

NOVEMBER 2023

newsletter

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sewellbarn
THEATRE

Constitution Hill
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Our next production: ***Immaculate***

by Oliver Lansley | directed by Sabrina Poole

23-25 November and 29 November-2 December



Photography: Sean Owen of Reflective Arts

Mia is young, free and single, hasn't had sex in a year, and yet is somehow pregnant. As if the day couldn't get any worse, the angel Gabriel and Lucifer both turn up to claim parentage. A belligerent ex-boyfriend, a baby-fearing best friend, and the weird kid from high school complete the riotous mix of irreverent characters, in a drama that challenges more than just your faith.

Director Sabrina Poole says: "*Immaculate* is consistently rude, frequently absurd, sometimes serious and features a lot of Hobnob biscuits. But as well as being bright and fun, it does actually ask some deep questions, using humour as the vehicle. How should a modern woman cope with immaculate conception? What would the arrival of a new Messiah do to the world? How do you discipline the Son of God? OK, not all deep – but still a good question".

Immaculate was first performed at the Edinburgh fringe in 2005. It has been both lauded and loathed by critics, often at the same time: "This play is carved out for those who can truly appreciate witty one-liners, bitter sarcasm, over-the-top slapstick, relentless swearing and even somewhat childish humour" (Varsity). It goes without saying (but we will say it nevertheless) that this production does, of course, exclusively focus on the brilliance - thanks to our extremely talented cast and crew. Lottie Askew plays our put-upon protagonist Mia, whilst Richard Vojvoda is her short-tempered former lover, Michael. Playing the angel Gabriel and Lucifer are familiar Barn faces Will Harragan and Séan Bennett; Rebekah Igneczi plays Rebecca, Mia's friend with a guilty conscience. Finally, Julian Newton is the one and only Gary Goodman.

Tickets available online at £12 and £13 from TicketSource via www.sewellbarn.org, also by phone via 0333 6663366. Booking fees are included in the ticket prices. Includes strong language and adult themes.

Our previous production: 1984

by Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan | based on the novel by George Orwell | directed by Ginny Porteous
12-14, 18-21 October



Photography: Sean Owen of Reflective Arts

Our opening production of the 2023-24 season was eagerly anticipated by us all, but we were stunned and delighted by its artistic and commercial success. Six of the eight performances were sold out, and reviews were full of praise for the standard of performance, direction, set and technical presentation.

"The constancy of war and the need for politics to find an enemy hasn't gone away; we are more surveilled than ever and mostly sleepily, complicitly, grateful for protection from the foreigner in funny shoes that could so easily be us. This production brings those themes crashingly to life, in a brilliant – if also distressing – piece of theatre. **You might not want them to watch you, but you should watch this.**" *James Goffin (Cultivated)* - [click here for full review](#)

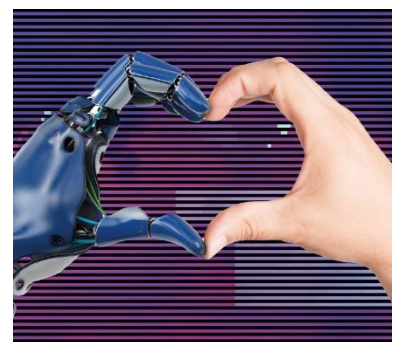
"Wonderful production. **The quality was on a par with professional theatre we have seen in London.** This was the first production we have seen but we will certainly be coming again. Fabulous talent in direction and acting." *Sandra*

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

Coming next : Comic Potential

by Alan Ayckbourn / directed by Joe Flatt
18-20, 24-27 January

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. A fabulous slice of Ayckbourn with a huge dose of quirkiness.



Director Joe Flatt is delighted to be working with a strong cast of Barn newcomers and regulars alike. Lewis Garvey (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 2023) plays Adam; newcomer to the Barn stage, Hannah

Wood, plays Jacie. They are joined by Abi Tacon (*Orca* 2022), Ayesha Christian-Roxby (*Love, Love, Love* 2021), Shem Jacobs (*Lark Rise to Candleford* 2017), Melanie Peter (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 2023), Rebeka Igneczi (*Immaculate* 2023), Christopher Whitley (*Romeo and Juliet* 2018); and Harry Quirk and Amy Bevan. Don't miss this hilarious show.

Important announcement about our February/March production:

Amy's View

by David Hare / directed by Pip Sessions

Performance dates: 29 February-2 March, 6-9 March 7.30pm

Matinée 9 March 2.30pm

As our friends and members will have heard by now, we were very sad that we needed to cancel our production of *The Clearing*, planned for our February/March slot. However, we fully intend to return to this production in a future season, with director Chris Bealey at the helm.

We are delighted to be replacing this show with one of the casualties of the COVID pandemic. *Amy's View* had been fully cast and was well into rehearsals when the first lockdown was imposed in March 2020. We have been able to obtain the rights to the show for this new set of performance dates; the majority of Pip's original cast and crew are ready, willing and excited to have the chance to recreate the production; and we know that this will be a wonderful and moving production.



About the show

'You know Amy's view: you have to love people. You just have to love them. You have to give love without any conditions at all. Just give it.'

1979 and Esme is at the height of her career as an actress in the West End although life is becoming increasingly difficult for those making a living on the stage. The visit of her daughter, Amy, with her new boyfriend, Dominic, an arts journalist, sets in motion a series of events which only reach their conclusion many years later.

A deeply affecting play from one of the nation's foremost playwrights, *Amy's View* explores marriage, love, fame, fidelity, betrayal and loss through the mother-daughter relationship and makes a case for both personal and artistic integrity and the importance of theatre itself.

Auditions

As mentioned above, Pip is very pleased to have reassembled most of her original cast and crew. She will, however, be looking to hold auditions for the role of **Dominic Tyghe** – Amy's boyfriend, an ambitious arts journalist/film-maker. Playing age 20s-30s. Attractive. Arrogance of youth. Sees things in black and white. Quick tempered. Described as a victim of moods. Mellows with the experience of life.

Auditions alongside the existing cast will be arranged for a mutually convenient time in the next few weeks, and rehearsals will begin as early as possible in the new year. If you're interested, please contact Pip on pip_sessions@hotmail.com as soon as possible.



Auditions : Bette and Joan

by Anton Burge / directed by Steven Scase

Performance dates: 18-20, 24-27 April

Auditions: 18th & 19th December 2023 7pm / Recalls: 22nd December

Contact details: steven.scase@icloud.com

Bette & Joan depicts the two stars, in adjacent dressing rooms, between takes on the set of *Baby Jane*. While Joan manages her anxiety by lacing her Pepsi with vodka and signing photographs for her beloved fans, Bette chain smokes and muses on her lovelife, and her ability to pick a decent

script, never a decent man. Behind the bitching and the practical jokes we see each woman's insecurities and regrets, and their rivalry is revealed to be underpinned by grudging respect as they attempt to identify their new roles in life as well as in their careers.

The two actresses have a playing age in their mid 50s. Mid-Atlantic accents will be required. For full details, please visit our website at <https://www.sewellbarn.org/betteandjoancasting.html>, and contact the director as shown above to register your interest and book a slot. Please note: initial auditions will be held at the Maddermarket Theatre.

Queers: an award and a revival

We were thrilled with the success of *Queers* back in January 2023. First-time director Michelle Hutchings and her splendid cast and crew were rightly praised highly for this sensitive, dramatic, moving and important presentation of Mark Gatiss' 2017 curation of monologues. They traced the gay community across the last century to mark the 50th anniversary of the passing of the Sexual Offences Act 1967, and our production also included a specially-created extra piece about a transgender character, co-written and performed by Jen Alexander.

We are even prouder of Michelle and her team now. First, they have just a few days ago been awarded the Dick Condon Theatre Award at the prestigious Norfolk Arts Awards. Several of the cast and crew are seen here with the award (*photo credit: Simon Finlay/Norfolk Arts Awards*).



And secondly, if you missed the production earlier in the year, you will be glad to know that you have another chance! Michelle has been asked to recreate the show as part of **QueerFest** at the Assembly House next February.

Almost all her cast and crew are available to return; however, she will be looking for one member of cast to join them. Michelle writes:

"Newly formed Watch this Space Theatre Company are looking for auditionees for the part of Steve in *Something Borrowed* by Gareth McLean. This monologue is set in 2017 and sees Steve preparing his speech for his wedding to Adam. Playing age is 28-40 and I am happy to audition anyone who would be happy to play a cis-gender gay male. Email Michelle Hutchings at wtstheatrecompany@gmail.com for more details. This is an amateur production and will be staged at the Assembly House as part of QueerFest on the 15th, 16th and 17th February 2024."

A note of thanks from Clare

Clare Williamson, joint Artistic Director alongside Cassie Tillett since our 2016/17 season, concluded her tenure at the end of the 2022/23 season. Clare said:

"I'd like to thank the Sewell Barn Theatre Company for supporting me as Joint Artistic Director over the past seven years and especially for the beautiful director's chair with my name emblazoned on the back which I received as a parting gift on the last night of my final show as AD, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.



I remember how nervous I was when I stood on the Barn stage in front of the company, made my pitch for the job and then had to respond to much rigorous questioning. It made me realise that here were a group of people who cared deeply about their theatre and had high standards for the work they wanted to perform. My biggest problem was that I was a newcomer to the world of Norwich amateur theatre. Thank goodness for our chairwoman, Jill Fuller, who had the insight to suggest that Cassie and I might work well together. And so we have, with complementary skill sets leading to an excellent working relationship and friendship throughout the seasons we have created. I am immensely proud of the work we have done together as well as the plays I have directed. It has been one of the most exciting and satisfying times of my life, working with the Sewell Barn Theatre Company.

And since you can't keep a good woman down, I'm still part of the Barn team. I'm in charge of props and this season, I've taken on the role of Front of House Manager. I also hope to continue to direct in future seasons. This is a brilliant theatre and long may it continue to shine!"

The photograph above shows Cassie Tillett (centre) with Clare Williamson (left) and Sabrina Poole, Clare's replacement as Joint AD, at the Sewell Barn AGM earlier this month

What's on in Norwich

The Maddermarket Christmas Show : The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

After a cyclone lifts up her house and drops it on an evil witch in a faraway land, young Dorothy becomes an unlikely hero to the Munchkin people. In her epic quest to return home, she must confront strange magic and terrifying illusions that will test her resolve and force her companions to confront their greatest fears. This big-hearted adaptation brings to life the story we know and love while restoring the sublime details and dark edges of L. Frank Baum's wondrous vision.



*You may like to know that the cast includes Hollie-Harrington Ball, recently seen as part of the cast of our highly successful production of *The Welkin*, in the iconic role of Dorothy.*

<https://maddermarket.co.uk/event/the-wonderful-wizard-of-oz/>

15-30 December. Various times. Tickets from £14.50. Family Tickets available (2 adults, 2 children) £55.

Please note: this production is not the musical adaptation.