

# 'Of Mice and Men'

by John Steinbeck

directed by Tim McQuillen-Wright

2-9 October 2010

There is a fair amount of trepidation which comes with choosing a well known and well loved play for the New Venture Theatre. Invariably, experts come out of the woodwork, many people will prejudge and living up to the expectations created by foggy nostalgia is always impossible. But some plays are worth that risk. *Of Mice and Men* was not my initial choice to propose for the season but it quickly became the first choice as I read it more and themes became apparent which had otherwise escaped me from watching other productions. For me, this is the key to choosing a play for the NVT. I do not have an encyclopaedic brain of obscure modern plays and I am fully aware that if there is an incredible, undiscovered classic out there, people with more time and more talent for such things would have found it already.

This leaves me with trying to find a piece which plays to the unique nature of the NVT and the talents of it's members. *Of Mice and Men* is one of those plays which, for me, have become victims of their own success. It can play to large audiences and so is regularly churned out by commercial theatre companies in need of a hit. But the play is not about recreating the dusty landscapes and the stifling heat and nor is it about the social and political history of the thirties. It is about the human spirit and what it takes to push people past the limits of their own understanding. It is about the unexplainable nature of brotherhood and how we all, universally, struggle to find our place in the world. These are themes which the New Venture can explore more successfully than a large proscenium theatre. Hopefully, our production will surprise a few people with how naturally it can sit within the studio

space and allow those who do not know the play to be taken in by it's charm and beauty.

When John Steinbeck wrote the novella, he had been working as an itinerant worker in California, much like his character, George. He knew of a another worker who eventually became the character of Lennie and there has been much debate during rehearsals as to how much of the rest of the play could have been lifted from experience. Is John suggesting he himself is like George or was he completely on the outside of this relationship? And why does he not write with the social and political comment which is evident in his other novels? There is one brief reference to the fact that the ranch is owned by a corporation but no indication that this is either good or bad.

The characters are complex and with their own frailties which don't allow us to judge them for their status alone. This is not the political attack of *The Grapes of Wrath* nor the dig at the social order of *Tortilla Flat*. This is a simple story of two men



Andy Hutchison as George

Andy Bell as Lennie

who have found a way to survive in a lonely world. Perhaps that is why it will always feel relevant and up to date. There are reasons why such plays are so well known and loved, after all.

# Autumn 2010

- Season changes
- Movement, Poise and Centering for Actors
- New Venture Titter 2
- Poetry South East 2010

# Much Ado . . . . .

- Workshops
- Body awareness
- Short Story Event
- Acting Classes

## Season Changes

Even though all licenses for 2010/2011 were available and agreed, we've already had some changes to the upcoming season.

Due to job related issues, the production of 'Gaslight' has had to be postponed. As you may have noticed 'The Steamie' is now scheduled in December as our Christmas production. To fill the January slot I am looking at several options and am in conversation with directors. So look out for the next audition notice!

Another change relates to the Festival. The Fringe finally released the dates for the Brighton Fringe Festival 2011. Both shows will start a week later than originally scheduled. 'All my Sons' will run from 7<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> of May and 'Four Play' from 25<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

## Movement, Poise & Centring for actors

**9 October 10 am-4 pm**  
**£15 (£10 members)**

**Paul Smith**

The human body is designed to feel and look good in movement. We all have dormant reflexes for poise that are surprisingly easy to tap back



into – and the process is fun! You'll feel more relaxed and have more presence, and the difference

will show when you perform.

To book a place contact [urike.schilling@newventure.org.uk](mailto:urike.schilling@newventure.org.uk)

Paul Smith originally trained as an Alexander Technique teacher and has developed a uniquely simple transformational process that restores natural posture and flowing, centered movement

## New Venture Titter 2

**15 October 7.45 pm**  
**£6 (£5 members)**

New Venture Titter returns with more of Brighton and Hove's best upcoming stand-up comics. As the nights begin to draw in, find warmth in the comedy club ambience of the transformed NVT studio. Have a laugh with the rapidly rising performers who are helping Brighton to challenge London and Edinburgh for the position of the UK's cradle of new comedy.



## Poetry South East 2010 (Book launch)

**22 October 7.45 pm**  
**£7 (£6 members)**

In the 1970s and early 1980s South East Arts published a series of annual anthologies showcasing the work of regional poets. Anthologies were edited by the likes of Lawrence Lerner, Patric Dickinson, Barry McSweeney and early work by poets such as Niki Jacowska, Ian Caws and Hubert Moore appeared here.



In 2000 the Lewes based Frogmore Press revived the anthology and ten years later a successor to Poetry South East 2000 is being published. Edited by Jeremy Page and Catherine Smith, it includes poems by John Agard, Ros Barber, Maria Jastrzebska, Grace Nichols, Susan Wicks and many more.

## Another Short Story Event

**'INTO THE DARK'**

**Friday 19 November - 7.45pm**  
**Members £5, non-members £6**

Calling all writers... after the success of our last Short Story event in February 'From the Heart', we've decided to do it again.

New Venture Theatre prepares for winter by taking you **'Into The Dark'** with an evening of short story readings.

Please submit a piece of fiction of 1,500 words or less. Stories should be based on the theme 'Into The Dark'. All selected stories will be read out on the night by an NVT actor.

Please include your name and contact details and send your story in the body of an email or as an attachment to: [brightonnewshound@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:brightonnewshound@hotmail.co.uk)

Deadline for submissions is 18 October 2010

## Breaking Down The Script – James Newton

**18 September 10am-5pm**  
**£15 (£10 members)**

A practical workshop for actors who want to progress onto the next level. We will break down a variety of example scripts from film, TV and the stage and reveal how to unlock your talent.

Discover how to create truly natural dialogue full of nuance and detail. Learn how objectives, beats and the secret art of 'Actioning' come together to create a powerful naturalistic performance.

James Newton trained as an actor at the RSAMD. He is currently directing a film: '14 Lines' based upon Shakespeare's Sonnets. To book a space please contact [urike.schilling@newventure.org.uk](mailto:urike.schilling@newventure.org.uk)

## Acting Classes

### Physical theatre

6, 13, 27 Sept. and 4 October  
Jonathan Brown

Jonathan explores physical theatre, close ensemble work, composite characters, and embodiment in (and out) of the context of text and plot.

### Body Awareness

20 September - Ulrike Schilling

During this session we will work with the body as a tool in performance. Through a variety of hands on exercises we will explore our physicality and redefine our approach to our bodies.

## Creation and Development of Character and Plot through Improvisation

11, 18, 25 October and 1 November  
Steve Coulson

## Characterisation and Text into Performance

8, 15, 22, 29 November and 6 December - Mark Wilson

Becoming an exquisite actor in five easy sessions

## Objectives, Beats, Actioning

13 & 20 December - James Newton

## 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.



# Ten Minute Play Competition

A guest review By Barry Hewlett-Davies

The last offering of the full season was a programme of short plays of ten minutes each, selected from a competition hosted jointly by Sussex Playwrights and NVT. There were more than 250 entries from around the world.

I suppose the first question you ask is why should anybody write a play which runs for only ten minutes? They are not commercially viable. There is no room for them in the professional theatre, on TV or (usually) on radio.

So the only available audience is the amateur theatre.

And why not? NVT, in particular, is committed to new work by new writers. Here was a chance to show what today's playwrights are up to.

The seven pieces on offer ranged from sub-Pinter and almost-Kafka to very-near stand up and some unexpected gender juggling. There was one very good joke, excellently realised.

This was *Brief Encounter*, written by Mark Wilson, directed by Andrew Allen, and played by Caron McNish and Andrew Allen. (Two people meet in a cinema showing *Brief Encounter* and needlessly confess to infidelity through mistaken identity.) Not only was it the most successfully well-staged show of the evening, it was also the smartest. It used the Black Limelight technique. (You really believed the couple were sitting in the dark, even though you could see them.)

The final piece (*Slipping into Anarchy*) was truly engaging

emotionally. Written by Jeffery Wolf, it was directed by Colin Elmer and acted by Carl Boardman and Lyn Fernee. A married couple, drinking their breakfast coffee, reveal a depth of affection against devastating personal circumstances.

This was the most simply-staged show in the collection and gained a lot from that. It deserved a less clumsy title but the writing was impeccable.

The other plays didn't come off quite as well.

*A Night in Praha* seemed twice as long as its ten minutes. It was over-staged and perhaps leaned so far towards Kafka it was in danger of falling over. *Dream Girl* turned out to be a blow-up doll - a sex toy. I wondered if it might have worked better had it been done as a stand up routine by a really aggressive female comedian. This would have let loose its savagery.

*For Whom the Microwave Dings* was another good joke. It would have been improved had it been played by two comedians rather than two comic actors. There is a difference. Think Morecombe and Wise sending each other up.

The results of the competition were announced after this review was written. (Each night's audience had their say.) The details appear below.

My money is on *Brief Encounter* and *Slipping into Anarchy*.

## Plays and Players

**Dreamgirl** by Trevor Wood & Ed Waugh, directed by Steve Coulson; acted by Guy Walsh & Lou Preecy

**Rules is Rules** by Gerry Greenland, directed by Ken Potter; acted by Tom Robinson & Daniel Brown

**The Con** by Barbara Hendrick, directed by Arwen Matthews; acted by Lou Preecy, Amanda Urwin-Mann, & Alistair Lock

**Brief Encounter** by Mark Wilson, directed by Andrew Allen; acted by Caron McNish & Andrew Allen

**A Night in Praha** by Steve Capra, directed by Leanne McKenzie; acted by Amanda Urwin-Mann & Katie Lambert

**For Whom the Microwave Dings** by Phil Jacobs, directed by Martin Hoskins, acted by Steve Coulson & Paddy O'Keeffe

**Slipping into Anarchy** by Jeffery Wolf, directed by Colin Elmer; acted by Carl Boardman & Lyn Fernee

### The Winners Were:

1<sup>st</sup> *Brief Encounter*    2<sup>nd</sup> *Slipping into Anarchy*    3<sup>rd</sup> *A Night in Praha*

# NVT Awards - The Results

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Many thanks to all who voted in last season's NVT awards, which were announced at the End of Season social on 31 July. It was an enjoyable evening with a good turn out. Specific thanks are due to Ollie and Natasha who received and counted the votes and to our guest award designer for this year, Alex McQuillen-Wright.

Congratulations to the awards winners and Runners up for the 2009 / 2010 season:

	<b>Winner</b>	<b>Runners Up</b>
Best Production	<b>A View From The Bridge</b>	<b>Endgame</b>
Best Direction	<b>Mark Wilson</b> for A View From The Bridge	<b>Tim McQuillen-Wright</b> for Art
Best Actor / Male Performer	<b>Joint Winners:</b> <b>Bill Arundel</b> for A View From The Bridge <b>Andrew Allen</b> for Art	<b>Joint Runners Up:</b> <b>Sean Williams</b> for Endgame <b>Nik Hedges</b> for Endgame
Best Actress / Female Performer	<b>Tessa Pointing</b> for A View From The Bridge	<b>Lou Preecy</b> for Breaking The Code
Best Newcomer on Stage	<b>Hannah Brain</b> for A View From The Bridge	<b>Chris Jenkins</b> for The Ugly One
Most Effective Back Stage Team	<b>A View From The Bridge</b>	<b>Dancing at Lughnasa</b>
Most Innovative Production	<b>Ulrike Schilling</b> for Icarus	<b>Mark Green</b> for Endgame
Best Set Design	<b>Mark Green</b> for Endgame	<b>Kate Greaves</b> for A View From The Bridge
Best Lighting Design	<b>Dan Walker</b> for Icarus	<b>Strat Mastoris</b> for Art
Best Costume Design	<b>Mark Green</b> for Endgame	<b>Kirsty Elmer</b> for A View From The Bridge
Best Make-up Design	<b>Lisa Feldman</b> for Endgame	<b>Kathrin Zeisberg</b> for Bold Girls
Best Sound Design	<b>Mark Mitchell</b> for Icarus	<b>Mark Wilson</b> for A View From The Bridge
Best Poster Design	<b>Strat Mastoris</b> for The Ugly One	<b>Tamsin Fraser</b> for A View From The Bridge
Greatest Contribution - Non Production	<b>Lou Preecy</b>	<b>Charles Gilson</b>

## October NVT newsletter

*Copy deadline*  
Monday 4 October

*Printer*  
Thursday 14 October

*Stuffing & posting*  
Wednesday 20 October

## From The Little Theatre Guild newsletter August 2010

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"The theatre is unique as a medium because, as far as I can see, it's the only place left in the world where people can stop and listen. I think that it is as important as having a home and having food and having water and having health - to be able to sit together communally and listen and reflect and think and share."

*(Vanessa Redgrave talking to Richard Eyre, as reported in his new book Talking Theatre, published by Nick Hern Books.)*

Please note new email address for the NVT newsletter

# Fund raising

## Gift Aid on donations and bricks.

If you made a donation or bought a brick during the last few years we might be able to claim a tax rebate and add to our funds.

We can do this if you were a UK taxpayer in the year in question. If you were, please email mikes-tubbs2000@yahoo.co.uk and we can get the claim moving.

Thanks for your help and support,

**Mike Stubbs**

# HELP WANTED

We have a very large curtain we want to cut into sections to use as smaller drapes.



Is there anyone who has experience in this area ?

If you can help please get in touch with Jerry Lyne 01273 446574, mobile 07762916888 or e-mail **jerry.lyne@btinternet.com**

## NEWS ABOUT GRANTS, PROJECTS AND LICENSES

### GRANTS:

We are currently working with South East Arts Council to upgrade the Studio. The project will cost in the region of £15K with S.E. Arts contributing 50% if we are successful. The upgrade includes climate control, secondary glazing and new blinds.

We are also working with Awards For All on a project to replace Electrical Wiring to the Upstairs Theatre and kitchen. The costs for this project are approximately £10K and we are looking for a 100% contribution from Awards For All

Additionally we have met with Brighton & Hove Council grants member to discuss additional support for our bids.

If we are unsuccessful in our grant applications we still intend to secondary glaze the Studio and install new blinds out of our own funds.

### SELF FUNDED PROJECTS

Replacement of Studio Door, refitting of South Fire Escape door and replastering the Studio Wall.

The provision of a Fire Detector in the paint room and additional emergency lighting work in the Upstairs Theatre.

### LICENCE VARIATION TO INCLUDE UPSTAIRS THEATRE SPACE

Following the work done on Fire Detection and Emergency Lighting we have submitted an application for a Minor Variation to our existing licence to include the Upstairs Theatre for public performances. Full scale productions are unlikely as we lack seating, lighting and sound facilities However at least we can stage readings, workshops and one off events

**Jerry Lyne on behalf of NVT Committee**

MANAGEMENT: Who we are and how to reach us				
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