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double bill

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Ian Black

And 'Seagulls'
directed by
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'The Building'

An original promenade production
Directed by Sarah Davies
20-27 July 2013

"Everyone wants to peer into other people's lives, don't they? It's why we go to 'Open Houses'!"

Turning a script into a piece of theatre is a magical thing. Creating a piece of performance from scratch is an exciting, crazy challenge - not for the faint hearted, and one which I am drawn to ('Talking Dog' - most innovative production, 2011/12). The process of creating as a team is in itself a wonderful experience.

As a collective we have worked to create 'The Building'. You begin with a title, a few ideas and images, engage the interest of a talented bunch and see what happens. It's about trusting the process.

Through games, brainstorming and physical explorations, characters began to emerge as we considered who'd live where, with whom and how. *How?* How to make it look? Which theatrical conventions to explore and why? And then there came the restrictions . . . ah, the blessed restrictions of space, time, venue, resources, budget, access, rules and regulations and they

are blessed restrictions for they provide a frame within which to work and a constant stream of interesting problems to solve.

I was inspired to experiment with and make a promenade piece after being transported by the Dream Think Speak magic at the Co-Op on London Road a couple of years ago. Their piece was

inspired also by happening upon one of Uli's acting classes where people were playing in different parts of the NVT. Eureka, I want to do that! That looks like fun. And so it has been.

So we have, or at least nearly have, made a brand new piece of theatre which is entirely ours. Many thanks to the support and encouragement we have received from so



Poster image by Jeff Driver and Tamsin Fraser

based on Checkov's Cherry Orchard - I did see a cherry tree and get a sense of Siberia in the basement, however my true love and delight was from visiting the different spaces, times, their playfulness with dimensions.

I loved the notion of leaving space for the audience to create and decide how a piece speaks to them. I was

many en route: tireless Tamsin ever-encouraging and wonderful, the amazingly talented and creative Mr Jeffrey Driver, lovely Rod, Andrew Allen, Sarah Charsley and all our lovely visitors.

It has been an absolute joy and honour to work with such a committed and creative cast. The process of devising is not always easy and requires resilience and self-belief

Continued on page 2

NVT Newsletter editor, Charles Gilson, is stepping down after 12 years and 129 issues. Why so many years? Because it's been fun! Interview on page 11.

Harold Pinter double bill

'The Lover' directed by Kevin Moore
and 'Celebration' directed by Tim McQuillen-Wright

A review by Barry Hewlett-Davies

Re-writing Pinter and Appalled Disbelief

Another trip into the wondrous world of Mr Pinter where extraordinary things happen in totally ordinary



Photos by Strat Mastoris

'The Lover' – Lou Preecy and Moog Gravett

situations and where people are always trapped by circumstance.

The couple in **The Lover** have fantastic sex - literally, the boyfriend pops back home from the office in the afternoon pretending to be someone else. There is a lovely gag in the middle where Pinter traps us into believing for a moment that the girlfriend is having it off with the milkman (Jezz Bowden.)

Boyfriend and lover (Moog Gravett and Lou Preecy) have a quiet reserve about them which makes their climax, accompanied by a bongo drum and Ravel on the sound track, rather a surprise. They are not well-served by the minimal set where the furniture is cov-

ered by dark sheeting. The absence of props means they have to mime glasses, bottles, newspapers and cigarettes and this does little to realise the ambience needed for the play to work.

In **Celebration**, we are in another world altogether, the celeb Ivy Restaurant in the West End. How this gang ever got admitted to such a posh place is a mystery but it is a gloriously funny 45 minutes.



'Celebration' L-R Dennis Cumming, Hellen Ward and Frank Leon

Warren Saunders with his constant appalled disbelief at what he hears himself saying and Laura Scobie as his knowingly innocent wide-eyed girlfriend are a delight. Just as funny is Frank Leon, the interjecting waiter with his deadpan delivery and misplaced emphasis.

The main party is Katherine Brown, Sophie Dearlove, Steve Mallen and Sam Parsons, a sharper streetwise group who deliver the Pinter trademark menace, again very funnily. Dennis Cumming is urbane in the face of some pretty startling advances, and Hellen Wells Ward, has a wealth of pushy comic input. The whole show has a bright zest about it, off from the start at a cracking pace.

Frank Leon has the last word – sort of. Pinter abandons him open-mouthed, silenced in the middle of a sentence - outrageous theatre and Frank handles it brilliantly.

A Summer Quiz

(not to be taken too seriously)

by Barry Hewlett-Davies

1. Shakespeare wrote only one play entirely in verse. Is it

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Richard II

The Tempest

2. Harold Pinter's career began as an actor in Birmingham. What was his stage name ?

John Earl

Richard Knight

David Baron

3. Donald Sinden says he became an actor by accident when he was working in Brighton fitting revolving doors. Where did he first appear ?

Brighton Theatre Royal

Brighton Little Theatre

The Connaught at Worthing

4. Who lived at Rottingdean and claimed never to remember where they had left their false teeth ?

Enid Bagnold

Rudyard Kipling

EM Forster

5. Who reckoned there are only two rules for being a success on the stage – remember your lines and don't bump into the furniture ?

Arthur Miller

Noel Coward

Tennessee Williams

6. Who did the murders in The Mousetrap ?

Colonel Harding

Det Sgt Wyatt

The ski instructor

7. Which Dr Who was a professional footballer ?

David Tennant

Matt Smith

Peter Davidson

8. Who is the next Dr Who ?

Olly Murs

Helen Mirren

Russell Tovey

9. Jonathan Harvey (Beautiful Thing, Canary etc.) also writes for which TV soap ?

Hollyoaks

Coronation Street

Doctors

10. What did Alan Bennett's dad do for a living ?

Accountant

Professional violinist

Pork butcher

11. Who are

Hanna Glawari

Emilia Marti

Minnie

12. When is Mickey Mouse's birthday ?

May 2 1932

November 2 1930

November 18 1998

Answers on page 8

Four Seasons at NVT

By Uli Schilling, Artistic Director

As you will know after four years in my role of Artistic Director I decided to step down and hand over many aspects of the work I am doing. It has been, and still is, an amazing and inspiring time that taught me lots about theatre and the passion NVT embraces.

It is still fascinating how the quality and magic of shows transpires and overwhelms audiences after a long and often hard working process, which most people who come to see our shows might not even be aware of.

Having graduated in Dance and Visual Art I joined NVT and finally got involved in 'Dinner' at the end of 2006. Starting with this show I had a 2nd full time job - volunteering at NVT.

When I first came to see the Promenade Production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in the Studio in May 2006, I fell in love with the space and was lucky enough to be able to stage my degree show 'Intimate Encounters' as part of the Festival only two years later.

After having been SM and PM on several shows in 2007 I became the NVT Production Manager for over 2 years and joined the committee, which was a great way of meeting key players in the organisation and learning about pretty much every aspect at NVT.

During this time I took on the organisation of the Acting Classes and arranged training and workshops, which is such good fun as our membership has soooo much to offer and share! Please keep those kind offers for workshop and classes coming as that is one of NVT's features to share skills and knowledge and train up new talents!

At the AGM 2009 I became Artistic Director and with the support of the committee and many many lovely members I found my way around this, for me, new territory being able to continue developments I already started in my previous role and expanding other aspects and artistic areas at NVT.

I am very impressed with the ideas and variety of productions, genres, themes and approaches directors are proposing each year and all the other ideas and events we manage to add to our season.

There is so much going on at NVT, so many different things one can get involved in and I can only be grateful to the amazing volunteers ensuring the smooth running of all our operations on a regular basis - THANK YOU!!!!

I am very pleased that we are in a position to open the upstairs theatre and to utilise both spaces from next season onwards. And of course I am very

proud to have been able to see and be part of the restoration process, which has been utilised throughout that time in many different ways as well.

NVT has certainly changed since I joined, building developments, improvements of existing systems and structures, many new members bringing great ideas and talent and to name just a few. I love the feeling of being part of such an amazing devoted organisation and the opportunity to constantly learn and share knowledge and skills.

For myself NVT has been such an important part of my life, I met sooo many friends at NVT, I learnt so much about many different aspects of theatre and community and could develop my own ideas, create work, try things out and enjoy the support, passion and company of lovely and talented creative people.

My life at NVT after the AGM will focus on some aspects I already am involved in, training and classes, and I am looking forward to creating work and getting involved in productions.

I am pleased to know that capable hands will continue to ensure NVT's success and am looking forward to the AGM where you can hopefully meet all officers together and elect your team that runs NVT all year round.

Ulrike

Andrew Allen has HIS say

What do YOU think?

So, we produced an entirely improvised play back in May as part of the Fringe. Some people loved it, some people hated it, and some people, thinking us either insane or indulgent (or both) didn't really know what to think, but were keen to congratulate the cast on their bravery and risk-taking.

We got a couple of reviews which ranged from lukewarm to the heady heights of downright negative. They had something in common, though: the shared belief that Beginning Muddle End was not, in fact, improvised: that we had 'safety nets' in place to stop the story wandering off in a confusing direction, or even – as one particularly hostile review suggested – that it was all planned and even scripted. At least our very own Barry Hewlett-Davies was gracious to offer up an apology if his assumption (that the show was not in fact improvised) was wrong. As the cast suggested when we read the first of our reviews: if we planned things in advance, do you not think we'd have come up with a better story? It was a play set in Hitler's bathroom/kitchen, for crying out loud. Obviously, on one level, those sort of reviews were great to receive – they stroked our egos and vindicated our risk-taking: what better to be so skilled at making things on the

spot that people in the audience are simply unable to believe that that's what you're doing?

And yet.

In certain cases (certainly in the case of the more vitriolic, on-line review) we were basically being accused of cheating. Now, all theatre is lies, really. But we were honest. At the risk of being the lady that protests too much, I can't emphasise enough just how little plan or idea the cast walked onto stage with each night. As some of you will be aware, that's a hell of a ask: even professional, much more experienced improvisers will hesitate, wanting some kind of structure to hang the plot on. The cast of BME had nothing. Some of them had never even improvised before joining us at the NVT. That they were able to create a show – hell, five shows – out of nothing says almost nothing about any skills I might claim as their director, and almost everything about their charisma and bravery as performers.

I initially had not intended to respond to the review (it always seems somewhat graceless to defend yourself against the negative points). However, many people were keen that I attempt to state the case for the other side, if only to state that, in our claim to be entirely impro-

vised, we were not breaking any trade description act. It's made me think a great deal about exactly what improvisation – and by extension, any storytelling, including theatre – actually is, and what it promises. Skilled jugglers and acrobats will occasionally introduce a stumble into their act simply to remind audiences that, yes, this stuff is difficult, it's not nearly as easy as it might look. Perhaps we should take our reviews as a positive sign that we didn't fall. At the NVT, we keep from stumbling a great deal, and it's all almost entirely invisible – the work backstage, in box office and bar – and the extraordinary amount of work happening upstairs in the main theatre; much of it without praise or even comment, because to most of us, it just looks effortless. But we all know the stunning amount of effort, sweat and – yes – tears that go into the theatre, and into each production, even the ones that we've made up as we go along.

Forgive me if I veered off into incoherence near the end: with a supreme lack of irony, I hadn't planned what I was going to say. So, in response to the review – no apology necessary. We're very pleased that we could get that response to our improvisation. Now: just imagine the damage we could do if we knew what the hell we were doing

NVT newsletter editor steps down after 129 issues.

After 12 years of Charles interviewing others for the newsletter it seemed a good idea on this, his final newsletter, to turn the tables on him.

He decided to apply for the position of NVT newsletter editor after seeing an advert saying there was a vacancy. He had, what he describes as, a very informal interview with the then Admin Director who told him what the job involved and that he didn't need to report to anyone and no checks were made on what he decided to include. This seemed like a fun and interesting challenge. Charles had previously produced newsletters on a regular basis for 2 other charities. The idea of being involved with a Theatre Group particularly appealed as in his younger years he'd acted in productions in USA, Japan, France, Moscow as well as the UK. (Modesty isn't one of his virtues!)

Charles said the highlights of these 12 years have been having the chance to develop the newsletter from a photocopied A5 leaflet to the present colour A4 editions. Over this time he has felt respected for the work he was doing and has been given many compliments over the years. The big bonus has been working with lots of interesting and talented NVT members.

There has been a bit of a downside to the job and that involved telling members, diplomatically, that he couldn't include articles which were unkind or disrespectful to others. It also took some patience to

persuade contributors that 3 page essays needed to be condensed to a maximum of a page. He also has worried that he wasn't going to get enough material for an edition (it never happened!)

His bit of fun was to create his alter ego, Mary Jane Birdwhistle, which gave him the chance on occasion to write just what he fancied – sometimes a bit tongue in cheek. This American extrovert took on a life of her own with members inviting her out for a coffee, enquiries about the name of the club where she was supposed to be dancing and on one occasion being credited as 'the prompt' in a production programme.

Charles says he has had a lot of fun especially as he has never seen himself as creative but this role has offered him the chance to try to be and it has felt special to be a part of the Theatre. It always gives him a rush of adrenalin when he puts the newsletter together and he has really enjoyed the contact with lots of new friends. He says it has also massaged his ego that people think he knows what he is doing!

Now it is time for him to move on and give someone else the chance to take on this rewarding and valuable role for NVT. He intends to continue coming to productions which has been an important element in his and Anne's life. Over the last 25+ years he has worked as a volunteer in 4 different charities and in stepping down as NVT Newsletter Editor it is the first time that he doesn't need to then leave an organisation.



November 2001



July 2013

Next newsletter: October 2013
Final copy date: 9 September

Reviews and Spoilers by Strat Mastoris

I write a fair number of theatre reviews, though not for the NVT (never review friends...) and I do take production photographs for NVT which are used to publicise the shows. Anything which illustrates a work of art is bound to give away a certain level of detail about the work - so how much information is needed, and does too much constitute a 'spoiler', something which degrades the audience's enjoyment of the piece when they finally get to see it?

I think it depends on what we mean by a 'review'. Is a review something which is meant to encourage potential audience members to go and see the show, or is it some kind of assessment process employed after the event? Where reviews award stars, does a five star rating mean - "You really must go and see this", or does it mean - "This was a really high-quality production, and the company did superbly well?"

If it's the first, then it's really a form of advertising - a preview, that gives people a flavour of what to expect when they finally do see the production, and so presumably too much detail would spoil some of the freshness and surprise of the performance. They don't want to be told - "The butler did it..."

But in the way of theatre - especially fringe theatre - most of the population won't get to see the show, so for them the function of the review is to provide some kind of record of the event. They can read about a production that they didn't experience for themselves at first hand, and decide whether the company, and the author, are worth pursuing in the future. That's certainly how I read reviews.

My dictionary defines 'review' as - 'a survey; a critical examina-

tion; a critique. That's what I try to produce when I write. To that end I put in as much detail as is needed to describe the production adequately. But I'm actually trying to do more...

'News is only the first draft of History'. Alan Barth, a journalist on The Washington Post, wrote that in 1943. I don't see myself as writing 'History', with all the academic analysis and perspective that the word implies, but I am trying to write a contemporary 'eyewitness account'. What was it like to BE at that performance on that particular night? What did that production FEEL like? If I can give some of the flavour of the event - if I can make readers experience some of the sensations I felt myself - then I'll have produced something that's useful today, but hopefully has some lasting value as well. Remember that after a few years, the review might well be the only record of a production.

During the Festival I saw a wonderful production called 'Belvedere' (you can read my review on my website) and at the end I gave away the final twist of the plot. That action has been criticised, and I'm not totally happy myself. Did you see the show? - probably not - but now by reading my review you have the opportunity to examine the author's imagery and plot construction. And you might be encouraged to see more work by Ana-Maria Bamberger. Surely that's the job of a reviewer.

I describe the sets, the costumes and the action of the show. I set out the plot and usually quote enough of the lines to give a flavour of the author's voice, too. If that involves 'spoilers', it should become obvious before I get to the point where I reveal that it was 'the butler who did it', and people don't have to read the review. Robert Capa (I'm a photographer, remember) once said - "If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough". I try to take my readers very close indeed.

www.stratmastoris.wordpress.com

Answers to Summer Quiz

1. Richard II
2. David Baron
3. Brighton Little Theatre 4. Enid Bagnold
5. Coward (who else?)
6. None of them. I was talking about the play Hamlet
7. Matt Smith
8. Your guess is as good as mine - nobody knows yet
9. Corrie.
10. Butcher
11. Operatic heroines The Merry Widow, the woman with the Macropolis Secret, and the Girl of the Golden West
12. November 18 1928, the date of the release of Steamboat Willie - first Mouse cartoon.

CORRECTION

The **Sean O'Casey** play, directed by Rod Lewis and scheduled for 21 - 29 March 2014 is incorrectly described as The Beginning of The End in the NVT current playbill.

The correct title is **THE END OF THE BEGINNING**.

You ARE valued!

On behalf of the committee I would like to apologise if members input and suggestions have not been appreciated or dealt with instantly or at all. We are fortunate to have an active membership, which comes up with amazing ideas and projects relating to all aspects of the theatre and that is something very special the whole NVT membership is grateful for!

As you know many of us have been on the committee for several years and on top of our jobs and personal lives spent a lot of time at and for NVT. To us every show is equally important and we aim to support as much as we can. As mentioned, every show, that means we are working every month on at least 2-3 shows and this all year round. I am aware it might come across that we are detached from some aspects or not as heavily involved as it would be welcomed and we can only hope you understand that we have to attend other aspects of theatre life as well. Most of you know that the MAIN THEATRE PROJECT is coming along amazingly and that a group of members has been driving this project for YEARS!!! As a volunteer run charity we can only progress in rather slow steps as we are relying on the time, knowledge and good will of our members as well as available funds.

And of course there is the every day maintenance and admin and all external and internal requests that flood mailboxes and calendars. Luckily most of them are interesting projects and proposals or meetings not

far away from a bar or coffee shop, so we can still relax after a days work whilst progressing NVT developments.

I do not want to emphasize the work involved in being part of the management group, after all, we all choose to accept our roles, and I rather want to use this opportunity to apologise if individual projects, especially relating to fundraising and decoration of the building have not been acknowledged or progressed instantly.

It is a delight to see members presenting amazing ideas how we can raise money and what is possible with and at NVT. And in order to ensure all aspects and many views of the membership are considered we often have to bring these ideas to our monthly committee meetings and discuss feasibility in relation to all other projects happening at NVT. I am aware this can be frustrating to the person/s bringing the idea and ready to get started for a great cause, but hopefully you can understand that we need to look at past experiences (often preceding our time at NVT), current developments and future plans lasting longer than one show or season and consider the whole membership as well.

As a committee we can only apologise if we have not shown our gratitude to individuals who proposed ideas and offered time and skills to support NVT. We are still struggling to ensure all offices are filled and often we wear several hats and maybe even heads, so please bear with us.

The best way to get heard and propose creative and amazing ideas might be to just grab us at

the bar and discuss your ideas briefly or submit a proposal and then join a committee meeting to present things further. We can fill you in on past projects, present status quo and future plans which might affect or are affected by the proposed project and we can then move forward together and hopefully avoid the current delay and frustration. You might even consider getting involved on a regular basis by joining the committee or taking on an office, which is another amazing opportunity to shape the future of NVT. If you would like to find out more about the various offices, let us know and look out for the AGM papers as this is your chance to get involved!

So please keep your ideas and suggestions coming, ideally combined with a proposal and the amazing passion and dedication NVT stands for, and be assured you are heard and valued, even if we are at times a little snowed under and rather quiet.

And of course you do not have to wait for the next show to catch us at the bar, even though we would really like that, (red wine is normally fine with me), you can always contact us and arrange something in between shows.

I look forward to hearing your amazing and creative ideas, projects and suggestions and see you at the next show!

Ulrike
Artistic Director
On behalf of the committee



Tickets for next NVT production

Please note: Performances on Sundays are matinee only.

Evening performances at 7.45 pm

Sunday Matinees at 2.30 pm

20-27 July

'The Building' a site specific production

(Unfortunately, this production is not suitable for those with reduced mobility.)

Performance date?	How many?		Total Cost?
	Member?	Non-Member?	£

Seats £9 (£8 members) except final Friday/Saturday : £10 (£9 members): Tuesday evening £7

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Membership Number(s)

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Why not be an Angel or a Cherub, £100 or more to be an Angel or £5 or more to be a Cherub. Pick up a leaflet at the theatre or send your donation to Angel / Cherub Appeal, NVT Bedford Place Brighton BN1 2 PT

If you are a tax payer please let us know if you will Gift Aid your donation.



About NVT

NVT was founded in 1947. For ten years the company was nomadic, performing in a wide variety of halls and theatres. In 1956, it took a lease on the first floor of Christchurch Schoolrooms, Bedford Place -- when its 100-seater proscenium arch theatre was built.

In 1983 the trustees of the company decided to buy the freehold of the premises and added an 80-seater studio theatre on the ground floor. In the autumn of 1999, the third main space in the building -- the South Hall -- was refurbished. Apart from being a more inviting place for members and audiences to meet and enjoy drinks from the bar, the new South Hall is also used as a cabaret-type venue.

NVT is a community theatre, committed not only to achieving the highest standards on stage, but also to cultivating original work.