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Press Release

First World War play 'Duty'

at the

Brighton Fringe Festival 2025

Sound Architect Creative Media are proud to support Twilight Theatre's 'Duty', a new play by award winning playwright Susanne Crosby, set during the time of the First World War. Susanne was instrumental in several of Sound Architect's community heritage projects over the past few years, and has incorporated all the facts gained through the research into her play. 'Duty' is about three young men and one woman in rural Sussex, set against the backdrop of the First World War: it is about friendship in extraordinary circumstances, and the very different calls to duty that they experience. It draws particularly on three projects: 'Twelve and Sixpence' which is about life on the Home Front, 'The Right to Refuse' about Conscientious Objectors, and 'The Day Sussex Died' about the Battle of Boars Head.

"It's very important to me to honour the people who lived through those times by ensuring that all the facts around this story are true," says Susanne Crosby who wrote the play, "and I've also made sure that the story is alive and relevant to now. These characters in my play are real people: with hopes and dreams for the future. Sometimes that dream is just to meet someone and fall in love and settle down. All of that changed when war broke out in 1914. It changed everything. We can't imagine that now, so I've written this so that people will be able to have a chance to experience what it might have been like for four ordinary working people in Sussex at that time, which will make the history: the real events, come alive."

John and his mother Mags run their family farm with Joe and Harry's help. The three men have been friends all their lives, but nothing has tested their friendship like the onset of War. Harry feels the call to duty for King and Country very strongly, but John feels the call to duty to his fellow man, and as a man of faith, to God. There have been many films and plays about soldiers in the First World War, most of them concentrate on men who became soldiers. This play has that too, but there were also those who objected because they had strong humanitarian views or faith, as well as

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protected occupations which were exempt from conscription. There was also the difficulty of how those who were left behind survived: mainly women, children, and those too old or young to sign up. There was also a very important First World War battle that affected all the families in Sussex that became known as: The Battle of Boars Head, in France. It also became known as “The Day Sussex Died”, as the repercussions were felt by every single family across the county. The real sounds of those times are used in the play, including the very end of the war: the last shelling before the ceasefire, and the silence that fell on 11 November 1918.

“There is no story out there that brings all these things together.” said Susanne. “When I was researching this through Sound Architect Creative Media, one elderly lady told me how she lost her father in the Battle of Boars Head and it was still very fresh in her mind even at 94 years old. One man told me of the bravery of his grandfather saving others from no-mans-land, which is backed up by official records as well as other people’s accounts. It’s so hard for us to imagine now the very real impact of what it must have been like. But there was something else that really struck me about these oral histories: the funny stories. The camaraderie, as well as the bravery. The fun they got up to. And the fact that they were just like us: they had hopes for the future, they had things that gave them joy and made them laugh. I wanted to tell this very human friendship story, and how it’s tested by their very different calls to duty under extreme circumstances.”

“The important thing for me is to tell an authentic story that needs to be told, and not take sides, which this play doesn’t: it invites you to live in that moment and feel what they are feeling. I want the audience to share their story.” In addition, the Sound Architect Creative Media information from the projects will be available for all audience members to take home, for free.

‘Duty’ runs Thursday 22 to Sunday 25 May at various times at the Lantern Theatre, 77 St James Street, Brighton and tickets are available through the Brighton Fringe website www.brightonfringe.org or www.twilight-theatre.co.uk priced £14 or £12 for concessions, various discounts are available including free companion tickets for carers.

ENDS

Cast:

John – Matt Vickery

Joe – Jake Marchant

Harry – Jordan Southwell

Mags – Sam Nixon

NOTES:

1. Duty, written and directed by Susanne Crosby, at
 - a. The Lantern Theatre, 77 St James' Street, Brighton BN2 1PA
 - b. Dates: Thursday 22 May - 7.00 pm, Friday 23 May - 5.00 pm, Saturday 24 May - 5.00 pm, Sunday 25 May - 7.00 pm
 - c. Tickets £14 or £12 concessions, various discounts available including for Carers, see the Fringe website for details
 - d. Tickets from both www.brightonfringe.org and www.ticketsource.co.uk/act - if sold out on one, available on the other one
2. Press information: Susanne Crosby, suse@susannecrosby.com 07729812274
3. Sound Architect Creative Media: www.soundarchitectcreativemedia.co.uk/
4. Twilight Theatre: www.twilight-theatre.co.uk
5. Facebook: @TwilightTheatreUK
6. Instagram: @TheatreTwilight
7. X: @TwilightThtrUK @SACreativeMedia
8. Sound Architect Creative Media community project films are available on YouTube