

MARCH 2021

newsletter

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sewellbarn
THEATRE

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Exciting news... we're coming back!

With the government's announcement of the 'roadmap out of lockdown', we are very optimistic that we will be able to present at least one show between now and the end of what should have been our 2020/21 season.

In June, therefore, we are intending to return to our splendid compilation of work by talented local writers, 'Put Your Shorts On', that we had originally prepared for presentation in December 2020, but which was suspended due to the worsening of the pandemic and the reintroduction of lockdown. Precise dates, booking details and audience capacity will all be published as soon as possible – watch this space.

We're thrilled that almost all our original team are available for the production, and we look forward to working once more with Aura Guha, Jose Tarouca, Jan Farrar and Ralph Yarrow (part one) and Ayshea Christian, Harriet Waterhouse, Jonathan Redding and Kevin Oelrichs (part two). The sharp-eyed among you may have noticed one change; we were very sad that Matt Nobbs was unable to join us for the new dates, but we are delighted to welcome Barn stalwart, member of the Trustees, and supplier of our Norfolk Gin (!), Jonathan Redding, in his place.

Calling writers & performers! Shorts on Zoom – #4

As you'll remember, the 'Put Your Shorts On' production grew out of three excellent evenings that we shared over Zoom during 2020. We invited submissions from local writers of short pieces – monologues, short plays, or extracts from longer plays – and were so pleased with the resulting quality that we grew the above show out of our favourites.

The original idea was to give the writers a unique opportunity to hear their creations brought to life, as well as allowing our actors – deprived of their usual performance fix – to keep in practice. The resulting sessions were informal but quality opportunities for all involved, and much enjoyed.

We've decided that we'd like to do a further evening of 'Shorts' before we return to the theatre. So this is a shoutout for all **writers** and **performers** who would like to be included.

- **Writers:** please send us your scripts (no more than 10 minutes long), and **performers:** please let us know you'd like to take part – no later than **Monday 29 March** (please email Cassie & Clare on artisticdirector@sewellbarn.org).
- When Cassie & Clare have read all submissions, the programme will be created and cast between volunteer actors not later than **Monday 12 April**.
- The 'performance' evening will take place by Zoom on **Wednesday 21 April** at 7.30pm.

Get in touch as soon as possible – and we look forward to another evening of talented creativity!

Between You & Me

An evening of Zoomed monologues & duologues

Thursday 18 February 2021

We were delighted by the response to the above event. Around 50 households logged on to the Zoom call, including performers, and were treated to a wide range of entertainment. Some of the actors had gone the whole hog with costumes, wigs and props; some had even recreated sets in their living rooms (a certain gentleman going so far as to trash his flat for an extract from *The Caretaker*!). We were also very pleased and grateful to learn that over £300 had been donated in appreciation of the performances, which is a great boost to Barn funds during this difficult time.

Our very grateful thanks to all who attended, and especially to our splendid performers:

Alexandra Evans
Barnaby Matley
Cassie Tillett
Clare Williamson
David White
Harriet Waterhouse

Jan Farrar
Jane Keidan
Jessica Hutchings
Jo Sessions
Kevin Oelrichs
Leah Spencer

Mel Sessions
Michelle Hutchings
Nick Meir
Peter Wood
Selwyn Tillett

- you can see a collage of the many and varied characters they created below.



If you would like to 'tune in' to the performances, they were recorded in sections of three or four items per video, and can be accessed on OneDrive (details below).

A message about the evening from the Chair:

Yesterday evening we were treated to intimate theatre in its most extreme form. Between You and Me really felt like having a private performance in your own sitting room. A talented and experienced group of actors brought us a wide variety of pieces, ranging from poetry through amusing duologues to some of Shakespeare's well known or entertaining passages.

The programme relied on technology working in many different locations as naturally all actors, as well as the audience, were at home. And the technology did work! Many thanks to Cassie, Clare and their team for bringing some theatre back to us.

Jill Fuller

The videos can be accessed on OneDrive via the following link:

<https://1drv.ms/u/s!AkCt0EAgGgVljiYgolrlQ6wGM-sQ?e=buQZrG>

The videos range between 130-200MB in size, and are in MP4 format, so should be viewable using any standard video software.

You will also find a PDF file ([which you can alternatively download by clicking here](#)) giving full details of the items and the performers, and which videos they can be found in, as well as explanation of how you can make a donation to the Sewell Barn in appreciation of the performances if you would like to do so.

RIP: Jeff Davies

We were much saddened to hear of the passing of Jeff, who was a much-loved and respected member of the Norwich theatre community. We are so glad that we were able to see him at our 40th anniversary celebrations last February.

Many of us will only have known Jeff in a theatrical and musical context, but his work as a distinguished scientist was equally important. Here is a great account of Jeff's life from the John Innes Centre (Plant & Microbial Science): <https://www.jic.ac.uk/news/high-notes-and-harmony-remembering-the-life-and-career-of-professor-jeffrey-davies/> ... and an obituary in the Eastern Daily Press: <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/jeffrey-davies-of-the-john-innes-institute-dies-7825384>

He is remembered with affection by many of our number. This from **Bob Young** (Sewell Barn Artistic Director: 1992-1996):

"The recent sad death of Jeff Davies, after a long fight against Parkinson's disease, adds another name to the long list of Barn members who are no longer with us. His talents were not limited to acting; as a director, his carefully planned productions were always directed and delivered with enthusiasm, meeting with much success and approbation. I had the privilege of working with him when he directed Jill and me, (and others!) in Tom Stoppard's "The Real Thing", a production which still brings back happy memories. He will probably be remembered most, however, for his rich singing voice and keen sense of humour, which will be much missed, not only in the Barn, but

by all members of the Norwich theatre scene. RIP Jeff, you are held in our memories with great affection.”



*Jeff (far right) with the cast of **The Real Thing** by Tom Stoppard at the Sewell Barn, January 1989*

And from **Robert Little** (present Chair of Trustees, and Artistic Director 1997-2005 & 2012-16):

“Recently the sad news of the passing away of Jeff Davies became known to us all. It is important that we remember all those that we can no longer spend time with. I can only tell you of what I know about Jeff, but as always there is so much more that we never get to know. Jeff truly was an understated and original man; he was never one to “blow his own trumpet”, but his achievements were incredible. In his professional life he was well respected and a pathfinder whose scientific work helped to boost vaccine research.

His other life revolved and involved the Arts, specifically Music and Drama. His passion for Opera led him to found “Opera de Camera” who performed at the Sewell Barn before Henry Burke founded that company. I remember that in the early days of the Barn there was influx of new company members who had heard of this new exciting theatre company and wanted to sharpen up their acting skills. Jeff was amongst that cohort, and what a truly talented actor he was.

My vivid memories are many, but what stands out was his Emperor of Austria in the Amateur premier of Amadeus (a joint production with the Barn and the Maddermarket) directed by Henry Burke. I only played a non-speaking part but it certainly was a cast rich in talent of whom I was totally spellbound by and was so happy to be part of. I remember Jeff’s character telling Mozart that his music had “too many notes” which had a further irony as Jeff was a lover of opera. Another fond memory of Jeff playing the “Drunken Padre” in the “Good Soldier Schweik” stands out. Although the production was a great comic success, Jeff’s performance was a master class in comedy.

He was director of some merit, where he always aimed high and more often than not achieved greater. His productions were always well crafted and had a scientific precision in the making. Having co-stage managed with Terry Dabbs on “How the Other Half Loves” a very difficult show to stage with two living rooms on stage at the same time, Jeff’s planning made a very complicated

task possible. Jeff as a director would often offer to rehearse a double cast, so to offer young actors an opportunity to work at a high level and learn skills next to more experienced actors. He truly was generous with his time and ability. Look up the “history” menu of the Sewell Barn web site and see how many productions he contributed to the company.

He managed to fit in summer schools of music at the UEA to help to educate and develop the potential that he always maintained that Norfolk had in abundance. He was a singer, actor, music teacher and director of theatre and opera and founder of various creative outlets for the talent of Norfolk and Norwich but I remember him in the early days with a glass of wine and a cigar accompanied with a big smile. He will be much missed in the Norwich creative community.”

Administrative help needed! (voluntary post)

We have been very grateful for valuable assistance with some key administrative tasks over the last couple of years from Gilly Playford, and thank her very much for all her help. Gilly has taken on some new roles during lockdown and as such is stepping down from the work she’s done for the Sewell Barn. With the imminent re-opening of the theatre, and plans soon to be developed for what we hope will be a full 2021/22 season, we would like to get somebody in place as soon as possible.

The main support required is:

- **Answerphone messages:** dial in remotely on a regular basis (at least twice a week) to check our answerphone for messages, and either deal with messages or pass them on to other members of the committee / company; and update the answerphone message as required (in more normal times, this usually means giving details of the next production).
- **PRS:** liaison with directors to ensure that our obligations to the Performing Rights Society relating to use of music are fulfilled, completing the end-of-year return (usually one simple form), and obtaining permission if required for use of interpolated music (this happens rarely but is important).
- Occasionally there may be other jobs that will help the committee a great deal, such as **updating online listings**.

The time commitment is usually fairly small, but it is very important and needs to be in reliable hands. If you feel you’d be able to help out, please contact Cassie Tillett (Joint Artistic Director) on cassie@tillett.org.uk to discuss further.

Cleaner required at the Sewell Barn (paid post)

As we prepare to return to working in the theatre, we find ourselves without a regular cleaner.

Ideally the cleaner should live within easy access of the building. They will be a key holder in order to be able to clean to fit in around productions, as long as the rules set out by the school are adhered to.

The main duties relate to cleaning during ‘show weeks’, but of course the present pandemic means that the job will be even more important than before. Hours to be discussed and also the rate of pay.

For further details please contact **Jane Page** on 01603 429360 and a meeting can be arranged to chat about what is involved.

Extras needed for filming project

We have received the following message; please email Grace as shown below if you're interested.

"I am producing a final year film for the Film and Television Production course at the University of Hertfordshire. We will be filming in Snetterton at the End of April/Early May and are currently looking for extras. Do you know anyone that would be interested?"

This project, known as **Dearest Brother**, is a new and exciting cult thriller set in the late 1800s. It's about a Doctor called Isaac who travels to visit his younger brother Amos in the hopes that he can cure him from an illness he has caught while living with a religious cult. The entire story revolves around the main character of Isaac and how upon reaching the cult, things aren't what they seem. He meets the cult leader known as Jeremiah who is looking for a sacrifice to ensure the bearer, the one woman who gives birth to all of the babies born in the cult, is able to produce a healthy child. This then leads to Isaac finding out his brother Amos is indeed not sick at all and he has been tricked into coming to the cult as the sacrifice for the religious ceremony. In the end Isaac is left burnt at the stake as a consequences of his brother Amos' betrayal.

We need extras to act as the members of the cult and there will be a few bigger roles available. We're looking for people of all ages. We'd be really grateful if you could put the word out to your members. Anyone who is interested can email dearestbrotherfilm@outlook.com for more information.

Kind regards
Grace Wardley"