

MAY 2022

newsletter

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sewellbarn
THEATRE

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Our next production: Orca

by Matt Grinter | directed by Sabrina Poole

2-4, 8-11 June at 7:30pm / matinee Saturday 11 June at 2:30pm



Photography: Sean Owen

Orca is masterful storytelling at its best. A remote fishing community is bound together by harsh conditions, isolation and age-old traditions. Such rituals help protect the island's way of life, embodying the legacy of generations passed. They also hide disturbing secrets and unspeakable truths. Described as 'an unnerving play', 'beautifully sculpted' and a 'fine, subtle and important piece of theatre' when it premiered in 2016, Orca's accolades have included the award of the Papatango New Writing Prize to its author, Matt Grinter. Sabrina Poole, the director of our production, has no doubt that Orca fully deserves such critical acclaim: "It is an inspiring and powerful piece, that draws on universal themes. Questions are asked at every turn, things that make you doubt what you think you knew before".

This production has been three years in the making. First announced in May 2019 and scheduled for 2020, it was then derailed by the pandemic. But those involved had such strong feelings about this play – developed as an ensemble piece – that they were determined to present it, no matter how long they had to wait. Sarah Jenkins plays the ostracised Maggie; Emma Smith her wistful and dreamy sister, Fan. Pip Dunn portrays their father, Joshua, a man drained of life from living on the outside. Abi Tacon is Gretchen, haunted by unspoken secrets, while Phillip Rowe is the imposing head of this isolated community.

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: Edith - In the Beginning

by Karen Forbes | directed by Robert Little

21-23, 27-30 April



Photography: Andrew Evans

In the summer of 1939 Britain was preparing for war but above the River Deben in sleepy Suffolk a different battle was taking place, one that revolved around a much earlier invader. When Mrs Edith Pretty invited local archaeologist Basil Brown to have a go at excavating the enormous mounds on her land, she was confident that he would find something. It was to be one of the most important finds in British archaeology. We were delighted by audience attendance and responses to this fascinating tale.

“...this is at heart a sensitive and enjoyable depiction of a relationship that brought us one of the most momentous historic discoveries of the Twentieth Century. That is some achievement, and Director Robert Little and the Sewell Barn team can be proud of their **accomplished production.**” *Julian Swainson, Norwich Eye* [[click here for full review](#)]

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

Coming soon (1): The War that Still Goes On

Adapted by John Barton from Thucydides and Plato | Directed by Immi Lea

17-18 June (Sewell Barn Theatre), 20 June (Maddermarket Theatre)

This extra production has been added to our current season, and will be performed in aid of the DEC Ukraine Appeal. It will be presented at the Barn as a rehearsed reading on Friday 17 June (7.30 pm) and Saturday 18 June (2.30 pm & 7.30 pm), also at the Maddermarket Theatre on Monday 19 June (7.30 pm) at the start of Refugee Week.



The war between Athens and Sparta began 2,400 years ago and lasted nearly 30 years. Other wars have continued ever since, with dynamics that are much the same. Thucydides wrote his history to warn future generations of the inhumanities and deceits of conflict, and his message retains its power today. Can we ever learn from history to change our present, and what insights can drama provide into the eternal truths of human nature?

Booking arrangements for The War That Still Goes On are being finalised, through a production-specific website www.ticketsource/playforukraine (for both Barn and Maddermarket performances). At least 80% of ticket revenues will support the DEC Ukraine Appeal, with customers choosing whether to pay £5, £10 or £20. We expect the booking site to be fully functional by 1 June. Tickets will also be available on the door, subject to availability, at both venues.

Coming soon (2): Under Milk Wood

by Dylan Thomas | directed by Cassie Tillett

14-16, 20-23 July

"Time passes. Listen. Time passes."

The inhabitants of Llareggub are asleep. They dream. They wake. They continue to dream. They go about their daily business. This being Wales, they sing. They meet and part and disagree and weep and love and complain and rejoice. They sleep again. Their world continues to turn, as does ours.

Dylan Thomas created this extraordinary world across many years, but it was first performed as 'a play for voices' in 1953 in New York, with Thomas himself as the First Voice and the Revd Eli Jenkins. The characters are at once familiar and supernatural, hilarious and tragic, disturbing and reassuring. Thomas referred to earlier versions of the play as 'the town that was mad'; but who is to say what is 'normal', what is eccentricity and what is insanity?



Director Cassie Tillett is delighted to have assembled a first-class cast of twelve accomplished performers, most of whom will be very familiar to Sewell Barn audiences (L to R above: Selwyn Tillett, Kevin Oelrichs, David White, Thomas Monument, Mandy Kiley, Jamie Willimott, Poppy Hiscox, Carole Lovett, Jonathan Redding, Judi Daykin, Emma Kirkham). Come and meet the inhabitants of Llareggub in July; with our presently slightly limited audience numbers, advance booking is highly recommended.

Our 2022-23 season

We were thrilled to welcome a large group of friends old and new to hear our plans for the new season. Refreshments were provided by the directors, the bar was open, and there was plenty of opportunity to chat to old friends and new – as well as to the directors about their shows!



The new season features three directors who have worked at the Barn many times, alongside two who are making their directorial debut and a further two who are new to our theatre but have considerable experience in other venues. Our directors have chosen a fabulous range of plays, which as always cover a wide range of chronology, style, cast size and subject matter.

The Welkin

by Lucy Kirkwood
dir: Jez Pike
13-15, 19-22 October 2022

Betrayal

by Harold Pinter
dir: Clare Howard
24-26 & 30 November, 1-3 December 2022

Queers

curated by Mark Gatiss
dir: Michelle Hutchings
19-21, 25-28 January 2023

Still Life and Red Peppers

by Noel Coward
dir: Cassie Tillett
2-4, 8-11 March 2023

Di and Viv and Rose

by Amelia Bullmore
dir: Emma Kirkham
13-15, 19-22 April 2023

A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare
dir: Clare Williamson
1-3, 7-10 June 2023

The Cemetery Club

by Ivan Menchell
dr: Claire Stretton
13-15, 19-22 July 2023

Our new Joint Artistic Director

We made another much-anticipated announcement at the new season meeting. **Sabrina Poole** will be shadowing Clare and Cassie during the 2022/23 season before taking over from Clare to work with Cassie on the 2023/24 season.

Sabrina has been a member of our theatre for several years now, as well as other venues around the city. She is known as an accomplished actor and director, as well as having great enthusiasm for set design and build, technical design and operation, and much more – in fact, every aspect of theatrical work. Her own theatre company, Hard-Nosed Cow, has created many fine performances in recent years.

Sabrina's tenure with Cassie will run for an initial three years. At the end of this time, Cassie intends to step back from the role of Joint Artistic Director (after, by that time, ten years!).

We are thrilled to welcome Sabrina to her new role, and we know that her energy, enthusiasm and experience will be of great benefit to the Sewell Barn as we move further into our fifth decade of providing quality local theatrical productions.



L to R: Sabrina Poole, Cassie Tillett and Clare Williamson proudly show off our new 2022/23 brochure!

A sad farewell : Terry Dabbs 1931-2022

We are very sad to announce the loss of one of the longest-standing members of the Sewell Barn Theatre, a few weeks short of his 91st birthday.

Terry's performances for, and support of, the theatre date back to the very earliest days of the Barn in the 1980s. He celebrated his 80th birthday in July 2011 during rehearsals for the role of Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; and although he performed less often in recent years, he continued to delight audiences as the grandfather in *Festen* (2013), *Lark Rise to Candleford* (2017) and - his final performance - *Waiting in the Wings* (2019). He was highly talented, easy to work with, unfailingly reliable, and the perfect gentleman, and will be much missed by the theatre family. We send our loving condolences to his family and friends, and celebrate a long life which was so very well lived.

We have sourced a small selection of photographs showing Terry in just a few of the many roles he played at the Sewell Barn Theatre over the years. Clockwise from top left: *Waiting in the Wings* (2019), *Tartuffe* (2006), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (2011), *Lark Rise* (2017), *Cold Comfort Farm* (2009), *Oh What a Lovely War* (1985), *Spring and Port Wine* (1992), *Far from the Madding Crowd* (2008), *Lysistrata* (1992).



Ruth Howitt, Terry's daughter, sends us the following information about the funeral:

Dad's funeral service will be on **Friday 10th June**, 10.30 at Strumpshaw Church, followed by his burial. Strumpshaw was where dad and mum spent 20 years of their life and has lovely memories for us all. Family flowers only; any other donations to go to the **Sewell Barn** or the **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds**, through Jary and Sons Funeral Directors in Acle, or on <https://terrydabbs.muchloved.com/>. You can also leave your own memories, photographs and messages on this page.

Chair of the Sewell Barn Trustees, Robert Little, writes:

I write this with a tear in my eye because I have lost a true friend and a member of the Sewell Barn family. I've known Terry since 1973 and was enriched by his friendship for nearly fifty years. When I first came to Norfolk he was one of two older men who were to take a place in my heart and to have an enduring influence on me: Henry Burke and Terry.

We first met in our local Theatre Company in Brundall, but it was when Henry Burke asked if I knew anyone who could speak French for a part in *Henry V* at the Whiffler Theatre, Terry came to mind. It's funny, looking back at his debut for the Barn, to remember how nervous he was. The rest, as they say, is history; he would go on to become one of the most prolific actors for the company, working with so many people (just look at the Facebook tributes). For me, he was most wonderful as Newman Noggs in *Nicholas Nickleby*, probably the company's greatest achievement. He would go on to become a 'go to' actor who would never let you down and would always deliver, and was usually the first 'off book'. He could sing – *Oh What a Lovely War* and *Lark Rise to Candleford*. Then he was a first class Stage Manager: *How the Other Half Loves*, which had two sets on stage at the same time; and *On the Razzle* which would require a lot of food to be prepared every night (ask any SM and they will tell you that the mention of food sends a shudder through you). There was no doubt he was an all-rounder: he could act, sing, direct, was a scenic painter, a steward and worked behind the bar. He gave so much time to the company and always to the highest standard.

They just don't make 'em like that anymore; the likes of Terry don't come around very often. So let's cherish the many productions that he helped bring the joy of theatre into our Barn. I'm sure you will agree Terry will be missed but not forgotten. We at the Barn send our love and kind thoughts to his family at this difficult time.

Norfolk Arts Awards

We are honoured to have been put forward for one of the Norfolk Arts Awards: our production of *The Father* (March 2022) has been nominated for the Dick Condon Theatre Award by Stash Kirkbride. (This particular award is given 'for exceptional theatre whether that be a company, a venue, a project, or an individual'.) You can support our nomination by visiting norfolkartsawards.org.



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

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. If you can help, either as a steward or a bar helper during this season, 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, if possible 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.

What's on in Norwich

The Three Musketeers by Daniel Winder

The Norwich Players at the Maddermarket Theatre

Tuesday 12 to Saturday 19 July: 6 performances (inc matinee)

<https://maddermarket.co.uk/event/the-three-musketeers/>



Director Claire Stretton* leads a 16-strong cast in Daniel Winder's thrilling adaptation of Dumas' famous – The Three Musketeers. The young D'Artagnon heads to Paris, determined to become one of the King's elite musketeers, only to become embroiled in intrigue, duels, stolen diamonds and daring escapes. Moving effortlessly between slapstick and high drama, this fresh take on the timeless tale holds surprises and twists, and swashbuckles its way across the Maddermarket stage in a visceral, dynamic production.

**(Claire will also be directing The Cemetery Club at the Sewell Barn in July 2023)*