

NVT
Newsletter
June 2010

Coming
July 10 -17

Ten Minute
Play
Competition

from NVT and
Sussex
Playwrights

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NEW VENTURE
T H E A T R E

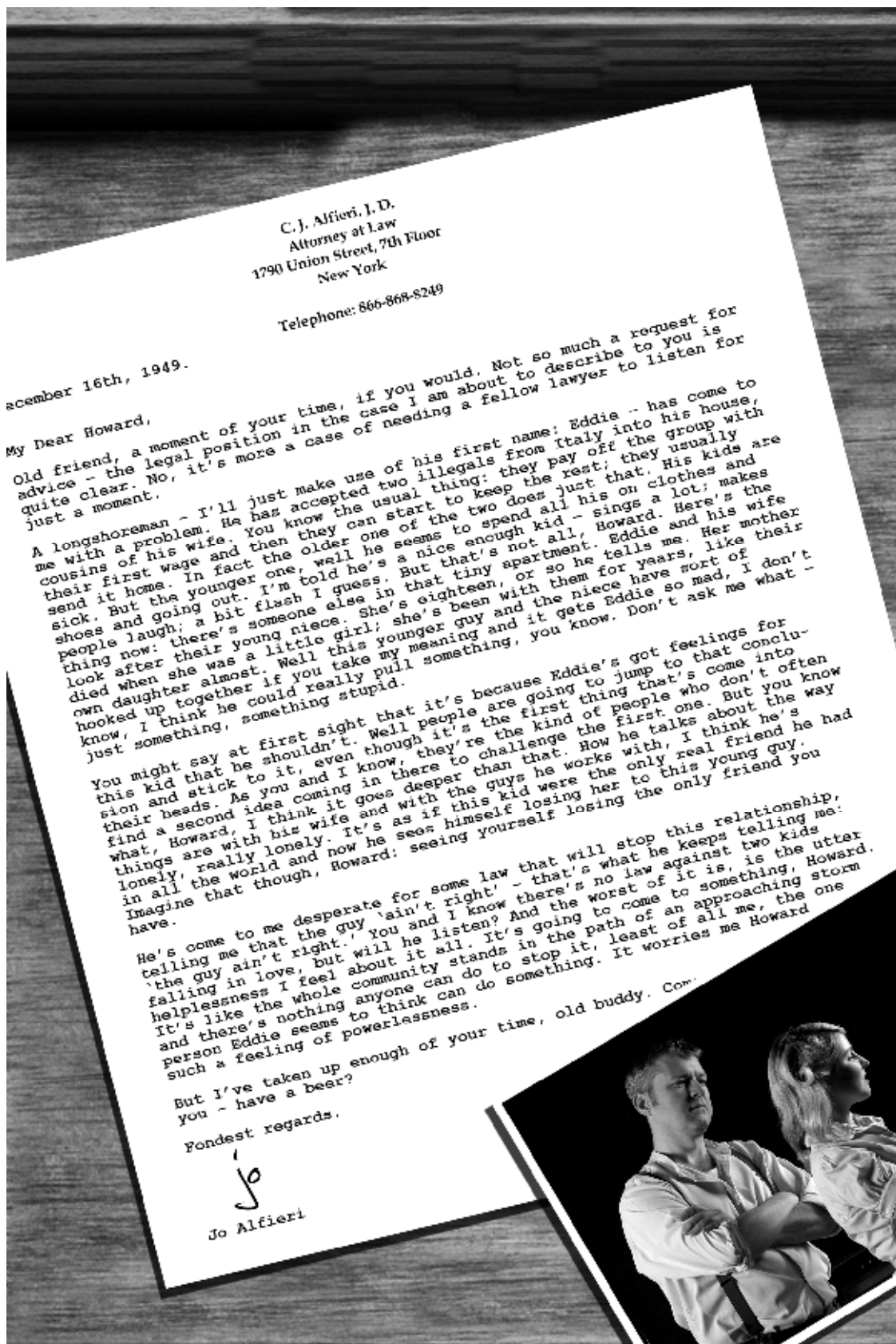
THEATRE
NEW WRITING
CLASSES

'A View From The Bridge'

By Arthur Miller

Directed by: Mark Wilson

19 - 26 June 2010



C. J. Alfieri, I. D.
Attorney at Law
1790 Union Street, 7th Floor
New York

Telephone: 866-868-8249

December 16th, 1949.

My Dear Howard,

Old friend, a moment of your time, if you would. Not so much a request for advice - the legal position in the case I am about to describe to you is quite clear. No, it's more a case of needing a fellow lawyer to listen for just a moment.

A longshoreman - I'll just make use of his first name: Eddie - has come to me with a problem. He has accepted two illegals from Italy into his house, cousins of his wife. You know the usual thing: they pay off the group with their first wage and then they can start to keep the rest; they usually send it home. In fact the older one of the two does just that. His kids are sick. But the younger one, well he seems to spend all his on clothes and shoes and going out. I'm told he's a nice enough kid - sings a lot; makes people laugh; a bit flash I guess. But that's not all, Howard. Here's the thing now: there's someone else in that tiny apartment. Eddie and his wife look after their young niece. She's eighteen, or so he tells me. Her mother died when she was a little girl; she's been with them for years, like their own daughter almost. Well this younger guy and the niece have sort of hooked up together if you take my meaning and it gets Eddie so mad, I don't know, I think he could really pull something, you know. Don't ask me what - just something, something stupid.

You might say at first sight that it's because Eddie's got feelings for this kid that he shouldn't. Well people are going to jump to that conclusion and stick to it, even though it's the first thing that's come into their heads. As you and I know, they're the kind of people who don't often find a second idea coming in there to challenge the first one. But you know what, Howard, I think it goes deeper than that. How he talks about the way things are with his wife and with the guys he works with, I think he's lonely, really lonely. It's as if this kid were the only real friend he had in all the world and now he sees himself losing her to this young guy. Imagine that though, Howard: seeing yourself losing the only friend you have.

He's come to me desperate for some law that will stop this relationship, telling me that the guy 'ain't right'. You and I know there's no law against me: 'the guy ain't right.' You and I know there's no law against two kids falling in love, but will he listen? And the worst of it is, is the utter helplessness I feel about it all. It's going to come to something, Howard. It's like the whole community stands in the path of an approaching storm and there's nothing anyone can do to stop it, least of all me, the one person Eddie seems to think can do something. It worries me Howard such a feeling of powerlessness.

But I've taken up enough of your time, old buddy. Com
you - have a beer?

Fondest regards,

Jo
Jo Alfieri

NEW SEASON 2010-2011

On the 29th of May at the Social evening I had the pleasure to announce the upcoming season 2010-2011, which will bring exciting new writing as well as well known established plays to NVT. I found myself in the lucky position of having more proposals than needed for the season and have already received proposals for the 2011-2012 season – so get in there early!

We will open in October with John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men" directed by Tim McQuillen-Wright. Tim intends to stage this famous play about friendship in an innovative way suitable to the Studio theatre.

This is followed by "Gaby Goes Global", a new play by Judy Upton. Ian Black is directing this play about a Jobcenter employee's dealings with the unemployed artists in Brighton.

Our Christmas show "Gaslight" by Patrick Hamilton, another local author, will be directed by David Downing. In this Victorian Thriller a man drives his wife deliberately insane, but help appears in the form of a former detective.

In January we will see "The Steamie" by Tony Roper, directed by Leanne McKenzie. We follow the lives of a group of women washing their clothes in a public washhouse.

This will be followed by a new play "The Well" by Jonathan Brown, looking at historical political issues as well as personal stories involved in the creation of a local well.

In March we will have a double bill of new writing with "Fake" by Michael Graney followed by a devised piece directed by Steve Coulson. "Fake" is based on live TV entertainment and psychic readings.

The Festival will follow on from this season's delve into Arthur Miller's work and start with "All my sons" directed by James Newton. In this anti war drama a family is faced with the revelations of past events based on moral decision making during war times. The second production in the Festival is the comedy "Four Play", a new piece by Andrew Allen, in which four actors play several parts in a murder mystery with four different endings, one of which

will be decided on during the show.

In June we will see Robin Maugham's "The Servant", a play exploring power relations between a man servant and his employer, which will be directed by Ken Potter.

And last but not least in July Pat Boxall will direct "Woman in Mind" by Alan Ayckbourn. In this black comedy a woman gradually collapses mentally and is trapped between a created and actual reality.

As you can see there are many plays referring to either local issues or by local authors, including new writing, which seems ideal for NVT. This variety of plays holds an almost equal amount of parts for women and men and addresses many different age groups, look out for audition notices in your newsletter and at the theatre.

And like this year we will add many additional events and workshops to this set season, suggestions and proposals for those are always welcome.

Ulrike Schilling
Artistic Director

NVT July newsletter

Final copy date:
Monday 21 June

Printer:
Thursday 1 July

Stuffing & posting:
Wednesday 7 July

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NVT Awards

2009/2010

Here we are nearing the end of another full season. We have our end of season social event on Saturday July 31, as part of this we will have the NVT Awards for the 2009/10 season.

With one play to go the voting forms have been enclosed with this newsletter in preparation for you to vote. There will be the opportunity to vote online as well from Monday 28 June - www.newventure.org.uk. Online voting will close on 30 July, but you will have a window of opportunity at the beginning of the End of Season Social to cast your votes.

As with last year voting is open to all members - Friend, Full Company, Student, Unwaged and Life. So please ensure you are current with your membership. The Trustees has agreed be excluded from the Greatest Contribution - non production; as if they would have got a vote anyway.

Ollie Donovan, our treasurer, has agreed to undertake the count as he is the only member of the committee who has not been directly involved with a production this season, so

thanks to him for volunteering. Below is a reminder of the awards and the productions you may have seen this season.

Awards

- Best Production
- Best Direction
- Best Actor / Male Performer
- Best Actress/Female Performer
- Best Newcomer on Stage
- Most Effective Back State Team
- Most Innovative Production
- Best Set Design
- Best Lighting Design
- Best Costume Design
- Best Make-up Design
- Best Sound Design
- Best Poster Design
- Greatest Contribution - non production

Productions 2009/10

- Art
- Bold Girls
- The Lying Kind
- The Ugly One
- Dancing at Lughnasa
- Breaking The Code
- Icarus
- Endgame

West Blatchington Windmill Summer Fete

Holmes Ave, Hove, Sunday 18 July, 2-5 pm

Please put this date in your diary now for the biggest local event of the year to raise funds for our windmill.

The Hangleton Youth Band are attending, as are a Country and Western music group. The 176 Squadron Air Training Cadet Band will welcome the Mayor's arrival and will hold a recruitment drive. Guided mill tours, cream teas, steam engines plus other entertaining side stalls are planned.

If you can spare bric-a-brac or donations for raffles and tombola, these are very much appreciated. Please arrange for collection or delivery by contacting Harry Atkins on 01273 734277

Some local interest items

Martlets Hospice - as well as collecting unwanted clothes, books, toys, household items, furniture and bric-a-brac, they can also convert used British and international stamps, plus any foreign coins or banknotes into much-needed funds. They, of course, accept sterling gift-aid, too, and run a successful weekly lottery scheme with a £1000 top prize. Please drop smaller donated items into any of their many shops. To arrange to have larger items collected or join the lottery scheme please phone 01273 747455.

Guided tours of Palmeira Mansions: Situated on the corner of Salisbury Rd and Church Rd, Hove, this opulent Grade II* listed Victorian mansion has miraculously survived with all original features and is now a part of The English Language centre in Hove. 90-minute tours take place at 11am on the first Sunday of the month - 4th July, 1st August, 5th September, 3rd October and 7th November. No need to book, just turn up. Pay on the door - £6, or £5 concessions.

M&M Historic Tours - Many excursions throughout the summer from Brighton & Hove departure points are arranged to many places of historic interest, with more to follow: Sun 13 June: The Red House and Eltham Palace; Sun 18 July, Hylands House and Ingatestone Hall, Sat, 4th Sept, Bodium Castle and Bate-man's; Sat 16 Oct, John Milton's Cottage and Hughenden Manor. Please contact Martin Foster, 11 Victoria St, Brighton, BN1 3FP (01273 729998) or <http://www.mandmhistorictours.com>

The London Regional Arts Club (LRAC): As well as general support of Open University academic arts, humanities and history courses, the LRAC also organises many general interest events for art- and history-lovers - including theatre visits and walks and talks in and around the London area. Please see more details at www.lrac.co.uk

So, reviewers, how do you like Samuel Beckett?

Barrie Jerram says "I have still to be convinced"

ENDGAME

Appreciation of Samuel Beckett's work is very much a personal taste with opinions often divided. There are those who believe him to be a genius whilst others see him as a theatrical charlatan and that championing him is just another case of the Emperor's New Clothes. Suffice it to say that I have still to be convinced of the former and that writing this review will be very difficult for me.

Disliking the writing's obscurity and tediousness – that had me occasionally looking at my watch - I think it best that I treat the production as an acting exercise and comment accordingly whilst leaving it to the more enlightened mind of Janet Hewlett-Davis to defend and explain the play.

Within a dark, grimy room sits Hamm, blind, unable to stand or walk and wanting to die. Around him Clov, possibly his son who he treats as a slave, begins the day's routine. Frequent descriptions of the outside world as being zero suggest that some great apocalyptic disaster has befallen the world. Whatever hell lies outside the walls it is no match for that which Hamm's cruelty creates for Clov within them. The cruelty extends to his parents, Nagg and Nell, who having lost their legs, are confined to dustbins where they are fed dog biscuits and abuse.

The bleakness of the play as Hamm bullies and

insults all around him had redeeming moments of comedy, both verbal and physical that the cast successfully achieved.

If nothing else the play is a great test of acting skills and this production had a cast that more than meets the required calibre. Paddy O'Keefe and Louise Preecy, trapped in their metal prisons, bring out the pathos of the old couple yearning for physical affection but unable to reach each other. Sean Williams, as the abused Clov, gave a performance that was physically downtrodden yet imbued with a spirit of rebellion that often gave his master as good as he got. His staring eyes seemed to radiate malevolence

But it was Nik Hedges as the immobile Hamm that dominated the production. He delivered an astonishing performance that at times mesmerised - his delivery reflected the character's many facets – aggressive, whinging, a crafty silkiness plus the touch of a luvy actor's campiness.

For Mark Green's fine direction of this play was clearly a labour of love, as a glance at the production credits reveals that he was involved in every aspect of the show's creation, including the set. It was the essence of bleakness and I liked the idea of the audience entering via the back of it – possibly a Brechtian device to remind us that the piece was theatrical not reality.

Barrie Jerram

Janet Hewlett-Davies offers another view from a nearby seat

Those of us who love Beckett's work have a lot of reasons for our attachment. We're content that the puzzles don't usually have solutions. Why should they? Not many of life's questions have definitive answers. Then there is the fact that it doesn't seem abnormal for bleakness and comedy to go hand in hand. Both these factors are the product of situation and character, the situation strange and the characters quite lightly sketched in that they can hardly be fitted into classic moulds of heroism or villainy, romance or violence, kindness or cruelty.

It usually takes only minutes for the audience to accept the bizarre situation and to become interested in the oblique characters, and to care about them. The cast of Endgame achieved this in the best possible way: they never appealed for sympathy or indeed for any sort of emotional response. This made me, for one, develop a kind of affection for them. I didn't feel able to condemn Hamm: he was as he was. I didn't truly pity the other three, rather I felt some sympathy for everyone, as I found myself in their world. I really wanted to see what

happened, but didn't mind that nothing much did. You can't ask for virtue to be rewarded or sin punished when concepts of virtue and sin are not entirely the point.

When the recent production of *Waiting for Godot* came on tour to Brighton, I would guess that a large proportion of the audiences came partly for the starry cast and were not really anticipating an entertaining evening. But that's what they got, and that's what many of those who attended Endgame will have got. And for the same reason. Ultimately, the Beckett fan loves the plays above all for their language, that rich soup of English translated from French written by an Irishman. It produces the perfect balance of imagination, elaboration and precision. The cast at NVT never missed a beat, never messed up a cadence. Not a word, not a move, seemed out of place in this superb production. Even Sam might have approved.

Janet Hewlett-Davies

Coming to terms with Icarus

A guest review by Barry Hewlett-Davies

It all depends what you are looking for when you go to the theatre. Do you want a good laugh, be told a story with something to think about, or be thrilled by a touch of mystery? Well, if you take Icarus as an example, NVT's first entry in the 2010 Brighton Festival Fringe, you'll not find it easy to fit it into any of these.

What it comes down to is a brief evening of dance, mime, movement, coloured lights, feathers and music, presented as a promenade by four people, not all at the same time.

The show begins with a few words in the bar about the myth of Icarus. You'll remember he was the young man with an ambitious father who wanted the best for him but who over-reached himself and came to a sad end. Rather like a lot of other people we know, really.

I was glad of the information. Without it, I can't say honestly, hand on my heart, that I would always have known what was going on.

In the studio ("the labyrinth") three actors are writhing in isolation against the walls telling us they are unhappy. After ten minutes, things get going and they come together in a group like Canova's Three Graces. From then on, as they move to music with changing lights, floating feathers and projections, the evening takes on more coherence - Isadora Duncan with technology, if you like, with beauty and tenderness.

Speech throughout is poetic but individual. There is no ex-

changed dialogue.

The music was specially composed and recorded, attractive and beguiling to listen to, a bit like the sounds whales make talking to each other over thousands of miles.

And it was good for your ego, of course, to try to pick up all the other references on stage. As well as Canova, I think I spotted Matisse (The Dance) and Munch (The Scream.)

I am not convinced that inviting the audience to walk about is a good idea. It didn't help your concentration and it wasn't always easy to see what was happening. Whenever the action got going, the audience gathered around it in knots like bargain hunters. Those of us at the back, less good on their feet like me, didn't get much of a look in.


Not an easy experience to explain, Icarus is NVT in "experimental" frame of mind, not exactly ground-breaking, and engaging you aesthetically rather than emotionally or intellectually. Whether the company succeeds in putting over everything they set out to is perhaps open to question. But they have determination and energy.

Several curtain calls, please, for Saskia Ulrike Schilling, Joyce Akanbi and Sarah Garbutt, Izzy Mackenzie, Julie Monkcom, and Ken Potter. And for the unseen musicians and their brilliant Flight of Icarus score.

Barry Hewlett-Davies

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 Mikes-tubbs2000@yahoo.co.uk if you have any ideas in that direction.



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The Sussex Playwright' Club is 75 years old

This year, THE SUSSEX PLAYWRIGHTS' CLUB is celebrating its 75th anniversary. It was founded in the Circle Bar at the Theatre Royal, Brighton, in 1935 by Charles Walker and five others. A plaque commemorating the event was unveiled at the Theatre Royal in 2005.

Charles was a member of The Southwick Players. The Club began meeting at Brighton Little Theatre but later moved to Cooks Hotel in the Old Steine. In the 1960's it was invited to make its permanent home at the New Venture Theatre by NVT's founder, A. Graham Phillips, who sometimes produced plays by Club members. The monthly meetings are now held in the South Hall but for many years they were held in the theatre upstairs.

As early President of the Sussex Playwrights' Club was Hamilton Fyffe, the distinguished journalist and friend of George Bernard Shaw, and play readings included LOTTIE DUNDASS by Enid Bagnold, who lived in nearby Rottingdean and who had already written NATIONAL VELVET. Her friend, C.B. Cochran, came to Brighton for the reading, with LOTTIE DUNDASS reaching the West End in 1943. Later, Dame Sybil Thorndyke was one of the Club's Vice Presidents.

for the first ever Brighton Festival in 1967, the SPC was responsible for arranging a National Theatre Open Forum at the Royal Pavilion, with a panel including Tom Stoppard and Kenneth Tynan and with John Stride and Edward Petherbridge performing an excerpt from ROSENCRANZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD.

In 1974, the theatre impresario, Henry Sherwood was President, and a play competition was named after him, with the play-

wright Philip King as Vice President. SPC's past members have included William Dinner (co-author of THE LATRE EDWINA BLACK, which was also filmed), Philip King (author of numerous plays for stage and film, including WATCHIT, SAILOR and SEE HOW THEY RUN) and Constance Cox (author of numerous plays for stage and radio and of adaptations for BBC Television, including the Sunday afternoon classic serials and episodes of the original FORSYTE SAGA). Current members include Judy Upton (author of plays for stage, film and radio, including ASHES AND SAND, staged at the Royal Court and later filmed, and of a newly commissioned work, LAZARUS, which forms one of the plays in this year's Durham Mystery Play cycle).

The Club meets once a month on a Sunday evening, the dates varying to fit in with the New Venture Theatre's programme, and the fee for membership (which currently stands at around fifty) is £10 per annum. Individuals may attend a meeting as a guest for a payment of £2.

The Club's committee selects a play to be read each month from those submitted by members or from among the winners of its annual competition. At the meeting, members hear a reading of the play, which is then followed by a short discussion to give the playwright feedback and advice.

The Club welcomes both performed and unperformed playwrights, beginners as well as professionals. There are also non-writing members who come along to the Club's meetings because they enjoy listening to new plans and like providing feedback in a friendly and encouraging atmosphere, as well as a number of members who are readers.

For several decades the Club has held an annual playwriting competition, open to the general public and currently funded through a legacy from Constance Cox, who was a committee member and office holder at SPC for forty years. In the past, for example, the competition is for a full-length stage play, a television script or a radio play. This year, the competition is for a new one-act play of between 30 and 50 minutes in length, which must be entered under a pseudonym, on the theme of 'anniversaries'. The stage and television actor, Paul Moriarty will be the adjudicator. The entry fee is £5 and there are three prizes of £150, £100 and £50, plus a reading at a future meeting. The closing date is July 31st and full details of how to enter and of where to send the manuscript are given on the Club's website.

This year, the Club has also collaborated with the New Venture Theatre in running a competition for new ten-minute plays and eight of these will be staged in the Studio in July.

The Sussex Playwrights' Club has a website that gives full details of the playwriting competition and lists the dates and content for the Club's future meetings. Members also receive a quarterly newsletter, containing reports on plays that have been read at recent meetings, news of members' successes and information on other related events. For full details, visit <http://www.sussexplaywrights.com> - or come along to our next meeting! The Chairman, Nicholas Quirke, and the Committee are always pleased to welcome potential members - either as writers, audience members or readers.

Trevor Harvey
Committee Member

Letters & Notes

23rd April 2010,
the day of Gallant St George and Billy Bard's Birthday

I was thrilled to note in your recent news letter, instead of a letters page, there was the timely and welcome inclusion of the NVT 'Rules, Responsibilities and Expectations'.

Let me be absolutely clear that this is a long-overdue publication, ensuring that we are all, at last, aware that we should 'respect the property of the club and that of other members' and that there is to be 'no stealing'. I hope it will be closely followed by an NVT charter outlining our policies and setting plenty of 'SMART' targets and a raft of notices appearing around the theatre. I shall then feel secure in the knowledge that the NVT is exactly like my place of work (and indeed everywhere else) where I'm no longer trusted or believed to have an iota of initiative, human decency or common sense. Indeed I am too daft to know how to behave without clear guide lines.

I look forward to being patronised further in the near future when I shall be removing my name from your membership permanently, in order to avoid any tomfoolery or creativity that the NVT might still manage to squeeze into its well-regulated walls.

Yours (and let me be absolutely clear about this) sincerely,

Mr. Henry Root.

Hello all.

I was disappointed (and a bit insulted) by the authoritarian and overwhelmingly negative tone of the Rules, Responsibilities and Expectations sheet that arrived with this month's newsletter. There was nothing in the newsletter to introduce them or explain their necessity. Is the membership really so dim-witted and untrustworthy

now that we need to be told not to steal and whose authority we must respect? Please take care to preserve the joy of the NVT.

Yours with best wishes,
the irresponsible, disrespectful and unregulated,
Peta Taylor

Dear Editor,

The letters from my two fellow NVT members seem to suggest a bit of communications failure.

In a perfect world, how DO you reach the one or two (unidentified) members who DO steal stuff, who DO treat their fellow members rudely or insensitively, who DO fail to help clean up after a production ends?

The other two letter-writers seem offended. Why? I'm sure neither of them, nor I, have ever stolen anything from NVT. But SOMEBODY has. How can the theatre reach these several people and persuade them to behave decently and respectfully and not take what isn't their property?

Really, you guys, I don't see any perfect answer.

Lots of love to you all,

Ms. Mary Jane Birdwhistle

Fund raising news

The fundraising total rose to £16,500 by the end of April, thanks mainly to two new sponsors. This has helped to fund the external redecorations and the fire detection system.

We've also spent about £1,000 recently on bar improvements and are about to order 30 new South Hall seats for £900.

But we need money for building improvements, including refurbishing the kitchen, double glazing the studio, a new electrical system for the whole building and a new floor in the South Hall. The total cost of these projects is estimated at £35,000 and we are applying for a grant from the Arts Council for £25,000.

Will we get this grant? Who knows, but we certainly can't rely on it.

So we need our members to help in various ways:

- Making a donation,
- Adopting a brick for £5 (or 10 for £50!)
- Remembering NVT in your Will (hopefully this will be long term planning!)
- Introducing sponsors,
- Donating items or promises for the Christmas auction.

Please email **mikestubbs 2000 @yahoo.co.uk** if you want to help in any of these ways.

Mike