

Bold Girls

by Rona Munro

Directed by Jerry Lyne

7 to 14 November 7.45 pm

"My Daddy said I was special, my Daddy never lied to me. So it must have been me that lied to him" Cassie Scene 1

Bold Girls is a drama of everyday life in 1990's Belfast - burning buses, road-blocks, gunfire are but offstage events in this stirring play about the lives of women, whose men have been killed or imprisoned for their political activities, but where bread must still be bought between explosions.

Set in Marie's kitchen, and a seedy night club, ordinary life goes on, but the appearance of a disturbing young girl threatens Marie's carefully structured widowhood. Pretences are shattered as finally, truths about their men-folk are painfully exposed.

In spite of its chilling theme there are many humorous and heart-warming moments - a play about people not politics.

Rona Munro's skilful writing explores

the illusions and myths we live with, not just in Belfast, that force men and women into roles, decisions and places they don't really want to be in but all too often end up there by sheer circumstance. It's just too hard to break free.



L to R. Amy Holmes: Marie, Cassie's best friend
Sarah Davies: Nora, Cassie's Mum
Claire Armstrong: Cassie, Nora's daughter

Photos by Strat Mistoris



Christina Wood: Deidre

Rona Munro's ear for the authentic cut and thrust of Belfast's unsung heroines is sharp, abrasive and at times downright painful but often wonderfully funny.

This play won the Evening Standard and the Susan Smith Blackburn Award Most Promising Playwright in 1991

I am very pleased to be given the opportunity to stage this play and thank the NVT for allowing me to produce it. I am very fortunate to have a great production team who with our 4

talented actresses, all new to the New Venture stage, have brought the whole thing to life.

Looking forward to seeing you at the show, you are in for a great night out!!

Jerry Lyne, Director

Ticket Reservations page 7

MANAGEMENT: Who we are and how to reach us

Ian Black	Admin Director	07956 530696	addirnvt@googlemail.com
Uli Schilling	Artistic Director	07867 725919	ulrike.schilling@mac.com
Ollie Donovan	Treasurer	07709 303134	oli_donovan@hotmail.com
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T.B.A.	Production Manager		
Tamsin Aidellbery	Publicity Manager	01273 557844	tamsin.aidallbery@bt.com
Jerry Lyne	Secretary	01273 446574	jerry.lyne@btinternet.com

‘ART’ reviewed by Barrie Jerram

This production proved to be a salutary lesson in dismissing a play before seeing it. When Art was first performed I read the reviews and synopsis, decided that it was not a play for me so I avoided it every time it surfaced – until now. How grateful I am to Tim McQuillen-Wright for showing me the error of my ways with his delightful production.

Art is a simple play without a plot – it is an entertaining and at times an extremely funny play involving three old friends. It is an intellectual squabble that looks at friendship and its betrayal set within a debate as to “What is Art?”

Serge, a modernist, clashes with Marc, a classicist, when he purchases for 200,000 francs a large canvas totally white with barely perceivable “white diagonal scars”. The showing of this purchase is the catalyst that causes an emotional earthquake that shakes the foundations of their relationship. Whilst accepting the view of art experts that his purchase is significant he is desperate for such validation from his friends.

Marc, as one time mentor, feels betrayed when Serge becomes influenced by a circle of other people. It is

not really the passion for abstract art that infuriates but his loss of control – his pupil has outgrown him.

Sitting on the fence and trying to act as peace maker is the neurotic Yvan who is having problems of his own involving his forthcoming marriage. He is a shambling disorganised figure that sharply contrasts with his two cerebral friends. But like the others he possesses a volatile nature that is brought to the surface when provoked.

The writer cleverly depicts the shifting alliances formed throughout the play. An example being when Marc and Serge are attacking each other ferociously an interjection from Yvan causes them to unite, instantly, turning their invective on to him.

The play is an actor’s delight giving the three cast members great scope to show off their talent. Matt Cotton played Marc with a combustionable passion that brought to mind an emotional pressure cooker that cannot survive unless its steam is released.

By contrast Colin Elmer’s Serge was

more clinical, almost icy at times. One wounded with fire the other with frostbite. Elmer, who impressed in the production of Festen, continued to do so as he endowed the part with a narcissistic element.

It fell to Andrew Allen to provide the bulk of the comedy. His Yvan was a masterpiece of comic creation – a shambolic figure forever twitching with lips trembling to find the right words to say. His monologue regarding the wedding invitations proved to be the comic highlight – his delivery with rising hysteria was masterful.

If this was McQuillen-Wright’s first attempt at directing then he should feel proud. The production was slick with the cast cleverly moved around and placed to satisfy all three sides of the audience. The transition between place and time was beautifully achieved aided by effective and efficient lighting cues.

Barrie Jerram

Neutral Mask Workshops with Rikki Tarascas

Acting Class: 2 & 9 November 2009

The neutral mask is a mask without expression.

It represents a being that has no past and no concept of the future.

It exists only in the present - in the moment. The neutral mask is used to help the actor understand and develop a heightened sense of discovery, awareness of the space, a greater presence and a profound awareness of self.

The idea of using a neutral mask as a tool for actor training was first introduced by Jacques Copeau at The Theatre du Vieux Colombier. Copeau started experimenting with hoods, moved to a blank form and then later discovered the need for a mask that represented a state of neutrality. His students carried Copeau’s ideas and experiments away from his school.

Jacques Lecoq and the Italian sculptor Sartori fully explored and developed the methods and the neutral

mask itself as a tool for actor training.

Rikki Tarascas trained with Jaques Lecoq and Phillippe Gaulier (head tutor at Lecoq’s school in Paris).

The workshop:

- Introduction to mask techniques, The laws behind mask acting
- *Basic mask training*: preparatory exercises
- *Body and movement*, stage presence, chorus, improvisation
- *Gesture*: practical exercises .
- *The neutral mask* as the basic mask or “tabula rasa” of theatrical and performance work

AGM 2009 - The Highlights

The AGM for 2009 has come and gone. A good turn out at the meeting, some 40 members, enabled the theatre to appoint those willing to stand for trustee and non-trustee roles for the coming year. An interesting competition for the Artistic Director role saw a lively debate following the candidates' presentation of their vision for the coming year and subsequent questions. This resulted in Ulrike Schilling being elected as Artistic Director. Which leave us with a vacant non-trustee role of Production Manager for the theatre.

I agreed to stand again as Admin Director, Jerry Lyne and Ollie Donovan stepped into the other two set trustee roles of Secretary and Treasurer. I would like to thank both Mike Stubbs for the work he has put into the role of Artistic Director over the past year and to Steve Robertson for his 2 years as

treasurer. I would also like to thank all those who have worked in the various roles over the past year and those who have agreed to continue their unstinting work in existing roles. Welcome to Lou Preecy, who has agreed to take on the role of Front of House / Bar Manager and Tim McQuillen-Wright as Scenic Design Advisor for the theatre and thanks to Tamsin Fraser and Mike Stubbs who augment the committee with the Marketing/Publicity and Fundraising roles, by agreeing to be trustees. Also to Chris Pugh who has agreed to continue in the role of Technical Manager and as part of the committee

The meeting also mandated the committee to progress developments in the theatre, focusing primarily on the studio and kitchen, leaving the development of the main theatre for the future, when funding may be a practical option

and it was clearer how the space should be developed - flexible theatre / rehearsal space, rehearsal rooms and workshop etc.

In his Artistic Director's report Mike Stubbs proposed that the theatre needed a Chairman role, rather than it being part of the Admin Director role, as it is at present. The outcome of discussion was for an Extra Ordinary General Meeting to be called early in 2010 to discuss this issue further with a view to possibly creating this role and changing the constitution accordingly. There was also a feeling from some members present that a working group may be useful to develop this idea and clear Job descriptions of the existing roles should be developed. Full details of the AGM can be found in the minutes.

Ian Black, Admin Director

New appointments to the NVT committee

Photo by M.J. Birdwhistle



Ulrike Schilling,
Artistic Director

Photo by M.J. Birdwhistle



Ollie Donovan,
Treasurer

Photo by Christine Snowden



Tamsin Aidallbery,
Publicity (*)

(*)The task of publicizing NVT is seen to be of such importance that it was felt the role of Publicity Manager needs to be represented on the Committee.



Jerry Lyne,
Secretary

Do we know what we're doing?

By Eleanor Gamper

The future of the NVT

I have some serious concerns about the apparent far-reaching changes of direction proposed for the NVT at its AGM on Sunday. I believe they would change the current status and ethos of the club significantly and irreversibly.

Three main points of contention arose for me:

1. The suggestion that the NVT is, or should be, a "community theatre".
2. The implication that in the past there has been a lack of "vision" in the running of the theatre
3. The proposal that a new position of "Chairman" should be created and that would somehow solve the aforementioned missing vision.

To take the first point: having the word "community" in one's mission statement does not make one a "community theatre". That description has a very specific and well understood meaning. The NVT is a subscription-based amateur theatre club that is run by and for its members. It opens its doors to a paying public in the shape of audiences for its theatre productions and in its various drop-in classes. That is its "shop window" to the community.

To run a community theatre you need to do some basic things:

- To understand what a community theatre actually is
- To know exactly what your own organisation is about, now and in the longer term
- To know exactly how you are going to deliver your ideas practically
- To possess the resources both in material terms and in the manpower, knowledge, skills and experience to carry out your plans

You also need to understand what your "market" is – or, if you object to that word then what the "need" is. The world is littered with people who thought it would be a great

idea to have a community theatre only to find that the community either wasn't interested in having one foisted on it, or that it didn't actually need what the community theatre was offering.

One common argument put forward is that being a "community theatre" would be a great way to get funding. Yes, there is no doubt that it is easier (well, less difficult!) to obtain funding for a community project, rather than for bricks and mortar, but the price of that is, YOU HAVE TO DELIVER THE PROJECT to justify the funding! And you have to spend the money on that project, not on whatever else you might fancy, such as refurbishing your kitchen or costuming the next production.

We at the NVT have our work cut out trying to put on a season of plays. Anyone who has been involved in this process for any time will tell you that it is perennially difficult to crew up a production with the essential technicians, designers, set builders, front of house staff, production managers and – yes – even directors and actors!

I maintain that our best way of involving the community in our theatre is:

1. To encourage members of the community to become members of the NVT and take part in what we do (that is, making theatre) and be as inclusive and welcoming as we can to new members. This already happens to a much greater extent than it used to, with acting classes, workshops and readings providing ways for people to experience different aspects of theatre and thereby to get further involved in the main programme of productions.
2. To aim to mount plays of the highest standard that will enhance our reputation and attract audiences from the community (aka "the paying public").
3. To encourage the active involvement of as many of our existing members as possible in the whole business of making

theatre and maintaining the venue which we as a club are privileged to own.

The Devil Is In the Detail

Sometimes the Vision Thing can just lack essential detail: stuff like – I don't know – "who's going to do it?" The thing is (*sigh*) one of the really important details is the one involving people's time, which at the NVT we must remember is unpaid. If you think it would be a great idea to get outside groups into your theatre – whether "community" groups or visiting companies – you will find that it requires a great deal of in-house support. This can involve hugely technical support for get-ins; it can be extremely time-consuming, heavy-duty physical work; there will be issues of safety, of access, of availability, marketing, liaison, child protection etc etc.

The NVT often has within its membership a number of professional theatre practitioners who choose to give their time to the club's activities for the mutual benefit of its members. But I wonder if they would choose to give their time free to support the work of outside groups who are being paid. Trust me – I have the t-shirt on this: there is a hideous minefield that exists between paid and unpaid work where paid groups come into your volunteer-run club theatre and presume on your hours of unpaid time. Much of this time will be spent helping these visitors to maintain the delusion that they are professionals, whereas in fact they can only function on the back of your free time. This can turn you into a bit of a "gopher", to be patronised by those who, if they had to compete in the real professional world, wouldn't have a prayer. You can rest assured that visiting groups will rarely be worried about your problems; they'll be far too busy worrying about their own.

What is theatre except the realisation of visions?

Now, let's talk about vision. It was suggested by more than one person at the AGM that there had been a lack of "vision" in recent times. A new committee position of "Chairman" was proposed, one rea-

The future of NVT

son being that this would be someone "with vision". Later I was in conversation with a member who expressed the same idea in another way – that somehow we had become "inward looking", concerned with the nuts-and-bolts running of the place but – it was implied – lacking "vision".

Vision is obviously essential to all artistic activity. For "vision" you can substitute the word "imagination" quite successfully. Also essential is being able to realise that vision: that's the real trick at the NVT. The world is full of people with visions – think of all the "novelists" who have got the next Big Idea . . . there's just that little matter of writing it!

Anyone who sets out to put on a play – and let's remember that putting on plays is what the NVT is about – has to have vision. To get a play from page to stage is an ever-evolving cycle of envisioning and realisation. In theatre we witness a unique form of creative collaboration from which emerge numerous visions at different points in that process.

Making a drama out of a crisis

It's worth noting that lavish material resources do not necessarily guarantee the best creative solutions – in fact they can even act as a diversion! Sometimes a tiny budget and a whole load of practical constraints can actually serve the artistic quality of a production much more successfully: one is forced to focus on the artistic essence of the work and ask oneself what the play is really about. We've experienced this in recent times with the loss of the upstairs proscenium theatre as a performance space. That has forced some of us to seek truly creative ways of translating what *might* have been a proscenium piece into a piece for studio. It's made us look at ways of playing in the round, of working with minimal or stylised set, imaginative lighting and sound, of experimenting with different acting styles and techniques and coming up with hard-thought creative solutions. One has only to look at the first production since the upstairs theatre went out of use ("Through the Wormhole") and the most re-

cent production ("Art") to get a flavour of the complex, diverse and highly creative solutions that can be found within the constraints of the studio space.

NVT Visionaries

It takes a lot of vision to solve the day-to-day practical problems that arise in theatres. From envisaging what might happen if your audience burnt to death or broke their necks falling off a rostrum, to directing a cast of thousands, from fund-raising to designing a web-site – the whole business of putting on plays with limited resources and groups of people with a variety of ability and experience is one of creative improvisation – doing genius things with what you've got! What makes "Am Dram" look "Am" is people, however worthily, trying to reproduce something that's technically or artistically beyond them and which doesn't draw on their truth. This can produce boring, second-hand results – I call it "karaoke theatre". The true visionaries at the NVT try to explore peoples' strengths and truths to produce *first-hand* results. I call that "art" and as such it can be fairly judged against both "professional" and "amateur" on an equal footing.

What are we right now?

The New Venture Theatre is an amateur (yes, yes, I'm sure you hate the word, just get over it) theatre club with its own premises. The maintenance of the venue by volunteers is a huge challenge. Lack of resources and the frequent burdens of new legislation can make it a constant fire-fighting exercise. But that is the nature of the beast. To try and turn the NVT into a receiving house would make this incomparably more difficult and also compromise the club's core activities. I used to work 24/7 running a community arts centre and I can testify how just one visiting group can play havoc with an in-house production's set-building or rehearsal schedule.

All theatre organisations, regardless of whether their staff are paid or unpaid, have a legal responsibility to ensure their venues meet certain minimum requirements. As things stand, as an amateur group

we have no guarantee that we can field members with the necessary qualifications or experience to carry out our basic essential jobs to an adequate standard, if at all. We have no guarantee that anyone in position will be there in the future. In these changing times our constitution places us in peril because there is no real safeguard against someone who is unqualified, inadequately experienced, incompetent, or indeed barking mad being voted into a job: if there's no-one else to do it we can just stick our hands up and vote them in.

If we want to continue making theatre in this lovely venue I believe we need to be crystal clear about what we are and to keep things as simple as we possibly can. We need clear descriptions that include the minimum necessary qualifications for the essential jobs in our theatre that would make it easier for both present and future candidates to volunteer for them and carry them out successfully. Perhaps we should keep more accessible records of plans that have been tried and discarded for good reason, to avoid constantly reinventing the wheel. We should be wary of imposing solutions if we have not correctly defined the problems. We should be wary of embarking on new schemes without adequate knowledge or experience. Of course we need vision, imagination, inventiveness, inspiration, dreams . . . we just need to make sure we dream with our sleeves rolled up!

Eleanor Gamper

Footnote

Eleanor is both a tired cynic and a passionate optimist about "vision". She's racked up a fair bit of experience in her forty plus years of being involved in theatre, both as an active member of amateur theatre clubs and fringe companies, as a teacher who has been involved with schools theatre and as a past artistic director of a community arts centre. As a writer, composer and musical director she has had her work performed in various very different venues, including the NVT, where she's been an active member for 8 years, serving as its assistant artistic director from 2004 – 07.

AUDITION NOTICE:

‘Dancing at Lughnasa’ by Brian Friel

Directed by Gerry McCrudden

Production Dates 20 - 27 February 2010

Audition dates Sunday 15 November - 3pm 17 Tuesday November - 7.30pm

Recalls Saturday 21 November - 2pm

Rehearsals will start at the beginning of January. There will be a number of read throughs in November and December as well as choreography rehearsals for those who have to dance.

It is 1936 and harvest time in County Donegal. In a house just outside the village of Ballybeg live the five Mundy sisters, barely making ends meet. The two male members of the household are brother Jack, a missionary priest, repatriated from Africa by his superiors after 25 years, and the seven year old child of the youngest sister. In depicting two days in the life of this ménage, Brian Friel evokes not simply the interior landscape of a group of human beings trapped in their domestic situation, but the wider landscape, interior or exterior, Christian and pagan, of which they are nevertheless a part. A deeply moving play.

CAST 5 female and 3 male

Michael	mid 30s plus – Could even be into early 50s, Narrator
Kate	Mid/late 40s, school teacher
Maggie	40 ish, housekeeper (occasionally smokes on stage)
Agnes	late 30s knitter
Rose	mid 30s knitter
Chris	mid 20s Michael’s mother
Gerry	30 ish Michael’s father
Jack	mid/late 50s, missionary priest

Michael, who narrates the story, also speaks the lines of the boy, ie himself when he was seven. All ages are flexible – some could be slightly younger or older. There will be dancing in some scenes – a great Irish dancing number for all the women. Also a couple of 1930s dance numbers for the actors playing Gerry, Chris and Agnes. So it would be necessary for them to be able to dance or be ready to learn to do so.

Gerry McCrudden

gerrymccrudden@hotmail.com 07912 873 235

‘A View From The Bridge’

A number of people asked me about approximate audition/rehearsal dates for this show so that they can plan their diaries. So, if you’re interested, I’ll be auditioning at the beginning of March and rehearsing from the end of March/beginning of April. The show is at the end of June.

Mark Wilson

A modest proposal

I have now directed two productions at New Venture: Caryl Churchill's 'A Number' in 2007 and 'The Maids' & 'Deathwatch', by Jean Genet, last season. Although loving theatre, watching and reading plays, I had done no directing before NVT, and the whole process seemed dauntingly complex. Luckily, though, I was offered the opportunity to direct 'A Rational Death', by Gareth Buckell, one of a short series of rehearsed readings that we put on in 2006

What a revelation! With no sets or costume, no commitment to learning lines and the whole process completed within a week, the production was free of a lot of the stress and pressure that comes with putting on a full scale play. And yet... all the directing essentials were there: auditioning the actors, discussing the meaning of the text with them and then fleshing out their characters, getting the pace and the timing right. Taking real directorial decisions, with all the risk of making mistakes and a wonderful sense of creative achievement for the whole team when it goes well. But without the huge

commitments of time and resources that would otherwise be required.

Another benefit is that an NVT audience got to see Gareth Buckell's play. In this case, it was the first performance of a new work and the author was able to assess its impact, but we, the members, saw a play that we would not have seen otherwise, so our own experience was widened. To return for a moment to Caryl Churchill; the Royal Court put on rehearsed readings of 'A Number' and 'Far Away' and I was obviously interested in seeing a play I had directed myself, but I had never seen 'Far Away'. Now I have. Even though only seen as a rehearsed reading, it has become a part of my playgoing experience and of my understanding of Churchill's work.

Obviously the same goes for actors. Even assuming an actor gets through the audition, and with a limited number of roles available not everybody does, that is only the start of a huge commitment of time and energy. Not everyone has those resources available. Compressing the whole process into a week gives actors the opportunity

to try out a role they might not otherwise have taken on.

I think that we should organise a series of rehearsed readings at NVT. We would give invaluable experience to new and untried directors with minimum risk and with very little cost. We would provide another showcase for our actors, allowing more of them (especially newcomers) to be seen, again without large time commitments to line learning. Possibly the most valuable aspect, though, is that NVT members would get to experience more PLAYS. Plays, presumably, is why we all joined, and a programme of only one or two readings every few months would increase the number of NVT productions by almost fifty percent.

What do people think? I am happy to act as a co-ordinator, and if anyone has more thoughts then let's talk. Email me at strat@stratmastoris.com
Strat Mastoris

Ticket requests

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

Please reserve for me ____ tickets for **'BOLD GIRLS'**
7 - 14 November - 7.45 pm
(No performance on Monday)

Matinee Sunday 8 November - 2.30 pm

Tickets:

£8 .00 (Members: £7); Final Friday & Saturday £9.00 (£8.00 members)

Tuesday evening: all tickets £6.00

Date: _____ Time: _____

NAME: _____ Membership number _____

ADDRESS: _____ PHONE _____

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

Final copy date: Monday 9 November

Printing: Thursday 19 November

Stuffing & posting: Weds. 25 November

Please note:

Charles will be away at newsletter production time. Tamsin has kindly offered to produce the December issue.

**Please send all December
copy to Tamsin at**

tamsin.aidallbery@bt.com

01273 01273 557844

Letters & Notes

From Barry Hewlett-Davies:

Barry Hewlett-Davies is now back home from three months in hospital following radical surgery. He is grateful to everybody at NVT who helped Janet during the time he was away and would like to thank them very much for their support.

Drinks on me at the bar. But make mine an orange juice, please!

BH-D

NOTICE in Hanover, New Hampshire

LOST DOG

Three legged - blind in one eye

- missing left ear
- recently castrated

Answers to "Lucky"

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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.

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Costume Creation Workshops - Sandra Ventris

A workshop to inspire and spark creativity. Choose a character from any play and work from drawing to realisation.

Each person will need to source their own materials - by fair means or foul. We will work from silhouette to actor in motion and see what can be achieved in the time we have !!!

For further details contact Sandra Ventris on 01273 728904

Sunday 1 November: Introduction & Preparation

7:30 - 9:30 pm

(NOTE: NOT Monday 2 November as originally advertised, due to changes in Sandra's schedule)

Saturday 14 November : Assembly

10 am - 5 pm

Cost - £15 (£5 members)

To book a place email ulrike.schilling@mac.com

Actor Training Workshops - Denise Evans

Denise Evans has worked in theatre as an actor, director and teacher since the early 1980's, with companies and artists including Company:Collisions, George Dillon, Steven Berkoff, Volcano, Boilerhouse, the Young Vic, Glasgow Citizens and Kaboodle Productions. She recently

directed a site-specific piece on Crosby Beach for Liverpool's Hope St. Ltd., and performed in Periplum's 1000 Revolutions for White Nights in Brighton.

The workshops will focus on basic to advanced actor training, looking at impulse, stage presence, physicality, characterisa-

tion, voice work, and bringing text to life. Influences include Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Augusto Boal, Dario Fo, Patsy Rodenburg, Jaques Lecoq and Yoshi Oida.

Please wear loose clothing and trainers so that you can move and breathe comfortably.