



BACKSTAGE PASS

The Barnstormers Theatre, Tamworth, NH FALL/WINTER 2021 NEWSLETTER

Women at The BST: Sarah Rozene

We chatted with Director Sarah Rozene about **Popcorn Falls**, working with an inclusive stage crew, women in theatre today, and coming back to work after lock down.

BST: How did *Popcorn Falls* happen?

Sarah: "I was initially approached by Joe Longthorne, our interim artistic director about directing a show this summer and we went back and forth with some ideas that he had, and we ended up settling on *Popcorn Falls*, which was not a show I was familiar with, but once I read it, I loved it. And I totally understood how perfect it was for The Barnstormers."

BST: How did you create the first all-female design and creative team at The BST?

Sarah: "When I work, I intentionally create a space in which I like to be. In the past few years, I have intentionally been creating teams of women and under-represented genders. I proposed that idea to Joe when he had asked me about designers that I like to work with. I told him that I generally work with this type of team and he said, 'I love that. Let's go for it.'"

Joe sent me lists of people that he really love to work with. I added some folks to that list and we whittled it down. One thing I really loved is that in the Boston area, I can name maybe two female sound designers—and Joe gave me this nice long list of women in sound. So just working with someone who was new, and also a woman in an industry that is predominantly male – that was really exciting.

I come from a background of both design and direction, and I really love a room to be completely collaborative. When our sound designer, Kimberly O'Loughlin proposed the idea that we use musical instruments as the sound effects for this show – that's already a play about putting on a play – I thought that was a great idea. One of them was the Vibraslap we used for the Taser, which I'd never heard of. It was an instrument that I borrowed from another percussionist friend of mine.

From there, we went into our six days of rehearsal. 16 hours of tech and then performing the tech rehearsals. I know a lot of people dread them, but it's always been something that I really love. It's when you can see all of the different pieces of a show come together and really start to live and breathe on stage – especially in an atmosphere like



Sarah Rozene

The Barnstormers where the rehearsal period and tech process are so condensed. It's really lovely to see all of that come together and be a really beautiful product.

For the creative team on *Popcorn Falls*, we had Emily Nichols as the scenic designer, who's been with The Barnstormers for twelve seasons as a scenic designer, Karen Perlow was our lighting designer. She has been with the Barnstormers longer than anyone else on the team. I think her last season that she worked with us was my first season 11 years ago. Kimberly S. O'Loughlin is our sound designer. She was new to The Barnstormers, and Alison Pugh was our costume designer. She's had a long history with the Barnstormers and is a brilliant costume designer. Hollis Duggans, our stage manager, was incredible, and started in immediately after *Far From Canterbury*. I've worked with her since her first season at The Barnstormers. I like her a lot and I'm really happy that she was my stage manager."

BST: Let's talk about women in theatre.

Sarah: "I think that many theatres are taking steps to make sure there is more representation of all people across the board, whether that's BIPOC people, LGBTQIA folks, or women in general—I think that the



Doug Shapiro and Amanda Huxtable in *Popcorn Falls*

theatres that are going to survive, hopefully are the ones who are addressing these concerns and these issues of representation.

It should not be so progressive that I have put together an all-female design team and creative team. That should not be something that's new, and I'm really grateful that Joe gave us that opportunity. But at the same time that shouldn't be something that is a surprise.

I found just solely working with teams that are women and under-represented genders is a completely healthy space to be in and that it gives you more of a chance to breathe and to create with the other people in the room. Just coming from the point of view of a cisgender white woman, I am not a minority in any way, but when I intentionally create a room where these people that I love to work with, and I love to create with also feel at ease, I think that the production is all the better for it.

The main thing that I've heard about *Popcorn Falls* after they closed is that the rehearsal space was just one that people enjoyed being in, and that was my end game."

BST: How does it feel to be back after the COVID lock down?

Sarah: "*Popcorn Falls* was my first show back since March 7th, 2020. So I think that we're really working to see how things change in the room, as we progress. It felt simultaneously completely familiar and surreal.

The show for me was great because I was able to work my brain as a scenic designer in terms of 'now we have to go here for this, in order to do that.' We have to get these pieces and these moving parts—including the actors to this ultimate place. I love storytelling, and so much of *Popcorn Falls* is having a through line that is understandable, both in all of the different characters that we saw Doug Shapiro play, and the number of characters we saw Amanda Huxtable play, but the story arc as well of the Mayor and Joe, and the Mayor and Becky.

What really felt surreal in the room was just being face-to-face with people that I knew, but working hard for 8 hours of rehearsal every day, and taking the time to remind everyone in the room that we are in a rehearsal room all together for the first time in 17 months. It's okay to be having a harder time than normal. To have it be more difficult just because of what has happened in the last 17 months, and you are not the same person that you were at *The Barnstormers* in 2019. And maybe you work differently or maybe you're readjusting to how you work. All of that is good. And we will work with it and we will make everything happen that needs to happen.

It literally it really boiled down to us just being kind to ourselves which I know sounds a little lame, but it was about remembering to be kind to yourself, because as much as it feels the same, this was a completely different year than we've ever had before."

BST: The pace of *Popcorn Falls*!

Sarah: "Yeah, Penny Purcell asked me after the Invited Dress Rehearsal, "How could you do that to Doug?" The show had to happen! Doug and Amanda were ready to go, and so willing to just, try anything, and be clowns – and I couldn't have asked for more.

Barnstorming: Music From WAITRESS



Waitress cast performing to an enthusiastic, sold out audience at Rosie's Restaurant in Tamworth. Other stops on the tour included Bald Peak Colony Club and a return to Castle in the Clouds.



Waitress cast performing on the Tamworth History Center lawn. Left to Right: Greg Pike, Lisa Joyce, Jordan Ahnquist, Yewande Odetoynbo, Jordan Stanley, Alia Hodge, Pim van Amerongen, Tiffany Chalothorn, George Piehl, Chazmond Peacock.
Director: Sara Coombs.

The Barnstormers Auction



In August The Barnstormers Theatre hosted its annual auction online. With over 50 donated items, the Theatre was able to raise just under \$10,000 with over 160 total bids. Everyone enjoyed following their progress online and competing from a distance! Items included trips to Florida and Canada; the top grossing lot, the beautiful bronze sculpture *Blessings* by local artist Andrea Kennett; and our famous marquee posters, including *Our Town*, which received the most bids. We are truly grateful for all of the support we received.

~ Lynn Kearney



A Message from the Board

What a gift it was this summer to be able to enter the hallowed halls of The Barnstormers Theatre and experience once again the excitement of live theatre in Tamworth Village. Although we were dark for only one summer, our sabbatical felt more like a decade long. We were anxious to finally inaugurate our 91st season of entertaining audiences drawn to our region by its spectacular natural beauty.

WE ARE BACK doing what the theatre does best: presenting productions that honor our rich heritage while acknowledging our evolving culture and addressing contemporary social issues such as inclusion and diversity.

Our Interim Artistic Director Joe Longthorne came into the theatre facing difficult circumstances due to COVID-19. We planned to host three plays in our outside venue, and as the virus took a turn, so did our plans. Joe proved to be theatre savvy and nimble when he made the decision to host patrons inside the theatre. His play selection, production quality and focus on inclusion set the tone for a successful 2021 abbreviated season. The board is indebted to Joe for his significant artistic contribution this past summer.

The lights shone brightly on three stage productions this summer. We opened with Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, followed by the world premiere of *Far From Canterbury*, and wrapped up the mainstage shows with *Popcorn Falls*. Continuing our "Barnstorming tradition," we took to the road with music from *Waitress*. We wrapped up the season with the launch of a children's educational program in collaboration with the Brett School, and a reading of three new plays performed by some of The Barnstormers most beloved actors. In the midst of this busy season, we also managed to replace clapboards, spruce up the lobby area, and put a long overdue new coat of paint on the exterior of the theatre. The building is wearing its new renovations proudly!

Despite the limitations placed on ticket sales this summer, we can count the season a resounding success. We could not have accomplished this result without your help. Without financial backing, alas, there can be no art, and accordingly we remain indebted to our patrons for your generous support of our endeavors.

Lou Demaio, Board Chair

New Works: Miley Chase the Science Ace



Director Brian Dillon with students from the Brett School, who read the play in The Barnstormers Theatre to an enthusiastic audience of their peers.

New Works: The Stephen Kaplan Plays



Three plays directed by Bob Shea, performed on the lawn of the Tamworth History Center. Left to right: Jordan Stanley, Rachel Alexa Norman, Jean Mar Brown, Dale Place, Penny Purcell, Bob Bates

2021 Fall Appeal

Thanks to you, we had a banner 2021 summer season, despite all the challenges we faced in this current world! We enjoyed enthusiastic praise from you, our audience, as well as excellent reviews and coverage in the state and local media, and were honored to produce the world premiere of *Far From Canterbury* on The Barnstormers stage. Although we had limited seating in the theatre, ticket sales were very strong and attendance was better than we'd hoped for the entire season.

Like most theaters throughout the nation this year, we suffered a large revenue gap despite great ticket sales. This was because Covid protections mandated by the Actors' Equity Association forced us to limit our audience size to 40% of our seating capacity, even though our production costs did not go down. We always rely on you, our wonderful donors, to make up the difference between our costs and our ticket income. **Over the last 18 months, you have come through more generously than ever.** We know this is an expression of your love for The Barnstormers. Your loyalty and financial support in these uncertain times means so much.

To implement our plans for the 92nd season, we need your help. Please make a donation to our annual fund. If you've never donated before, please do it this year. If you have donated before, please consider an increase in your amount. We have a gap to fill before the end of 2021, and we need to raise a total of \$50,000 before December 15th to ensure that we have another great year of theatre in 2022. We can't wait to see you again next summer!

For your convenience, you can tuck a check in the enclosed envelope or visit our website, barnstormerstheatre.org, to make a one-time donation or become an evergreen contributor by donating monthly.

Thank you in advance for your generosity!



Necrology



David Neal Brown, son of Dr. Francis Brown and Beulah (Jones) Brown, died on August 6 surrounded by loving friends and family in Tamworth. He was a resident of Tamworth for most of his adult life. He was a professional actor, a member of Actors' Equity, and especially active with The Barnstormers Theatre in Tamworth for over 40 years. He was well-known and loved by theatre goers.



Margaret Cleveland, August 3. From left to right: Margaret, Warren Steele and George Cleveland in *Solid Gold Cadillac*, 1980. See the 2021 Summer Newsletter for our tribute to Margaret.

ADVERTISE IN THE BARNSTORMERS 2022 PROGRAM BOOK

To reach over 10,000 patrons next summer, call
603-323-8661 to reserve an ad

Mission Statement

To keep vital the value, spirit, and tradition of fine summer theatre in Tamworth and to provide a venue for and to promote varied cultural activities within the region.

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