

APRIL 2022

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

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

- Our next production: **Edith – In the Beginning**
- Our previous production: **The Father**
- Coming Soon: **Orca**
- **Season Launch Day** (and announcement of new **Joint Artistic Director**)
- Vacancies: **Front of House staff, Website Manager**
- **Under Lockdown in Milk Wood**
- What's on in Norwich: **Maddermarket**

Our next production: Edith - In the Beginning

by Karen Forbes | directed by Robert Little

21-23, 27-30 April 7:30pm, matinée 30 April 2.30pm



Photography: Andrew Evans

The play is based on the true story of Woodbridge magistrate and land-owner Edith Pretty, her employee Basil Brown, and their discovery of a 7th century Anglo-Saxon longboat, king's burial chamber and associated treasures at Sutton Hoo. This was one of the most important archaeological finds in British history, exploding the myth of the 'Dark Ages'.

Like the excavated barrow itself, this play is multi-layered. It uses dialogue, poetry and song to explore a rich array of other themes – that include the eternal truths of widowhood; hierarchical relationships between classes and within professions; and the questionable practices of wartime journalism and the honours system.

Edith was commissioned by the National Trust and first performed on site at Tranmer House, Sutton Hoo in 2019, to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the main events that it describes. This production by the Sewell Barn Theatre is its first 'proper' theatrical outing, and has benefitted from close involvement by its author, Karen Forbes. A separately-developed film interpretation, *The Dig*, received critical and popular acclaim; it starred Ralph Fiennes and Carey Mulligan, and was nominated for five BAFTAs. Robert Little, the director of the Barn's production, commented: "This production was originally planned for 2021 but became a casualty of COVID. I'm glad to be working with such a talented team to present Karen Forbes'

crafted story, not just of Edith Pretty but also the amazing Basil Brown, the self-taught archaeologist whose thorough methods still provide the basis for site excavations today. He was a 'man with a plan', yet it took the establishment nearly forty years to recognise his contribution. These two extraordinary people got to follow their dream, and we are all in wonder of what they found."

Lauren Baston plays the title role of Edith, who vigorously asserts her ownership of the precious jewellery, armour and other iconic items, then gifts them to the nation. Andy Lofthouse is Basil, who plans and initiates the dig, but is then replaced as the project's leader when its significance is realised. Judi Daykin and Jonathan Cooke take on the roles of Queen Raedwald and the Coroner, with other parts played by Diane Webb, Melanie Peter and Chad Mason.

Tickets are limited to 80 per performance for your continuing safety and comfort. Available at www.ticketsource.co.uk/sewellbarn or on 0333 666 3366.

Our previous production: The Father

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

3-5, 9-12 March 2022



Photography: Sean Owen

"I feel as if I'm losing all my leaves." Why do strangers turn up at André's door? Why won't his meddlesome daughter leave him alone? He's perfectly capable, isn't he?

We were delighted by audience responses (many of which involved a lot of Kleenex and stunned silences) to this moving and powerful production.

"All six cast members give **exceptionally strong performances**. John Dane is convincing as a once proud man struggling with a loss of identity and awareness while still trying to hang on to what always mattered to him. The other five cast members handle the transitions between characters so well that at first you doubt your own sanity – which is the point of this play. Go and see this play, and remember it next time you cast your vote, local or national. We are supposed to be a civilised society, but we regularly fail people with dementia and those who support them in their everyday struggle with a condition that only gets worse. It might seem odd, but even though this play covers a difficult subject it is **an enjoyable performance superbly delivered**." *Julian Swainson, Norwich Eye*

Such an **excellent production** from all aspects. Performance. Direction. Design. Sound. Excellent to see." *Stash K*

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

Coming soon: Orca

by Matt Grinter | directed by Sabrina Poole

2-4, 8-11 June

The roaming orcas are returning and a new daughter must be chosen to ride out with the boats to protect the village. Fan is desperate to be chosen, but her sister knows she must never go. Because something happened to Maggie out there, something that everyone is refusing to admit.

Winner of the Papatango New Writing Prize in association with Southwark Playhouse, where it premiered in 2016, Orca explores the way in which a small community moulds and reshapes its inhabitants, with sometimes brutal force.

Director Sabrina Poole is delighted to have reassembled the majority of her cast from 2020, when of course the production was halted by the pandemic, and to have completed the team with recent additions. Don't miss this moving and powerful piece of theatre.



Our 2022-23 season – and a new Joint Artistic Director

We are delighted to say that our new season is now in place; all rights have been secured, directors booked, and we have a very exciting season for you with, as always, a wide range of opportunities and entertainment for performers, crew and audiences alike.

Please join us on **Sunday 15th May** at 4:00 pm for our Season Launch – and for light refreshments and socialising afterwards (the bar will, of course, be open). You will be able to meet the directors, hear their visions for the productions, and register your interest, and our new brochures will also be available. All information will, of course, be available on our website very soon after the meeting.

We will also be announcing the new Joint Artistic Director appointment, who will work alongside Cassie Tillett for an initial three-year tenure. An afternoon not to be missed!

Some 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 for all of us 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) as soon as possible.

Website manager

We are urgently in need of a volunteer for this role. It is open to either a designer or an administrator. Please read on...

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 as soon as possible.

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). Please note that this production was previously scheduled for March, but due to COVID casualties has now been rescheduled for May.



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 the 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 **15 and 22 May** at 3pm at the Westacre (for

details and tickets visit 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

Art by Yasmina Reza

The Norwich Players at the Maddermarket Theatre

Tuesday 17 to Saturday 21 May: 6 performances (inc matinee)

<https://maddermarket.co.uk/event/art/>

A dark witty comedy that begins with an argument about the nature of art and quickly leads to more challenging questions about identity and friendship. Are you who you think you are or are you who your friends think you are?

