

NOVEMBER 2020

newsletter

Editor Jill Fuller newsletter@sewellbarn.org | Design Cassie Tillett admin@sewellbarn.org

sewellbarn
THEATRE

Constitution Hill
Norwich NR3 4BB

Box Office: 01603 626414

www.sewellbarn.org

Live performance returns to The Sewell Barn Theatre **Put Your Shorts On!**

NEW DATES: 16-19 December at 7:30pm (Wed-Sat) with a 2:30pm matinee on 19 December

As this is written during the month-long Lockdown #2, clearly we will not be staging the plays on the dates originally proposed. However, we're not letting that stop us...

The show was due to be performed on Wednesday 2 to Saturday 5 December. As the present lockdown is due to finish (assuming it doesn't get extended) on Wednesday 2, clearly it's not practical to go ahead with those dates.

However: we feel we can still do this. We've consulted with all cast & crew over the last few days, and we have decided to perform a fortnight later than planned (16-19 December) - this gives us a bit of leeway if lockdown gets extended, and if it doesn't it means we get a bit more 'real' rehearsal time (including, of course, technical setup and final dress rehearsals). We were able to rehearse for real until 4 November, and have our basic 'blocking' and staging in place.

We are therefore holding online rehearsals by Zoom for the next month, concentrating on character work and lines. This means that when, all being well, we can return to the theatre on Thursday 3 December, we can 'hit the ground running', and have the show ready to present as planned.

We are very proud of our team for being willing and able to work on these shifting sands, and have every confidence that we will be able to provide an excellent evening of entertainment. Of course, we have no idea what the situation will be come December, and have to be prepared for further disruption; but we will keep everyone informed of our plans.

If you, or somebody you know, has already booked tickets (and we're delighted to say that we'd sold 17% of available seats already), don't worry. We will be in touch with you very soon (or you may have heard from us already by the time you receive this), using the contact details you gave us via TicketSource, to offer you the option of

- keeping the same booking day for the new period of performances
- changing to a different day
- cancelling your booking and receiving a refund

NB: We're also hoping to be able to provide an online version of the show, accessible behind a paywall. We are working on this at present and will publish further details as soon as we are able.

The Shorts teams rehearsing on Zoom through lockdown...

Part One: Clare Williamson directs Aura Guha, Jose Tarouca and Jan Farrar (plus Ralph Yarrow, and assisted by SM Anne Giles, not shown here).



Part Two: Cassie Tillett directs Ayshea Christian, Harriet Waterhouse, Kevin Oelrichs and Matt Nobbs, assisted by SM Selwyn Tillett.



Stella Jay



I have just heard the news that Stella Jay has passed away. Our thoughts go out her family during these difficult times.

It seems that Stella was part of the foundations of the Sewell Barn. So how did it all start? Well, her son Peter was a student at the Blyth Jex School (as it was then). The headmistress at that time, Valerie Glauert, was mustering local support to help fundraise for a community Theatre. The Sewell Barn was born.

Stella, whose son was interested in drama, went along to offer her support. Peter would perform in the early days of the company; Stella came to help and loved being involved with all those friendly people starting a new, exciting chapter in the Norwich theatre scene. Quite simply, she never really left. She was neither an actor nor a stage manager; but she was involved in more productions than anyone else. Although never officially a member of the acting company, she certainly belonged to it, by default. Stella was to head the Front of House Team for over 25 years before handing the title to her friend, Jane Page. She retired twice, although she kept coming back. She would restock the bar from the cash-and-carry, sort out the cleaning rotas, and sometimes take the rubbish home to her own bin.

She was a great persuader, managing to bring on board people to fulfil various roles within the Barn family. She served on the management committee for over twenty years, and then went on to become a Trustee. In her front of house capacity she would include most of her family - husband, children and grandchildren - although I suspect that was the best place to be able to see and speak to her. She also, with her husband Wilf, managed the distribution of our newsletter for many years. Her service to the company and the Sewell Barn in general was never a task or a problem: she loved to be part of it all. She was always willing to help where needed.

A friend of mine once said of Stella. "She is the face of the Sewell Barn, the first face to greet you when you arrive to see a show; always with a big smile, you know that you are in place that cares."

Stella will be greatly missed by so many, but she will always be with us in spirit.

Robert Little

The photograph at the top of the page was taken by Andrew Evans as part of a set of images of all Trustees and Committee in 2004. We brought Stella on stage – not in reality, but virtually – in my July 2019 production of Noel Coward's *Waiting in the Wings*. One character, Martha, was spoken of but never appeared. I needed, however, an image of 'Martha' as part of the display board of all the residents in their days on stage, and Stella's family were happy to oblige with the lovely photograph on the right. We were delighted when they brought Stella to see her friends, and to see her own image as part of our front-of-house display, between the matinee and the evening performance of the show. She was a kind, gentle, hardworking and loyal member of our theatre family. RIP, dear Stella.



Cassie Tillett