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2013-2014 Season

Newsletter 5: February 2014

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### Our Next Productions

## Once in a Lifetime

By Moss Hart and George Kaufman

Directed by Robert Little

February 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> – March 1<sup>st</sup> at 7.30 pm also a matinée on March 1<sup>st</sup> at 2.30 pm

This was writer Moss Hart’s first success and went on to make him a very big star in the world theatre and the movies. He and Kaufman would work with many of the top stars of the day including the “Marx Brothers”. If you’re looking for the art of comedy, look no further.

The play is all you would expect, Epic and Glamour applied to all. We have a large cast of 24 human actors and 2 canine actors playing over 50 characters between them. There are movie stars, mad directors, voice teachers, cameramen, and many more hoping that the “Talkies” will bring fame and fortune to them all, in this fast paced comedy. The cast, as you would imagine has attracted the best from the company, and the Norwich acting community. They are supported by our fantastic wardrobe department providing over 60 costumes and a set designer (Gemma Goodwin) who was asked to design a set that had to transport us from theatrical “digs” onto a train carriage then on, to a glamorous art deco hotel where the stars gather to be seen. That’s just Act 1!

It’s the 1920’S – the film The Jazz Singer has just been released, causing a storm as to where the movies will go with this new talking picture! Kaufman and Hart have come up with one of the best comedies of all time. It’s Hollywood at its funniest. Can our Vaudeville troop of May Daniels (Ruth Bennett), Jerry Hyland (James Gault) and George Lewis (George Ronayne) make their fortunes teaching actors to speak for the new era of the talkies? Can George be left to his own devices? Or will he mess it all up? This is a show that will have you laughing, as we follow our three heroes’ journey into Hollywood.

This is a great night out for all ages and you will surely leave the Sewell Barn feeling happy.  
Robert Little



# Down Among the Wines and Spirits

The golden age of the real music hall

Directed by Cassie & Selwyn Tillett

Performance dates: 6th - 8th March 2014 at 7.30 pm also a matinée on March 8<sup>th</sup> at 2.30 pm



For these four performances 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.

Our cast will between them re-create the stage performances of no fewer than 26 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 RACHEL DUFFIELD  
MR JOHN GRIFFIN  
MISS ANGELA ROWE  
MISS GILLIAN TICHBORNE

MISS JUDI DAYKIN  
MISS JUNE GENTLE  
MR JOHN HARE  
MR DAVID SHAW  
MR SELWYN TILLETT

"Crowded audiences are certain to prevail this week" – EDP, March 1913

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

Cassie Tillett

*Cassie & Selwyn Tillett add: "We have been having a wonderful and highly entertaining time working with a magnificent cast. This show is an unusual beast, in that it's somewhere between a variety show and a play; it's been written to suit the personalities and considerable skills of our cast; the 'real' music hall characters were chosen depending on who became part of the team. Some of the original artistes have left clear indications of their performance style via early twentieth-century film, and audio recordings back into the previous few decades; others exist nowhere except as perhaps a single line drawing and one song, so we've had to create these acts as we think they might have been.*

*"We promise you an evening of the surprising and the familiar, of comedy and pathos, of imagination and real life. These people were our theatrical forefathers, and we hope you'll come and meet them."*

## Our Previous Production

### The Shape of Things

We went to see The Shape of Things on the opening night. With a young cast of four, three of whom were new to the Barn, I'll admit to being curious. I can confirm that they didn't disappoint!

A short time into the first half, the cast were warmed up and putting on what was clearly going to be a fantastic performance for their full-house, an audience member fell seriously ill. Both the cast and director, Luke Owen, handled the situation brilliantly and with dignity for the ill audience-member.

Following the unfortunate delay, the show continued and carried on to great effect. The young actors were all very strong. I'm a stickler for Brits putting on American accents but the hard work they'd all put in was clear to see. The storyline was compelling and handled beautifully. I know Hazel Wilson well - she's a wonderful girl. But seeing her play her role, so utterly convincingly, made me want to boo her though hatred of her character; in fact her 15 minute soliloquy made me feel exceptionally uncomfortable which is testament to the extent to which these actors drew us in and had us believe that we'd just witnessed a hideous artistic experiment. Very well done - another great dramatic product from the Sewell Barn Theatre.

Tracie Harris

#### The Shape of Things

I was a steward on the first night of The Shape of Things. Unfortunately the show had to be stopped as a member of the audience was taken ill and an ambulance had to be called. The response time was excellent and the paramedics looked after our 'patient' very kindly and took him to hospital. The audience were very kind and understanding, not to mention patient and the performance was restarted after 30 minutes. Many members of the audience were very concerned and said how impressed they were with the way the emergency was handled. I would like to thank them for their response.

The actors and Luke, the director were very calm and despite the interruption continued with an excellent and professional performance..... many congratulations to them.

The next morning I spoke to the wife of the gentleman who was taken ill and she thanked everyone for their kindness and reported that her husband was in the N & N hospital and being extremely well cared for prior to having a pacemaker fitted. The couple were visitors to Norwich and were very impressed with the paramedic, the ambulance service and the hospital . .

We later received a very nice letter from the gentleman himself re-iterating this.

Jill Fuller



### Wednesday Performances

Don't forget that if you are in the audience for a Wednesday performance and you show your current membership card at the door, you will receive a free drink voucher for the bar!!



### Prompts

Although we no longer have a prompter at our performances, we do still need people at rehearsals. Peter Wood organises a rota for this and would very much like to hear from you if you could spare an evening occasionally to sit in on a rehearsal. Peter can be contacted on tel: 01508 538678

or email: [peterdwood@hotmail.com](mailto:peterdwood@hotmail.com)

Please support the Barn in this way if you can. It is also a great way to get to know a few more people.

## A New Barn Actor's First Impressions

My first performance at the Sewell Barn was this year's 'The Shape of Things,' in which I played Adam. I had little knowledge of the company prior to beginning rehearsals and the little I did know was patched together from recommendations made by others I knew who had been involved in productions. Scanning through information on recent Barn productions bolstered my appetite for auditioning as the range was varied, challenging, and refreshing. As such, it was a huge privilege to have been cast, especially in a play with a cast as small as ours was, as it meant each performer's contribution to the whole felt highly valued. On top of this, I had just moved back to Norwich the day before I auditioned after spending most of the last three years at university in Scotland, so I could not have wished for a better return to the city! I thoroughly enjoyed the rehearsal process which was always fun while remaining focused, but of course it was in performance that I felt the real buzz of the Barn. Playing on opening night to a full house felt genuinely special, and a lot of that comes down to the venue itself, which I can't avoid waxing lyrical about. Of all the theatres I have either performed or watched shows in, the Sewell Barn stands out as one of the very best. There is an intimacy to the space which I really felt when performing with an audience so close, and the space also oozes character. Please forgive me for romanticizing the place here, but I find sitting in the auditorium and looking over the stage area (with or without a set in place) endlessly interesting, a reaction I don't think many theatres can anticipate provoking. Maybe I am just going through a honeymoon phase right now - regardless, for those who participate in the Sewell Barn Company, those who come to watch shows and prospective audience members, it's an absolutely brilliant theatre venue. I cannot wait to get further involved.

David Green

## Company News

### Workshop:

Matt Briggs went to the Wardrobe Workshop:

– How to costume a production? A display of photos on the back wall of the theatre showed how different periods have been reflected by the costumes used.

We were taken step by step through the wardrobe department's discussions with the director, taking into account the era and location of the performance. These along with the status of the characters all help decisions to be made on the costumes that will be used. Often the same story can be told in many different locations, eras and with different classes of characters without affecting the story. Romeo and Juliet and West Side Story were used as examples.

June then continued by explaining the concept of silhouettes: a way to make costumes, which may be from a very different time and place, look authentic for the setting of the play. We were also shown techniques to make clothes look authentically worn and dirty, were given hands on experience of the methods used to distress cloth and had explained the different ways that costumes are cleaned and cared for.

A demonstration of how to do quick changes explained that they need to be rehearsed just as much as any other aspect of the play. The evening rounded off with a short quiz on clothing from various times, different statuses and with a variety of uses.

An Enjoyable and informative evening

Matt Briggs

I recently attended a workshop at the Sewell Barn run by the wardrobe team. I was so impressed by their professionalism and the attention to detail. It obviously contributes hugely to the great success of the productions. The evening was so interesting and it was over so very quickly. I am very much looking forward to maybe helping backstage in the future.

Jennifer Flitton

## Audition

Auditions for 'The Attractions' by Tony Marchant took place on Monday 20th January. Seventeen determined souls ventured out on that cold and foggy night, coming from as far as the Norfolk/Suffolk border. We had a wonderful time working on extracts from the play - it is a comedy, albeit a dark one. As a new (to the Barn) director it was very exciting to meet actors that I don't already know, and I *always* love watching different interpretations of the same characters or scenes. There are some very talented performers out there and it was a tough decision, but I'm very pleased with my final casting and we can't wait to start rehearsing.

Casting:

Sam Lawson - Peter Sowerbutts

Ruth - Jo Sessions

Danny - Luke McCulloch

Thank you to all who attended.

Jen Dewsbury (Director)



## What else is on in the Area?

### **The Maddermarket Theatre:**

'Hitchcock Blonde' by Terry Johnson : Directed by John Holden. February 20<sup>th</sup> – March 1<sup>st</sup>  
Time: 7.30pm; also a matinée on March 1<sup>st</sup> at 2.30 pm.

### **The Great Hall Theatre Company** (At the Assembly House, Norwich):

'Fortinbras' by Lee Blessing; March 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>.

Time: 7.30 pm also a matinée on March 29<sup>th</sup> at 2.30 pm