

Coming in
June:

Genet's
'The Maids'
&
'Deathwatch'

Directed by
Strat Mastoris

Bedford Place
Brighton BN1 2PT
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NEW VENTURE
T H E A T R E

THEATRE
NEW WRITING
CLASSES



'FESTEN'

Adapted by David Eldridge
Directed by Pat Boxall
2-16 May 2009

"Welcome to this curious birthday

Festen was the first film shot according to the rules of the Dogme 95 Manifesto, which shook the world of film in the 1990s. With natural lighting, no post-production sound and the use of hand-held cameras, it quickly achieved cult status.

This English stage adaptation, by David Eldridge, brilliantly and faithfully captures the integrity of the film by keeping narrative at the heart of the writing and by utilizing the device of a family dinner as the context for a tragic black comedy about dark family secrets. Like almost all great tragedy Festen is a play about families; the once sacred unit torn apart by revelations from the past as in *The Oresteia* or *Oedipus*. Like *Hamlet* or *Hecuba*, Festen is about a son, symbolically named Christian, who destroys his father with accusations from the past.

Festen made an immediate impact when it opened at the Almeida Theatre in 2004. It was nominated for five Olivier awards, including Best New Play and made a hugely successful transfer to the West End.



Matthew Houghton
as Christian

Photo by Strat Mastoris

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Tom Stoppard Double Bill 19-24 May

'The Real Inspector Hound'

Directed by Mark Wilson

Two theatre critics attend a performance of an Agatha Christie type 'Who-dun'-it?' little knowing that they will become key players in the lives of the drama they have gone to review. This is the play where 'real life' ends up on stage and 'on stage' ends up in the audience. And, if that doesn't

Photo by Strat Mastoris



L-R Jenny Bridges, Steve Mallen & Peta Taylor

do anything for you, it's also one of the funniest plays ever written.

This was one of Stoppard's earliest works but already shows that fondness for language and those 'Theatre of the Absurd' twists that later found expression in his

'After Magritte'

Directed by Martin Nichols

In *After Magritte* Stoppard has constructed a delightful theatrical puzzle, a jeu d'esprit which has certainly made the cast think (a lot) and laugh (out loud, very frequently) during the rehearsal period.

The director (relative newcomer, Delorean Groves) has also been pleased to discover that the play also works as a fascinating sociological record of a very important time for not only him personally but also, it is hoped, for a large cross-section of the theatre's membership: the early 1970s. A time when "making do" prevailed, rather than "making megabucks"; when Maigret was always on the telly (and always in black-and-white) rather than Snog Marry Avoid (always in garish colour); when people had hobbies rather than lifestyles and when an ordinary British policewoman could still be unself-consciously racist

Continued on page 2

I am fortunate to have assembled an extremely talented cast including Matthew Houghton [*Christian*], last seen at NVT in "Mojo" and with Matthew Lawson [*Michael*] and Kirsty Harbron [*Helene*] in "Strangers on a Train". Making a welcome return to the NVT Studio are Bob Gilchrist [*Helge*] and Eleanor Gamper [*Else*], last seen in "Dinner", David Richards [*Helmut*] "Hedda Gabler", Darren Cockrill [*Kim*] "Mojo" and Peter Milner [*Grandfather*] "The Birthday Party". Making their acting debuts at NVT I am delighted to welcome Caron McNish [*Mette*], Emma Cunliffe [*Pia*], Colin Elmer [*Lars*], Anthony Ayton [*Gbatokai*] and a special welcome to Rebekah Benny and Amber Tregoning [*Little Girl*].

This enthralling and challenging play has innovative set, costume and lighting designs together with original music by award winning composer Steve Gallant and songs written by Gaynor Gallant. So...don't miss it! I look forward to seeing you during the run and promise you an unforgettable night out at this year's Brighton Fringe.

[Please be aware that Festen is suitable for audiences over 15]

Pat Boxall

'*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*' in which two minor characters in Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' become central figures.

The text demands the casting of a highly intelligent and creative cast, ready to contribute to the process. I am lucky in having just such a group of people to work with

This show is 'suitable for all the family' - because everyone can be amazed and everyone can laugh.

Mark Wilson

without anyone batting an eyelid. These last aspects of the text may make the younger members of the audience look with slightly drier eyes at the prejudices of a time before they were born, but Delorean has retained them out of respect for the integrity of the piece. So let us take you into the apparently bizarre but actually perfectly normal home of Thelma and Harris as they prepare to go out ballroom dancing.

Hopefully tonight will give them a chance to make amends for the fiasco at the Cricklewood Lyceum. Hopefully Mother will get to practise her tuba. And hopefully you, loyal NVT member, will accept this invitation to be seduced by the audacious comic genius of the wittiest playwright writing in English today.

Martin Nichols

**To the Hound/
Margritte Company**

I'm delighted that "The Real Inspector Hound" and "After Margritte" are coming together after many years - thanks and best wishes to the New Venture Theatre.

Tom Stoppard



Photo: © Derry Moore

June newsletter dates

Final copy date: Monday 25 May

Printing: Thursday 4 June

Stuffing & posting: Weds. 10 June

Ticket requests

**To: The Box Office Manager, New Venture Theatre,
Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT**

Please reserve for me _____ tickets for '**Festen**'

Saturday 2 May to Saturday 16 May - 7.45 pm

Matinee on Sundays 3 May & 10 May at 2.30 pm

(No performance on Mondays)

Tickets: £7.00 (Non-members: £8)

NAME: _____ Membership number _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE _____

**To: The Box Office Manager, New Venture Theatre,
Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT**

Please reserve for me _____ tickets for

The Tom Stoppard double bill

Tuesday 19 May to Sunday 24 May - 7.45 pm

and matinee on Sunday 24 May - 2.30 pm

Tickets: £7.00 (Non-members. £8.00)

NAME: _____ Membership number _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE _____

'Beauty Within'

Devised by Saskia Ulrike Schilling

Reviewed by Meinir Macfadyen

The intriguing poster for **Beauty Within** attracts, and informs the subject of this ensemble piece. Quotes from the great and the good posted in the South Hall further illuminate the performance in store. Einstein, Bacon, Keats, Dante and others all had wonderful things to say about beauty and reading the programme with its ideas on the subject expressed by the company further 'softens up' the audience for the show. This can be a very good play, especially for a new drama, allowing the audience to feel part of the experience more keenly, putting us in the frame.

Ulrike Schilling obeys one of the vital tenets of the New Venture Theatre which is to achieve new work while keeping up the standards of good production. Her intention as described in the programme was to: - " .. explore the subject of Beauty which cannot be understood simply in logical terms. The work is based on physical and emotional experiences - 'The body knows things about which the mind is ignorant', (Jacque Lecoq)." She explains, " I enjoy working with people from a variety of backgrounds and diverse training to create an individual aesthetic and language, both verbal and physical."

She achieves the above by assembling 9 young and *fit* actors and dancers who developed the narrative from their individual experiences during rehearsal. The concentration and focus in the performances, individual and ensemble, are remarkable. To me that indicates great trust between the company and director as well as great control by the actor. The 'set' is the studio, ie a black box with the characters wearing white trousers and primary coloured vests. They are lit brilliantly

well with lighting which seems to join in the search for beauty! The first half depicts each individual's search and their performances are repeated as members enter their own choreography one by one, almost like the birth of the human condition. In the second half people perform in sections, the action layered, more active in creating cosmetic beauty, ie cleaning, washing, making-up, presenting the outward to the world. There is quiet humour and explicit energy expressed as the journey progresses. Towards the end it seems that each person is able to gravitate towards others creating the final tableaux.

The sound track complements the action perfectly with its sometime lyrical and sometime discordant music, and voices referencing beauty in history of religion and culture, here and in the rest of the world, thus underlining the point that the search for and the identification of beauty is universal. I felt it was vital in playing its part in changing the pace of the movement and giving it shape.

The drama reminded me of *The Snail* by Matisse, a composition in the round with elements clinging to the sides of the frame and the blocks of the snail's body in primary colours moving around the centre. The amazing block of black in the centre provides the drama of the painting. The collage effect in the painting is also effected in **Beauty Within**. Perhaps Ulrike would echo Matisse when he said he had gained '.. a greater completeness and abstraction in the cutouts. I have attained a form filtered to its essentials'.

With her talented cast Ulrike Schilling produced a well-structured movement drama and used only essentials to create this. The overall effect of the piece was one of reflective tranquillity. I enjoyed it and it made me think and feel.

Meinir Macfadyen

Directors' meeting held on 4 April

I was delighted at the large and enthusiastic turn-out for this meeting, at which a number of decisions were made:

- Potential new directors would be encouraged to "shadow" an experienced director before taking on their own production, perhaps combining this with another role such as production manager or stage manager.
- All directors would have the support of an experienced director as a "buddy"-an adviser and mentor, but with the director firmly in charge.
- We'd have a directors' workshop at a date to be advised in July/August to pool our ideas for improving artistic standards.
- All directors would contribute to a "library" of plays which they'd like to direct over the next few years, so that we can begin to take a longer term approach to planning the artistic programme.

Mike Stubbs
Artistic Director



Clover has had her baby. A beautiful little girl, Flora, born February 6th. Mother and daughter doing very well. Dad, Raph, a bit tired but proud.

Review: 'Five Kinds of Silence' - February production

Directed by: Kirsty Harbron

Guest Reviewer: Kiah Hart, Haywards Heath 6th Form

Recently I came to the New Venture Theatre with three friends to see a production of Five Kinds of Silence. It was our first time here at the theatre and the play was one that we are researching and performing for our scripted pieces at college, otherwise we would never have seen this brilliant piece, which was originally written as a radio play by Shelagh Stephenson.

Five Kinds of Silence is about a mother and her two daughters who have been abused in every way possible by the husband and father, Billy. Simple things like making a noise when they clicked the light on and buttering his toast in the wrong direction would set him off.

Eventually the two daughters, who are thirty-six and thirty-eight decide to shoot him in order to save themselves and their mother. The play is structured mostly as monologues which reveal information about their home life with Billy. The monologues are also used as a sort of portal for the mother and Billy, as they relive bits of their childhood. Through the play, it is clear that Billy is a cruel and dangerous man but also he is depicted as a sort of victim since he himself received horrible physical and emotional abuse as a child.

The set used for this production was simple; using only blocks for seats, a revolving staircase in the centre which led up to a door frame and shelving to the sides. As soon as we walked into the theatre the characters, the mother Mary and the two daughters Susan and Janet, were there sitting on the steps rigidly waiting. Already, our attention was on the play and the characters. The size of the theatre only made the play more intense since the audience was right there; almost in the characters own space.

The scene changes were smooth and clear, the simple stage easily went from an interview room to a cell to the family's house without ever changing, with the exception of the stairs. The changing of levels in this plays allowed the status of the characters to be visibly seen during the course of the play, again using the stairs to show this. They used a variety of effective abstract techniques that, when combined with the simplicity of the setting and the low key lighting, clearly put across the plays message of the silence many abused families live in and control.

For first timers here at this theatre, we were all very impressed with what we came to see and it had given us a new and clearer insight to the play. The cast was made up of only six actors for eleven characters two of whom were constantly changing character right in front of the audience. It takes strong acting and direction to do the story of Billy's life and family justice. Acting out the utter most extremities of abuse without overdoing it or not doing enough is hard work- but I think it's safe to say that they succeeded in not do either.

Box Office developments

At the AGM we agreed to automate the Box Office system, using a company called TicketWeb, who could provide both an online and telephone service at a small handling charge. However, we have since found a further cost per transaction that makes this option not viable. Therefore we have to look at a system which only provides an online service.

We have considered how best to move forwards. The need to change the system to prepayment has already been agreed and online is the most advanta-

geous route for both parties. However we need to allow for those who do not have access to or wish to use online booking.

From the July production, bookings for NVT productions will be online; with limited options for postal and phone bookings. A limited number of seats will be held back for postal bookings until 10 days before the production run starts. If postal bookings are received for a performance that is full. We will attempt to contact you and rearrange the booking, or return/destroy your

cheque by agreement. Postal bookings will only be available to members. Phone bookings will be during set times - probably 6 to 8pm for the week prior to the production run. This will enable direct booking and prepayment, leaving message to reserve seats as previously will not be possible. This phone service will only be possible if adequate volunteers are available to take the calls during the set time slots. Where tickets remain they will continue to be available on the door, on a first come first served basis.

Ian Black

Letters

NVT Newsletter edited and produced by Charles Gilson - Correspondence to: nvtnewsletter@btinternet.com or by post to the theatre

Dear NVT Friends,

I was just getting ready to start assembling the March newsletter on March 1 when I quite unexpectedly found myself being whisked off in an ambulance to the Royal Sussex County Hospital.



The good news is that I'm home, completely back to normal.

But what I really want to say is how hugely, hugely grateful I am to Tamsin and Strat for stepping in at a moments notice, picking up all the media, and producing the March newsletter.

I would have been so disappointed if the NVT people had had to send you a little note saying, "Sorry, the editor is ill. No newsletter this month".

Charles Gilson
NVT newsletter editor

Acting Class Body Awareness: Mondays 1, 8, 15, 22 June

Whilst many actors focus on learning their lines, they forget what they might be saying with their bodies. During these classes we will be looking at physicality, explore the concept of presence and work with the body in relation to its surroundings.

The classes will be led by Ulrike Schilling who has trained in several dance and movement techniques and devised two productions at NVT. 'Intimate Encounters' was part of Brighton's 2008 Fringe Festival, and 'Beauty Within' was shown earlier this season.

Ulrike's work focuses on individuality, physicality and experience.

Our sponsors

Our sponsorship deal is £250 for a year's advertising on our website and in our brochure, newsletter and show programmes, plus 2 free tickets for each production in that year. We need more sponsors, so please email [redacted] if you have any ideas in that direction.

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Andrew Robson - British International

Artistic Director - or Dustman?

After three months as Artistic Director I've at last worked out what I'm supposed to be doing . . . I'm a dustman!

I spent a happy hour on Saturday moving the crap left outside the stage door to the refuse bin directly outside the building. It's big and black and you can't miss it, so please use it.

Blocking the stage door like this is against the fire regs so please don't do it!

But then I had a nice surprise today (Monday 16th March) when I found the kitchen nice and tidy...thanks to whoever did that. The refuse bag was full, though, and that goes in the big black bin, too.



While I'm at it, it's black bags for refuse and white bags for recycling, and that goes in the area behind the gate on the left of the entrance to the theatre. Spare bags are kept in the supplies cupboard in the kitchen.

The basic rule is simple . . . clear up your own mess please.

Mike Stubbs

COMING

'Mademoiselle Y' 8-11 July

A performance event of dance and drama exploring the tensions within August Strindberg's play 'The Stronger'. An opportunity to view the original play and go on a journey of physical and vocal interpretations of the silent protagonist. Featuring dance performance by Tamar Daly, in which movement, video and sound provide an exciting theatrical landscape.

Tamar Daly and Mike Stubbs come together to direct this amazing combination, all based on Strindberg's wonderful playlet - an encounter between two actresses who are old friends but also, it turns out, old enemies. One is very vocal and the other, silent . . . does that give her strength, or not?

Don't miss this unique and vivid piece of theatre which concludes this season.

Audition notices are on our website and have been emailed to members

Mike Stubbs

WANTED! NEEDED!

We need a Treasurer

Steve Robertson, who has been our treasurer for the last 2 years, has decided to stand down at the next AGM.

Yes, it's a long way off, but we need to find someone interested in taking over to shadow Steve for a while.

Are you that person?

Would you be interested in doing the job?

Just a few hours of your time each month.

Yes? Well Done.

**Contact Steve or Ian
for further details.**

Social to launch next season: Saturday 30 May at 8 pm.

The 2009/10 season is shaping up well with only 2 free spots. By the end of May I very much hope we'll have a season full of challenge, fun, excitement and, above all, audience appeal.

So come along on 30 May to hear about it from the directors and put your names down to act or crew.

This is an open invitation to all Friends of NVT