

Coming in July  
'Decade

Directed by  
Kirsty Elmer  
18– 26 July

Box Office (24hr)  
01273 746118  
Other enquiries  
01273 808353

NEW VENTURE  
T H E A T R E

Bedford Place  
Brighton BN1 2PT  
info@newventure.org.uk  
www.newventure.org.uk

## 'The Herbal Bed'

by Peter Whelan  
directed by Tamsin Fraser

Friday 20 - Saturday 28th June

In the depths of last winter, when I was fretting about directing 'Far Away', my first full length play, a good friend suggested that I might be interested in taking a look at 'The Herbal Bed' as a next offering because she'd seen it at Stratford and had loved it. I borrowed her copy of the play and was instantly hooked – I left behind snow-bound Hollingdean and was transported back to the summer of 1613 and rural Stratford upon Avon.

This is the true story of a passionate, independent and intelligent woman stifled by a loveless marriage and the confines of being a woman; the contradiction between human desires and the social and religious conventions which suppress them. My initial proposal for the play appealed to another strong, independent woman – our previous artistic director Uli - well it would, wouldn't it?... and so we were on our way.

It's hard for us to imagine the worldview of people in the early seventeenth century. The separation between different social classes was rigidly enforced, and the rule of the Church in moral matters was absolute - partly out of feudal deference, but also because of an unquestioning belief in an afterlife and the possibility of eternal damnation. Peter Whelan takes us very close, though, with 'The Herbal Bed'.

Susanna, William Shakespeare's eldest daughter, is accused of adultery with family friend and neighbour Rafe Smith. Her husband, respected physician John Hall, is desperate to clear the family name and pushes her to sue for slander. But how can they avoid the fact that one summer's night while her husband was away, Rafe Smith was seen secretly leaving their herbal garden?

This is a serious charge, and three people's private lives are subjected to the glare of intense public scrutiny in this tale of passion, loyalty, independence and religion. The case ends up before an Ecclesiastical Court, where the family's souls, as well as their moral reputations, are in danger.

Based on actual events and written by Whelan (who wrote about Great War morality in 'The Accrington Pals') in

1996, this play looks at universal themes of love, marriage, loyalty, independence and social class. It is set in Elizabethan England but it's written in accessible modern language.

The play's action takes place mainly in the 'physic' garden where many medicinal herbs were grown, and in the doctor's dispensary adjoining the family house. And this is where another challenge came in, how to create the period feel of the Jacobean manor 'Halls Croft' and the garden, in a small black space, with limited budget and without it looking 'clunky'. The solution was to treat the entire design as a sketch... an artist's impression of how it would have looked. I am very happy to work again with Mark Green who created the creepy futuristic set for 'Far Away', along with Isabel Aidallbery who has run with the whole design concept and also used it for our lovely poster.

In fact, somewhere along the way we have ended up with a vastly talented team bringing this show together - including designers, costume makers, researchers, production and stage managers, choreographers, techies and even a plant consultant/planner...

And that's without mentioning our lovely actors who have put in many hours of rehearsal and many packets of biscuits... welcoming back Red Gray (Old Times) and Simon Messingham (The Winslow Boy), along with NVT stalwarts Warren Saunders, Sarah Charsley, Alistair Lock and Gerry McCruden—and newcomers Jay Chappell as Jack and Constance Starns and Cordelia Brand as Elizabeth.

Many thanks to Alexandra Loske for suggesting this play; we hope you enjoy this unforgettable drama.



Red Gray, Warren Saunders

---

## From the Artistic Director

---

With 'Hedwig & The Angry Inch' having just finished its brilliantly successful run - hugely enjoyed by both company and audience alike - and 'Not About Heroes' also hitting sublime heights in performance and production, I am once again struck by the wonderful diversity of dramatic material that can be brought so excitingly to life, and by the sheer quality of what can be achieved by the talents and commitment of NVT members. With both theatre spaces now so well into their stride and the bar thriving with its juicy cocktails too, it has once again been an extremely busy Fringe period - so a very special thanks to those who have worked so hard to make it all not only run so smoothly but have also managed to maintain such a welcoming environment.

And onward! Good to know that the rehearsals for Herbal Bed and Decade are now well under way and are also on track to becoming very special theatre experiences in their own right too.

Also, the NVT Youth Group continues to develop and, I'm happy to say, have accepted the invitation to perform a short sample of their work for our Social Evening at NVT on Saturday 7th June, 7.30 pm. A night not to be missed as this is when the schedule for the 2014/15 season is to be announced, and the directors will be present to talk about their productions and also to take volunteers onboard! Could be the bar will once again be throbbing ... see you there!

**Rod Lewis**

---

## NVT Awards Evening

---

I had four replies to my invitation in the last newsletter for views on whether or not we should continue with the annual awards evening. These four ranged from lukewarm to negative and so the committee have decided there will be no awards evening this year.

I'm now braced for a big protest against this decision...but we'll see if that happens.

**Mike Stubbs**

---

## Art in the South Hall

---

Penny Bailey specialises in plant photography using standard, wide or macro lenses. "Plants have an infinite variety of colours, shapes and textures and, for me, photographing them is a way of drawing attention to this variety. I hope to reveal how beautiful, dramatic and vibrant plants are."

Penny previously exhibited her photographic work at an Open House at the NVT in 2010. Her forthcoming solo exhibition will showcase her recent plant photography as prints and canvas wraps. You will be able to buy the framed prints on exhibition or you can order canvases in different sizes.

Penny's work will be on display in the South Hall, throughout the run of 'The Herbal Bed'.



## Who Do You Think We Were?

**'The Taming of the Shrew'**  
by William Shakespeare  
New Venture Theatre Group  
October 1948

As many will know there is a major initiative to archive the records, photos and programmes of all the NVT productions down the years. Gerry McCrudden has asked whether any member might wish to dispose of and donate a glass fronted book case or similar to display the archive binders. These will sit in the bar area for members and production teams to peruse. If it was lockable that would be a bonus. If you can help do contact Gerry at [gerrymccrudden@hotmail.com](mailto:gerrymccrudden@hotmail.com)





# 'Hedwig & The Angry Inch'

**Created by John Cameron Mitchell**

**Music and lyrics by Stephen Trask**

**Directed by Frank Leon**

**Musical Director: Moog Gravett**

**2 – 17 May 2014**

**Review by Barry Hewlett-Davies**

---

The Boys in the Band

Hedwig, a rock musical from 1990 steeped in 1970s glam rock and punk, stars an East German transgender singer risen from babysitter and prostitute. It is the very stuff that cult shows are made of and became one off-Broadway where it ran for two years. Presented here for only the second time outside London as part of the Brighton Fringe Festival, it is an evening of vitality, determination, confidence and courage.

The production, clearly a labour of love for Frank Leon, who directs, fills the studio space with sound, light and glamour with The Angry Inch – the boys in the band – for super musical backing (Excellent keyboards). It comes over as a distant relative of The Rocky Horror Show having had a heart transplant. I won't go into too much detail but the "angry inch" refers to a sex change op which went a bit wrong – an inch wrong in fact.



Jonny Parlett

The performance I saw had Jonny Parlett as Hedwig (there are two – the other is Fintan Shevlin) fired up with a great deal of power and often very funny, loping round the auditorium in great leather boots. His support was Izzy Mackenzie (Lou Preecy at some performances) a second fiddle sort of part but giving it everything. Ben Pritchard, the true love of Hedwig's life, is touching in his naïf eagerness to be loving. They share a particularly poignant scene towards the end when Hedwig is finally emerging from the various layers of his/her elaborate persona.

The show has a dying fall in the last big number but having reached up as far as it does, where is there left to go?



Fintan Shevlin

During the run I had a birthday (don't ask, but well into my 80's) and I admit my idea of a great night out at a musical is six hours of Die Meistersinger or a good chunky star revival of Oklahoma. Hedwig is from another planet altogether but totally engaging. It's the only production I've ever been to in my life where ear plugs are on offer at the Box Office. It would be downright sinful to wear them - even though the show might have the volume of Wagner in a phone box.



Lou Preecy

The Band: Jonathan Stanger (drums), Zak Woodman (keyboards), Dan Holloway (bass), Christophe Gau (lead guitar) and Moog Gravett (rhythm guitar.)

Photos by Jez Bowden

**Further reviews of this production**

Fringe Review: <http://www.fringereview.co.uk/fringeReview/5828.html>

Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/mrum328>

# 'Not About Heroes'

by **Stephan MacDonald**  
directed by **Jerry Lyne**  
**23 – 31 May 2014**

## Review by **Barrie Jerram**

"This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them. Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War. Above all I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity." So wrote Wilfred Owen in the forward to a book of his poems.

Stephen Macdonald's powerful play depicts the real-life relationship between the World War I poets Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon and has been developed from their letters and diaries. His subject is the horrors of war and its effect on the mind.



David Eaton and Colin Elmer

The play has only the two characters and tells the story of their friendship as it blossomed from a pupil/ tutor relationship to deep respect and love. The development is told in a series of flashbacks after the death of Owen just a week before the Armistice. Sassoon, who survived the war, acts as narrator. Most of the first act takes place at Craiglockhart War Hospital near Edinburgh in 1917 where they met as fellow-patients. The second act centres round London before Owen returns to the front.

Both are tormented souls. Owen, accused by his colonel of cowardice, needs to return to the front, despite the horrors he has seen there, to prove to himself that this accusation is false. Sassoon is plagued with nightmares of the death of David, a young officer he befriended. A death, he thinks, should have been his.

Jerry Lyne's production commences with a filmed prologue using actual WWI front line footage - good idea that would have benefitted from the cropping of the early part. It went on too long - all that was necessary was to show bombardment/death & mutilation and the

close up of the staring eyes.

That apart Lyne's direction was excellent and his choice of cast inspired. As was his decision to stage simply with black drapes with the final front line scenes played behind a gauze at the back of the stage away from the acting area that had represented Blighty.



David Eaton and Colin Elmer

It was NVT that first acquainted me with this play when they staged it some years back. It had superb performances from Nick Hedges and Carl Boardman and my concern in approaching this production was how would the present cast match up to the previous high standard? I need not have troubled my mind with such a question.

Recent newcomer to NVT, David Eaton, delivers a truly believable Owen as he transforms from a stuttering gauche young man to one of confidence -subtly changing from insecurity to full articulation. It was a fine physical portrayal with all the tics and shudders of a tormented man.

Colin Elmer is always a delight to watch and has given many quality performances at NVT. Here, as Sassoon, he is magnificent and gives, possibly, his best performance to date. It is a multi-layered performance that blends cynicism with passion, light hearted mockery with full blooded nightmare terror.



David Eaton and Colin Elmer

The production and the performances provide a fitting commemoration of the Great War's Centenary.

Photos by Jez Bowden

### Further reviews of this production

Fringe Review: <http://www.fringereview.co.uk/fringeReview/5876.html> Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/ovjwuoz>

---

## Castings

---

### **'Decade'**

**Directed by Kirsty Elmer**

**Friday 18 - Saturday 26 July**

'Decade' is shaping up to be an amazing production. The ensemble cast have been working hard to explore and craft a range of fascinating characters whose stories promise to create a memorable theatrical experience for the audience. The plays will be staged in promenade, utilising all three spaces in the theatre. Don't miss out on this extraordinary event!

***Kirsty Elmer***

The ensemble cast are as follows:

Sheelagh Baker  
Andy Bell  
Pat Boxall  
Madi Dunne  
Sam Parsons  
Stuart Flynn  
Amanda Harman  
ma Hutton  
iel King  
Roberts  
Roberts  
Snowdon  
Spencer  
O'Keefe  
Lola White

Em-  
Dan-  
Lucy  
Scott  
Lyn  
Emmie  
Paddy



**New Season Launch Social**  
**Saturday 7 June**  
**7:30pm**

**New Venture Theatre South Hall**



# 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

**20-28 June**  
**'The Herbal Bed' by Peter Whelan**

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

**18-26 July**  
**'Decade' by Various Writers**

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

**Name, Address, Postal code & phone number:**

**Membership  
 Number(s)**

**PLEASE SEND or DELIVER YOUR CHEQUE and this coupon to: New Venture Theatre, Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT**





Print & Copy       Packing & Shipping  
 Office Services     Packing Materials  
 Stationery             Post & Parcels

Tel: 01273 70 60 20    www.mbebrighton.co.uk  
 Email: print@mbefbrighton.co.uk    91 Western Road, Brighton, BN1 2NW



*Bringing business training alive through actors*

www.bluestarfishconsulting.com    0845 017 0742  
 email info@bluestarfishconsulting.com



**DEEPPENE SCHOOL & NURSERY**

*Nursery - 6 mths to 4 yrs  
 School - 4 yrs to 11 yrs*

Traditional Caring Nursery & Primary Education

Helping children become  
**confident, competent, considerate & courteous**

195 New Church Road, Hove BN3 4ED  
 www.deepdeneschool.com    Tel: 01273 418984



**Windlesham School**

An independent school and nursery for boys and girls from 3 to 11 years, with strong links to a range of state and independent secondary schools at scholarship level.

Contact the School Admissions Secretary on 01273 555645  
 or email info@windleshamschool.co.uk

190 Dyke Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 6AA    www.windleshamschool.co.uk

## Donate when you buy online at no 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.

## 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

**Why not be an Angel or a Cherub donor - £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 2PT**

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

## MANAGEMENT: Who we are and how to reach us

Ian Black	Chairman	ian.black@newventure.org.uk
Jerry Lyne	Secretary	
Rod Lewis	Artistic Director	rod.lewis@newventure.org.uk
Iain Hay / Joanna Wolowicz	Treasurer	finance@newventure.org.uk
Mike Stubbs	Production Manager	prod.mgr@newventure.org.uk
Chris Pugh	Technical Manager	chris.pugh@newventure.org.uk
Mary Allen	Fundraising	fundraising@newventure.org.uk
Dan Walker	Marketing & Publicity	publicity@newventure.org.uk
Ulrike Schilling	Volunteer Liaison	volunteering@newventure.org.uk
Jezz Bowden	Front of House	frontofhouse@newventure.org.uk
Anne Gilson	Membership Secretary	membership@newventure.org.uk
James Macauley	Box Office	boxoffice@newventure.org.uk
Natasha Borg	Newsletter Editor	natasha.borg@newventure.org.uk
Pat Boxall	LTG Rep	
<b>Vacant</b>	<b>Social Secretary</b>	social@newventure.org.uk
GENERAL ENQUIRIES		info@newventure.org.uk

01273 808353