

Coming in
February
*'Five Kinds of
Silence'*
by Sheilagh
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NEW VENTURE
T H E A T R E

THEATRE
NEW WRITING
CLASSES

Five exciting events for January

Throughout January you'll be treated to a variety of events: Performed Readings, a Physical Theatre Showcase, and an Improvisation Showcase.

Tickets will cost only £3 per person per event

Tuesday 20 January

Physical Theatre Showcase

Exploring individuality through physicality. The first half of the evening will be based on ideas for the upcoming production *'Beauty Within'* (NVT 28th March - 4th April). This will allow the audience to get a taster of the production and offer a possibility to ask questions and give feedback.

The second half of the evening will show *'What Mlle. Y Never Said'* by Tamar Daly. Based on the silent protagonist of Strindberg's play, *'The Stranger'*, *'What Mlle Y Never Said'* is a physical performance, combining movement, text, sound and video. Mlle Y's silence is repeatedly disrupted by voices that split the audience's attention.

Friday and Saturday, 23 and 24 January

A Comedy Double Bill:

A performed play reading by Andy Thomas: *'The Therapists'* ('Wonderfully funny and surreal', The Argus) and premiere of *'The Therapists Strike Back'*. Two hours of fun and laughter not to be missed".



Tuesday and Wednesday 27 and 28 January

A performed play reading

Calolm MacGregor's **'Being Frank'** - 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?



Friday and Saturday, 30 and 31 January

Improv Showcase

The end of January sees the theatre open up to a world of possibilities when participants from the Improvisation Acting Classes take the stage for a spontaneous play. Lasting could be amusing, it could be heart warming or tragic, but it will definitely be fun. Come along - we promise you don't HAVE to get involved, but you will be invited to add your voice if you'd like to! Workshop leaders are Andrew Allen, Gayle Dudley and Tamar Daly.

ENJOY!

Further events in the New Year:

19th and 26th January (the last 2 of 4) Improvisation Classes:

Spontaneous Play

Improv is a vital piece of the actor's toolkit, whether you are new to acting or a seasoned old-timer, these classes 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 4 classes.

Classes are 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.

2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd February

Exploring the non-verbal as a dramatic tool

Tamar Daly is an experienced improviser and movement based performer, particularly interested in the tension between verbal and non-verbal dramatic devices, and between narrative and abstract performance texts.

Lighting and Sound Workshop

Saturday 7th February 3-6 pm

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 you can get involved in forthcoming shows and get hands on experience.

Limited places available, to book please contact Ulrike at 808353, or leave a message on 01273 808353.

February newsletter dates

Final copy date: Monday 26 January

Printing: Thursday 5 February

Stuffing & posting:
Wednesday 11 February

Message from Mike Stubbs, Artistic Director

When I joined NVT three years ago I was excited by the consistently high standard and the balance and variety of the plays presented.

We are still delivering high quality in many productions but, perhaps, not as consistently as before, and this season, in my view, lacks balance. There are not enough plays with smiles on their faces!

As many of you already know, I was appointed Artistic Director at the AGM in November. How will I go about the job?

1. By working with my support team: Pat Boxall, Alex Epps, Mark Wilson and Martin Nichols. I've said all along I could not do this job without a strong team helping me and I'm very pleased to have this diverse group on board.
2. By using this team and other experienced members to 'buddy' current directors, new and experienced alike, giving them support, advice and encouragement to deliver high quality to our audiences. Directing a play can be a tough and lonely business, especially for inexperienced people, and I will do my best to ensure directors feel supported by NVT.
3. By encouraging prospective new directors to be Assistant to the Director for a production before taking full charge of their own show, and to attend directors' workshops which we will be arranging.
4. By finding out what members and audiences want to see in our theatre by using questionnaires in newsletters and programmes.
5. By creating an exciting 2009/10 season to give our members and audiences what **they** want, with a balance between experimental and classic, light and dark. There will, however, be no specific "theme".
6. By arranging readings of promising new scripts, to give writers a chance to hear their work read and help us judge whether such work is good enough to put before our audiences. This process will take some time in each case so I would ask writers to be patient. Members will be invited to participate in such readings and to give their views. I'm determined we should maintain our reputation for presenting new work, though it will not dominate our programme.

In February I will be inviting directors to make submissions for 2009/10, but if anyone wants to talk to me before then I'll be at the theatre each Saturday from 10th January onwards between 10am and noon (or till 11 when there's a committee meeting) so by all means drop in for a chat. If, for any reason, I'm not around, please leave me a note or send me an email and I'll get back to you.

Meanwhile, the rest of this season combines innovation and high quality drama, so let's get behind it, fill the seats with our friends and have a great time celebrating the skills, passion and daring of NVT!

AUDITION NOTICE - 'FESTEN'

Directed by Pat Boxall

By David Eldridge [based on the Dogme film and play by Thomas Vinterberg, Mogens Rukov and Bo hr. Hansen]

2nd AUDITION DATE: -

Saturday 17th January 3.00pm Main House

CALL BACKS: -

Sunday 18th January 3.00pm Main House

PRODUCTION DATES: -

Saturday 2nd May – Saturday 16th May, evening performances 7.45pm, Sunday Matinee 2.30pm, no performances on Mondays.

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

A family group gathers at the magnificent house of patriarch Helge for a black tie dinner to celebrate his 60th birthday. He is a successful restaurateur/hotelier with a beautiful wife. Seemingly, the only dark clouds on his horizon are his unpleasantly violent, racist son Michael and the sadly mysterious death of his daughter Linda.

Suddenly, as everyone sits down to dinner and the laudatory speeches commence, his son Christian [Linda's twin brother] stands up to speak. By the time he has completed his accusations of incest and rape against his father, nothing can ever be the same again.

The full audition notice has already been sent to all those members for whom we have an email address. If you have not received it or do not have an email address then please contact Pat and she will be pleased to give you full details.

**Calling All Members!
Full and Friend Members!
Are you interested in Helping?
Front of House/Bar and Box Office
One Performance As and When
If So Let Us Know**

Email: ian.black@newventure.org.uk

'It's A Wonderful Life'

Reviewed by Barrie Jerram

It is widely held that no Christmas would be complete without Frank Capra's film classic being given an airing and this adaptation for the stage was a wonderful way to get people into the festive spirit.

George Bailey, a simple man who has given his life to the service of his community, is driven to the point of suicide through the machinations of an unscrupulous local banker. Enter Clarence, a guardian angel, who demonstrates how important George's life has been and how it has impinged on the life of others. The play's message is that no one is poor if they have friends.

Set around the American depression of the thirties the play has a resonance with the present financial climate.

The complexity of the film regarding multiple locations and magical effects must present a challenge to any director in staging it. Director, Gerry McCrudden, uses the clever device of presenting it as a radio play. It is unknown to me whether this is an original idea of his or if he used a previously staged version. Whatever – the main thing is that it worked well. Not having seen the film I had no preconceptions that could be marred by this approach. My companions, who knew the film well, had no complaints.

The set was a re-creation of a radio studio of the thirties complete with an "On Air" sign, authentic looking microphone stands and sound effects ably provided by Jessica Faulks. Obviously a lot of thought had been

given to ensuring that the set had a genuine period feel about it.

The cast were required to play the many different roles that the script required and it was fascinating to watch them switching between characters as they came up to the microphones. Again the acting styles reflected those of the period. These challenges provided a great opportunity for showing off acting skills and demonstrated ensemble playing at its best.

Carl Boardman, as George, captured well the simplicity of the man and his courting scenes with Mary, played with much charm by Jen Bridges, were both funny and touching. Boardman can be relied on to give a completely assured performance.

Amongst all the good performances mention should be made of the interplay between Janet Hewlett-Davies, as the Superintendent of Angels, and McCrudden who also took on the role of Clarence, the angel trying for his wings. The calm and wisdom of the Superintendent contrasted well with the naivety and enthusiasm of the rookie. Alistair Lock and Anna Bolwell were particularly adept at playing multiple roles. Lock at one time had to hold a conversation between two of his characters whilst Bolwell successfully managed to portray three children of differing ages.

This heart warming tale may have been told with simplicity but the production delivered a hugely entertaining evening that ended with cast singing and the packed audience joining in with "White Christmas".

Audience comments —

'What a triumph! A beautifully crafted and impeccably acted piece of Theatre....moving and uplifting. Congratulations to everyone involved. Thank you so much for arranging tickets and for giving us all such a wonderful evening....Theatre at its best.'

- and this from a Producer who does the Edinburgh and the Brighton Fringes

"Lovely balance of humour and seriousness"

"Possessed great charm and energy"

"Carl's performance moved me to tears" "made me smile, laugh and cry"

"Very gifted cast"

"That was absolutely superb. The cast were fantastic and you had us all in tears. What a wonderful show and great concept. Huge congrats"

"Huge congratulations - the production was superb, every nuance, every switch from the "radio" characters to the "real", every change in time and space, the re-telling of the story through George Bailey's life, the music, the atmosphere, all the props and sound effects rang true. There were no gaps, no pauses, the pace was tightly controlled, all the actors were busy at all times - I could see the touch - direction, direction. You should all be so proud. I thoroughly enjoyed it and am so glad I came. Thank you"

"It has been a very long time since I have gone to the theatre - the main reason is that due to my a d h d (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) - I find I lose the story line or fall a sleep - but last night I was transfixed by the production of this show A great format in which the story was told. The acting was impeccable The set was amazing. So until the next show, Gerry and crew bravo "

"I cried and I thought of my home and growing up in Spain, sitting as a boy with my mother listening to the Radio plays in our kitchen. So after the show last night I telephoned my mother in Madrid and told her about the show and we both cried again. "

'Just before the show I was told that my mother was dying. Not unexpected but a shock nevertheless. I was wondering whether I should go to the play before I go to see her for the last time. I am glad I did - watching has helped my come to terms with what is happening"

'The Man Who Was Hamlet'

Reviewed by Barrie Jerram

If you did not get to see this one man show then you missed a theatrical treat.

In telling the story of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, Georg Dillon gave a tour de force performance as he brought to life not only the Earl but also the various characters interwoven with his story.

There was no set, just the bare studio walls and floor with a sword and skull on it together with a couple of spotlights that emphasised changing moods. The atmosphere was further enhanced by the use of original music played by Charlotte Glasson, seated to the side of acting area. This music complimented the narrative but on a couple of occasions I felt it intruded – a minor quibble, however.

Dillon's account of De Vere's childhood started with him secretly observing his father's company of players performing before

the visiting Queen Elizabeth, recounting the death of his father and the remarriage of his mother one month later. And so the parallels with Hamlet started to appear.

Being made a Court Ward he was sent to live with and under the guidance of Lord Cecil, an old man much given to spouting words of wisdom to the young boy. Whilst at fencing practice in the gardens he heard a noise behind the bushes and thrust his sword into it thereby killing a cook, possibly one of Cecil's many spies.

The narrative went on to depict life at court where his skill at dancing made him a great favourite of the Queen. His stately impersonation of Good Queen Bess was delightful. For convenience he married Cecil's daughter Anne but promptly went off to fight in Europe. A later dalliance with a lady of Court, whom he made pregnant, ended up with the pair

of them imprisoned in the Tower of London.

Particularly amusing were the two encounters with a Warwickshire yokel named Shake-speare to whom de Vere helped with a sonnet to send to his wife!

Dillon's performance was astonishing as he displayed exceptional acting skills combined with great dexterity of movement – be it dancing or fencing. As a monologue it was full of drama and spiced with humour. It gripped the audience and held them spell bound until the very end.

Having also written the piece, that undoubtedly had been extensively researched, Dillon wisely handed over the direction to Denise Evans, thereby ensuring a dispassionate view of the piece.

It is understood that this is still a work in progress and I, along with many others I suspect, would welcome a later viewing.

NVT opens its doors to its Friends

The AGM has come and gone for another year and it was great to see a good turn out of some 34 members. We got through a wide range of things at the meeting, which can be read through in the minutes that are enclosed with this newsletter.

A big welcome to Mike Stubbs who has bravely taken on the role of Artistic Director - good luck Mike - and a welcome back to Steve, Uli and Chris; yes you're still lumbered with me as well. We have already had our first committee meeting and will be developing new things for this season as well as starting work on the new season over the coming weeks and months.

One thing that was clear at the AGM and has subsequently raised its head again and that is the small number of active members we seem to have at present. What is it that is putting you off

participating? Answers on a postcard, email or by phone please.

One thing that we managed to clarify at the AGM is how much involvement friend members can have. This appears to have always been a matter of uncertainty and many friend members have therefore been hesitant at getting involved. It was agreed that friend members should be encouraged, welcomed with open arms by us all to participate in any way that is not directly involved with a production - cast or crew - or holding a role within the theatre. Even the AGM is and should be open to friend members; although not in a voting capacity. So come along, enjoy the social events, help on the bar or just watch the show, it's your theatre too.

Ian Black, Admin Director

AUDITION NOTICE - 'The Real Inspector Hound' By Tom Stoppard Directed by Mark Wilson

Performance dates: 19th-24th May 2009

Audition: Sun 8th Feb. 11.00 – 2.00 (Main theatre)

Recalls: Tue 10th Feb. 7.30 – 9.00 (Main theatre)

As one half of the Theatre's 'Stoppard Evening' to be produced in the second half of this year's Brighton Festival programme, I am directing Stoppard's hugely funny 'Theatre of the Absurd' play, 'The Real Inspector Hound'.

When two theatre critics attend a performance of an Agatha Christie type 'Who-dun'-it?', they have little idea that they will end up as key players in the lives of the characters from the production they have gone to review. This is life colliding with Art colliding with life and is probably one of the funniest, cleverest one-Act plays written last century.

Characters:

Moon and Birdboot – male. The theatre critics. The characters are middle-aged but can be played by actors of between 20 and 70+.

Mrs Drudge – the home-help. 50s but again can be played by an actor of any age between 20 and 70+.

Simon Gascoyn – flash young cad, a womanizer, late 20s/30s

Felicity Cunningham – a house-guest at Muldoon Manor. Naïve, late 20s, taken in by Gascoyne.

Lady Cynthia Muldoon – the hostess, wife of the mysteriously missing Albert Muldoon. 30s. She has also been taken in by Gascoyne.

Major Magnus Muldoon – the wheelchair-bound brother of Albert. 60s but can be played by an actor of any age.

Inspector Hound – witless police inspector. 50s but can be played by an actor of any age.

The body – lies unnoticed centre-stage throughout the performance till the play's final minutes. Has no lines. (Good part for a beginner)

The audition:

You are invited to come along and read at any point during the above times.

You can either present a section you have already learnt from this play – I will read the other part if you choose a section of dialogue. Alternatively you can sight-read cold on the day or you can present something from a completely different play.

The way I run an audition is to rehearse with the actor to the point at which she or he feels that they have created as much of a character in the time available. This means that you will need to allow yourself 10 to 15 minutes for the work.

I am looking for people who can at one level create the rather two-dimensional stereotype typical of the Agatha Christie 1950s genre, but at the same bring a subtlety and humour that will take the production to a completely different plane. It's going to be a hoot.

Copies of the play are available on Amazon from 50p.

Contact me on 07776238673 or carrigher@yahoo.com for more information or to discuss alternative timings if the above do not fit.

Mark ('Amadeus', 'Our Country's Good') **Wilson, Director**

Changes to this year's programme

'The Real Inspector Hound', by Tom Stoppard, is our chosen play for the second Festival production from 19th to 24th May and it will be directed by Mark Wilson, an experienced director with NVT.

The audition notice is on the left.

"Hound" runs for only 50 minutes and will be the first part of a Stoppard evening. The other play is likely to be After Magritte (35 minutes of mad mayhem!). Any directors interested in handling this should contact me as soon as possible, please.

Mark Wilson was going to direct A View From A Bridge in June but we cannot now get a licence, so we need a new play and director for the June 20-27th slot. Could any interested directors please email me with their ideas as soon as possible.

. . . . and a very Happy New Year to everyone!

Mike Stubbs
Artistic Director

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

The New Venture Theatre is launching into 2009 with determination to start the plans for refurbishing the front of the building, putting in new windows and generally fluffing up the place.

The theatre is a great place to work and see drama, meet friends and yes, maybe learn a thing or two. So how come we had to pull a play because there were no actors!! And how come the success of *It's a Wonderful Life* was nearly undermined by the non- appearance of members to volunteer for front of house, bar and box office.

No actors, no volunteers, guess what? **NO NEW VENTURE THEATRE.**

So how about it members, anyone want to participate, join in or whatever. There is an acting class, auditions, workshops etc. see **www.newventure.org.uk**. Meet people by doing the front of house, the bar and box. You won't be left on your own there will be someone there to hold your hand.

Did you see the Argus review of *It's a Wonderful Life* – great stuff.

I would like to say a personal thank you to Ian Black and Ulrike Schilling for their hard work and devotion to the theatre, well over and above what is expected of them.

Susan Moss

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Some recent email correspondence

FROM: Susan

TO: 25 members

DATE: 15 December 2008 17.07

SUBJECT: Help in the bar

Hi everyone

I don't know if you are aware but there has been a problem getting people to help in the bar and box office while this production has been showing. The 'show must go on' so it has been left to Ian and Uli to do most of the jobs plus others who have had to be asked to volunteer.

I am putting your names forward for the next production or when it is convenient for you to help out. There is no mystery about the box office or the bar and you will not be helping out on your own. We have to have a qualified person to run the bar, we just need the help. If you have a particular objections go doing either of these jobs let me know as I am sure there are other areas that NVT can do with your help.

Cheers Susan

FROM : Janet

TO: 20 members

DATE: Tuesday December 16, 2008 10.24

SUBJECT: Help in the bar

Thanks, Susan. Very happy to do bar when available - I've been doing it since the bar was two boxes of wine on a trestle table beneath a chart of various kinds of animal-poo (the south hall was then a playgroup which, in a way, I suppose it still is.) This wasn't terribly long ago - I'm not that ancient.

Love, Janet

FROM : Sheelagh

TO: 20 members

SENT: 16 December 2008 12.39

SUBJECT: Help in the bar

I can go back even further, when we only had the main theatre to play in audiences came in via the North entrance and then through the Stage Door entrance - yes they did - the only heating was ancient gas fires - god the smell -, leaking roof and we still managed to serve **coffee** in the interval from what is now the paint room. The cast also cleaned the theatre prior to the final dress.

Obviously I will help - it's something that I quite enjoy. However, I feel this whole subject needs more than just a bit of banter twixt us all. Several Associate members have never been asked to help and would do so, and many non-acting full members ditto. I'd like every single member of the theatre - supporter/actor/whatever to receive a personal e-mail from the committee making clear how desperate the situation is.

Only a thought, I don't intend to start a holocaust!

Sheelagh

FROM : Ulrike

TO: various members

SENT: Tuesday December 16, 2008 10.52 p.m.

SUBJECT: Help in the bar

Good evening. Somehow I think these kind of stories would be amazing for the newsletter. Many members are rather new and it is well interesting to read things like that, and for people who have been with the theatre for a while, memories are lovely! Any chance you could write some of these stories for the newsletter?

I might contact you at some point during the summer regarding stories anyway, as I would like to do a performance about such stories within the theatre

X Uli