

Five minute INTERVIEW

SHERIDAN WINN is the Norwich-based author whose first children's book, *The Sprite Sisters, The Circle of Power*, is attracting great reviews.



What is your idea of perfect happiness in Norfolk?

I grew up in the Norfolk countryside, in the days when children were free to roam. All through my childhood, I was very in tune with nature and I hope that comes through in my writing. These days, my happiest time is spent sitting under 'my' tree in Blickling Park, sometimes for hours. It's the place where I feel completely peaceful. Time slows down; my mind empties and life feels simple. It's here and walking through the woods that I get a lot of ideas for my stories. Sometimes, I talk in to my digital recorder as I walk, and the ideas flow out. Later, I transcribe them. Alternatively, I love striding out across the wide beaches of Holkham and Burnham Overy.

How do you relax in the county?

Walking and cycling; pottering about Norfolk churches - Salle is one of my favourites. Years ago, I researched and wrote a book about Norfolk barns. I still love the sense of discovery here: that you can turn a corner and find a wonderful old building.

With which Norfolk character do you most identify?

My third Christian name is Sewell, so it would have to be Anna Sewell. It was thought that my father's family, the Ebbages, may be related to hers. Anna was 57 when her novel, *Black Beauty*, was published, and I am 54 on the publication of my first book, so we're both late starters. She cared a lot about things and so do I. *Black Beauty* was said to be the sixth best-selling book in the English language - so the *Sprite Sisters* and I had better buck up!

If you weren't talking to us now, what would you be doing?

Gazing out of the window at the clouds whooshing past, thinking about the work I need to get on with.

What do you miss most when you leave Norfolk?

I love big, wide spaces and clear thinking. It's fun going to London for meetings, but I cannot wait to get home. There are too many people there. Norfolk provides me with a sense of freedom and it's where my roots are: my family and my oldest friends. To me, that sense of connection is priceless in a world that spins ever faster.

How would you spend your ideal day in Norfolk?

Over a good meal in the unhurried company of the people I love, or alone with my notebook.

What's your earliest Norfolk memory?

I was four years old and sitting on *Starlight*, a huge chestnut horse. He belonged to my Uncle Sid, an ex-mounted policeman, and was stabled on land where UEA now sits. I fell in love with horses in those few minutes.

In moments of weakness...

I escape my desk and the city for another walk in the country.

What would your motto be?

Dream your dream awake.

If you like a party and enjoy good jazz, then there's only one place to be. DAVID WAKEFIELD previews a special bank holiday event.

What a swell party!

THE PARTY'S ALL SET TO ROCK - THE SECOND NORWICH Jazz Party, that is. Once again, over the May Day bank holiday weekend, fans will flock from all over the country to the Holiday Inn at Norwich International Airport for a three-day fiesta of all that's good and enjoyable about jazz.

There to delight them will be a mouth-watering line-up of musicians from the UK, America, Europe and Australia, including some real-life legends. But this is far more than a weekend of hero worship. The organiser, Norwich record shop owner Jerry Brown, who was at the helm for last year's inaugural Norwich party, sees it as very much a social event in which musicians and audience, literally, rub shoulders - and that's very much the basis for its success.

The 2007 event was born in rather unlikely circumstances - in a Blackpool bar in the early hours. It was then that Jerry - experienced at running jazz gigs at the former Lakenham Leisure Centre - heard that the previous organisers, Tom and Chris Baron, had decided that the 2006 Blackpool event, an eagerly-awaited weekend in the Lancashire resort, was to be the last (although they did subsequently have a change of heart and organised a September party in Blackpool the following year!).

"We (Jerry, his wife Ann, and fellow promoter Brian Peerless) decided that we would have a go at doing one in Norwich," he said. And so they did.

Jerry, who has run a record shop at the jazz parties for many years, was well known to the musicians and that familiarity, plus Brian's contacts, and a good deal of arm-twisting, saw the first Norwich party get under way.

It succeeded brilliantly, with fine music, a warm and enthusiastic audience and, best of all, no heartaches for the organisers.

"To be honest, we won't have a lot to change this year," said Jerry, "maybe just tinkering with lighting and presentation. But we're not changing the way that the music ran. We were so impressed with the professionalism of the musicians - not once did we have to go and look for someone who was late for their set.

"A lot of them stayed in the room after playing to hear the next band, and did a lot of socialising. This rubs off on the audience and makes it all the more enjoyable."

The musicians also enjoyed it, and many who came last year are returning - several in time for the traditional Friday evening pre-party jam session. Indeed, Britain's jazz knight, Sir John Dankworth, has asked to come back, and is staying longer this year; "although his wife [Dame Cleo Laine] has told him he has to do a gig at Cheltenham Festival on the Sunday," joked Jerry.

John's bass-playing son, Alec, is also returning, along with fellow Brits Keith Ingham (piano), Alan Barnes (sax/clarinet), Ian Bateman (trombone),



JAZZ PARTY: Performers include, clockwise from above, American tenor saxophonist Scott Hamilton; Ken Peplowski; Australian bassist/singer Nicki Parrott.

Dave Green (bass) and Steve Brown (drums). Suffolk tenor saxist Karen Sharpe, from the band led by the late Humphrey Lyttelton, is making her debut.

Then there's the usual flock of top American players: saxists Scott Hamilton, Scott Robinson, Ken Peplowski, guitarists Chuck Flory and Howard Alden, trumpeters Enrico Tomasso and Randy Sandke and former Count Basie drummer Butch Miles, to name but a few.

American singer Rebecca Kilgore is a great favourite at the party, as is Australian singer/bassist Nicki Parrott. Then, from Italy, comes the outstanding young pianist Rossano Sportiello - equally adept at jazz or the classics - who was a big hit last year and who alone is worth the admission money.

Much of the programme content is decided by the musicians, some of whom bring special projects: American tenor man Scott Robinson will be playing music by Thad Jones, and there will be a big band playing Benny Goodman numbers arranged by Fletcher Henderson. And, if all goes to plan, there could be a special session featuring five trombonists.

Although the party atmosphere is ever-present, the event raises money for



charity via a raffle - this year's beneficiary is the East Coast Truckers organisation (which famously takes a party of disadvantaged children to Great Yarmouth each year amid a welter of hooting!). Also, several of the musicians happily give their time to organise sessions with Down's Syndrome children; last year this was at Norwich Arts Centre, but this year it is at the hotel, on Saturday, at 10.30am.

Maybe, one day, it might be possible to meld some of the Jazz Party content with the Norfolk and Norwich Festival, with which it overlaps. The "crossover" possibilities are there: A late night jazz/classics concert from Rossano Sportiello at St Peter Mancroft, for example; or the wise-cracking American guitarist/singer Eddie Erickson at Norwich Playhouse?

The Norwich public might just think it a half-decent notion.

■ The Norwich Jazz Party is at the Holiday Inn at Norwich International Airport, Saturday to Monday, May 3-5. Tickets cost £150 for three days, or £50 for separate days. Contact: Norwich Jazz Party, 43 Whittingham Hall, Kirby Road, Trowse, Norwich NR14 8QH; 01603 467777/620287. Fax: 01603 0305505; e-mail norwichjazzparty@btconnect.com

QUOTES OF THE DAY

"There are no finer words with which to finish and upon which to say: In history, in politics and in life, there are no ends, only new beginnings. Let us begin" - Bertie Ahern addressing a joint session of the US Congress in Washington less than a week before he stands down as Ireland's taoiseach.

"It's strange, given that I have been married four times, but I actually don't think marriage is necessary. Girls like it, especially if they have

never been married before - it's the dress. Girls want a wedding. They don't want a marriage. If only you could have weddings without marriages" - Writer Salman Rushdie.

"A shallow salesman" - The prime minister's description of David Cameron, the Tory leader, pictured.

"What self-respecting chap wants to buy a face cream that sounds like a remedy for something far worse?" - Rowan Pelling, co-founder of The

Erotic Review, discussing "some gunk called L'Oreal Men Expert Vita Lift".

"With confidence faltering, the economy now slowing and no sign that the tightening in lending criteria is coming to an end, it is hard to see what will prevent further house price falls" - A gloomy outlook from economist Ed Stansfield.

"The Women's Institute is not my scene. I have never joined a club. I don't suppose I am good at

belonging" - Actress Dame Helen Mirren.

"I love it when I meet a woman and her sexuality is dancing across her face, so it is apparent that all we need to do is nod and find a cupboard" - Russell Brand.

