

FEBRUARY 2020

# newsletter

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**sewellbarn**  
THEATRE

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## Our Next Production: The Female of the Species

by Joanna Murray-Smith | Directed by Mel Sessions

**13-15, 19-22 February 2020 (matinée 22 February at 2.30pm)**



Photography: Andrew Evans

Our February production has the distinction of being the 300<sup>th</sup> show staged at the Sewell Barn Theatre, halfway through our fortieth season. This wickedly funny play by Australian author Joanna Murray-Smith was inspired by a true life incident involving Germaine Greer held hostage by an angry student.

Acclaimed feminist writer Margot Mason has lost her muse. While struggling with her next best seller, she's interrupted by a series of disturbed and unwelcome visitors.

The play premiered in London in 2008, starring Eileen Atkins and Anna Maxwell Martin. A satirical comedy which dissolves into farce as new characters are introduced, it is full of bad language and behaviour. Germaine Greer herself reacted badly to the play, but its author maintains: "... while I used an incident in her (Germaine Greer's) life to springboard the play, I was never interested in using her as my Margot... my play was about an ideological collision (between generations of women) and not a documentary re-enactment of the actual incident... I thought Margot was finally tremendously loveable and admirable in many ways and of course very funny."

Janet Clay plays Margot and Rebekah Oelrichs the student. The other visitors are her daughter and son-in-law (Michelle Moore and Jonathan Redding), her publisher (David White) and the taxi driver (Wesley Burgess, making his debut on the Barn stage). This very funny play deserves good audiences. Forgive the bad language and the 'in your face' sexual references. Also forgive the characters. As Murray-Smith says: "I think, ultimately, it is less a play 'about feminism' and more a play about how human beings can never keep any extreme ideology sacrosanct in the face of their own foibles and the complexities of life. Doesn't matter if you are talking about feminism or Marxism... our political engagement with the world is necessary but it has to incorporate our emotional complexities."

**Please note: the play contains strong language and adult themes.**

# 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 [www.ticketsource.co.uk/sewellbarn](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/sewellbarn). Payment can be made by credit or debit card at St George's or online, but please note that only cash payments can be made if purchasing tickets on the door.

## Our previous production: The Innocents

By **William Archibald** | directed by **Richard Hand**

*Adapted from Henry James' The Turn of the Screw*

**9-11, 15-18 January 2020**



Photography: Sean Owen of Reflective Arts

Based on the greatest of Victorian ghost stories – Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* – this is a play about a haunted mansion and a governess's attempts to save the two orphaned children who inhabit it. Are the ghosts real or a figment of the imagination? Of those two possibilities, which is the most terrifying?

In Richard Hand's first Barn production, we were treated to highly accomplished performances by our two youngsters (Oscar Meir and Freya Prigmore), our two [mostly] silent and [always] terrifying ghosts (Ed Cairns and Georgia Dimopoulou) and the two hapless members of the staff of Bly House (Megan Artherton and Gill Tichborne). The eerie soundscape was specially composed by Phil Rowe, the evocative lighting by Chris Jones, and the simple but effective set by Phil Williamson, creating a remarkable and atmospheric production, ideally suited to our intimate theatre. The show ran to exceptionally high praise and very good audience attendance – including a full house on the last night.

"...It was **a truly excellent evening of theatre**...The whole play was presented with such understanding of how to create an unsettling atmosphere that really draws you in and makes for **an engrossing, unnerving and riveting production** that you can't take your eyes off." *Matt S*

"This retelling of a classic Henry James tale is a menacing and suspenseful production, with more chills than the winter weather...The small cast is led by Megan Artherton as governess Miss Giddens. She puts in an exceptional performance, with her initial over-cheeriness giving way to mental and physical decline. Along with her the audience can never quite be sure whether the 'ghosts' are real, or part of her imagination; Artherton's tension and nervous exhaustion are palpable... **This dark and provocative tale with an outstanding performance at its heart makes for a spooky winter treat.**" *James Goffin, EDP*

For more reviews of this and previous shows, please visit our blog at <http://sewellbarntheatre.blogspot.com>.

# Coming Soon: The Love of the Nightingale

by Timberlake Wertenbaker | Directed by Tony Fullwood

**26-28 March, 1-4 April 2020**



*"Listen. This is the noise of myth. It makes the same sound as shadow. Can you hear it?"*

A dispassionate Chorus narrates a story of forbidden love, unspeakable violence and terrible revenge. A story of the power of words and the power to silence them.

Well-suited to the MeToo and Time's Up era, this play presents a modern re-telling of the myth of Philomele, daughter of the king of Athens, her sister Procne and brother-in-law Tereus. It was written for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1988.

**Contains adult themes**

## Our next auditions

### Orca

by **Matt Grinter**

Audition date: **Sunday 23 February** at 2pm

Performance dates: **11-13 , 17-20 June** (including matinee on 20 June)

Director: **Sabrina Poole** [sdpoole93@hotmail.com](mailto:sdpoole93@hotmail.com)



*An incisive, unflinching insight into what makes a community tolerate the unthinkable.*

Midsummer. The village must choose a new Daughter to sail with the fishing boats and bless the waters, keeping them safe from the roaming orcas for another year. Fan hopes with all her heart to be the one they choose. But her older sister Maggie says she must never, never, go with the boats. Because something happened to Maggie out there. And no one will admit it.

The production will draw on folk lore and traditions, and utilise soundscapes, to explore how a single person can make or break a community.

There are two male and three female roles to be cast. The three girls are all teenagers (actresses should be 16 years old or over), and the two men are 40+ and 50+. For full details of characters, auditions, rehearsals and contact details, please visit our website at <http://www.sewellbarn.org/orcaauditions.html>.

### Under Milk Wood

by **Dylan Thomas**

Audition date: **Sunday 1 March** at 7.30pm

Performance dates: **16-18, 22-25 July** (including matinee on 25 July)

Director: Cassie Tillett [cassie@tillett.org.uk](mailto:cassie@tillett.org.uk) / 07802 475110



*"Time passes. Listen. Time passes."*

The inhabitants of Llareggub are asleep. They dream. They wake. They continue to dream. They go about their daily business. This being Wales, they sing. They meet and part and disagree and weep and love and complain and rejoice. They sleep again. Their world continues to turn, as does ours.

Dylan Thomas created this extraordinary community across many years, but it was first performed as 'a play for voices' in 1953 in New York, with Thomas himself as the First Voice and the Revd Eli Jenkins. The characters are at once familiar and supernatural, hilarious and tragic, disturbing and reassuring. Thomas referred to earlier versions of the play as 'the town that was mad'; but who is to say what is normality, what is eccentricity and what is insanity?

This production will be created entirely by a cast of ten (5M/5F) (except for the Voice of the Guidebook and Captain Cat, which have been precast). Each actor will play at least three named roles, plus several other un-named roles (e.g. children, gossiping women, fishermen and so on). Finally, all speeches allocated to the First Voice (the Second Voice is not shown separately in the script we'll be using) will be given to members of the ensemble. In other words, nobody will be off-stage for more than a few minutes at a time!

For full details of characters, auditions, rehearsals and contact details, please visit the audition page on our website at <http://www.sewellbarn.org/milkwoodauditions.html>.

## 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

***Wuthering Heights*** by Jo Clifford **21-29 February**

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

The Assembly Rooms, Theatre Street, Norwich NR2 1RQ

***One Fine Day*** by Dennis Lumborg **10-14 March 2020**

