

Coming in February

'The Winslow Boy'
By Terence Rattigan
Directed by Gerry
McCrudden
21 February – 01
March

Box Office (24hr)
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Other enquiries
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NEW VENTURE
T H E A T R E

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www.newventure.org.uk

'Old Times'

By Harold Pinter
Directed by Steven O'Shea
Friday 17 January 2014 - Saturday 25 January 2014

Harold Pinter is arguably the most significant and influential British playwright of the post-war twentieth century. It is easy to forget therefore that when Pinter's first full length play, *The Birthday Party*, was presented in London in 1958, it closed within a week due to a combination of disastrous reviews and a general sense of bafflement from the theatre-going public.

Theatre folklore has it that Pinter received a letter from an audience member who had attended a performance during the brief run. In it she stated that, while she'd actually rather enjoyed the show, surely Pinter must realise that for her to understand the meaning of the play she would need to know who the characters were, where they came from and whether they were supposed to be normal.

The desire to seek such verification is perhaps understandable. "So what's it about?" is the perennial question I'm asked in response to "I'm directing a Pinter play called *Old Times*". This is followed by an appropriate Pinteresque pause on my part.

How to summarise a play that remains so tantalisingly enigmatic and, as such, has inspired such myriad of interpretations as to its real meaning. The plot, such as it is, is simple enough. Kate and Deeley, a married couple are visited by Anna, an old friend from Kate's past. What transpires is a meditation on friendship, possession, thwarted desire, lost hopes, jealousy, male aggression, lost youth, sexuality and perhaps most significantly, the nature of memory. In particular how memory may be utilised as a weapon in a battle for domination through the need to impose upon others, the veracity of each character's interpretation of past events according to the psychological or strategic needs of the present.

Or is it?

Like much of Pinter's work, the play defies any attempts to provide an easy, straightforward summation of what takes place and supplies more questions than answers in its examina-

tion of the human condition, and the motivations and behaviour of the three characters in the play. It remains, however, no less compelling a drama for all its inherent, mysterious ambiguity and ranks amongst the most acclaimed and celebrated of Pinter's considerable body of work.

Eventually, over time my answer to the question, "What's it about?" has regressed to the unarguable observation that, "It's about an hour and a half, with an interval".

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my exceptional cast, Janice Jones, Red Gray and Jim Calderwood, the entire crew and all the administrative staff at the NVT for their invaluable work and support throughout this production.

Incidentally regarding the letter sent to Pinter concerning the audience member's response to the first production of *The Birthday Party*, Pinter is said to have responded that while he'd actually rather enjoyed her letter, surely she must realise that for him to fully understand it, he would need to know who she was, where she came from and whether she was supposed to be normal.

Steven O'Shea



Janice Jones, Jim Calderwood, and Red Gray

Photo by Jez Bowden

Don't forget we now open on a Friday, with tickets at the same lower price as Tuesdays (£7 all seats)

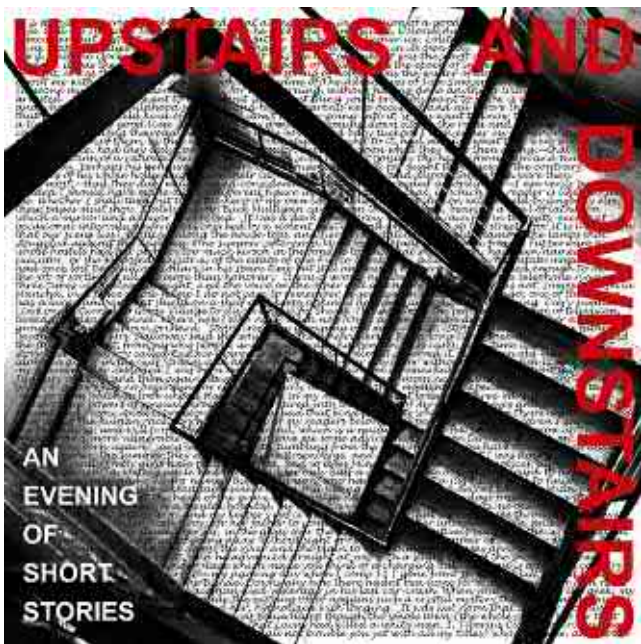
Upstairs and Downstairs

Friday 15 February

NVT's popular short story event is back! Submit stories of up to 1500 on the theme of 'Upstairs and Downstairs'. Our favourite entries will be read out by a team of NVT story-tellers during a night of live fiction on Friday 15 February.

Please send your stories to brightonnews-hound@hotmail.co.uk. The deadline for submissions is 29 January.

This event will be taking place in the Theatre Upstairs, our newly refurbished Main Theatre. Please note this has access is via stairs only and is not suitable for the disabled or persons with mobility issues. Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience and disappointment this may cause.



Directors' Proposals

I feel very privileged to have been given the chance, at NVT's last AGM, to take on the role of Artistic Director that Ulrike has been doing so brilliantly over the past four years. I shall do my best to continue her good work and stimulate and encourage further excellent productions from our members.

Thanks to a huge amount of selfless voluntary work, the Main Theatre will be opening upstairs at the end of March with Sean O'Casey's joyously funny 'The End of the Beginning', promising a suitably celebratory evening for all. I feel this beautifully renovated theatre could herald a new era.

Exciting theatre comes in many different shapes and forms, and the wide variety of the NVT programme has reflected that and I believe should continue to do so. One reason that this has been so effectively achieved in the past is NVT's policy of asking individual directors to choose what they

put forward themselves, rather than having a play/production imposed upon them. This has brought a passion and commitment to NVT productions for all of those involved from which everyone - including the audience - has benefited.

So! The priority now is to start putting together the 2014/15 season, which starts next September, and the time has come for potential directors to start putting together their proposals. The NVT proposal form should be sent in by the end of January but should you want to sound out your ideas earlier than that, you're welcome to email me brief details about what you'd like to do and how you'd like to do it - or simply get in touch for a chat. Imaginative, creative ideas will very much be welcomed but do be prepared to have matters thought through. I believe that any good, dramatic idea (wherever or whoever it comes from) should have enough stamina for it to be able to withstand being discussed, tossed about, developed and worked on (scripts may even need to be edited!). Theatre is, at its heart, a collaborative medium and, with the wide ranging skills available from our talented membership, collectively we have the ability to make potentially good ideas even better, for them to become great ideas. This is the stuff that can lead to a wide spectrum of powerful, exciting productions! So - let's have those ideas and let's make 2014/15 a brilliant season!

I'm really grateful to Pat Boxall who has kindly agreed to assist me in my new role. For proposal forms and any other info, please contact Pat at pat.lyne_47@btinternet.com or me at rod.lewis@newventure.org.uk 07914 639627

Rod Lewis
Artistic Director

Thank You Uli!

As you will be aware Uli stood down as Artistic Director at the Annual General Meeting in November, after 4 years in the role and Production Manager before that. She has done a phenomenal job in her time as AD, not only with respect to encouraging new directors and planning some great seasons, but also in the time she has spent expanding the range of workshops we provide, coordinating the Acting Class teachers and instigating various entertainments for our social events to mention a few.

Those who have not been on the committee will probably be unaware of the time and effort Uli has put into the NVT over the last few years. Without this input we would not be in the position we are now, so I would like to thank her personally and on behalf of the committee and the members.

Thankfully we haven't seen the last of Uli. She has now taken on a Training Co-ordinator Role developing the workshops and acting class aspects, which she has had considerable input into in the past.

Ian Black
Chairman

Who do you think we were?

The Ghost of Upstage Left

Christmas is traditionally a time for ghost stories.

Any good theatre worthy of note seems to have a resident spirit, and the NVT likewise. Not a ghoul or malevolent being, but a seemingly benign presence which the more sensitive amongst us claim to have encountered or felt brush by. Some have told me of a female spirit loitering in the upstairs theatre - perhaps the presence of a late thespian who does not wish to take their final leave of the stage...or a long passed audience member keen not to miss the next show.

With the Upstairs theatre newly reopened, now is the time to investigate what spirit we may be disturbing! So if you have had a ghostly NVT encounter, or remember someone who had, please do write in and I hope to include it in my upcoming story of 'The Ghost of Upstage Left'.

Gerry McCrudden

gerrymccrudden@hotmail.com



Photo by Strat Mastoris

Dear Editor

I was delighted to see Gerry McCrudden's piece in the November newsletter about A Graham Phillips, someone who I feel has been undeservedly 'forgotten' over recent years.

I first joined Sussex Playwrights' Club (at NVT) in 1967 and A Graham Phillips took an interest in all its activities. He had been instrumental in offering the Club a permanent home at NVT for their monthly meetings and would sometimes ask to read a copy of a script from a recent meeting, occasionally staging something by an SPC member at NVT. (The SPC was run by the stage and television dramatist Constance Cox, along with Philip King and other playwrights.) I have fond memories of A Graham Phillips who was often working in his upstairs office on those Sunday evenings and was always welcoming. I think Gerry's suggestion that the South Hall is renamed after him is a brilliant idea.

Yours sincerely,

Trevor Harvey

Thoughts from a South Hall Chair

A Happy New Year to all. As we move into 2014 we have many great productions to come during the rest of this season. Also, don't forget that if you want to direct next season the closing date for proposals is Friday 31 January - season to be announced in April.

This season will also see the first full production in the Upstairs Theatre since its extensive renovations. These are not fully complete as we would like to add a new lighting and curtaining rig, but this requires funds we still have to raise so it is something for the future. Talking of raising funds, if you're making any online sale purchases signup to Easyfundraising.co.uk first and you may be able to raise some money through donations paid by the vendors at no cost to you.

We would like to welcome a new member, James Macauley, who is also taking over the Box Office Manager role from Natasha. Many thanks to James for taking on this vital role and to Natasha for her hard work over the past few years managing and developing the Box Office system. She is still working hard editing this very newsletter each month.

Ian Black
Chairman

Directing a 10 Minute Play

I loved my first experience of directing with the NVT, particularly with a play of the calibre of *Make Up*. All the plays were written to a very high standard, and it was a pleasure to see them all together in the course of one evening. I was particularly struck by how professional NVT is - the acting, the production management, the stage management, the publicity and everyone else who was involved. It's been great getting to know so many new people, and I'm looking forward to a long and happy association with the NVT.

Mary Allen
(*Make Up* by Robert Hartley)

Coming from a history of almost purely professional theatre I was so pleasantly surprised by the highly organized yet friendly and encouraging atmosphere generated by all of the very 'hands on' members of the NVT. All aspects of the 10 Minute Play Competition were made simple by the fantastic help and input of all of the backstage and technical team, and nothing was too much trouble for the ever kind and positive Ian Black. Bravo and thank-you so much NVT. 'Maybe I WILL bring Marjorie'...!

Sean Lippett-Fall
(*Brief Encounter* by Roger Mortimer-Smith)

I have been involved with NVT for a couple of years now, and thinking about directing for about the same time. In my work as a coach and trainer using theatre and other creative approaches, I often use rehearsal techniques. But taking on the challenge and responsibility of directing a performance as a 'first timer' was still daunting, so the 10 Minute Play Competition was a perfect opportunity to put a toe in the water.

I cast a great combination of actors in Andrew Allen and Lisa Caira; both worked instinctively and truthfully in the open space that the lovely script allowed them, and they were also up for the added challenge I gave them of playing alternate roles on different nights.

Throughout the rehearsal and production process, the moral and technical support from the NVT team was superb. There were no dramas other than the plays! The teamwork has made directing a wonderful experience, and I can't wait to do it again!

Sam Chittenden
(*One.Two.Three.* by William Patterson)

I have been lucky enough to watch several excellent directors in rehearsals at NVT but when planning my own direction my mind went curiously blank. Thankfully this evaporated at auditioning and I realised what the missing ingredient had been - the actors. With a great cast everything made sense and we worked methodically, mining the excellent script. The exotic setting required extra work on magnetic-booted movement, essential light and sound and a compact, evocative set from our talented designer. Getting ready for the dress rehearsal was a big push but on opening night I couldn't have been more grateful to everyone involved.

Dan Walker
(*Ten Moon Minutes* by Craig Ainsley)



Sue Stevens & David Floyd Miller



Ben Pritchard & Helen Pepper-Smith



Lisa Caira & Andrew Allen



David Floyd Miller & Terence Drew



Tom Slater, Hellen Ward & Mark Green

The 10 Minute Play Competition

Reviewed by Barry Hewlett-Davies



Chelsea Newton Mountney & Richard Foyster



Lex Lake, Chris Jones & Alex Auld



Ben Pritchard & Alexandria McLeod

Eccentric, Shocking, Crazy and Enjoyable

The annual play competition, run in conjunction with Sussex Playwrights, is a great way to keep in touch with new writing, directors and players. Out of more than 120 scripts submitted this year, the eight chosen made for a busy and ingenious evening which took the audience to the moon, to a nursery rhyme world where the characters had turned criminal, and down into hell where naturally there was the devil to pay. Other locations were less easily identifiable.

Discussing each piece in depth would take up most of this edition so may I just

make the point that since the stories have to be told in stark brevity, with the words and action pared right down, the results are eccentric, sometimes shocking and agreeably crazy. In short – a varied evening's entertainment and one to keep you on your toes.

The *Caterer's Reckoning*, for instance, was the one which took us to what turned out to be hell where the devil settled his account, an ingenious idea. The *Pig Sleep* had the Knave of Hearts, Tom Tom the Piper's Son and Marjorie Dawe (among others) running a protection racket; and *Ten Moon Minutes*, probably the most thoughtful piece in the show, shared with us the final moments of two astronauts doomed by malfunction. In a programme of inevitably minimal sets, this was the most interesting to look at.

The *Pool Boy* was the best surprise – dalliance by the swimming pool turning into a criminal investigation at the flick of a switch. It wasn't a surprise to find your head in a spin at the end of the evening, not only that – you had to snap out of it at once to vote for the "best" play, an entirely personal choice since what was on offer was so varied, that a cool balanced judgement wasn't an option.

Two pebbles were supplied to pop in the voting boxes. Both mine went into *Make Up*, a thoroughly wicked little piece about a woman torturing her husband, a poor silent creature in the grip of Dr Alzheimer. It was brilliantly observed, done in classic grand quignol style, guaranteed to send shudders of horror right down the back of your neck.

One grumble: the running order of the plays was changed without anyone thinking to tell the audience. If, like me, you don't know every face in the company, it was baffling to decipher the printed programme. I spent the interval trying to find people who could tell me which stories fitted which titles. Given the extraordinary events we were watching, this wasn't straightforward.

The plays were:

The Caterer's Reckoning by Jonah Jones, dir. Sara Selim with Chris Jones, Lex Lake & Alex Auld

The Cleaner by Doc Watson, dir. Fintan Shevlin with Alexandria McLeod & Ben Pritchard

The Pig Sleep by Doc Watson, dir. Jez Bowden with Tom Slater, Mark Green & Hellen Ward

The Pool Boy by Edwin Preece dir. Dennis Cumming with Chelsea Newton Mountney & Richard Foyster -with the voice of Warren Saunders

Brief Encounter by Roger Mortimer-Smith dir. by Sean Lippett-Fall with Helen Pepper-Smith & Ben Pritchard

Make Up by Robert Hartley dir. Mary Allen with Sue Stevens & David Floyd Miller

One, Two, Three by William Patterson dir. Sam Chittenden with Andrew Allen & Lisa Caira

Ten Moon Minutes by Craig Ainsley dir. Dan Walker with David Floyd Miller & Terence Drew – with the voices of Kristin Magnuson and Geoff Goble

And the winners were:

1st place **Brief Encounter** by Roger Mortimer-Smith

2nd Place **Ten Moon Minutes** by Craig Ainsley

3rd Place **The Pig Sleep** by Doc Watson

From The Little Theatre Guild yearbook 2013-2014

Ticketmaster Audience Survey

"A higher proportion of people went to the theatre last year than to a music concert or sporting event, with teenagers saying they are more likely to go than older people, a survey will say today.

The research seems to defy any notion that theatre audiences are intrinsically middle class and middle-aged. The most likely age group to say they will attend the theatre are those aged 16-19, with 45- to 54-year-olds least likely to attend. The statistics appear in a report commissioned by Ticketmaster to look at the broader state of UK theatre.

The company's Sophie Crosby said she was stunned by some of the statistics. "I asked my team to check the data five times about the number of people who said they'd attended a theatre event - it was 63% and by no means limited to the middle class and middle-aged."

Alistair Smith, deputy editor of the Stage, said: "Theatre has tried very hard over the last few years to target younger audiences and we're seeing that pay off."

Mark Brown

Arts correspondent, *The Guardian*

Quotes for Newsletters

"The trouble with being 'with it' is that this is the step before being 'without it', i.e. the only place an 'in' person can go is 'out'."
(Margaret Ramsay)

"Theatre is evanescent, yet it can provide us with experiences so intense that we gratefully retain them for the rest of our lives. Memory compulsively preserves ancient grudges; more importantly it is the impregnable archive of our affections."
(Peter Conrad, in his review of Stage Blood by Michael Blakemore)

"Perhaps young actors who mumble inaudibly should take lessons from those commuters who have no difficulty in conveying their intimate mobile phone conversations to an entire railway carriage."

Brighton & Hove Arts Council - Drama Awards

Congratulations to *The God of Carnage*

This year's NVT entry to the Brighton & Hove Arts Council Drama Awards was *The God of Carnage*. On Tuesday 10 December at the Awards evening we received the following nominations:

Best Set; Best Stage Crew; Best Lighting Design; Best Actress - Sarah Davies; Best Actor - Colin Elmer; The Gabbus Denney Award for Best Director; The Arthur Churchill Award for Excellence; Bea Waters Challenge Cup for Best Overall production.

Congratulations to the following winners:

Best Actor - Colin Elmer

Best Lighting Design - Emma Shiel

Best Stage Crew - Rick Moore & Chloe South

Would you like to contribute to the NVT newsletter? We'd love to receive reviews of our productions!

If you have a moment to write down your thoughts next time you come along to a show, we'll be happy to print it here.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Hello from the new Box Office Manager

'I've been acting since before I moved to Brighton. I've been looking to get involved with a company locally, so I jumped at the chance to join New Venture! Being box office manager is a great way to get to know the theatre and the people who contribute to its success. So if you see me about, come and say hello.'

James Macauley

Box Office Manager

Donate whenever you buy online at not cost to you

Signing up to easyfundraising is very straight forward and is completely free to you.

Using <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/nvt> you will go straight to the NVT page, where you enter your details and sign up. You can also add the option to have a reminder popup on screen whenever you go to purchase an item from a retailer who is registered with the easyfunding scheme. There are over 2500 such online retailers, including many of the bigger ones.

Just add the *Find and Remind toolbar* to your browser so that you don't miss an opportunity to donate.

The NVT has many drains on its finite resources, the maintenance of the building as well as improvements to the infrastructure and the ongoing refurbishment of the Theatre Upstairs.

Tickets for the next NVT production

Performances on Sundays are matinee only. No performances on Mondays. Evening performances at 7.45pm Sunday Matinees at 2.30pm

17-25 January

'Old Times' by Harold Pinter

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

15 February

**'Upstairs Downstairs' Story Evening
(£7/£6)**

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

21 February-01 March

'The Winslow Boy' by Terrence Rattigan

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

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

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Angel/Cherub Appeal, NVT Bedford Place Brighton BN1 2PT

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