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ARTISTIC NEWS

From Michelle Montague & Robert Little

We thought you might all appreciate an up-date on forth-coming productions, as it is the beginning of what we hope will be an inspirational year for the Sewell Barn Theatre Company.



Our Next Production

The Shape of Things

By Neil LaBute

Directed by Luke Owen

January 9th – 11th and 15th – 18th at 7.30 pm also matinée on January 18th at 2.30 pm

We are very excited to be able to update you about this production. Luke was lucky enough to be able to cast four extremely talented young actors, who are enjoying working in our intimate, unique space. How lucky are we to have a professional young playwright (see below) directing new talent, enabling us to continue the development of our theatre company. These rehearsals are definitely creating art that provokes and will enrich our audiences.

It is essential that our established company members support our new actors and directors. The foundations of this theatre were built on the relationship of established performers sharing their experience and passion with those who had a burning desire to learn more about theatre. We are so very lucky to have the interest of newcomers and we MUST nurture and support!



Director Luke has also written a play:

UNSCORCHED BY LUKE OWEN

The Guardian, November 2013 – Michael Billington gave the play four stars – *high praise indeed*

Time Out, November 2013 – 'Luke Owen's debut is a cracker and has won him the Finborough's Papatango New Writing Prize'

The Stage, November 2013 – 'Owen has a great ear for awkward exchanges and treats the material with a pleasingly light touch . . . And while the play deals in extremes, it also subtly reflects on the power of images in general, on how the things we watch can twist us'

British Theatre Guide – 'It is the winner of this year's Papatango New Writing Prize and will shock viewers, making them think about a difficult subject afresh. It might also manage to influence public policy and if that is the legacy of any play, it can be regarded as a major contribution to both theatre and society'

DOWN AMONG THE WINES AND SPIRITS

The golden age of the real music hall

Directed by Cassie & Selwyn Tillet

Performance dates: 6th - 8th March 2014

For these four shows only, we're bringing to life characters who entertained the UK from around 1880 until World War 1, the era that became known as *The Golden Age of Music Hall*. Many might still be familiar names, even to a 21st century audience (Marie Lloyd, Vesta Tilley, George Robey) and were at the top of the bill; many others you'll never have heard of, but they were able to earn a modest living 'down among the wines and spirits' – at the foot of the bill, next to the list of refreshments.

The show is now cast, and rehearsals begin in early January. Our excessively talented nine are already hard at work studying photographs, recordings, and in some cases even film clips, and will between them re-create the stage performances of no fewer than 27 stars and lesser lights of the halls. In between their appearances onstage in the course of the evening, we see them relaxing, reminiscing, criticising and bickering in the Green Room of an unspecified theatre across a period of years (loosely based around the Norwich Hippodrome where Marie Lloyd appeared in March 1913 – 101 years, to the week, before our show). As they interact we learn something about their own personalities and experiences, and what life was like for those at the bottom of the bill.

As the playbills used to say: we count ourselves extraordinarily fortunate to have secured the services of several fine artistes, many of whom are already well-known to Sewell Barn audiences:

MR STEVE ASKEW

MISS JUDI DAYKIN

MISS RACHEL DUFFIELD

MISS JUNE GENTLE

MR JOHN GRIFFIN

MR JOHN HARE

MISS ANGELA ROWE

MR DAVID SHAW

MISS GILLIAN TICHBORNE

"Crowded audiences are certain to prevail this week" – EDP, March 1914

Be among them – be enthusiastically entertained – be wild in your applause!

BRAVE NEW WORLD

A Play by Roger Parsley, from the novel by Aldous Huxley

Performance dates: 3rd – 12th April 2014

AMATEUR PREMIERE!

Roger Parsley, says, 'All the personnel have now been recruited for the Amateur Premiere of this play, based on Aldous Huxley's far-seeing 1930's novel. The original text has proved incredibly (and frighteningly) accurate in its depiction of where certain areas of science (in particular body and social engineering) are leading us. The original was written as a warning, and its portent is just as meaningful (no, more so!) for us today. The story involves both workers in the *Hatcheries* (where babies are *produced*) and people from the "Savage Reservation" (where a more *primitive* society is allowed to live, in the *Old Ways* - including worship of gods). This second area is used as a *gene pool* for the scientists to dip into for their experiments.

Directed by Roger Parsley, the production will feature Luke Rogan, David Green, Louise Waller, Charlotte Pound, and Jill Fuller.

The play is both thought-provoking and funny, and will send audiences into the night (except after the *matinée!*) with something to think about.

Music for the production is being composed by Tom Parsley. The several challenging technical areas, and original costumes, are already being discussed and designed.

It's not too early to put the dates in your diary for all of these productions. Even better, book your tickets!

HAPPY NEW YEAR, SEWELL BARN THEATRE COMPANY!

Michelle & Robert

Our Previous Production

A Cricket Match

Ayckbourn provides experimental and challenging theatre for audiences, who feel comfortable in the familiarity of the circumstances, situations and settings he selects, to highlight common aspects of human behaviour and interrelationships. His excellent ear for dialogue stems from those 'intimate exchanges' between people who, at times, seem unaware of the humour and insight of their observations and experiences. The challenge Ayckbourn presents to his actors is to portray these insights – humorous, thought provoking, sad – as realistically and authentically as possible so as to draw in the audience to believe in the sometimes recognisable and sometimes preposterous actions created by human nature.

This glove that fits so well a large cast becomes a gauntlet thrown down to acting skill when a play is written for two actors each representing four characters differing in age, attitude, generation and motivation.

Expectations were high on seeing that the two actors cast in this cricket match 'team' of eight players were Mandy Kiley and Nick Lawrence who have both given convincing and memorable performances in past Sewell Barn productions. Carole must have felt very fortunate that these gifted actors had accepted the parts offered to them. Were these high expectations realised? The critical eye of this keen and regular theatregoer began to focus on the minutiae of expression, characterisation, understanding of Ayckbourn's language and versatility of portrayal of the different personae. The maiden bowled me over but I felt that I managed to bat well against some of the googlies from the other bowler - when characterisation was inconsistent and the struggle for the right words bubbled beneath what was falteringly expressed. The effect of this was to lose some of the humour offered by the play as well as crispness and pace in delivery. Offstage speeches though were successfully projected to convey convincingly conversation between two characters of the same gender. I raise my cap also to those many quick costume changes – an example of how important the backstage wardrobe crew are in any production.

As a member of the audience I look to the set of a production to provide a meaningful and aesthetic backdrop to the proceedings on stage. Past Barn productions have presented outstanding set designs so my first impression of this set was one of disappointment. However, as the play progressed, its simplicity and dual functionality as garden and cricket ground became more appealing as it seemed to reflect the lives of those on stage as well as the impression that not only beyond the garden was the cricket field but also those other 'matches' in progress. The proportions of a well built garden shed effectively transformed into the sanctum sanctorum that is a cricket pavilion.

On the night I went the house was almost full, the audience was intent on the action before them and, at the curtain call, applauded spontaneously and enthusiastically – a positive sign that this production may be considered another success for Carole and for the Sewell Barn Company.

Nigel Coates

Company News

Workshop:

What Did You Have for Breakfast ; with John Holden

Wendy Atkinson, one of our newest actors who will be gracing our stage in *Once In A Lifetime*, took part in the last workshop of 2013 and wrote :

On Wednesday 11th December a very aptly named "What did you have for breakfast?" workshop was held at the Barn. John Holden ran the session and I would heartily recommend it to anyone new to acting or thinking of getting involved again.

The purpose of the workshop was to think about how you create a character's backstory and the impact that has on their behaviour on stage. The workshop was very well attended; 16 of us in total with a wide range of ages and heights! John started with a couple of games getting us to order ourselves by height and then by age, definitely an icebreaker! This was followed by creating 'Who's Who' entries for famous literary characters, and then working in pairs on improvisation scenes and then text. At the end of the night we performed our text pieces and it was really interesting to see what people had done with their parts!

I am a firm believer that if you attend a course or a workshop and come away with at least one thing you didn't

know before then it has been worthwhile. In this workshop there was plenty for me: the key things that stood out were when John spoke about thinking about what has happened to your character just before you come on stage so that you are acting from the moment you appear and also how just thinking about a situation that your character and the other character on the stage might have had (good or bad) can impact greatly on how you speak to them and the tone that you use.

It was a great evening and I look forward to attending my next workshop at the Barn. Thank you John and all of the organisers behind the scenes!

We would like to welcome all the new actors who joined us at this workshop and look forward to seeing them at future auditions and workshops!

Michelle and Robert

A second report, from Colin Barrett who also attended the workshop.

A combination of regular visitors to Sewell Barn and a refreshing smattering of new faces were out in force for the last Sewell Barn Workshop of 2013, "So what did you have for breakfast?" with John Holden. The workshop served as an introduction into Character Development by demonstrating some tips and techniques that an actor can use to gain access to more of a character's back story.

At first some of the games and exercises seemed challenging but as the time whizzed past, it was clear for all to see that there was real value to John's work with us. Working as an individual, within smaller groups and also as a larger group, the energy in the Barn was impressive with everyone seemingly very keen to take on the invaluable information and guidance being offered by John as well as by each other.

The collaborative nature of the workshop meant that no-one felt out of place and that everyone's needs and abilities were catered for. That is the impressive thing about these workshops. There is always something to learn, something new to take away with you, regardless of age or experience. With the bar open for refreshments, it allowed us freedom to discuss what we were learning as well as giving us a good dollop of time to socialise with fellow Barn members in a very pressure free environment, away from the turmoil of rehearsing and performing!

Workshop Wednesday January 22nd 7.30 pm

Titled ;

"Inside the Wardrobe- an interactive evening on Theatrical Costumes with Insight into the Dressing Room!"

Come and discover how we play an important part in your visual enjoyment of a play.

June Gentle

THE ATTRACTIONS by Tony Marchant

Audition 20 Jan 2014 at 7.30pm

Directed by Jen Dewsbury

Performance Dates: 12-14, 18-21 June 2014

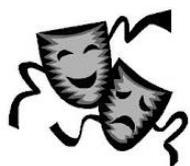
A sharp-witted and wise psychological mystery, exploring the darker aspects of human thought and behaviour.

CASTING: 2M / 1F

Sam Lawson: Playing age, late 60s. Retired. No specific accent. Widower. Used to work as a commissionaire at Madame Tussaud's. Now owns the 'Black Room' museum of horrors.

Ruth: Late teens to late 20s. Local girl. This is her first and only job. Enjoys her position as Sam's 'right hand man'. Afraid of the exhibits in the museum.

Danny: Late teens to late 20s. Londoner. Cocky. Unemployed, travelling the coastal towns looking for cash in hand summer work. Needs to be able to suggest a potential for violence.



What else is on in the Area?

The Maddermarket Theatre:

The Last of the Red Hot Lovers by Neil Simon: January 23rd – February 1st Time:7.30pm; also matinée February 1st at 2.30 pm.

The Great Hall Theatre Company: (at the Assembly House) Time and the Conways by J. B.

Priestly: February 4th – 8th at 7.30 pm also matinée February 8th at 2.30 pm.