

FEBRUARY 2022

# newsletter

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Welcome to our February newsletter. Read on for details of:

- Our next production: **The Father**
- Keeping us all safe: **COVID update**
- Our previous production: **Woman in Mind**
- Coming Soon: **Edith – In the Beginning**
- **Artistic Directors**: Going forward
- Other vacancies: **Front of House staff, Website Manager**
- **Under Lockdown in Milk Wood**
- A novelist in our midst: **Judi Daykin**
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## Our next production: The Father

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

**3-5, 9-12 March 7.30pm, matinée 12 March 2.30pm**



Photography: Sean Owen

*Please note: we will be holding Q & A sessions with members of the creative team immediately after the show on Friday 4 March and Friday 11 March. Please book for either of these dates if you're interested in finding out more about how the play was interpreted and performed.*

What can we hold onto when blatant contradictions arise in what we see and hear? Is time itself playing a cruel trick on our ability to reconcile the past with the present? The play powerfully explores this journey for André, the eponymous father, largely from his perspective. A thread of humour weaves through the narrative, illuminating the darkness.

**The Father** was first performed in the UK in 2014 and released as a film in 2020. Both versions were lauded, winning awards for the author and leading actors, including two Oscars. The New York Times described the play as “stupendously effective and profoundly upsetting”, while the Guardian praised the way that it constantly confounded expectations, “not stinting on the savagery whilst finding all the comedy in a situation that has its farcical elements even as the tragedy unfolds”.

The director of this production, Chris Bealey, commented: "When I saw the UK premiere of *The Father* I knew immediately it was a play I wanted to direct. Zeller captures superbly the loss of self and rising sense of alarm that occur when what you know to be true seems inexplicably to change. He brilliantly draws us into André's world and changes it in front of our eyes. I am delighted by the opportunity to bring this uniquely theatrical piece to Norwich. The Sewell Barn Theatre enables the audience to feel and almost touch the actors, and presents great challenges in the staging, which I have relished."

André is played by John Dane, who has exceptionally strong and long-standing links with the Sewell Barn and Norwich theatre more widely. John's recent successes on stage have included *King Lear* at the Maddermarket; perhaps not coincidentally, since the two plays share many similarities in depicting the anguish of aging. He is ably supported by Jenny Belsey as his daughter Anne, Lauren Baston as his carer Laura, and Trevor Burton as Pierre, whilst Neil Auker and Jo Sessions take on the roles enigmatically described as *The Man* and *The Woman*. Tickets (£11/£10 concessions, and £5 for students on Wednesday 9 March) are available online from [www.ticketsource.co.uk/sewellbarn](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/sewellbarn) or on 0333 666 3366. Please note that we will, for the time being, continue to limit ticket sales to 60 (out of our usual capacity of 100) for your comfort and safety (see COVID update below), so advance booking is highly recommended. Tickets can, if available, be purchased on the door, and we are able to accept cash or cards both for tickets and bar sales. NB: please note that *The Father* runs without an interval.

## Keeping us all safe: COVID update

We greatly welcome the falling numbers of Covid infections, and the associated removal of government restrictions. Nevertheless, we continue to prioritise the health and safety of our audience, and all others involved in our productions, through the following measures:

- **Audience numbers will remain at 60% of capacity for *The Father***, to allow for social distancing, with the request that face-coverings should continue to be worn in the theatre except when consuming refreshments.
- **At least two Covid vaccinations** are required for actors attending auditions and subsequently performing in the theatre.

Please note: when booking tickets online via TicketSource, you may be offered '**Booking-protect**' insurance. The Sewell Barn Management Committee does not consider that this insurance offers value for money for Barn productions; in particular, we will make ticket refunds directly for many of the identified risks. If you do consider that this might be suitable for you, please read the terms and conditions very carefully so that you are aware of exclusions and the documentation necessary to support any claim.

## Our previous production: *Woman in Mind*

by Alan Ayckbourn | directed by Peter Wood

20-22, 26-29 January 2022



Photography: Barry Parsons

Susan's husband is insensitive and indifferent, her sister-in-law interferes, and she is estranged from her son. As a coping mechanism, she has created in her mind the perfect fantasy family who adore and cherish her. However, an eventual blurring of the worlds of fantasy and reality has devastating consequences for her. This is Ayckbourn, but perhaps not as you know him...

Our audiences were not only full of praise but came in great numbers; we were delighted to need the 'house full' signs. Under Peter Wood's direction and with a sterling cast led by Mandy Kiley as Susan, the show was a tremendous success, both commercially and artistically.

"The Sewell Barn cast do great justice to this finely written script, and give us a play that may be difficult but is also a joy to watch... Director Peter Wood has marshalled his cast into giving a **faultless and moving performance**." *Julian Swainson, Norwich Eye* [[click here for full review](#)]

"It blew my mind!! Such **stellar performances** from everyone involved, especially the amazingly talented Mandy Kiley. Everything about this performance, including the sets, sound, lighting and costume were so professional! Well done everyone." *Wendy A*

"I would just like to say I went to the play last Thursday with three friends, and we all thought **the production was fantastic**. The acting was so good I was totally absorbed the whole time, I did laugh out loud but never lost sight of the disintegration of the lead character. Could you please pass on our appreciation to all those who took part." *Margaret L*

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

## Coming soon: Edith – in the Beginning

by Karen Forbes | directed by Robert Little

**21-23, 27-30 April**

Originally written for an outdoor, site-specific venue (Sutton Hoo House, Suffolk) to commemorate Edith Pretty donating the treasure to the British Museum, the play recounts the story of the excavation of the barrows and the discovery of the Anglo-Saxon burial ship. At the heart of the play, set in class-rigid 1930s England, is a very human story about the unusual friendship between self-taught archaeologist Basil Brown and his employer Edith, a remarkable, educated woman in her own right, who served with the Red Cross in WW1 and became a first-time mother at 47.



A strong cast includes Lauren Baston as Edith, with Andy Lofthouse, Jonathan Cooke, Diane Webb and Melanie Peter, with Judi Daykin as Queen Raedwald and Chad Mason's dulcet tones in voiceover form.

## Artistic Directors... going forward

We have been very fortunate that since 2016 we have had Cassie and Clare providing us with an exciting and varied programme of productions. Since then, they have entertained many audiences, with contemporary and classical, funny and sad plays. They have kept us 'afloat' in imaginative ways during the difficult and unexpected times of the pandemic, for which we are so very grateful. Sadly, their tenure comes to an end at the end of the 2022/2023 season - that is, in July 2023. We therefore need to look to the future. The management committee have the task of selecting and appointing the Artistic Director(s); this is then ratified by the Trust.



Clare has told us she would like to step down in July 2023 (although fortunately she assures us she isn't disappearing!). However, Cassie is prepared to stay on for another three-year tenure working with another person. A partnership has proved to be extremely successful in the past, offering a diverse and interesting approach. It would be ideal if we could appoint someone early so they can work with Cassie and Clare during the 2022/23 season. If you think you might be that person, please get in touch with me ([chair@sewellbarn.org](mailto:chair@sewellbarn.org)) and we can meet for a chat to talk about what the position entails. In common with everyone who works at the Barn, the post of AD is a voluntary one.

*Jill Fuller*

### **A note from Clare...**

It's hard to believe that it's seven years since I first joined the Sewell Barn Theatre Company, having retired from teaching in July 2014. In the first newsletter I received was the announcement that Robert Little and Michelle Montague were stepping down as Artistic Directors.



A friend assured me that if I could run a Drama department in a large comprehensive school then I was more than capable of working the magic required to lead the Sewell Barn Theatre artistically. I was to discover that the jobs are very different but, as much as I loved teaching, I have also loved the role of Joint Artistic Director at the Barn. Six seasons later, I feel that it's time for me to step down and pass the baton on. There are so many other aspects of life at the Barn that I want to get involved with and, not having that ultimate responsibility for the safe passage from rehearsal to production of 7 or 8 shows per season will give me greater flexibility.

I look forward to working with my successor during our 2022/23 season and, with Cassie as their partner, I am confident that the new partnership will continue to produce a rich and varied programme of work into the future.

### **... and from Cassie**

I moved to Norfolk from South London with my husband Selwyn in 2005. For the first couple of years of our life here, we quietly attended many excellent theatrical productions across the county; by 2008, we decided that we wanted to make the Sewell Barn our primary theatrical home (although that hasn't stopped us supporting, and performing at, both the Maddermarket and the Great Hall as well!). Since then, I've been proud to perform in six shows and to direct or co-direct ten more (that's before we get to this year's production of *Under Milk Wood*, which will go into rehearsal after Easter).



I've learned so much, been supported by so many amazing people, and had so much fun with the Sewell Barn family, and if the company is happy to have me in this role for a bit longer, I'd love to work with another joint Artistic Director. It's a great privilege to facilitate a wide range of quality entertainment at such a unique venue, and to be involved in bringing forward new directors, actors, technicians and all the other vital pieces of the theatrical jigsaw; as well as enjoying the expertise and generosity of those with far more experience than I.

If you feel that you would like to share the next seasons of learning and creativity with me, with a view to receiving the baton with another volunteer in three years' time, we would be delighted to hear from you.

## Some more important vacancies at the Sewell Barn Theatre

*Could you help us in any of the following ways? We'd especially welcome volunteers among our actors. When you're not involved in a show on stage, there are many other ways that you can help the Barn community to flourish: prompting, front of house, stage management, technical operation and much more. And of course, please support us by buying a ticket and coming to see the show! Helping out when you're not on stage will ensure that audition opportunities will continue in the future.*

### Front of House: show staff and assistant manager

We are looking for more helpers front of house - both behind the bar and on the reception desk as stewards. As ever, we will train any newcomers. If you are an actor, but are not cast in a production, it would be good to see you front of house. The show cannot go on without help and it is a great way to get to know other actors and our audiences.

Jane Page has very successfully organised the teams for front of house for many years but needs someone to act as her second in command, with a view to taking over the organisation in 2023. The responsibilities include organising the rota of helpers for each performance and keeping the bar stocked.

If you can help, either as a steward or a bar helper during this season, or indeed if you would like to become Jane's assistant, please get in touch with Jane ([foh@sewellbarn.org](mailto:foh@sewellbarn.org)) as soon as possible.

### Website manager

We are hugely grateful to John Holden, who as well as being a long-time member, supporter, actor and director at the theatre, and presently a trustee, has also been responsible for developing and maintaining our website for several years now. He would like to step down from this role, ideally in time for the end of the 2021/22 season in July 2022. As John has observed, "Web design has moved on a lot in the last 10 years and I think it's essential the Barn moves to a modern responsive website design, which is beyond my technical capabilities."

We have two paths open to us. If you have website design experience and would like to use your skills to implement complete redesign and overhaul, that would be very welcome. On the other hand, if you lack design skills but are confident with maintenance of an existing site, we will be able to recruit the support of our web host and technician, Tim Wheeler, to move the site into WordPress or similar, ready for regular updating. If either or both of these roles appeals, please contact Cassie on [admin@sewellbarn.org](mailto:admin@sewellbarn.org) as soon as possible.

### A novelist in our midst



As you will have seen above, one of the cast of our upcoming show *Edith* is Judi Daykin, well known as actor and director for many years at the Sewell Barn and across the wider Norfolk theatre community.

Having completed an MA in Creative Writing at the UEA in 2019, Judi then went on to use the enforced downtime during lockdown to publish her first novel. More followed, and the Detective Sara Hirst series – set in Norfolk – is enjoying excellent reviews and popularity in paperback, on Kindle and as Audiobooks. Do take a look at her Amazon profile here if you haven't already:

<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/JUDI-DAYKIN/e/B08J7QN8ZB>.

## Three's Company – Under Lockdown in Milk Wood

As you'll know, our final production of the 2021/22 season is to be Dylan Thomas' classic 'Under Milk Wood'. Here's some information about a different and exciting show inspired by Thomas' work, which had its beginnings in our lockdown, online evenings 'Sewell Barn Shorts', and including our very own Jane Keidan (last seen as Doreen in *Waiting in the Wings* in July 2019).



During the pandemic Leah Spencer wrote a short piece imagining what lockdown would have been like in Dylan Thomas' town of Llareggub. It was performed on zoom for Sewell Barn in 2021.

From this 10 minute start the piece grew into a play, 'Under Lockdown in Milk Wood', which had 3 performances at Westacre Theatre, King's Lynn, in November 2021. It was well received and a further 2 performances are taking place on **13 and 20 March** at 3pm at the Westacre (for

details and tickets visit [www.westacretheatre.com](http://www.westacretheatre.com) or call 01760 755800).

Listen to Polly Garter (Leah Spencer), Rosie Probert (Jane Keidan) and Lily Smalls (Irma Fowler) air their views on life during a pandemic; reminisce about their shared pasts and look forward to new lives ... oh, and don't miss Sir Jonathan Pryce reading the 'zoom' eulogy to Miss Myfannwy Price.

## What's on in Norwich

**Romeo & Juliet** by William Shakespeare

**The Norwich Players at the Maddermarket Theatre**

Tuesday 22 to Saturday 26 March: 6 performances (inc matinee)

<https://maddermarket.co.uk/event/romeo-juliet/>

*Enter the Verona Public House, where two bitter, rivalling families meet every Friday night to settle a score so old, no one quite knows how it started. Against this backdrop of rage, two young lovers from opposite sides of the feud must hide their love from a world that won't allow them to be together. **The Norwich Players** and **University of East Anglia** present a rural Norfolk retelling of William Shakespeare's most tragic love story. **Romeo & Juliet**. Here & now. Now & forever.*



**Who the Who, Who | Moco Theatre**

Stage 2, Norwich Theatre Royal: Tuesday 8 March

Fisher Theatre, Bungay: Wednesday 9 March

<https://www.mocotheatre.com/shows>

*Hermione is facing the challenges of a midlife woman. Grieving for the loss of her father and a mother in final-stage dementia, she fights to adapt to the harsh reality of her changing life. Director and creator **Michelle Montague** is a long-standing member of the Sewell Barn Theatre who was our Joint Artistic Director 2011-2016; performer **Mandy Kiley** has created many notable characters at the Sewell Barn, most recently Susan in *Woman in Mind* (January 2022).*

