Lane, Oxted, Surrey, RH8 0AA

Festival Dates

23rd - 28th February 2026

Festival Adjudicator

Cherry Stephenson G.O.D.A

The largest preliminary round festival in the UK

Entry Form A deadline 31st October

**Winning team prize of
£500 to be won**

Southern Counties Drama Festival

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Kent, TN16 1RA

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www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk/scdf.html



Barn Theatre, Oxted

Southern Counties Drama Festival 2026

23rd - 28th February



"Can't wait to come back next year it was so much fun"



"Such high standards, a super week of live theatre"



"A great week of theatre, thanks so much"



Premier festival of the Eastern Region

**A competitive festival of
one-act plays varying from
20 minutes to 55 minutes in length**

Barn Theatre

**Bluehouse Lane, Oxted,
Surrey, RH8 0AA**



Southern Counties Drama Festival

"The premier festival of the AETF Eastern Area"

The Southern Counties Drama Festival has been an important part of local amateur dramatics in Surrey and Kent for over 70 years. Traditionally the venue of the Festival had moved around with different groups hosting the event each year. As time moved on, the standards of technical facilities were found lacking in some of these venues, which were in the main church halls, hurriedly converted for theatre use on the morning of the technical rehearsals. In 1989 the Festival moved to the Barn Theatre, was a great success and since that time the Barn has become the resident home to the Southern Counties Drama Festival.

Eighteen years ago there was a change in the Festival Management team who have since rejuvenated this popular Festival to become a premier event in the annual UK arts diary.

The 2025 Festival

The Southern Counties Drama Festival enjoyed another successful season in 2025 with 14 entries. The standard of the entries was particularly high and it was not easy to forecast any of the winners until the final play had been performed on the Saturday evening. SCDF are pleased to support the winning team as they progress to the successive rounds of the All-England Theatre Festival. The ongoing sponsorship provided by Verlingue is warmly welcomed and will enable SCDF to continue their support for the winning teams in future years.

In 2026 the winning team will take away a £500 cash prize

2025 SCDF Youth Winner
Old Times by Molly Taylor
performed by Glow Theatre Group

2025 SCDF Winners Award
Medicine by Enda Walsh
performed by Disaster Class

SCDF 2026 Adjudicator Cherry Stephenson G.o.D.A.



Cherry Stephenson
Cert. Ed. B.Phil (Sp. Needs)
M.A. FRSA

Advised by her mother not to go on the stage, Cherry began her career as a specialist drama teacher. She has taught at every level in education, in state schools, special schools, therapeutic units for young people and running an MA course for teachers for the University of Leicester. She has accrued many years' experience, working in all aspects of theatre and educational drama, from directing to acting and theatre design. She has directed a professional Theatre in Education company, amateur and youth theatre groups, and organised county wide events involving several hundred young people and adults. Touring productions extensively abroad and to the Edinburgh Fringe has been a regular feature of her work.

Cherry was Advisory Officer to Leicestershire for Drama and Dance, for fifteen years. Her many projects include running a Shakespeare in Schools Project with 14 schools across all ages from 5-18 for the RSA, becoming a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

As a headteacher, she set up a Community Theatre group for all ages. Now, she feeds her passion as a committee member for Leicestershire & Rutland One Act Play Festival, and as a GoDA adjudicator of many years standing.

Cherry is looking forward to spending time at SCDF.

Our Festival Patrons



Diana Drysdale 'got the bug' for performing when her childhood dancing school put her on stage at the Scala Theatre in London in 1947, playing Pan. After leaving school she had two years with East Surrey Operatic Society as a dancer but acting being her preferred activity, she joined Merstham

ADS in 1958.

MADS were founder members of the Betchworth Drama Festival (as SCDF was originally called) and she appeared in many of their entries. She acted in and directed many MADS entries over the years and they achieved Best Set, a couple of Best Supporting Actors and a Best Actress. She was flattered to be asked to be Vice Patron of SCDF and is looking forward to being part of this very friendly contest.



John Simmons moved to Surrey in 1973 and within two years joined Merstham Amateur Dramatic Society (MADS) and Reigate Amateur Dramatic Society (RATS).

He soon fell in love with drama festivals, becoming RATS representative for the Betchworth Festival in 1979. He became

Treasurer of the Festival in 1982, a post which he held until 1985 when he became Chairman. He was Chairman until 2005, running the Festival with his great friend and Secretary Betty Bristow. John was also Divisional Chairman of festivals held both at the Ashcroft Theatre, Croydon and the Secombe Centre, Sutton and Area Representative for many years.

John's other great love is antiques of which he is an avid collector and through this he has been involved in dressing many sets. John also enjoys reading, music of many different styles, visiting friends and is thrilled to be asked to be Southern Counties Drama Festival Patron, re-connecting with old friends and making new ones at the Barn.