

'Talking Dog'

Directed by
Sarah Davies

10-17 December

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NEW VENTURE
T H E A T R E

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'Iron'

By Rona Munro
Directed by Jerry Lyne
19-26 November 2011



**"IF A MAN KILLS HIS GIRL-
FRIEND HE'LL GET A TEN
STRETCH, IF A WOMAN KILLS
HER KID IT'S ONLY AS LONG AS
THE LITTLE SCRAP LIVED, BUT
IF A WOMAN KILLS HER MAN,
IT'S LIFE"**



Image by strat@stratmastoris.com

Sandie Armstrong and Erica Thornton

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.

IRON has tremendously subtle black humour. It is set in a Women's Prison in Scotland and the situation, inmates, warders and visitors find themselves in drawn out dark ironic comments on the way things have to be for them. There seem to be very few choices, so decisions are often final.

Rona Munro spent time in prisons researching a screenplay commissioned by Tim Roth. When the project fell through she was left with a clutch of vivid impressions of life under lock and

key which she then fashioned into a play of her own. "There were three things I wanted to explore," she says. "The attitude of someone going into prison, the attitude of someone in prison, and the whole issue around families. The thing is, you have this unbelievable boredom in prison. So when a bit of outside life comes in, it's extremely intense." It was the perfect crucible for a dramatic exploration of family, says Munro. "It's that thing of a mother living vicariously through a child, and the child needing to identify with the father as well as the mother," she says. "IRON describes an extreme form of those dilemmas." Like Munro's debut *Bold Girls*, which was about Belfast wives during the Troubles, or like 1999's *Snake*, whose characters grappled with life on a council estate, IRON is a private story against a political backdrop. Its heroes are hard done by life. Characteristically, though, Iron resists polemic as resolutely as it does sentimentality. IRON's political dimension is integrated stealthily into the human drama.

Rona Munro was born in Aberdeen and is currently Senior Playwriting Fellow for the Traverse. She has written many plays and scripts for stage, screen and television and received numerous awards for her work including The Maiden Stone Peggy Ramsay Memorial Award Winner for *Snake*; Susan Smith Blackburn Award, Evening Standard Most Promising Playwright Award, Plays International Award, Critics Circle and Plays and Players Most Promising Playwright Award for *Bold Girls*.

I have the pleasure of working with a very talented cast and crew all committed to giving you, the audience, a night to remember. This is the 2nd Rona Munro I have directed and as with *Bold Girls* I find the language superb, it is treat for us all to work with this script. You will be moved by the humour as well as the tragedy.

Jerry Lyne Director

NVT Quiz Night

Being someone who loves quizzes but whose brain seems to struggle to retain any useful (or indeed trivial) information, I sometimes find that even the most general of knowledge has eluded me. I'm the sort of person that might appear vaguely bright in some respects, but would still make like David Brent under pressure and state that the former Cuban leader was Fray Bentos. However, if answers in a quiz are so blatantly obvious as to render them patronisingly mundane (I'm looking at you, Anne Robinson), I don't find them engaging or - more importantly - fun to be a part of.

Not so with the NVT Quiz - where the questions were pitched at just the right level of difficulty and were also, crucially, varied in topic and tone so that it felt like there was something for everyone. The rounds themselves also utilised different methods of delivery of questions - including video and audio clips - which were entertaining re-

gardless of whether you knew the answer or not. There was also a nice touch in the interval which involved the teams seeking out quotes around the theatre and attempting to ascertain to whom they belonged, sparking conversation about their wit and sagacity.

In Ian Black and Hannah Liebeskind we had two great quiz masters who gave us an engaging, interesting and fun quiz, and the atmosphere buzzed with heated discussion, and playful and friendly competition.

A bargain at only £2, this was an enjoyable evening on 12 October, full of the creativity, intelligence, humour, fun and warmth to be found within the community of the NVT.

'Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world' - **Albert Einstein.**

Isabelle Mackenzie

Formation of fundraising team

With lots of exciting opportunities on the horizon for NVT, including the refurbishment of the upstairs theatre, we are now looking at ways in which we can extend our fundraising potential to realise these plans.

There are plenty of ways in which NVT can increase its income in order to grow, but we need your help.

We are currently looking at putting a fundraising team together, whose role will be to plan and execute a wide range of fundraising initiatives and we are looking for NVT members to fill the following roles:

Sponsorship Officer
Grants Officer
Events Officer

All of these opportunities would be great experience for anyone interested in the fundraising/charity sector and will mean that we can maximise our fundraising efforts.

If you are interested in any of these roles or require more information, please contact Mike Stubbs at mikestubbs2000@yahoo.co.uk

Changes to the Season - January production

Due to insurmountable difficulties in obtaining performance rights for the play, 'Gangster No. 1', the production has been cancelled. '**Kvetch**' by Steven Berkoff will be presented in its place and be directed by Steven O'Shea.

Mark Wilson - The November/December Acting Classes

How to act with extraordinary skill, confidence and verve.

21, 28 November, 5, 12 December

This set of four sessions will take participants into the processes of communicating a character's situation to an audience both physically and vocally.

Each class will be run in a way that fits all levels of experience and as a discrete unit - perfect for those

either able to attend all or just one or two of the sessions.

You will be working on your own and in small groups. There will be opportunities to present work and gain feedback on performance although the focus will be on your experience of the process rather than simply the end product. The intention is that it should be a learning, skills-based process - ideal for beginner or for those with more experience - that, by the end, will have provided you with more than you came in with.

'The Servant' by Robin Maugham

Directed by Ken Potter

A review by Barry Hewlett-Davies

The Servant is a nasty story, told very slowly in this production and there's the rub.

The performances are first-rate. But since the flow of the action is frequently broken by painstakingly careful scene changes, the actors lose the suspense they work so successfully to achieve. As the narrative is often concerned with sexual tension, it's like watching momentum interruptus.

All the casting is spot on.

From the word go, Colin Elmer, the unspeakable Barrett, the servant, is nastiness personified. Colin has the ability to make you believe he has just stepped out of a fridge. A sign reading "Grandma for Sale" might as well be hanging over his head. As he progresses from glacial to near-hysterical by way of drunken false penitence, he offers a performance which makes it impossible to take your eyes off him. Great!

Fifty years on from when the play was written, social drama is no

longer presented in such big black capital letters. The world Maugham wrote about has gone. Few people can afford a Jeeves. It is to Matthew Houghton's credit as the victimised employer that he makes us believe what is happening to him, close to melodrama though it seems.

His self-destruction, cheerful insouciance defeated by a great deal of whisky, is heart-breaking. Matthew's performance is impressively well-sustained.

His concerned friends, Arabella Gibbins and Richard Merton, who try to save him, have considerable style. Arabella is glamorous, haughty, full of common sense; Richard practical and down to earth, knowing when to accept the inevitable.

Sarah Charsley and Sarah Deas are the imported low life. They are involved in the only moments where there might be a chance to draw breath and laugh. Both are excellently cast.

Comparing the play with the later movie version (Losey, Pinter and Bogarde) is irresistible. To some extent, Maugham was restricted in what he could get away with by state censorship (the Lord Chamberlain.) The film censors allowed a more subtle journey into depravity. This cut away some rough edges.

It is an uncomfortable evening for the audience, and, I suspect, for the cast, too, because the staging gets in the way of what they are doing. The sets look good but moving them around so often hinders the action. The accompanying gloomy music on a loop doesn't help.

I don't believe we need to see Barrett at the beginning, spot-lit in a menacing hat, looking as if An Inspector is about To Call. He needs a trailer no more than the audience needs to be told in advance that something nasty is about to happen. Again.

Actors: 10; production 7+

LETTER TO THE EDITOR -

Dear Mr Editor

Let Us In !

I hesitate to ask this (don't want to be thought grumbling without cause) but am I right in thinking that NVT is the only theatre in the world that won't allow the audience in until the very last minute before the show is due to start ?

Performances are late, as often as not – the last one I went to by 15 minutes. After the announcement is made in the South Hall that "the performance is about to begin," you find yourself herded into the tiny foyer space waiting for another five minutes for the door to be unbolted (literally) so you can scramble into your seat before the lights go down.

Why ?

If the actors are doing a warm-up, why does it have to be at the last minute ?

If the set has fallen down – tell us !

If the leading lady has gone into hysterics – let us know ! We'll understand.

But don't keep us hanging about like unwanted guests, We're not gate-crashers. We are your audience. We have paid to come in. Show us we are welcome.

Please.

Yours in hope,

Peter Quince

Calling all directors!

Even though the season 64 is still young, I am looking already for proposals for our 65th season.

As usual, anything goes and I am happy to discuss plays, projects and ideas with you.

If you are new to directing or have not a lot of directing experience at NVT, why not propose a one act or short play or even a rehearsed reading to get you started? There are many opportunities to present work within the season without working on a scheduled 1 week production. Proposal forms can be requested by email to ulrike.schilling@newventure.org.uk and the proposal deadline is 18 February 2012.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Ulrike, Artistic Director

Review of “Love Letters” coming from Barrie Jerram on Wednesday.

Printer on Thursday

AUDITION NOTICE

THE RISE AND FALL OF LITTLE VOICE

By Jim Cartwright

AUDITION DATES:

Sunday 27 November 2–5 pm in the Main House

CALL BACKS:

Sunday 4 December 6.30–9.30 pm in the Main House

PRODUCTION DATES:

Saturday 31 March to Saturday 7 April, evening performances 7.45pm, Sunday Matinee 2.30 pm, no performances on Sunday and Monday evenings

SYNOPSIS:

Set in a Lancashire town, this incredibly moving play tells the story of a shy, reclusive girl named Little Voice, who lives with her man-hungry mother Mari. Desperately missing her dead father, Little Voice spends her time locked in her bedroom listening to his old record collection and perfecting astonishing impersonations of famous female vocalists. When Ray Say, a small time hustler and Mari's current boyfriend, hears Little Voice sing, he thinks she's a star and his long-awaited ticket to the big time But, what about Little Voice?

Magical, hilarious, terrifying and hauntingly sad, this wonderful play boasts a superb script by one of our most outstanding playwrights.

Now that the part of Little Voice has been cast, I am holding further auditions for the remaining roles, all of which are to die for.

I have deliberately not specified ages as I don't want to restrict any possibly casting opportunities.

ROLE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Mari Hoff	LV's mother: raucous, man-hungry, boozy and vulgar
Ray Say	Small time hustler and manager of third rate artistes
Sadie	Mari's friend and neighbour who is described as "a great big fat woman"
Billy	Shy and tongue tied; immediately drawn to LV
Phone Man	Very small role; could be doubled with Mr Boo
Mr Boo	Sleazy night club MC

If you would like any further information or a copy of the script then please do not hesitate to contact me. I'd also be grateful if you would let me know whether you wish to audition so that I can dedicate a specific time slot to you.

Pat Boxall

Contact details: - Telephone 01273 770004, Mobile 07786 585253, email pat.lyne_47@btinternet.com

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December newsletter

Copy deadline: Monday 7 November
Printing: Thursday 17 November
Stuffing & posting: Thursday 24 November

MANAGEMENT: Who we are and how to reach us

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