

OCTOBER 2022

newsletter

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sewellbarn
THEATRE

Constitution Hill
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www.sewellbarn.org

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Our next production: The Welkin

by Lucy Kirkwood | directed by Jez Pike

13-15, 19-22 October

One life in the hands of twelve women



Photography: Sean Owen of Reflective Arts

The Welkin provides a deep dive into another world, drawing us into the lives of twelve East Anglian women from 300 years ago – the ‘jury of matrons’ who must decide whether Sally Poppy is telling the truth in claiming to be pregnant, and therefore whether she will live or die. The rich canvas of this play combines twists and turns with laughter, tears, violence and shocking revelations.

Most of the seventeen characters of *The Welkin* are onstage throughout the play, filling the Barn’s unique space with their presence. Emma Smith plays Sally, who ‘pleads the belly’ when convicted for the murder of a young girl. Determined to save her is Elizabeth Luke, the local midwife, played by Jo Parker-Sessions. Emma and Jo have both appeared at the Barn earlier this year, in *Orca* and *The Father* respectively. Other members of the cross-generational cast bring rich acting expertise and skills: they include David Newham (veteran of more than 100 plays at The Maddermarket Theatre), Ginny Porteous (the female lead in many productions at the Barn and the Maddermarket), Sabrina Poole (a new Joint Artistic Director at the Sewell Barn from summer 2023), and Helen Wells (recently in *Henry VI* at RSC Stratford as a Shakespeare Nation performer).

“*The Welkin* teems with life, ideas and vivid language; it has the breadth of experience akin to a Shakespeare” said Jez Pike, the director of this production. “It is not often that one comes across a play by a contemporary writer that takes in the personal, the political, the farcical, the sexual and the

supernatural. Audiences will encounter a world with strange customs and beliefs that may at first seem very different from their own. Yet as the story unfolds, it may begin to feel uncomfortably familiar”.

Jez currently leads Norwich Theatre’s artist development programme, after four years as Artistic Director of The Maddermarket Theatre. His critically-acclaimed productions there included *Jerusalem*, *A View from the Bridge* and *Boudica*. Jez’s freelance career has also included productions at the Brighton and Edinburgh Fringes; The Park Theatre, London; The Dukes, Lancaster; Bolton Octagon and numerous productions for Theatre by the Lake in Cumbria.

Tickets are limited to 85 per performance due to the set design. Ticket sales are going very well at the time of writing, and advance booking is highly recommended. Available at www.ticketsource.co.uk/sewellbarn or on 0333 666 3366.

Our previous production: Under Milk Wood

by Dylan Thomas | directed by Cassie Tillett

14-16, 20-23 July



Photography: Andrew Evans

Our 2021/22 season finished on a tremendous high, commercially and artistically, with a cast of twelve creating Dylan Thomas' magical world. We could not have been more delighted by the kind comments, high audience attendance and wonderful work of the cast and crew that made up this very special show.

"I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for bringing Dylan Thomas’ words and characters to life so beautifully. It’s a long time since I manned the follow spot for the Theatre Royal Jr Studio version of the play, so I reacquainted myself during the set build and painting by listening to the Richard Burton version on something of a loop. I’m not given to hyperbole, so trust me when I say that the Burton version fades to a pale shadow in comparison to what you all brought to those words. The nuanced pathos, fun and dark caustic humour that you found was remarkable. Where the Burton version provided sketches, you gave vibrant oil paintings. **Your residents of Llaregub were no mere caricatures, but became real people with real lives, hopes, joy, sadness and frailties.** I never really ‘got’ UMW before – some pretty words with postcard characters. Now I do. Thank you." *Myles Crowder (our set builder, after watching the show on the last night)*

"...this is **a show you should not miss**. A brilliant presentation of a familiar classic which covers every moment of life from birth to death and all the human passions that make our short lives so full. Poignant but life-affirming, this show will send you home smiling and considering a second visit." *Julian Swainson, Norwich Eye* ([click here for the full review](#))

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

Coming soon: Betrayal

by Harold Pinter | directed by Clare Howard

24-26 November, 30 November-3 December



We are delighted to welcome back Clare Howard (Artistic Director of the Sewell Barn 2005-2011, as well as long-standing acting and directing member) to direct this classic piece.

The play looks at an illicit affair from its end to its beginning. Emma is married to Robert, but enters into a long-term relationship with his best friend, Jerry. As the plot works backwards, the trio's complicated secrets and lies emerge from the mists of time and memory.

The cast includes familiar Barn faces Verity Roat (*Private Lives*, 2021) and Steven Scase (*Three Russian Encounters*, 2021), as well as welcome newcomer John Davis, with Robin Watson as the waiter.

Audition: Still Life and Red Peppers

by Noel Coward | directed by Cassie Tillett

Contact: cassie@tillett.org.uk

Auditions: 6 November 2022 (with possible alternative dates and/or recalls as required)

Performances: 2-4, 8-11 March



Director Cassie Tillett is looking for another strong ensemble cast to present these two delightful pieces by Noel Coward. She writes:

"*Still Life* is well known in its 1945 film version, *Brief Encounter* (which starred Trevor Howard and Celia Johnson in the lead roles). It follows the story of the unexpected, intense affair of two highly respectable people (Alec and Laura), both happily married, who meet in the railway station café when Laura gets some grit in her eye from the smoky railway, and Alec (who is a doctor) helps her to deal with it. *Red Peppers* is 'an interlude with music'. George & Lily

Pepper are a (not very talented) music hall act, as well as warring husband and wife. They perform two song-and-dance routines, along with typical bad jokes, and both routines hit the skids for various reasons. Their backstage rows with the manager, the musical director and other artistes are funny, fast-moving, and rather painful.

"The roles are flexible regarding playing ages, and may be individually or double-cast. (The guidelines on the audition notes are open to negotiation.) I've been delighted by the interest already expressed, but the wider the choice of auditionees, the better chance I have of assembling the best possible 'theatre family'. As usual, the men are being shy and retiring violets! Please review all the notes (link below) and contact me as shown above to express your interest; full instructions for audition pieces and appointments will be provided soon. (NB: please book in your audition slot, rather than turning up on the day unannounced, and do let me know if you can't make the above date.)"

Full details can be found on our website here: <https://www.sewellbarn.org/stilllifecasting.html>.

Supporting Ukraine: The War That Still Goes On

The Sewell Barn and Maddermarket Theatres created a show in support of the DEC Ukraine Appeal

A 'giant cheque' for £750 for the DEC Ukraine Appeal was handed over on Thursday 28 July at the British Red Cross charity shop at 88 St Benedicts Street, Norwich. The money was raised by a joint initiative of the Sewell Barn Theatre and the Maddermarket Theatre, by staging the play *The War That Still Goes On*. The idea for this production was first proposed in March – soon after the Russian invasion of Ukraine began, with its terrible (and continuing) consequences for so many.

The War That Still Goes On was adapted by John Barton from Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian Wars and Plato's Dialogue with Alcibiades. An earlier version was first broadcast by the BBC in 1991 at the outbreak of the first Gulf War, with several revivals in the early 2000s around the time of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The play was performed in mid-June at both theatres, linked to UK Refugee Week. Chris Jones, who led the initiative jointly with Immi Lee, said: "The War That Still Goes On is based on a conflict that occurred more than 2,400 years ago. Yet it remains a powerful portrayal of the eternal inhumanities and deceptions of war."

Shirley Ampleford and George Burroughs (Red Cross) receiving the cheque from Chris Jones and Phil Williamson (Sewell Barn).



What's on in Norwich

The Book of Will by Lauren Gunderson

The Norwich Players at the Maddermarket Theatre

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

<https://maddermarket.co.uk/event/the-book-of-will/>

In tribute to their dead friend, two actors of the King's Men's company - John Heminges and Henry Condell – set out to collect and publish complete versions of all Shakespeare's plays. They overcame enormous practical and financial difficulties and succeeded against all odds. Without the 1623 folio, we would not have Macbeth, Twelfth Night, The Tempest or Antony and Cleopatra, and half the plays would exist in dubious versions. Lauren Gunderson is one of the last decade's most produced living American playwrights. We are delighted to bring her witty and moving play, with all the noise and colour of 17th Century London to our stage, built as a replica of Shakespeare's own theatre. Many familiar faces, from the Sewell Barn and other Norwich theatres, can be found taking part in this exciting show.

