

JUNE 2023

# newsletter

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## Our next production: ***The Welkin***

by Lucy Kirkwood

3-5 and 7-8 July (please note: NO performance on Thursday 6 July)



Photography: Sean Owen of Reflective Arts

We are thrilled to have the opportunity to restage this show, after the devastating cancellation due to an outbreak of COVID among several members of the cast last autumn. Sadly the original director, Jez Pike, is unavailable to recreate the show, but cast member (and joint artistic director in waiting!), Sabrina Poole, has brought the show together again with support from long-standing Barn member and Trustee John Holden, and the reforming of the whole of the original cast. This powerful production was [much praised in its original incarnation](#), and we know that many of our audience were disappointed to have missed the two performances that took place – so do book your tickets soon.

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 the end of this season), and Eva Wright and Melanie Peter (fresh from their roles in A Midsummer Night's Dream).

Tickets available online at £11 and £12 from TicketSource at [www.ticketsource.co.uk/sewellbarn](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/sewellbarn), also by phone via 0333 6663366. Booking fees are included in the ticket prices.

## Our previous production: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

by William Shakespeare | directed by Clare Williamson

1-3 & 7-10 June

The chaos and delight of one crazy midsummer night was the perfect swan-song for Clare as she steps down at the end of this season as Joint Artistic Director after seven years' hard work (see below). Her cast of fifteen and dedicated crew were praised highly by our audiences, and it proved our most commercially successful show for many a season.



Photography: Andrew Evans

"What an **amazing production** you have pulled off at the Barn! So energetic, physical even... and magic! I could say Puck stole the show last night but equally so did the set. Phil is astonishingly talented, rendering the transformation from palace to forest so effortless! It was rich and beautiful. Costumes were stunningly good, lighting and music too. Congratulations! Much enjoyed by us all." *Shelagh & Alan*

"Saw this today and have to say it was **absolutely brilliant**. All the cast were engaged and the comedy timing was priceless. It was gripping from the offset and never failed to please. You should all be extremely proud. 10/10." *Jamie*

[Click here for more reviews of this and previous shows.](#)

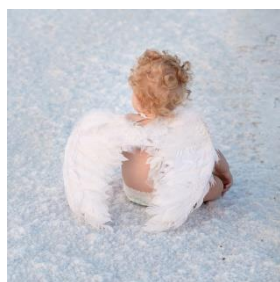
## Thank you, Clare

Joint Artistic Directors Cassie Tillett and Clare Williamson took over the reins at the Barn from their predecessors, Michelle Montague and Robert Little, from the 2016-2017 season onwards. For the last seven years, they have been delighted to lead the company through a wide range of drama in the best Barn tradition, from challenging dramas to hilarious comedies, two-handers to enormous casts, contemporary to classical, and much more. Their tenure was interrupted by the COVID pandemic, but even then they managed to continue the provision of entertainment via Zoom for performers and audiences alike.



Now, as we reach the end of the 2022-23 season, Clare is stepping back from this role. Cassie will continue as joint AD, joined for the next three years by Sabrina Poole. Clare isn't going anywhere – she has already taken on the role of props co-ordinator after the sad passing of our much-loved colleague Anne Giles this time last year, and she will remain on the committee and actively involved in the Barn and its productions.

Clare's contribution to the Sewell Barn in that time has been immeasurably valuable, and we have been privileged to benefit from her expertise and enthusiasm, her dedication and her creativity. We felt that the last night of her recent production (see above) was the appropriate occasion to thank her formally; so our Chair, Jill Fuller, stepped onto the stage with Cassie after the final curtain call, in order to present Clare with a suitably personalised Director's Chair and a card commemorating the ten productions that Clare has directed or co-directed during her tenure. Our huge gratitude and love to you, Clare, from the Committee and from the whole of the Society!



## **Auditions: *Immaculate***

By Oliver Lansley

Director: Sabrina Poole

Contact details: [sdpoole93@hotmail.com](mailto:sdpoole93@hotmail.com)

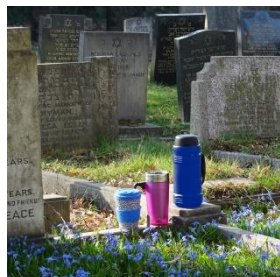
Performance dates: 23–25 November & 29 November–2 December

**Auditions: 9 July 2023 2pm**

A laugh-out-loud comic variation on the virgin birth in which a young woman finds her life spiralling into confusion when she wakes up one morning, unaccountably pregnant. You're young, free and single and haven't had sex for the last eleven and a half months, then one morning you wake up pregnant and to make matters worse the Angel Gabriel is on your doorstep claiming parentage...

This is a quick witted, sharp, and fast-paced show that treads the delicate line of farce. Characters acknowledge and speak directly to the audience but we want to avoid straying into pantomime. Actors will need good comic timing, strong physicality, and high energy. For full details, characters and dates, please visit our website: [www.sewellbarn.org/immaculatecasting.html](http://www.sewellbarn.org/immaculatecasting.html).

*Please contact director Sabrina Poole as shown above to register your interest and book your slot.*



## **Coming soon: *The Cemetery Club***

by Ivan Menchell

Directed by Claire Stretton

**3-5, 9-12 August**

*Please note: due to the rescheduling of *The Welkin* (see above), this production has been moved from its original July slot into August as above.*

Three Jewish widows meet once a month for tea before going to visit their husbands' graves. Ida is sweet tempered and ready to begin a new life, Lucille is a feisty embodiment of the girl who just wants to have fun, and Doris is stuffy and judgemental. Their lives follow a regular, if dull, routine, until the day they bump into their butcher, Sam, who is visiting his deceased wife's grave, and he changes their lives forever. This story, seemingly about death, is in fact a touching and humorous plea to relish life, and the loves and the friendships along the way.

A wonderful cast includes Barn stalwarts David White, Gill Tichborne and Mandy Kiley, together with welcome newcomers Ros Swetman (more often found at East Norfolk Operatic Society), and Julie Benfield in her first outing at the Barn but well known to Norwich theatre audiences at the Maddermarket and the Great Hall. Led by Claire Stretton (recent director of *The Three Musketeers* at the Maddermarket), this is a show not to be missed.

## **Membership: subscription rates**

Our membership runs from July to July each year so, if you are an annual member and would like to renew your membership, please could you send £15 for a single person, £25 for a couple at the same address or £75 for life membership. (Please note increase in rates as explained in our last newsletter – the first increase in many years.) This can be paid:

- by BACS bank transfer: Sewell Barn Theatre Sort code 30 96 17 account 02167536 *or*
- by cheque made out to The Sewell Barn Theatre posted to Jill Fuller at 20 Blofield Road, Brundall, Norwich NR13 5NN

Remember: if you buy a ticket for any first night and produce your membership card you get a free drink from the bar.

Please send me an email ([membership@sewellbarn.org](mailto:membership@sewellbarn.org)) if you pay by BACS so I know to update your records.

*Jill Fuller – Membership Secretary*