

NOVEMBER 2021

newsletter

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sewellbarn
THEATRE

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Our next production: Three Russian Encounters

THE YALTA GAME & AFTERPLAY by Brian Friel (after Chekhov)

SWANSONG by Anton Chekhov translated by Marian Fell

Director: Tony Fullwood

25-27 November, 1-4 December at 7:30pm, matinée 4 December at 2:30pm



Photography: Sean Owen & Cassie Tillett

What happens to fictional characters when the stories they are in come to an end? Might those from one play mix with those from another, resuming their lives through a different author? Themes of illusion and theatrical conceit abound in **Three Russian Encounters**, providing a novel combination of three one-act plays – by Russia's most famous playwright, Anton Chekhov, and the much-acclaimed modern Irish dramatist, Brian Friel.

Friel's **The Yalta Game** is based on Chekhov's short story *The Lady with the Lapdog*, in which a bored man and a lonely woman meet in the resort of Yalta and begin an affair that comes to dominate their lives. In **Afterplay**, Friel takes two characters from different Chekhov plays and has them meet years later in a Moscow café. Over tea, soup and vodka, they tell their stories and reveal the 'fictions' they have constructed in order to keep going. In the final play, **Swansong**, Chekhov presents an ageing actor reflecting on his life, his past triumphs and his doubtful future.

The Stage said of *The Yalta Game*: "A beautiful and melancholy piece of theatre, modern in its wit but wonderfully evocative of a lost time and place". Of *Afterplay*, the Mail wrote: "As an autumnal, middle-aged idyll, the piece is a little gem... a short story in 3D – a total delight", whilst the Guardian summarised *Swansong* as showing theatre to be "a house of dreams".

Director Tony Fullwood commented "Theatre is, of course, the art form that best explores the idea that 'all the world's a stage': that we are all actors creating and performing our roles. In each of these plays, two characters meet and share the illusions that they (and their authors) have created around

themselves." All three plays demonstrate the particularly Chekhovian blend of comedy and tragedy, summarised by the original author's stage direction 'laughter through tears'. Our production aims both to amuse and to move.

The cast has an age-range of more than five decades, from the young woman of The Yalta Game played by Barn newcomer, Poppy Hiscox, to David White in Swansong, who has been acting for over 60 years. Paired with Poppy is Steven Scase, a regular performer in Norwich theatre. David is joined by Barn regular, Kevin Oelrichs. The couple in Afterplay are also both experienced actors, Dawn Brindle and Jen Alexander. Together they give audiences an engaging, thought-provoking and emotional evening.

Tickets available at www.ticketsource.co.uk/sewellbarn or on 0333 666 3366.

Our previous production: Love, Love, Love

by Mike Bartlett | directed by Clare Williamson

14-16 & 20-23 October 2021



Photography: Barry Parsons

We started our new season with a bang: a provocative, hilarious, moving and sometimes fiery romp through the last several decades and the challenges faced by each generation. Joint Artistic Director Clare Williamson had a wonderful time working with her accomplished cast of five, with another brilliant and imaginative set from husband Phil, and a first-rate team of stage managers, technician and wardrobe. Our audiences laughed, cried and argued their way home in, apparently, equal measure.

"If you get a chance to see this play I unhesitatingly recommend that you do. Well written, brilliantly acted and staged and proof that the Sewell Barn Theatre company are back with a winner." Julian Swainson, Norwich Eye [\[click here for full review\]](#)

"We loved the production of this show even if we did go home somewhat emotionally bruised. Well done everyone, very well acted, brilliantly staged - great sets as always. A pleasure to be back at the Barn." Shelagh & Alan S

"Fabulous energy, excellent performances, powerful subject, thought provoking AND funny - great show, thank you!" Harriet W

Visit our blog for more reviews of this and previous shows at <http://sewellbarntheatre.blogspot.com/>.

Coming soon: Woman in Mind

by Alan Ayckbourn | directed by Peter Wood

20-22, 26-29 January (matinee January 29) 2022

Premiered in Scarborough in 1985 and drawing upon autobiographical experiences, Ayckbourn's work centres on Susan, a middle-aged wife and mother who has devoted much time and emotional energy to her marriage and family. Her efforts, however, have failed to bring her happiness and satisfaction; in fact, she has been left feeling undervalued and unappreciated by her family members who treat her with both condescension and some disdain. She is, in effect, trapped in relationships that, in the end, will overwhelm and destroy her. In order to cope with her increasingly desperate situation, Susan has created in her mind a fantasy family who dress in white, quaff champagne at every opportunity, live in a stately home and who adore and respect her.



As her level of disillusionment increases, Susan turns more and more to her family of the imagination but, crucially, is less able to control the characters she has created for herself. It is the blurring of the worlds of fantasy and reality that will ultimately have dire consequences for her. From the outset of the play, when Susan comes to after being knocked unconscious by accidentally standing on a garden rake, all the things that happen are seen and heard from her perspective: the audience are compelled to look at the world through the eyes of a woman whose mental health is failing.

We are delighted to welcome performers both new and familiar for this exciting production:

Susan - Mandy Kiley
Bill - Garrick Bradman
Andy - Lee Johnson
Tony - Ben Allen

Lucy - Jasmine Warne
Gerald - Kevin Oelrichs
Muriel - Alexandra Evans
Rick - Brad Mercer

Audition notice: The Father

by Florian Zeller trans. Christopher Hampton | directed by Chris Bealey

Auditions: Sunday 12th December 2pm / Monday 13th December 7pm

Performances: 3-5 March & 9-12 March 2022

Why do strangers turn up at Andre's door? Why won't his meddlesome daughter leave him alone? He's perfectly capable, isn't he? **The Father** plunges us into an increasingly befuddling world, where Andre's confusion collides with his powerful sense of self and his long-held convictions. As we become immersed in Andre's reality, time shifts, doubts creep, and loyalties are questioned. The play confounds with brutal humour and sinister twists, keeping us in its raw, emotional grip as it explores, Lear-like, the power of love between parent and child.



This is a small cast play with significant parts for all actors.

Andre - precast - John Dane
Anne - 40s-50s

Man - 40s-50s
Pierre - 40s-50s

Laura - 20s-30s
Woman - 40s-50s

Please visit our website (www.sewellbarn.org/father.html) for further details, and email as indicated to book your audition.

Annual General Meeting

We were delighted with the turnout at this year's meeting, with friends old and new (and some we hadn't seen in a very long time!) sharing news, gossip, support and food. The business of the meeting was dealt with swiftly, leaving us to the equally important matters of socialising! Thank you to all who came and supported the theatre.

Help needed - in many areas...

Thank you to those who responded to our call for help in our previous newsletter, and also at the AGM – it's very much appreciated. We could still use additional volunteers to lighten the load; **please especially consider this if you are more usually on stage**. It's very valuable experience to be involved in the creation of a production from all sides, and it helps us a great deal if we don't have to rely on the same stalwart souls all the time.

Technical Operators

For our forthcoming 2021-22 season, we need to recruit more operators and programmers/riggers to the 'box'. Our technical co-ordinator, Chris Jones, does a wonderful job of programming and designing, using our QLab software and our new LED lights; but as we move (hopefully) back to several shows each year, and eight performances plus tech and dress for each show, we need to spread the load. Please contact Chris on technical@sewellbarn.org if you'd like to make use of your existing skills or learn some new ones.

Front of House

For our new season, the role of FOH will be particularly important. We are still maintaining a reduced audience size and paying close attention to COVID measures, and the staff that welcome our public are vital in this. You may wish to work either on the ticket selling / administration side, and/or to staff the bar area. Full training can be provided in both areas. It's a great way to get to know the community and to support us at the same time. Please contact Jane on foh@sewellbarn.org to volunteer and let her know your availability and experience.

Prompts

While we don't use prompts during performances, it's very important during the rehearsal period, and allows the director and SM to concentrate on other jobs. If you are able to help in this way, it's likely to be during a period of three weeks or so as opening night approaches. Please contact Peter Wood on prompt@sewellbarn.org to register your interest.

What's on in Norwich

Our colleagues at the Maddermarket are preparing for their first indoor 'Players' production since before COVID times. Director John Holden – and the high quality of his work - is well known to Barn audiences, as director and actor here for many years.

Les Liaisons Dangereuses

by Christopher Hampton | directed by John Holden

Wednesday 17 to Saturday 20 November: 5 performances (inc matinee)

<https://maddermarket.co.uk/event/les-liaisons-dangereuses-2/>