

NVT  
February  
2011

Coming  
26 March - 2 April

Double Bill:

'Fake' and  
'Lie With Me'

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NEW VENTURE  
T H E A T R E

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# 'The Well'

Written and directed by Jonathan Brown

5 -12 March 2011

**"In my dreams, I'm digging. I'm always digging. Digging my way out, or digging my way in."**

It's a well-kept secret that the world's deepest hand-dug well lies beneath the feet of East Brighton's residents, stretching down as deep as the Empire State Building is high. On hearing about it 5 years ago, I was inspired to write this play. I was born and grew up near the Woodingdean Well, and wanted to explore the metaphorical significance of digging into the earth at a place so close to where I emerged from it. It's an inward journey for the protagonist, deep into the very underworld of his being, a place where dreams and reality merge.

"The Well" uses only physical theatre techniques, lighting and voice to portray everything, from Victorian Brighton streets, beaches, a fish head, the well itself, and dingy Dickensian backstreets at night to some tense action down a very deep, dark hole. The piece will be supported by songs sung by members of Brighton Vox Choir. My first five plays are all set locally, including 'Large Print Trash' for which I was kindly nominated Best Male Performer in the Brighton Fringe 2007, and 'Licence' which earned 5 & 4 Star reviews in this year's Fringe.

It's November 1861: Jack Tomkins, a former workhouse inmate, is now an experienced steiner, who digs and lines wells. For 7 years he had been apprenticed to the deeply intuitive Mark Tap, helping him restore Britain's hundreds of Sacred Wells.

Now, with his mentor dead, Jack has returned to Brighton, and labours at the foot of a 1200

ft, as yet dry, well. For nearly 4 years Jack has been one of the 45+ men digging daily, as ordered by the town's Guardians, to supply water to their brand new workhouse.

But something is wrong. Why is the project taking so long? Why has so



Photo by Strat Mastoris

Front: Warren Saunders. Back L-R: Alexandra Mckenzie Wilcox, Jonathan Brown, Paddy O'Keeffe.

much in local taxes been spent when, using many workhouse labourers, the task is run so cheaply?

And deeper, personal questions haunt him. Who are these men, that bid him dig so deep on their behalf, take the credit for success, but treat him so low? Why did his mother, a street-walker who "worked" the upper echelons of the town, disappear when he was a child? Who can tell him why she came to be found hanging dead from the wet twisted metal under the celebrated Chain Pier?

The Well is a fictional account, an allegory for questionable large-scale engineering or military projects, and the corrupt power brokers who profit from

*Continued on page 2*

## Box Opening Trial continues

We are continuing with the trial opening of the Box Office for a few hours in the two weeks prior to the next production. During these opening times you will be able to buy tickets on the phone and in person at the theatre. The bar will also be open, so why not drop in for a lunchtime drink and chat – Please ring the Box Office Information line – 01273 746118 – to confirm details of the opening times.

## Continued from page 1

their never-ending nature, ultimately at the expense of the people who do the work, fight the battles, pay the taxes.

It has echoes of a pre-industrialised life, where pre-Christian myths, stories and spirits still hold sway and can be heard above the din of the shovel, the pound of the hammers, and the thump of the Bible.

I have been very fortunate to be working with some excellent talent, including...

Anita Sullivan: a wonderful sound-board for the writing.

Uli Schilling: who has helped us enormously to develop our physicality.

Jo Mortimer: helping us to develop (and perform) songs that will echo through the production.

The players (Ali McKenzie-Wilcox, Warren Saunders, Paddy O'Keeffe,

Mark Green, Julia Monkcom, Leanne McKenzie) are brilliant... in that although not all are experienced in blending physical theatre with text, they've all worked very hard and got incredibly stuck in, ready to get up-close and intimate. It's been a real pleasure to work with them.

A big thanks also to Hannah Leibeskind, Strat Mastoris, and all the magical behind-the-scenes fairies that have made the production possible. And a very big thanks to NVT, for letting me do this, my first play at NVT. I hope you'll all enjoy it!

*Contains strong language and adult themes. Suitable for 12 year olds upwards.*

**5-12 March 2011, 7.45pm.**

**Matinee:**

**Sunday 6 March at 2.30pm.**

**No evening performances on Sunday 6 and Monday 7 March.**

*Tickets for the show are available - £8 (£9 final Friday and Saturday night) (Tuesday-tickets £6) and can be purchased online at [www.newventure.org](http://www.newventure.org). or for further details phone Box Office Information on 01273 746118*

From the Little Theatre Guild newsletter - February 2011

## Bonfire of The Arts?

The cuts to all aspects of public funding now underway are not likely to affect many amateur theatres, choirs and orchestras. But can the professionals complain? Richard Morrison in The BBC Music Magazine thinks not.

"Nobody in the arts can complain that they didn't have adequate warning. Pundits have been predicting a 30% cut for months, and prudent managers have planned accordingly. If arts organizations actually go bust as a result of the cuts, the reason will be stupid management or ludicrous over-ambition.

Just think of what artists in earlier generations had to survive. The carnage of the First World War, and the decades of strikes, stock-exchange crashes and mass unemployment that followed. The Blitz. The long recession of the 1970s and the anti-culture policies of the Thatcher years. Somehow the arts went on. Where the art is good enough, and the performances compelling enough, the wherewithal is usually found to keep the shown the road.

One way of looking at the cuts is that they are a disaster. Another is that, by closing one door, they force us to open others. So why don't we forge boldly into the future, rather than clinging to memories of how things were in the good old days of plentiful Government subsidy."

Are LTG theatres going to be affected by the cuts? Do we have a larger role to play in the new "big society"? Not many members are reliant on public funding to any direct or indirect extent, but news about financial changes brought about by the Government's austerity measures should be reported to the Guild, which is considering a questionnaire to treasurers sometime this year. We are well placed to assess the national situation, and the statistics we collect are much valued. One significant tendency that is coming through is that a lot of theatres are experiencing much improved box-office returns! If this is true, we need to clarify it!

# What a vibrant season we're having!

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Having attended the auditions for all the upcoming productions, I was starting to feel like being a West End or Hollywood producer, producing show after show after show. And this is exactly what is happening at NVT. We have now cast and started rehearsals for all productions until the end of the Festival, leaving only two more shows for this season left to cast. In between productions we've had amazing additional events, ranging from comedy, poetry and stories via swish events, auctions, many workshops, a theatre quiz and members meet evenings to a séance! In April we are hosting a massive Fundraising Gala for the Main Theatre as well as a Social to announce the new season. There is a lot on offer, and it's wonderful to see members getting involved and producing such a variety of entertainment and opportunities.

At one of the auditions I overheard a member commenting, "What a vibrant season we're having!", which not only reflected the variety of shows and events we offer, but described the atmosphere all the production companies and teams are creating. It is truly amazing what we can achieve at the NVT and this season demonstrates our passion for theatre with each production and event.

However, there are many jobs to be done in order to make all this happen and we are urgently looking for your support in various positions. If you would like to get involved in a production and gain new skills, meet new people or just enjoy being part of a company, please get in touch with the directors of the upcoming shows, they might just be looking for you and your skills! Another option to learn about various roles is shadow-

ing in a production, again get in touch with either Sarah, who manages Volunteer liaison, [volunteering@newventure.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@newventure.org.uk), or the director of a show. And of course, there is always a demand for Front of House and Box Office volunteers. Both are roles in which you meet members and often get to know the cast, crew and directors of a show, and so is a perfect way to socialise and be involved in a production and only by giving a couple of evenings. If you would like to get involved, contact Lou and Ian for Front of House, [frontofhouse@newventure.org.uk](mailto:frontofhouse@newventure.org.uk), and Natasha for Box Office, at [boxoffice@newventure.org.uk](mailto:boxoffice@newventure.org.uk)

**Ulrike Schilling**

## Looking ahead

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I've received intriguing proposals for next season including well known plays, new work and experimental projects. Again it promises to be an exciting and varied season. Make sure you don't miss the announcement of the 2011-2012 season at the Social on Sat 16<sup>th</sup> April at 7pm.

Part of this evening will be a presentation of the 'Working towards Performance' workshops lead by Steven O'Shea. There are still a few places available for this 8 week workshop starting on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> February at 6pm. To book a place contact [ulrike.schilling@newventure.org.uk](mailto:ulrike.schilling@newventure.org.uk)

**Ulrike Schilling**

## Front of House Managers Training

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We will be having a couple of training / updating sessions for all Front of House Managers. If you would like to join in and Front of House manage for a performance, or are just interested to see what is involved, come along.

The training will be from **2pm on Sunday 13 and Sunday 20 February**.

To confirm a place, please contact at [ian.black@newventure.org.uk](mailto:ian.black@newventure.org.uk)

## Acting Class

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### Exploring masks - Sarah Davies

**14, 21, 28 February and 7, 14 March**

Sarah's classes will explore aspects of mask work including archetypes through guided exercises and improvisation. It'll draw on techniques and theory from Le Coq, Boal and consider status and counter-mask. Be prepared to have fun, experiment with your body and practise being present whilst creating characters and stories. Sarah teaches and performs locally.

# 'SPEED-THE-PLOW' by David Mamet

A review by Barry Hewlett-Davies

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Though I've been going to plays at NVT for 20 years. I cannot claim to have seen everything so you can fault my judgment for being incomplete. That aside, it seems to me that this production ought to be acknowledged for what it is – a quite considerable achievement in acting and direction, a show to be remembered for years.

The title is an old fashioned wish for rural prosperity. David Mamet chose it to reflect the cynical motives of the American film industry, looking to create success at the Box Office for profit alone and the hell with art. Mamet would have put that more strongly but I don't want to upset anybody.

He knows a great deal about art v profit. When he wrote the play more than 20 years ago, it

was his contribution to the American theatre's attack on the cinema – a Hollywood script about a Hollywood script.

The attack began long ago with a Broadway musical called *Once In A Lifetime*.

With an eye to the main chance, Hollywood seized on it and turned it into *Singing in the Rain* with Gene Kelly. Thanks to successful TV deals, it is still a hot property. Dog swallowed dog wholesale and the accountants cheer as the money keeps rolling into the bank. *Speed-the-Plow*!

Mamet is not easy to be with. For one thing, he writes in uniquely American English. And the relationships he creates are not only expressed by words, they grow out of them.

This production is directed with a great deal of insight by Steven O'Shea. He also plays Charlie Fox. Opposite him are Robert Cohen, as Bobby Gould, his boss, and Marie Ellis, his apparently warm-hearted and naïve temporary secretary. All three behave like and accuse each other of being whores.

All three turn in superb performances, impeccably timed.

Forgive my dreadful play on words, but for a lot of the evening, I was convinced Steven O'Shea was, indeed Charlie, the Twentieth Century Fox. But the fox is Robert Cohen with a performance worthy of Volpone, cunning, greedy, a cynic with the most persuasive eyebrows I've seen in ages.

"I wanted to do Good", he wails at the end, " – but I became foolish." To which you can only answer: "Oh yeh ?!"

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## Audition Notice: *The Servant* by Robin Maugham, directed by Ken Potter

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Actors required for following roles (*Age ranges approx*):

- Tony** mid 20s/early 30s Well-bred, pampered socialite (*main part*)  
**Barrett** mid 20s/early 30s Manservant, meticulous, manipulative  
**Sally** mid-late 20s Chelsea professional, Tony's girlfriend  
**Richard** mid 20s/early 30s Tony's friend, publisher  
**Vera** early 20s Maidservant, coy & seductive, playful  
**Mabel** early 20s (*It is suggested to read for both Vera and Mabel*)

Stage Crew Required  
Stage Manager  
Sound Operator  
Costume Designer

**Auditions** will be split between male and female parts to save too much waiting around. Sunday March 20 12.00-14.00 Male parts, 14.00-16.00 Female parts. NVT South Hall. (*Please advise if you're interested but can't make audition.*)

**Recalls** Thurs March 24 19.00-22.00. NVT South Hall.

Actors will be required to read extracts from the play, copies of which will be available for collection from the table at the entrance to the South Hall. Please be aware that there are a couple of 'light' love scenes and, although mostly left to the imagination, some physical contact is inevitable. Candidates must be NVT members before rehearsals start.

**PLOT SUMMARY** - Tony returns to England to collect his inheritance after six wasted years in Africa. Richard lines up a house in Chelsea ready for his arrival and also sets up a meeting to interview a prospective manservant, Barrett. Tony takes on Barrett who then proceeds to play on his every weakness, slowly taking control of the household. Sally and Richard endeavour to stop him. At different junctures, Barrett introduces Vera and Mabel to please Tony. The play is very much about relationships and the struggles and power plays that arise within them. On another level it could be seen as a comment on the British class system of the day (*circa 1960*).

**Contact: Ken Potter** [s.desirken@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:s.desirken@yahoo.co.uk)

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# Letters to the editor

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Dear Editor

I recently came to see Speed the Plow at NVT and want to say how much I enjoyed it. The acting was superb and it was so well directed – way up to your normal standard. As I don't live locally I sadly only visit NVT occasionally but I was very disappointed that your great Newsletter was not available at the theatre. Is there a way they can be on display please?

**Rosie Gordon**

Dear Editor,

Your announcement in the January newsletter about the NVT Box Office leaves me feeling annoyed and frustrated. You're offering a VERY limited service for 12 hours in January (11.00 am to 2.00 pm times four) which is absolutely useless to me. It so happens that my two-days-a-week job as a lunchtime dancer at a private club leaves me unable to phone or visit NVT during those 12 hours.

Why can't I just telephone at a time convenient to me, and leave a message like we always used to do? Surely the new offering is not doing me any favours!

And it's no use telling me I can book on line. I am NOT what they call "computer literate". I simply cannot cope with buying and selling on my computer. Every time I've tried, something has gone wrong. For instance, last month I ordered a bargain case of wine – 12 bottles. They sent me twelve CASES instead and now refuse to take them back. A financial disaster!

I also object to paying a 50p handling charge for credit card sales. What's the justification for THAT?

Oh, it's all too much.

Sincerely (I guess)

**Mary Jane Birdwhistle**

Dear Editor,

The attempt to make booking easier is pretty pathetic. How useful is a total of 12 hours per production for combined telephone and personal call to the box office? Even if we had only 20 members that cannot or prefer not to book by computer, the likelihood that the appointed times fit in with their lives and obligations is not great, and that is 20 members who will not be able to attend and may well put others off doing so.

Is this now the only theatre in the country that doesn't have a telephone booking service? There's no problem with the National, Brighton Theatre Royal, or Brighton Little Theatre. And why has this happened now? In the twenty years that I have been a member it always provide possible for someone to pop in from time to time to collect up answerphone messages and deal with them. Perhaps our more sophisticated operation nowadays simply can't be bothered with minor considerations like the convenience of the audience.

How about offering to accept orders by post?

Yours in grumpy old woman mode,

**Janet Hewlett-Davies**

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## Want to be involved in Marketing and Publicity?

As you might be aware Tamsin has taken care of Marketing and Publicity for many many shows over the past years and established very good relations with reviewers, newspapers, magazines and radio stations. With the growths of social media the role of Marketing and Publicity has grown as well and we are looking for people to take on some of the aspects of Marketing and Publicity.

If you are interested in getting involved please get in touch with Ian Black via [Ian.black@newventure.org.uk](mailto:Ian.black@newventure.org.uk)

## 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 [mikestubbs2000@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mikestubbs2000@yahoo.co.uk) if you have any ideas in that direction.



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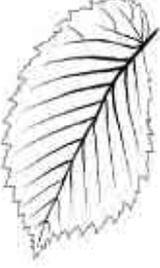
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| Jerry Lyne                       | Secretary              |  |
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**March newsletter deadline: Monday 21 February**

**Printing: Friday 25 February**

**Stuffing & posting: Thursday 10 March**