

NVT
Newsletter
JULY 2011

Next season starts
with re-scheduled

'The Servant'

by Robin Maugham
directed by Ken Potter
1-8 October

AND

'Love Letters'

by A.R. Gurney
directed by Strat Mastoris
22-29 October

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'Woman in Mind'

By Alan Ayckbourn
Directed by Pat Boxall
16-23 July 2011



L-R Tessa Pointing and Bob Ryder

Photo by strat@stratmastoris.com

*Awaiting input
from Pat Boxall*

Continued on page 2, column 1

'Connection Unsecure: Continue?'

A devised piece of theatre by Izzy Mackenzie and Mark Wilson
27-29 July 2011

What happens when two people come out from behind their on-line world and start to experience the excitement and the pain of a more genuine relationship?



L-R Izzy Mackenzie and Ben Prichard

Photo by strat@stratmastoris.com

Charlie: *What do they mean anyway? Who are they, these 'friends'? Just a bunch of people I met once, whose names I'd have probably forgotten. Just a bunch of numbers that make me feel better, that let me think: 'Look at me. I'm not lonely. I've got seven-hundred-and-eighty-three friends. How can I be lonely with seven-hundred-and-eighty-three friends? Look at me. All these photographs. Look at busy me in my busy busy life. ' Busy? I'm not busy,*

Frankie.

Continued on page 2, column 2

'Connection Unsecure: Continue'

Continued from bottom of page 1

Frankie and Charlie meet beyond their on-line world and start to play with and then make use of physical and vocal expression, discovering how, together with language, they enhance communication way beyond anything either of them has experienced before. However, as their new openness develops as well as the vulnerabilities that come with it, and as they lose contact with the people in their on-line worlds, they find themselves faced with a choice between two very different forms of existence.

The potential shallowness of the sort of obsessive two-dimensional world offered by social network sites is something that intrigued us and that we wanted to explore through a devised piece. We wanted our characters to experience the fun of 'playing' with and then making use of forms of expression whilst also eventually having to face the vulnerabilities and exposure that comes with openness.

Mark Wilson

The work addresses adult themes. Some of the language may cause offence.

'Woman in Mind' *Continued from top of page 1*

*Awaiting input
from Pat Boxall*

Season 2011-2012

As soon as the season was published in the last newsletter, changes started happening. But this just shows, NVT and its season are alive!

Due to unforeseen circumstances "The Servant" by Robin Maugham had to be postponed and is now rescheduled for 1st-8th October 2011.

Accordingly the production of "'Love Letters" has moved and will now be showing 22nd-29th October.

'Four Play' reviewed by Barrie Jerram

In complete contrast to its first Brighton Festival contribution, *All My Sons*, came this second offering – emotional drama replaced by comedy; believable characters by caricatures.

The title was a play on words – four being the number in the cast. Just four actors were required to portray seventeen characters, a feat that involved over 120 costume changes. If that was not enough they had to be prepared to act out one of four endings chosen by the audience at the interval and only revealed to them about 15 minutes from the end of the play.

The script was very funny and proved to be a skilful piece of writing in its construction with precise timing needed to ensure that the character changes flowed almost seamless. The mechanics of the piece and the need for precision brought to mind that classic comedy, *Noises Off*.

What resulted was a frenetic farce, with many moments of inspired lunacy sending up the genre of the country house mystery murder with its gamut of

stock characters. All were played as cartoons but with a nice mixture of overacting and underplaying.

There was plenty of clever word play, puns and in-jokes revolving round the size of the cast and the need to get off stage to change roles. Having a butler called Gardener and a gardener named Butler gave rise to plenty of confusion jokes – probably too many as the joke began to wear thin.

Sam Anderson, Sarah Charsley, Phillip Hill and Frank Leon worked their socks off as the pace quickened and events got out of hand. The furious build up to the interval left both cast & audience breathless. Not only were their acting skills successfully tested in switching roles but they also demonstrated a talent for ad-libbing in covering up the occasional gaffe.

Anderson's comic contributions included the dominant Lady Angkatell, a black widow now on her seventh husband, Sir Henry, and Fiona Damask, a sexual predator. A drunken actor; rustic gardener; straight laced vicar and Arab con man allowed Hill to go to town

with these diverse characters. In contrast there was delightful underplaying by Charsley as Sir Henry's twin daughters, the chauffer, the vicar's wayward daughter and the wife of the village philanderer.

It fell to Frank Leon to play Sir Henry, his long lost son, his butler and the philanderer with one of the highlights being the three way conversation he was required to deliver, off stage whilst changing costumes. Like his colleagues he often found himself in physical and manic situations that called for controlled restraint. All managed to do this – never letting their performances get out of hand.

A word of praise has to be given to the realistic set and those who constructed it.

Writer and director, Andrew Allen, has created a fine show, albeit overlong, that can become a great one with judicious cutting. It is appreciated that this would not be an easy task. It is not a case of just ditching sections of dialogue as so much of it needs to be timed to allow for costume changes.

End of Season Social

After such a successful and adventurous season the last event before the summer break on Saturday 30 June offers you the chance to have a drink and a chat about the season just gone as well as the next one. The bar will be open from 7:30 pm and as it is followed by the summer with its 'dark period' we have to ensure to finish all remaining bar stock. Remember we have the cheapest bar in town!

If you missed the announcement of the season 2011-2012, this is your chance to speak to the directors and get involved!

I look forward to seeing you there!

Ulrike

NVT AWARDS 2011

Coming Soon - The NVT Awards for the 2010 / 2011 Season
Your chance to vote for what you liked and enjoyed this season
Voting will be available online and by post
See the next newsletter for all the details

Am-dram is a serious business

The boundaries have blurred between amateur dramatics groups and the professionals. So perhaps it's time we took am-dram more seriously

By Jane Scott in *The Guardian*

In 1963, the academic [Edwin R Schoell](#) wrote: "There is, particularly in professional quarters, a deep-rooted suspicion that amateur theatre is really an institution that exists in order to give significance to 'amateur dramatics', a frivolous kind of amusement with no pretention to art."

Attitudes seem to have changed. Last month Sky Arts announced its latest theatrical sensation – [a reality documentary series entitled Stagestruck](#), in which cameras follow eight amateur companies competing for the chance to perform on a West End stage. As the production company's creative director, Nicolas Kent, said: "Stagestruck is more than a talent show, it's a celebration of how amateur theatre can be a beating heart of communities across Britain."

Sky is not the only interested party. The [RSC is currently running the Open Stages project](#), described as a "national programme of skills-sharing events and showcases, with amateur societies from across the UK invited to produce their own RSC-branded Shakespeare-themed production".

Am-dram seems in good health at the moment. There are over [2,500 groups](#) affiliated to the [National Operatic and Dramatic Association](#), the leading representative of amateur performance in the UK, and many more who are not associated. In the village in which I grew up, am-dram slotted alongside cricket, the WI and the church as a quintessential English activity. Long before the pronouncement of the "big society", theatre and the arts have been activities which unite people of all ages and from a range of backgrounds. And, of course, a high percentage of pro-

fessional theatre actors and practitioners had their first taste of theatre through their local am-dram. As purses tighten, it's reassuring that the industry is taking it upon itself to support and cherish groups from across the country.

Before the arrival of the [1988 Human Rights Act](#), Equity membership provided a clear and tangible divide between the two worlds. In old theatrical biographies you read of the thrill of receiving the Equity card, a talisman into the new world of professionalism. After the act came into force, however, when membership could no longer be made compulsory for performers, the distinctions have become somewhat murkier.

A "[professional](#)" could be defined as someone who has trained in a particular skill and then earns a living through using this skill. Yet, of course, simply because of the way the industry works, by this definition many people who work in theatre wouldn't count. There are thousands upon thousands of trained professionals who are unable to find paid work in theatre, let alone enough work to earn a full income. Many resort to taking a day job and fitting in acting work alongside. Plenty, despite the laudable efforts of [Equity](#), find themselves working on projects with low or no pay. They perform in order to be seen, to attract an agent, because they are passionate about work and because it is what they feel they are. Often they perform in theatres which also accommodate local amateur dramatics companies.

So what, really, are the differences between the situation of the performers I've just described and amateurs? Both groups rehearse

in the evenings and weekends in order to fit around their paying jobs. Both use ticket income to pay for the essentials of set, props, costumes and the rest, but usually have little left over in wages/expenses. Both perform for the love of putting on theatre. Often both include performers or creatives who are trained, the difference being in amateur theatre that those people have decided to make a decision to leave the world of theatre and perform as a hobby, while the professional performers remain hopeful and keep their [Spotlight](#) subscription.

You might go further. Often an amateur dramatics group with an established local following, shorter run and lower ticket prices play to fuller houses than an unknown professional troop. Often, because rights are cheaper for amateur companies, they perform slightly more traditional plays, written by well-known writers and with large casts giving opportunities for actors of all ages. While the standard can be patchy, many am-dram companies pride themselves on their professionalism. In contrast, the professional group, unable to benefit from [lower performance rights](#) and driven by desires to explore new theatrical forms focus on new writing and devised work. Finances often determine smaller and younger casts. The standard can, of course, be equally patchy.

More and more, I hear the term "semi-professional" within the amateur community. While I'm not quite sure what it means, maybe it suggests a push towards a fluidity of definition. You could argue that's a good thing. In any case, one fact seems certain – the distinction between the two worlds seems increasingly obsolete.

See Strat's comment on the blog following the article, bottom of next page

A heartfelt thanks for your commitment and support!

Sadly the production of "The Servant" had to be cancelled shortly before its opening date due to unforeseen circumstances. To buffer some of the losses NVT incurred through the postponement, Smarty Pants Productions have kindly offered to support NVT and put on the award-winning show "Crimes against Humanities Teachers" for two nights. This has enabled the theatre to not only open its doors, but has allowed us all another chance to see this show created by NVT members Andy Thomas and Colin Elmer and produced by Smarty Pants Productions. A massive thanks for helping at such short notice to all involved and for the kind offer to fill the sudden gap. Another amazing example of commitment and support from our membership!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members for putting in so many hours and work to ensure NVT runs smoothly show after show. Thank you to all the people supporting the organisation, our productions and the NVT community.

As Artistic Director I receive many external requests regarding our season, productions, workshops and jobs from people who aren't aware of the nature and spirit of NVT. Many people are surprised when they discover everything is run by volunteers, who are putting in all that work for sheer enjoyment.

My own family and friends in Germany wonder at how much time and effort one can put into this passion without financial gain. But they cannot see and feel the buzz, excitement and amazement when a show develops and opens to an audience to entertain, surprise, inspire, touch and move. And our love and passion for theatre make this possible - transform the space, the audience and ourselves. To be storytellers, characters, images and visions showing and touching on human truths.

In order to achieve these visions a lot of work and commitment is needed. And I am always amazed how much people do commit and put into NVT! Thank you!

But I've also encountered other occasions throughout the last year where that commitment has been lacking. Such as people responding to audition notices and ads for official posts without being aware of NVT's organisational structure, i.e. a members club run entirely by volunteers. People auditioning for parts and even accepting those parts without having read the script or even enquiring about the production dates! It seems easy to then find excuses to withdraw and leave massive gaps in productions or even slag NVT off without admitting their own shortcomings.

I am certain that many active

members volunteering in various areas like maintenance, bar, box office, publicity, directing and many other aspects of production have had disappointing experiences with unreliable people making life and the task at hand very difficult, but the ongoing success of our club and the activity within the theatre is proof that our hard work is paying off.

The term Amateur comes from the Latin word amare, meaning to love - and this is something members as well as audiences can feel at NVT - the love and passion for theatre!

If you would like to get involved in further aspects of this great venture NVT, many functions could do with an extra pair of hands. Time commitments vary from two hours at the box office to one evening at the bar, several months involvement in a production or even taking on an official post for a year or more. There are no limitations to how much you want to do! As with many things, what you get out of it depends on what you put in - it's up to you! Contact details for the management are in every newsletter, so get in touch and get involved!

Ulrike Schilling
Artistic Director

I do lighting, set design and occasional directing for New Venture Theatre in Brighton (Get the plug in early...) where we produce award-winning work to a very high standard. We are not paid, and we describe ourselves as 'fringe' or 'non-professional' but we tend to shy away from the dreaded 'A' word.

To my mind this is a mistake: never forget that the word

'amateur' has its roots in the Latin 'amo' - love. We do it for love.

'Professional' has got conflated with 'the professions' as in law, medicine, accountancy and all those activities which require training for qualifications and presumably have probity in their standards (do I even need to mention banking?) In reality 'professional' simply means that you do it for the money. You produce a service

and you charge for it - like in the oldest profession...

We do it for love. We do it to learn about theatre and because we love the nuts and bolts of drama and we want to experience it hands-on. Sometimes we are very good, sometimes we are truly dreadful - but so are the professionals.

Strat Mastoris

AUDITION NOTICE

'LOVE LETTERS' BY A.R. GURNEY

Director: Strat Mastoris

**Auditions will be held in the Main (upstairs) Theatre at NVT on Sun. 21st August.
Men 12.00-2.00 Women 2.30-4.30 Script extracts will be available in the Foyer.**

Performances run 22nd - 29th October 2011

'Love Letters' is the story of a never-quite-fulfilled love affair between two upper class Americans, Andy and Melissa. It's told through a series of letters that the two have exchanged throughout their life, which are simply read out by the characters. Sounds too simple? At first sight it is, but once you become involved in the progression of Andy and Melissa's lives, as recorded in the letters, with all their unrealistic assumptions and underlying anxieties, the narrative is gripping and remarkably moving.

The series of letters begins with Andy and Melissa aged about seven, in 1937, and continues until Melissa's death in her fifties. The actors simply read the letters from the page (the author is very insistent that the play works better if the lines are not learnt by heart) so the performance will have some elements of a rehearsed reading. Tone and emphasis are important, of course, but there should be no need for a lengthy rehearsal period.

Cast: We are looking for two actors, one male and one female, over fifty, who can manage an American accent. The exact region doesn't matter, but it needs to be fairly cultured as these people are WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) We are also looking for lighting and sound crew, and a costume designer.

Contact: strat@stratmastoris.com

AUDITION NOTICE

'IRON' BY RONA MUNRO

Director: Jerry Lyne

SATURDAY 23rd July: 12 to 3 PM Main Theatre

SUNDAY 24th July: 12 to 4pm South Hall

SUNDAY 31st July: 12 to 4pm Main Theatre

RECALLS WEDNESDAY 3rd August: 7:30 pm to 10 pm Main Theatre

Performances run: 19th November to 26th November 2011

SYNOPSIS

Josie has been looking for her mother Fay for 15 years, she finds her in prison, Josie has never been inside a prison before, Fay, her mother, is serving Life for murder, the murder of Josie's father.

Iron is an intense psychological drama in which mother and daughter try to break through the barriers of time, memory and punishment which separate them.

But, between them lies the fact of murder. A murder Josie cannot remember and Fay has always tried to forget. Uncovering the memories they share is more dangerous than either of them can imagine.

CAST:

All parts offer great opportunities, being very well written. The Guards are of particular interest, how they handle prison environment, the edgy relationship with Fay and her daughter. Fay and Josie also offer great rewards for actors as they probe the intense, complex situation they are in. There are many beautifully written and moving scenes. This is Rona Munro at her best. It will be performed in the round.

JOSIE: in her twenties, well educated, successful and confident.

FAY: Josie's mother, forties, measured, strong, persuasive.

GEORGE: guard 1, male, early middle aged, grounded family man.

SHEILA: guard 2: female, Josie's age, was vulnerable.

Mob: 0776291688, or e mail jerry.lyne@btinternet.com or phone 01273 446574

(Audition Pieces available @ audition or in advance from me)

DIRECTOR: Jerry Lyne Mob: 0776291688, or e mail jerry.lyne@btinternet.com or phone 01273 446574

(Audition Pieces available @ audition or in advance from me)

Most importantly we are also building our Production Team, call me or Tamsin, our Production Manager. Tamsin.fraser@bt.com / 07795981173

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 if you have any ideas in that direction.



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