

JUNE 2018

# newsletter

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**sewellbarn**  
THEATRE

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[www.sewellbarn.org](http://www.sewellbarn.org)

## Our Next Production

# A Month of Sundays

by Bob Larbey | directed by Mel Sessions

14-16, 20-23 June 2018 at 7.30 pm, matinée 23 June at 2.30 pm



Photography: Barry Parsons

'A Month of Sundays' is a bittersweet comedy about the trials and tribulations experienced by the elderly. Cooper has chosen to spend his remaining years in a residential care home, rather than become a burden on his family. His daughter and her 'flat-roofed' husband, visit him on the first Sunday in every month. This ritual is endured by all but enjoyed by none. Cooper and his friend Aylott face increasing fragility, both physical and mental, with humour, wit and a degree of heroism.

I first came upon this play when I took part in a production a few years after it was written and always felt it would suit the intimacy of a performance space like the Sewell Barn. The play was first produced in 1985 and we are setting it in the 80s, but its themes of ageing, awkward family relationships and having friends on whom one can depend are timeless.

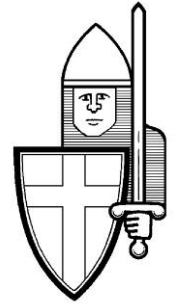
The play's author, Bob Larbey, is better known for his scriptwriting for TV. With his co-writer John Esmonde he wrote such sitcoms as 'The Good Life' and on his own wrote 'A Fine Romance' and later, 'As Time Goes By', starring Geoffrey Palmer and Dame Judi Dench. These two actors said of him, respectively: "Bob Larbey – I think – is a totally brilliant writer" and "I'd say a man who gave me more lines to make more people laugh than anybody else in 53 years".

There's no violence, bad language or energetic action in this play but I have been extremely fortunate in procuring a highly dedicated and talented cast who have made the relationships very real and together with the excellent text they compel you to listen, laugh and perhaps even cry; essential ingredients for a trip to the theatre.

*Mel Sessions - Director*

## Bookings

Our telephone and walk-in ticket bookings are handled by **St George's Music Shop** (near the Norwich Playhouse). Chris and his team will be pleased to welcome you to 17-19 St George's Street Norwich NR3 1AB, tel: 01603 626414, or visit our online bookings link at <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/sewellbarn>. Payment can be made by credit or debit card at St George's, but please note that only cash payments can be made if purchasing tickets on the door.



## Our previous production

### Romeo & Juliet

by William Shakespeare | directed by Carole Lovett

10-12, 16-19 May 2018



Photography: Barry Parsons

We could not have been more delighted with the response to this production. This iconic tragedy was set in the present day. Lord Capulet and Lady Montague were rival political candidates. The weapons were not swords but fists and knives. All members of the large cast, of all ages, worked hard together and made a wonderful team; and the result was a show that achieved excellent ticket sales (including a full house), entranced two large school parties, and received glowing reviews. Here are just a couple.

"Last night I made a late decision to go and see Romeo and Juliet at the Sewell Barn Theatre and I am mighty glad I did. It is such a well known story with so many versions of it around that **it was an absolute pleasure to watch a production that felt so fresh and had such energy in it.** I certainly don't remember laughing so much during a performance of this piece before but the cast have clearly worked hard on getting to know and understand the script and have found real humour in places. That isn't to say the show is played for laughs, far from it, it is well balanced and still packs a hefty punch. The stage was used to full effect including a twist on the classic balcony scene. A strong ensemble cast with particularly memorable performances from Mercutio, the Nurse and the Sister, but the stars of the night were young Juliet and Romeo with such well portrayed characters that you really believed in, cared for and were heart broken for. Well done to all involved! Go see this show, people..." *Matt S*

"Saw Romeo and Juliet last night and is **by far my favourite production I've seen.** Fantastic actors and great atmosphere. Brilliant evening!" *Alexandra C*

"It was FANTASTIC!!! And I'm honestly not just saying, but I think **that's the best production of Romeo and Juliet I've ever seen, and I've seen it with the RSC twice.**" *Hana H*

More reviews of this and other shows can be found on our blog at <http://sewellbarntheatre.blogspot.co.uk>.

## Coming Soon

# Tomfoolery

Adapted by **Cameron Mackintosh and Robin Ray** | Directed by **Cassie Tillet**  
**12-14 & 18-21 July 2018**



A revue of the witty, wicked, thoroughly twisted world of songwriter Tom Lehrer. This Harvard mathematics professor found world-wide acclaim during the 1960s with performances and recordings of dry, cynical, good humoured attacks on the A-bomb, racism, pollution, the military, boy scouts and many other topics including his infamous 'Masochism Tango'. A typical review observed "Mr Lehrer's muse is not fettered by such inhibiting factors as taste." Years after he stopped performing his satire remains exceptionally funny, intelligent, observant and thought-provoking, and resonates topically and painfully half a century later.

Cassie, one of our two Artistic Directors, is delighted to be working with an exceptionally talented cast, including faces familiar to Barn audiences and new friends; and with her husband Selwyn at the piano (he even gets a word in occasionally). This promises to be an evening of hilarity, surprises, shocks, sophistication and insane energy, and will prove a worthy finale to our successful 2017/18 season. We hope to see you there.

## New Season Launch 2018/19

We welcomed a wonderful turnout of long-standing members and new faces to our Season Launch last month. The new brochures were available, as well as audition details for the new season, and the widely varied programme has been met with great approval.

Full details and audition notes can be found on our website (under What's On and Auditions), but here is a brief summary of the season.

Dates	Play	Author	Director	Auditions
11-20 Oct	<b><i>Handbagged</i></b>	Moira Buffini	Clare Williamson	05/06/2018
22 Nov-1 Dec	<b><i>Not About Heroes</i></b>	Stephen MacDonald	Rob Tiffen	24/06/2018
10-19 Jan	<b><i>These Shining Lives</i></b>	Melanie Marnich	Jess Hutchings	28/08/2018
21 Feb-2 Mar	<b><i>Confusions</i></b>	Alan Ayckbourn	Angela Rowe	21/10/2018
28 Mar-6 Apr	<b><i>Faustus</i></b>	Christopher Marlowe	Chris Bealey	02/12/2018
2-11 May	<b><i>The Children</i></b>	Lucy Kirkwood	Peter Wood	20/01/2019
6-15 Jun	<b><i>Yerma</i></b>	Federico Garcia Lorca	Phillip Rowe	27/01/2019
11-20 July	<b><i>Waiting in the Wings</i></b>	Noel Coward	Cassie Tillet	03/03/2019

## Important audition note

There was a misprint in the Audition Notes for **Confusions** (Feb/Mar): the auditions will be held on 21 October, with rehearsals commencing around 11 December.

## Audition notices

You'll notice from the above table that the first two shows in the 2018/19 season will be auditioning in June. The first date (*Handbagged* on 5 June) may well have passed by the time you receive this newsletter, but do contact the director if you've only just missed it – you may be just what she is looking for!

### **Handbagged** by Moira Buffini

Performances: 11-20 October / Audition: 5 June

Director: Clare Williamson [cwilliamson197@gmail.com](mailto:cwilliamson197@gmail.com) / 07742 156686

What went on in the private, weekly meetings between two of the most iconic figures in recent British history? The Queen and Margaret Thatcher came from very different backgrounds but were similar in age. This play imagines the women's often frostily well-mannered, polite behaviour as they jockey for position whilst discussing the key events of the day. It's a buoyant, opinionated history lesson covering the eleven years of Thatcher's premiership, aided and enhanced by a succession of satirical cameos of the great and the good (as well as the occasional footman) all portrayed by two male actors. But there are also moments of almost unbearable pathos as the Queen hears of the murder of Lord Mountbatten, and Mrs Thatcher describes the Grand Hotel bombing. The play is highly stylised - there are always two Queens and two Thatchers on stage and the resulting comic contradiction of statements and events by the older, more knowing, versions of the women along with interventions by Actors 1 & 2, both in and out of role, add perspective and food for thought as well as humour. Even the interval is a bone of contention: typically, the Queen wants a break, but the PM is determined to press on.

**T** – an older Margaret Thatcher – playing age 60+

**Q** – an older Queen Elizabeth II – playing age 60+

**Mags** – a younger Margaret Thatcher – playing age 40+

**Liz** – a younger Queen Elizabeth II – playing age 40+

*Please note, I am not interested in "lookalikes" – wigs, costume, body language and handbags will all be used to create an impression of the characters. Work on voice will be integrated into rehearsals.*

**Actor 1** – addresses audience and interacts with Actor 2 as himself but also plays a range of roles including Michael Shea, Press Secretary, Kenneth Kaunda, Nancy Reagan and Neil Kinnock.

**Actor 2** - addresses audience and interacts with Actor 1 as himself but also plays a range of roles including Denis Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Prince Philip.

*Please note, there is no fixed playing age for Actors 1 & 2*

### **Not About Heroes** by Stephen MacDonald

Performances: 22-24, 29 November – 1 December / Audition: 24 June

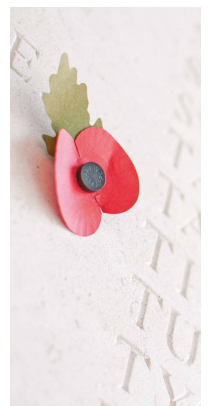
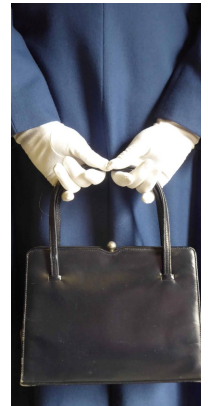
Director: Rob Tiffen [robtiffen@gmail.com](mailto:robtiffen@gmail.com) / 07415 869283

The play explores the relationship between the Great War poets Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. It is told through a series of flashbacks by Sassoon later in his life, from Owen and Sassoon meeting in Craiglockhart hospital up to Owen's death shortly before armistice. The play is a mixture of very theatrical moments coupled with beautiful, tender naturalistic moments between them. The play explores war, poetry, their closeted homosexuality, and Sassoon's strident anti-war attitude. And we will be performing it around the 100th anniversary of the end of the Great War. This should make the performances particularly poignant.

#### **CASTING 2m**

Owen – M, playing age around 20

Sassoon – M, playing age 30s/40s.



## Would you be available to help?

We need **Front of House** help! Jane Page runs the Front of House system. She organises the rota for stewards and bar helpers, and she keeps the bar stocked. She cannot do this alone! As well as needing volunteers for stewards and serving on the bar (training given), we need someone to be Jane's right hand person - to help with the shopping etc. (the bar doesn't stock itself!). Could you possibly be that person? If you could, please contact Jane on [foh@sewellbarn.org](mailto:foh@sewellbarn.org).

## Wardrobe Sale

It took several sorties to Ropemakers to identify garments that we could sell as vintage. We could only sell items not wearable on stage due to size, pattern etc, but a large number were taken from the store. The wardrobe team shared out the ironing, so that all looked good on the rails. After the last performance of Romeo and Juliet, sterling work was done by all in getting to the Barn early to get rails and clothing out for sale in the Theatre in time for the opening at 11am on Sunday.

We had a steady flow of buyers and nearly reached our £1000 target. We had some good items left which we are still selling. Anyone interested can contact Anne Giles ([hire@sewellbarn.org](mailto:hire@sewellbarn.org)). The remainder were distributed among a number of local charities. Since then we have had some more interest in our collection, so hope to eventually clear and make a good profit. Many thanks to all who helped make this first venture a success.

*June Gentle*

## Sponsorship opportunity for local businesses

There is now the opportunity for local businesses to become involved in the Sewell Barn Theatre's 2018-19 season - promoting their services and obtaining other benefits whilst providing additional income to the theatre, at either bronze, silver or gold sponsorship levels. If you own a business, work in a business or know a business that might wish to take advantage of this opportunity, please provide your suggestions to the Barn's Marketing Coordinator, Phil Williamson ([marketing@sewellbarn.org](mailto:marketing@sewellbarn.org)), who will then provide further details.

## Adult Drama Workshops

**Clare Howard** has been a valued supporter of the Sewell Barn for many years, highly-regarded as performer, director and Artistic Director (2005-2011). Anyone who has worked with her will understand that these workshops will be very well worth attending! Read on for more details:



"I'm sure some of you will remember that I ran mixed-ability adult drama workshops during my time as Artistic Director at the Sewell Barn. I really loved doing them, and a lot of people have been kind enough to tell me how much you enjoyed them. I'm now running my own business, **RagBag Creative Projects**, and the drama workshops are going to be happening again around Norfolk.

The emphasis on all my activities is on fun, and they are all just for adults. Some of the drama workshops will be aimed at people who want to explore theatre skills in a relaxed group, others will be promoted as an activity which can boost wellbeing, boost confidence and develop skills such as public speaking and creative problem solving. At a later date, there will also be 'no skills required' craft groups – messy play for grown-ups!

If you'd like to keep in touch, and find out more about my activities, you can either find RagBag Creative Projects on Facebook, email me on [clare@ragbagprojects.co.uk](mailto:clare@ragbagprojects.co.uk), phone me on 07981 939847 or check out my website (which will be up and running any day now) [www.ragbagprojects.co.uk](http://www.ragbagprojects.co.uk).

I'd be really grateful for your support in promoting the groups and it would be wonderful to see some familiar faces again at some of them. As a thank you for everything the Barn has given me, I'll be offering a small discount to holders of Sewell Barn Membership Cards."

## What else is on in the area?

**Maddermarket Theatre** [www.maddermarket.co.uk](http://www.maddermarket.co.uk)

St. John's Alley, Norwich NR2 1DR

***Cleo, Camping, Emmanuelle and Dick*** by Terry Johnson

**22-30 June** at 7.30pm; matinée at 2.30 pm on 23 & 30 June



**Great Hall Theatre Company** [www.greathalltheatre.org.uk](http://www.greathalltheatre.org.uk)

The Assembly Rooms, Theatre Street, Norwich NR2 1RQ

***The Devil at Midnight*** by Brian Clemens

**26-30 June** at 7.30 pm, matinée 26 June at 2.30 pm



To keep up-to-date on all the excellent theatrical offerings from our three very different Norwich venues (the Sewell Barn, the Maddermarket and the Great Hall), visit [norwichamateurtheatre.weebly.com](http://norwichamateurtheatre.weebly.com).