

*A real Christmas treat -*

## 'It's a Wonderful Life'

Adapted by Gerry McCrudden

Directed by Gerry McCrudden and Mike Stubbs

13-21 December

**"Each man's life touches so many other lives, and when he isn't around he leaves an awful hole"**

The NVT will be staging a rather different production this Christmas. Many of us know and love Frank Capra's classic film of **It's a Wonderful Life**. For many watching it has become part of their Christmas tradition. No one is born to be a failure. No one is poor who has friends. Simple thoughts were the inspiration for one of the richest, most uplifting, most beloved films ever made. We now bring a version to the stage as a radio play of the period. Intrigued? Well come along and see what I mean.

I hope you will be charmed and warmed. We have a superb cast and crew - many of whom are well known to NVT stalwarts.

Though the film on which the play is based came out in 1946, it has also many modern echoes in the current financial climate, with the town's mortgage and loan company being threatened by predatory bankers. Guess who wins! After 60 years it still remains a powerful and moving story. A lovely way to start your Christmas celebrations.

George Bailey, pillar of the community, a kind man, a man dedicated to the welfare of others. Through the actions of the town's avaricious local banker, Mr. Potter, George is driven to the

point of suicide. In answer to the prayers of the townsfolk for the missing George, a merciful angel comes to the rescue -



Carl Boardman as George and Jen Bridges as Mary

Photo by Strat Mastoris

showing George what a sad and sorry place the world would have been without him. George now realises that he has a Wonderful Life.

**Gerry McCrudden**  
Director

## WHY are you a member of NVT?

Between the writing of this and you reading it the True West and the AGM will have taken place, but I am sure not much will have substantially changed. So to the question that makes up the title of this little piece; why are you a member?

I am sure some of you will have joined to meet other people in a new area, some because you wanted to be in a play. Some will be friends and come along to see performances of plays several times a year.

But there are some 200 plus full company members, are you one of those? If you are we need you. We need you to be in plays, to provide back stage and technical support, to provide theatre support by coming in to help front of house, on the bar or box office. We need you to help with set building, keeping the theatre tidy and up together, to drink at the

bar and chat to new members.

But you are we. The theatre is made up of its members so you need you to keep the theatre running, productions happening and add to the overall fun of our theatre. Isn't that why you are a member?

Sadly we have lost a production for January due to being unable to cast it; unbelievable, but true. We have a great reputation locally and further a field, however good reputations have to be maintained and we can only do that if we work at it, with good productions, effective support and a great fun atmosphere. What's more, as you are a member, taking part is free. So let's make this a season one to remember, for the good things and the fun we all have on the way.

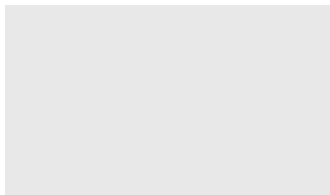
**Ian Black**  
Administration Director

# Lighting and Sound Workshop

**Saturday  
7th February 2009  
3-6pm**

you can get involved in forthcoming shows and get hands on!

If you would like to get involved with Lighting and Sound for a theatre production, this is your opportunity! Not only will you learn how sound and lighting works, but



## 5-26 January: Improvisation workshops: Spontaneous play

Improv is a vital piece of the actor's toolkit, whether you are new to acting or a seasoned old-timer, these workshops will provide an open and positive environment in which there is no right or wrong, there is only what happens in the moment. 'Spontaneity' and 'Play' are the key elements of an exciting and thrilling performance. Many performers dread the words 'now we will improvise...' These workshops will take the fear out of improvisation and help build your skills and

confidence as a performer, and to remember the meaning of the word 'Play'. We will explore different styles and techniques over the 3 classes.

Workshops led by Gayle Dudley who is currently co-writing a pilot sketch show for the BBC, and is a professional actor. Although these workshops are intended as stand-alone classes, there may be the possibility of joining an improvisation performance group.

The workshops will occupy the acting class slot at 7.30 on Mondays.

**Urike Schilling**

## NVT Social Networking

New Venture has, well, a new venture - a social network of our very own, designed and built with NVT members in mind. Located at

<http://newventuretheatre.ning.com> the site has discussions forums, a photo gallery, events listings and more.

You can find out more about your fellow NVT members, discuss productions and contribute reviews - in fact, whatever kind of socialising you want to do, you can do it here.

Signing up is fast and free so come join us today!

**Stephen Reid**

## Ticket request

To: The Box Office Manager, NVT, Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT

Please reserve for me \_\_\_\_\_ tickets for 'It's A Wonderful Life'

**Saturday 13 December & Tuesday-Saturday 16-20 December 7.45 pm**

**Matinee on Sunday 14 December at 2.30 pm**

**(No performance on Monday)**

Tickets: £7.00 (Friends £6.00) Tuesday: £5

Last Friday & Saturday £8.50 & (£7.50)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Membership number \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Answers: 1.b; 2.c; 3 b; 4.c; 5.c; 6.None of them. Dick's cat traditionally has no name.

## January newsletter dates

Final copy date  
Monday 22 December

Printing  
Thursday 8 January

Stuffing & posting  
Wednesday 14 January

# Voices Silenced

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Our production for January - Voices by Ian Hornby - has been cancelled due to an inability to get together a full cast. Is this a sign of the times?

To replace this missing production we have decided to have a mix of different events during the month and not just on the week of the planned production. Below is a listing of the productions that will be taking place, we hope to see you there. All events will be £3, Pre-book online, by phone or pay at the door.

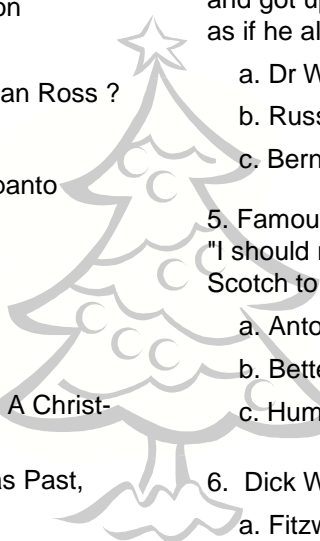
## January 2009 Programme

Wednesday 7 January	Play Readings - potential 2009/10 season
Wednesday 14 January	Play Readings - potential 2009/10 season
Tues 20 & Thu 22 Jan	Physical Theatre Showcase
Wednesday 21 January	Play Readings - potential 2009/10 season
Fri 23 & Sat 24 Jan	A Comedy Double Bill - Produced Reading of 'The Therapists' ('Wonderfully funny and surreal', The Argus) and premier of 'The Therapists Strike Back'. by Andy Thomas. Two hours of fun and laughter not to be missed
Tue 27 & Wed 28 Jan	A Produced Reading of 'Being Frank' by Calolm McGregor - Three friends meet up for a wake, old wounds are opened and recriminations soon begin to fly. Then, there is 'The Letter'. Who says the past won't catch up with you?
Fri 30 & Sat 31 Jan	Improvisation Showcase by members of the Acting Class.

Further details of these events will be available on the website and sent out by email, so please ensure the membership secretary - [membership@newventure.org.uk](mailto:membership@newventure.org.uk) - has your up to date email address.

## A Christmas Quiz

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- Pepper's Ghost is
    - A dead actor who haunts the Theatre Royal in Brighton
    - An illusion;
    - A nickname for Jonathan Ross ?
  - Robin Hood is in which panto
    - Mother Goose,
    - Cinderella,
    - Babes in the Wood ?
  - Who rattles his chains in A Christmas Carol
    - The Ghost of Christmas Past,
    - Marley's Ghost,
    - The Ghost of Christmas Shopping ?
  - Who fell down the escalator at Leicester Square tube on Christmas Eve and got up at the bottom "trying to look as if he always went down that way"
    - Dr Who
    - Russell Brand
    - Bernard Shaw ?
  - Famous Last Words. Who died saying "I should never have switched from Scotch to Martini"
    - Anton Chekhov
    - Bette Davis
    - Humphrey Bogart ?
  - Dick Whittington's Cat is called
    - Fitzwarren
    - Tiddles
    - Puss in Boots ?

Just for fun. Answers elsewhere upside down on this issue.

# 'TRUE WEST' reviewed by Barrie Jerram

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The contemporary American playwright, Sam Shepard, has produced a substantial number of plays that look at life in America, often using unconventional dramatic styles. He has been described as the poet par excellence for drawing on his country's mythic imagination and its de-based frontier mentality.

I well remember Jerry Lyne's excellent production of Fool for Love back in 2003 in which Shepard introduced a surreal touch by the use of an on-stage narrator who also entered into the action. True West is an earlier play and to my mind is a less satisfying piece of writing.

It tells of two brothers, Austin, a successful screenwriter and Lee, an alcoholic drifter who thieves to survive. They meet up when Austin is house-sitting while their mother is away on vacation. He is working on a project prior to completing a deal with his producer when his peace is shattered by the arrival of Lee who then proceeds to hi-jack the project. He has an idea for a contemporary Western and manages to persuade the producer to take this up whilst rejecting his brother's.

This turn of events results in a reversal of roles with Lee, now struggling over the typewriter and Austin, taking to the bottle and turning to burglary – although his bizarre choice of electric toasters ensures some amusing comedy.

The play, depicting the two sides of American life and emphasising that one side is never far behind the other, ends with the two protagonists in a menacing stand-off

- each person being the mirror image of the other.

Unlike some of his contemporaries Shepard can write dialogue and does not have to rely on continuous expletives to pad out the writing. In this play the baulk of the dialogue is concerned with anger and menace which came across in Calolm MacGregor's production as one long rant. Not only was it hard on the ears but soon became tiresome. Attention should have been given to the provision of more shading to the outbursts. It is possible to bring subtlety to convey anger rather than rely on continuous sledge hammering.

The play is virtually a two hander for Jack Bridgewater and Sam Parsons as Austin and Lee with a couple of brief scenes that featured their mother and the producer.

As Mom, Sandra Ventris did the best she could with a part that seemed to add nothing to the play other than to add confusion and comedy. Her arrival back home had more than a touch of lunacy as she looked on one son strangling the other and chided them from fighting in the house and suggesting that they fought outside like they did when they were children.

Andrew Thomas's performance as Saul Kimmer, the producer, seemed a little weak and did not come across as convincing. Maybe the fault lay in the writing – a caricature whose only function was to demonstrate Lee's skill as a con man.

Bridgewater taking on a leading role for the first time was successful in establishing Austin's soft nature and managed the character reversal reasonably well. The successful playing of a drunken scene is notoriously difficult to achieve and on this occasion the performance did not completely hit the mark – it appeared stilted.

As Lee, Parsons brought out all the feral qualities of a man who was happiest living in the desert with only himself for company. Most of the play's ranting fell to him and his performance would have benefited from the guidance mentioned earlier regarding variation of delivery.

Jeff Driver designed a substantial set that provided a realistic kitchen/diner and I liked the touch of the healthy plants being substituted by withered ones for the second act.

## Fundraising

### Notes:

Our total fundraising to date now stands at £12,960. so we're still doing well.

### Karaoke

We want to hold a Karaoke evening soon . . . Are there any experts out there who can advise on how we get the right equipment, free or cheap?

**Mike Stubbs**

## Letters

Dear Charles,

I was fascinated to see in the programme for True West that someone is thanked for being Chief Fluffer. That must have been fun. Wow ! If you'll pardon the phrase, was the position up for grabs at the AGM ?

If anybody doesn't know what a fluffer does, look it up in Cassells Dictionary of Slang. If you're a bit shy, phone me and I'll tell you privately.

**Barry Hewlett-Davies**

## Here are our sponsors



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## The Play's The Thing

"Of all the compliments I've come to fear, 'beautifully written' is the one I've come to fear most. A play shouldn't be beautifully written unless, for dramatic purposes, there is a character in it who speaks beautiful writing, so to speak.

If it's to be any good a play can only be truthfully written, which means the characters speak as the characters would have spoken in this or that situation - from time to time they may find resources within themselves that enable them to speak as if from beyond themselves (the prerogative of fiction) and therefore beautifully,

but the resources must be recognisably, even if astonishingly, the characters', not the writer's.

With luck and at his best the writer will pass unrecognised through a play, only identifiable at the end in the effect of a whole experience - if he's lucky, and been at his best.

*Simon Gray, playwright, who died in August aged 71. Among his works are Butley, Otherwise Engaged, The Late Middle Classes, Quartermaine's Terms, and Close of Play.*