

JULY 2023

newsletter

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sewellbarn
THEATRE

Constitution Hill
Norwich NR3 4BB

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www.sewellbarn.org

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Our next production: *The Cemetery Club*

by Ivan Menchell

Directed by Claire Stretton

3-5, 9-12 August



Photography: Barry Parsons

The wit and grit of women from the USA Southern States is a popular theme in plays, movies and novels like “Steel Magnolias” and “Fried Green Tomatoes”. In *The Cemetery Club*, Ivan Menchell looks farther north to the land of gefilte fish and bagels: Queens, New York, NY.

The “Cemetery Club” consists of three lifelong friends who get together each month to visit the graves of their late husbands. Lucille is a flamboyant flirt who relishes cashing in her late husband’s bonds and splurging on furs and finery. Doris is angrily loyal to the memory of her long marriage, and she meticulously tends her husband’s grave. And Ida, lonely and sensitive, thinks she is ready to open a new chapter in her life but is not quite sure how to go about it. Then on one monthly visit to the cemetery, the three run into Samuel Katz ...

The director of this production at the Sewell Barn Theatre, Claire Stretton, has been familiar with this play over several years. Her first encounter saw her playing Lucille in a studio production at South Hill Park in Bracknell, Berkshire back in 2005. “This was my first appearance in a play after many musical theatre roles and portraying Lucille was a joy. The play is so well written, and the characters interact so beautifully with each other taking the audience on a journey through a smorgasbord of emotions.” Claire also later played Doris in a rehearsed play-reading with just 5 days’ notice following a sudden illness. “So, when I moved to Norwich just two years ago and was given the opportunity to propose a production for the Sewell Barn, I

discovered that The Cemetery Club had not been produced here before, so it was obvious to me that this delightful piece should be made available to local audiences."

The five strong cast are a dream team of local actors, highly-talented and with much experience between them. Mandy Kiley plays Ida with sensitivity and compassion and the action takes place mainly in her apartment in Queens, New York. Lucille is played by Julie Benfield and her personally remodelled wedding outfit in Act Two is something to behold! Gill Tichborne brings both strength and wonderful comedic timing to the devoted Doris. Sam Katz, the local butcher, somewhat overwhelmed by these strong women, is beautifully portrayed by David White. The cast is completed by Ros Swetman, who plays Mildred, a cameo role but critical to what happens next...!

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

Our previous production: *The Welkin*

by Lucy Kirkwood

3-5 and 7-8 July



Photography: Sean Owen of Reflective Arts

After the disappointment of losing our October production to a COVID outbreak, it was a real delight and achievement to be able to assemble the whole of the original cast of this powerful show. Sadly, the original director, Jez Pike, was unable to be involved in its reconstruction, but cast member and new joint Artistic Director Sabrina Poole, together with longtime Barn member and trustee John Holden, took the reins, and six triumphant performances were met with considerable acclaim and commercial success.

"I never feel particularly eloquent when reviewing a piece of theatre. Usually get stuck after the 'was gud innit'. I've seen some outstanding productions at The Barn over the last decade, and *The Welkin* was up there with the best. **Had I seen this in the West End, it could not have been better.** The pace was fast, the acting outstanding, the set added to the production but what was so so so very good is how the actors took the words from the page and produced such believable, such different characters. The script must have been excellent, but f*ck, it takes talent to take it from the page and deliver it like that. There, hope that wasn't too gushing, but it was so thoroughly enjoyable!" *James*

"**An absolutely brilliant and very powerful performance**, I had goosebumps watching some scenes and tears at the end... congratulations to the very talented cast / crew and of course Lucy Kirkwood!" *Sheila*

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

Thank you, Myles

One of the first sets in the 2016-17 season – the first of Cassie and Clare's seven-year tenure – was the hilarious *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* (December 2016), directed by Rob Morris. It also happened to be the first time that Myles Crowder had designed and built a set for us, and it was a triumph of beautiful detail to frame a delightful production.

Myles has created no less than eight further sets since then, the most recent being *Di and Viv and Rose* earlier this year. Every set has been an accomplished and imaginative creation appropriate to the unique space and our wide-ranging seasons, and we owe him a very great deal for his contribution to the Barn's high standards and reputation.

In 2021, when we were able to cautiously return to the Barn after the difficult months of the pandemic, Myles took over the role of Buildings Manager from Andrew Evans. For the last two years, Myles has solved many conundrums and issues with our ancient and sometimes eccentric building, working closely with the committee, and with Phil Williamson and Chris Jones in particular, to achieve safety, efficiency and future-proofing wherever possible.

Myles is, for personal and health reasons, now stepping back from that role and from set-building (although he firmly states that he will continue to support and work for the theatre whenever possible, which he regards very much as a second home). We will miss his dedication, hard work and perfectionism very much, and send on behalf of the committee and the whole Barn family our heartfelt thanks for everything he's done for us over the last seven years.

Myles is well known for being a shy and retiring little violet, and persistently hides from any suggestion of imminent photography (occasionally one can catch sight of the top of his head ducking behind the rest of the team). However, this characteristic shot of him consulting with colleague Ged Bailes (who is in the fireplace hole) on the set of *Lord Arthur* is the best we can find! 😊 Thank you so much, Myles, and please don't go too far away.



Cassie Tillett – Joint Artistic Director

Buildings management at the Barn

As a result of Myles' resignation as explained above, we are looking to form a team of people who can help us with maintaining the barn, repairing general wear and tear, and responding to any facilities issues that may arise. Within the team we would like to have a Buildings Manager who will oversee the buildings management team and allocate jobs as appropriate, as well as being a point of contact to liaise with the Sewell Park Academy (in whose grounds the theatre is situated).

You might have specific skills in plumbing, electrics etc, or you may just be a bit of a handyman. Keeping the Barn in good order is a vital role in the future of the theatre. If you are interested – either in being a member of the team or in the supervisory Building Manager role - or would like to discuss in greater depth, please drop us a message at admin@sewellbarn.org.uk and we'd be delighted to hear from you.

Auditions: *Comic Potential*

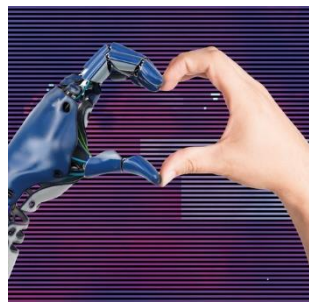
by Alan Ayckbourn

Director: Joe Flatt

Contact details: joeiflatt@gmail.com / 07751 170754

Performance dates: 18-20 & 23-27 January 2024

Auditions: 29 September at 7pm



With recent controversies about the use of AI in the film industry, this play – premiered in 1998 – has especial resonance in 2023. Joe Flatt, who is new to the Barn as director but has worked with Sabrina Poole (*Orca*, 2022) and at the Maddermarket, explains what's going on:

"When Adam first met Jacie, his world stopped for a moment. Her looks, style, sense of humour and acting ability wowed him. Then he realised her real name was JCF 31333 and was, in fact, a robot. Welcome to a world where actors are

out and actoids are in! Set in a TV Studio not too far from the year 3000, *Comic Potential* is a slapstick comedy set in the foreseeable future where everything has changed except human nature.

Alan Ayckbourn's style in this particular play is quirky and slightly chaotic, which is why we will be diving head first into the extreme! Filled with slapstick, custard pies, and featuring music from Busted, we need actors who aren't afraid to make a fool of themselves and willing to explore what makes their characters real. Does this sound like you? I hope so!"

Four men and six women, some of whom will play multiple characters, are required to create this quirky, hilarious and thought-provoking piece of theatre. Full details of characters, auditions and rehearsals can be found on our website at www.sewellbarn.org/comicpotentialcasting.html.

Please contact director Joe Flatt as shown above to register your interest and book your slot.



Coming next (1): *1984*

by Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan

based on the novel by George Orwell

directed by Ginny Porteous

12-14, 18-21 October

A dark cautionary tale published in 1949 about the dangers of totalitarianism, government surveillance, and censorship. Most of the world is at war. Great Britain is part of Oceania, controlled by Big Brother. Nothing is your own, not even your thoughts. 2 + 2 = 5: fact.

George Orwell's classic, terrifying, dystopian novel has been realised many times on stage and screen. We are thrilled to have obtained the rights for Icke & Macmillan's powerful version, and equally thrilled that director Ginny Porteous has assembled a first-rate cast of new and familiar faces. Definitely one for the diary – although, as Ginny has cautioned her cast, "don't expect an easy ride"!

Winston - Jez Pike

O'Brien - John Dane

Host / Syme - Surya Bajracharya

Charrington / Man - Hans-Christian Harder

Martin - Jonathan Redding

Parsons / Father - Kevin Oelrichs

Mrs Parsons / Mother - Alison Utting

Julia - Jo Parker Sessions



Coming next (2): *Immaculate*

by Oliver Lansley | directed by Sabrina Poole

23-25 November and 29 November-2 December

Director Sabrina is delighted to confirm a strong cast for the second show in our upcoming season, including several familiar faces and newcomers. Loretta Askew (*Still Life*, 2023) takes the role of Mia. The angels – one fallen, one heavenly – will be played by Seàn Bennett (*Queers* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2023) and Will Harragan (*Handbagged*, 2018). Welcome newcomers Rebeka Ignéczi as Mia's highly-strung friend Rebecca, Vincent Titheridge as ex-boyfriend Michael and Julian Newton as creepy classmate Gary, complete the cast.

Can you help? Sabrina is presently in need of a **stage manager** for this production. It will be "fairly undemanding" and hence a great training ground for new folks, or for those ready to move from ASM to SM role, with full support and training. If you can help, or know anyone else who would be interested, please contact Sabrina on sdpoole93@hotmail.com.

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 May 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) if you pay by BACS so I know to update your records.

Jill Fuller – Membership Secretary

What's on in Norwich

The Comedy of Errors by William Shakespeare

The Norwich Players at the Maddermarket Theatre

Tue 8 to Fri 11 August at 7:30pm / Sat 12 & Sun 13 August at 2:30pm

Please note:

performance on Saturday 12 takes place at The Courtyard, Cinema City

<https://maddermarket.co.uk/whats-on/>



Shakespeare's madcap farce makes the ideal Summer theatre treat as not one but TWO pairs of identical twins suffer multiple mistaken identities whilst an old man races against time to save his life. Servants punished for doing what they've been told to do, and wives and suitors in pursuit of the wrong partner mean a fast-paced evening of highjinks, all in a 1920s setting.

Several members of the cast are familiar Barn faces: Rebeka Ignieczi (see *Immaculate* above), Diane Webb (*The Tempest*), Charlotte Carter (*Di and Viv and Rose*), Jamie Willimott (*Still Life*, *Under Milk Wood*) and Kevin Oelrichs (too many to name! but most recently *Under Milk Wood*). A delightful summertime romp – do support our theatre friends in the centre of Norwich.