

MAY 2015

# newsletter

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THEATRE

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## Our Next Production

# Cowardy Custard

Words & music by Noël Coward | Devised by Gerard Frow, Alan Strachan & Wendy Toye  
Directed by Cassie & Selwyn Tillet

**14-16 & 20-23 May at 7.30 pm, matinée 23 May 2.30 pm**

Bright young things, cocktail glasses, witty lines and acid put-downs... yes, there's plenty of that. However, there is so much more. For some fifty years, Noël Pierce Coward was known as The Master (on both sides of the Atlantic), for very good reason. His music ranges from the sentimental to the sharp, from the simple to the fiendishly complex (as my cast would be the first to point out!).

Selwyn & I have been delighted to preside over rehearsals full of hilarity, new challenges and areas of talent, ensembles and solos, tiny cameo gems and full-length songs and scenes. Our hard-working cast of nine (including pianist) are enjoying the process enormously – and they rise to those challenges with aplomb. We are exploring together the genius of an extraordinary talent.



*Photograph: Andrew Evans*

Let us transport you to a world of elegance, pathos, wit, sadness, fun and laughter.

*Cassie Tillet*

## Booking

Tickets can be booked at Prelude Records who are located on St Giles Street in the city centre. With this new service, you can continue to buy tickets in person and over the phone by calling 01603 628319.

**PRELUDE  
RECORDS**

We've also introduced online booking, available on our website and via Prelude Records (a small booking fee applies if you use a credit card online). You can book tickets for any of this season's shows, so why not check your diary and book us in now?

## Our Previous Production

# Caligula

By Albert Camus | Translated by David Greig | Directed by David Green

Caligula was written in 1939 but Camus continued to make alterations until its first showing in 1945 when the post war Parisian audience would have seen Caligula as a Hitler-like dictator. However, as he lies dying, Caligula's final line, "I am still alive" is a chilling reminder that the threat of the tyrant is still with us today.



Photograph: Michael Stanislaw

The play begins as Caligula struggles to come to terms with the death of his sister and lover. He decides to bestow "the gift of meaninglessness" on the citizens of the Roman Empire by randomly committing barbarous acts and watching with amusement as "everything turns to ashes in front of fear". He declares that he is conducting a social experiment to prove that the exercise of unlimited freedom confirms life's futility. As this spirals out of control there is a sense that he is waiting for and willing the patricians to rebel and, led by the stoic Cherea, they finally do.

David Green created a tight, powerful production which was uncomfortable yet totally compelling. Mike Carson's set was sharp and impressive: a series of huge green and red geometric rectangles on floor and walls juxtaposed by a cuddly toy hanging by its neck and others lying abandoned, reflecting the cruelty and vulnerability of Caligula. This was powerfully enhanced by the lighting with colour washes bleaching the stage and the use of harsh torchlight swinging across the audience.

Joe Darbyshire gave us a tour de force performance as Caligula. His soft gait, dangling arms and petulant voice lulled us into a fall sense of security which we were shocked out of when he leapt into action, leering and posing with a voice full of menace. Ginny Porteous as Caesonia effectively portrayed the brittle yet vulnerable older mistress and Seamus Walsh's strong presence conveyed Cherea's calm voice of reason. David White was convincing as the cynical elder statesman, Helicon, whilst Luke McCulloch gave an emotional performance as the poet who loved Caligula - despite his cruelty. They were ably supported by a strong chorus of patricians who acted as a tight ensemble throughout, using stillness and movement to powerful effect.

Despite the constant sense of discomfort, there were moments of humour – David White's Helicon brought us down to earth with his desire for a good lunch and, when the audience laughed as the patricians were humiliated by Caligula, we became disturbingly complicit. There were some wonderful set pieces which provided a ghastly comedy – the worship of Caligula as Venus by the chorus of patricians, dressed in pink tutus; the poetry competition where the chorus feverishly wrote poems whilst looked down on from on high by Caligula, waiting for him to pronounce their fate from a bank of microphones.

Caligula is a play for all time. It is bleak and unsettling and rightly so. As we yawn in front of yet another party political broadcast, it serves to remind us of how fortunate we are to live in a democracy today.

*Clare Williamson*

## Coming Soon

# Mint

Clare Lizzimore | Directed by Jen Dewsbury

11-13 & 17-20 June

Rehearsals are under way for *Mint*. I always love those first rehearsals when I finally get to hear the characters speak with their own voices. We're enjoying the surprising comic moments and finding our way through the rhythms of the text. Can't wait to hear the final score (music by our very own Dave Green!). A great cast who will become the wonderful, if troubled, family central to the play.



*Jen Dewsbury*

# Copenhagen

Michael Frayn | Directed by Carole Lovett

16-18 & 22-25 July

The auditions for *Copenhagen* were very difficult – not because of a lack of actors coming forward but because of the amount of talented people that attended the audition! The Barn should be very pleased that we have such a large pool of first-rate actors who are keen to work with us. I am delighted however by my final choice and Jane de la Tour, Kevin Oelrichs and Rob Tiffen will begin rehearsals with me next month. Michael Frayn's script is wonderful and we will work hard to do it justice. This play has been described as 'a profound and haunting meditation on the mysteries of human motivation' and I really cannot better that description and I am beyond excited that I have the opportunity to bring it to the stage.

*Carole Lovett*

## Company News

### Company Meeting

**Monday 18 May at 7.30pm – Sewell Barn Theatre**

You are invited to meet your next potential **Artistic Director**. Those who have shown an interest in taking on the role will introduce themselves and their visions for the next exciting phase of the Sewell Barn Theatre Company. Should anyone else wish to express an interest, please contact Jill Fuller – [jill@ramatuelle.co.uk](mailto:jill@ramatuelle.co.uk) - by Monday 11 May.

We look forward to seeing you there.

*Michelle Montague & Robert Little*

## Front of House and Bar – your help is needed!

Could you possibly spare an evening during one of our productions to help as a steward on the door and in the auditorium? Or perhaps on the bar? It is a great way to get to know what is going on and to meet our audiences. We can organise for you to be on duty with someone experienced if you are new to stewarding.

If you can help, please contact Jane Page on [foh@sewellbarn.org](mailto:foh@sewellbarn.org) or on 01603 429360.

## Workshops

This season of workshops continues to develop creativity and offer members new learning experiences. Here are a few comments from those who attended our latest workshop on Ensemble Theatre, led by Tom Sparkes:

“Thanks Miche for organising the workshop. Attending enabled me to understand the impact of effective group dynamics on creating meaningful interactions, crucial to the success of a theatrical performance.” *Arun Joseph*

“The guy who took it was well into the vibe of using theatre / performance as a kind of spiritual practice. There certainly felt like there was a warm energy in the space where we felt pretty well connected after we had all been interacting with each other.” *Al Hindmarch*

“Tom’s Ensemble Theatre workshop was fun, informative and thoroughly enjoyable. I now have a much deeper understanding of the importance of rhythm and movement within acting and how it brings performers together as a group. Really looking forward to the May workshop. Huge thanks to Tom for giving up his time and sharing his knowledge with us all.” *Abbie Eastwood*

I am extremely grateful to Tom for supporting the company and to all of you who took part. Don’t forget **Part II** on **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May at 7:30 pm** – a continuation of session one (but also suitable if you missed session one) and will look at physical impulses and how we can begin to introduce text. Please be prepared for movement work and wear loose comfortable clothing.

*Michelle Montague*

## What else is on in the area?

**The Great Hall Theatre Company** (at the Assembly House)

***The School for Wives*** by Molière

5-9 May at 7.30 pm, matinée 9 May 2.30 pm

**The Maddermarket Theatre**

***Neighbourhood Watch*** by Alan Ayckbourn

21-30 May at 7.30 pm, matinee 30 May at 2.30 pm



*Photograph: Sean Owen of Reflective Arts*

great hall  
THEATRE COMPANY

MADDER  
MARKET