

Coming in May
'Hedwig and the Angry Inch'
By John Cameron Mitchell and Stephen Trask
Directed by Frank Leon

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NEW VENTURE
T H E A T R E

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'The End of the Beginning'

A Comedy by Sean O'Casey
directed by Rod Lewis
Friday 21st - Saturday 29th March

Set in a quiet backwater of rural Ireland, lazy farmer Darry Berrill makes a very big mistake when he scoffs to his spiky tongued wife Lizzie that he could do her work far better than she could do his. When Lizzie calls his bluff and strides out to mow the meadow it soon becomes a race against time as Darry, with some extremely inept help from his very short sighted crony Barry, attempts to complete the household tasks - with catastrophic results as the two men stagger from calamity to calamity on an hilarious path towards 'a panorama of ruin'!

O'Casey was one of the twentieth century's major playwrights. 'Shadow of a Gunman', 'Juno and the Paycock', 'The Plough and the Stars' dealt with serious and troubling political issues in a deeply humane way. When O'Casey visited New York in 1937 he was greeted by Eugene O'Neill, the most renowned dramatist of his time, with the words "I am greatly envious. I wish to God I could write like you."

'The End of the Beginning' is a script of pure fun. Although based on a simple fable where a farmer and his wife swap roles for a day the play is not without significance, namely the inequality of the woman's role in Irish life. O'Casey, a fierce fighter against all forms of oppression, was an outspoken champion for women's rights but in 'The End of the Beginning' he provides us with a feast of comic physical action, that at times veers towards the slapstick, and the play is hugely enriched by O'Casey's masterful insight into character and his finely tuned, and witty, use of lan-



Photo by Tamsin Fraser

Carl Boardman and Des Potton

guage is sublime to the ear. O'Casey surely wrote this play with glee in his heart.

'The End of the Beginning' has stuck in my mind now for more than twenty years since I first saw the Schiller Theater's production when I was working in Berlin. Despite its being in German, which I didn't speak, it still managed to be one of the funniest shows I had seen. I am grateful to NVT that now, helped so much by a superb cast of Des Potton, Carl Boardman and Janice Jones, and a fine creative team, I have been given the chance to try and pass this pleasure on.

Staging 'The End of the Beginning' in the Theatre Upstairs promises to be a great way of celebrating the opening of NVT's exciting new theatre space. The evening will kick off with pre show Irish Ceilidh singing in the bar, including songs written by Sean O'Casey himself, followed by what could be one of the funniest pieces of theatre you are likely to see - and I mean belly laugh funny. Then downstairs into the bar again to enjoy a drink, have a craic with your friends to the sounds of live musicians playing Irish music on the fiddle and bodhran.

This is a rare opportunity to see a very special theatre gem. Don't let it be one of those occasions you regret having missed. Grab your chance to book your tickets early and help our newly renovated Theatre Upstairs get off to a cracking start!

Rod Lewis

From 'The Argus'

Two decades of community work makes Brighton charity worker Local Hero

By Ben Leo, 26 January 2014



There is no need to dress up the two decades of work this local hero has done for the community.

Vania Wells, pictured, is the brains behind the Gladrags Community Resource in Brighton – a charity that brings more than 5,000 affordable dressing-up costumes to community groups, schools, colleges and low budget projects across the city.

The charity, which was founded by Vania in 1994, recently received a Sussex Community Foundation grant of £4,765 to support creative workshops for eight to 11-year-olds.

The sessions teach practical sewing skills and run dress-up activities that encourage social interaction and creative play. They are held in local libraries and community centres and are delivered by up to 12 volunteers.

Vania and her Gladrags team help disadvantaged people in the most deprived areas of Brighton, Newhaven and Worthing, plus those with special educational needs including travellers and young carers. The charity also recently welcomed a group of young women offenders to a dressing up and photo shoot session. Vania said: "We did some work with them to help them interact with the community and just have some fun.

"Some of them had been in prison and were going through a rough time, but it gave them the opportunity to really escape where they were.

"One of them dressed up as a superhero and another in really glamorous clothes.

"Once the sometimes aggressive and vulnerable guard is dropped, their softer side comes out and they really revel in it."

Vania was working as a care worker and in community theatre when Gladrags started in 1994.

She said: "I started doing informal reminiscence work with some of the older people I cared for, talking to them about the 1930s, with music and clothes from their younger days." Gladrags really grew organically from that. Watching people transform themselves into whatever they want to be, and almost forgetting their troubles and problems in the process, is really rewarding to watch. It can also be really beneficial to them as well."

She added: "Costume is really transforming. In many of the schools we work with the children don't come from families where there is a big dressing-up box on hand.

"Putting on a costume makes them take the whole activity much more seriously.

"They get into character and it doesn't feel like them anymore."

For more information on the charity visit:

gladragscostumes.org.uk.

Jean Francis

We regret to report that one of the company's most senior and long-standing members has died. She was Jean Francis whom many people will remember both as an actor and director.

Jean had a wry sense of humour. Her best work on-stage ranged from Alan Bennett's English comedy to the New York Jewish wise-cracking style of Ivan Menchell (*The Cemetery Club*.) She had a good line in sharp interjection – especially when things went wrong. It was not easy to keep a straight face in rehearsal if Jean decided to ad-lib – a door stuck on its hinges was a heaven-sent opportunity for one of her dry gags.

Her acting and directing ranged from Shakespeare to Ayckbourn and as well as her work for New Venture, she was also well-known at Lewes Little Theatre and other Sussex venues. In the photograph, she is playing the lead, alongside a young Amanda Redman, in 'The Killing of Sister George'. The production was for Centrestage at the Pavilion Theatre, Brighton.

Jean was a good hostess, a founder member of the legendary Stuffing Club.



Jean Francis and Amanda Redman

The meetings at her house in Hollingbury always guaranteed splendid home-made chocolate cream trifle.

She is survived by her husband, Fred, like her, a teacher by profession, and by their children.

BH-D

Thoughts from a South Hall Chair

Spring is knocking at the stage door and we are beginning to think of next season. The selection of productions is underway and it looks as though it will be another great season. However, we still have some excellent productions to come this season, after all it is only March and the first full production in the 'Theatre Upstairs' for almost 10 years is almost upon us – *The End of the Beginning* by Sean O'Casey directed by our new Artistic Director, Rod Lewis – don't miss out on this historic production, tickets are on sale now.

There have been some other changes around the theatre in the past few months. We have recently welcomed James Macauley as our new Box Office Manager. Now we have a new double act – Iain Hay and Joanna Wolowicz – as shadow treasurers, working with Ollie, with a view to take on the role with agreement of the membership at the next AGM. In addition Mary Allen has agreed to take on the role of Fundraising co-ordinator and Mike Stubbs has extended his theatre diary manager role by taking on the full role as NVT Production Co-ordinator. Mike has also been co-opted by the committee as another formal trustee along with his new role. Many thanks to all and welcome to Iain and Joanna.

As we seem to be on a roll with filling roles this may be a good time to mention some vacancies we need to cover. We are in urgent need of filling some of the roles that were left vacant at the last AGM. These are for Social Secretary – someone to co-ordinate the social events we hold each year, e.g. New Season Launch, NVT awards etc. Also there is the role of Theatre / Building Manager – someone to co-ordinate the maintenance and routine operations of the building. These roles are at present being added to other roles, which is not ideal for anyone.

Another area we are looking to expand is that of Front of House Managers – the person who manages the bar, front of house and building security for individual performances. We have a limited number and a few more who help us limit this to a maximum of one performance a production for us all. If you would be interested in this or just helping on the bar please email frontofhouse@newventure.org.uk

Ian Black — NVT Chairman

Scripted4

New Playwriting Competition

theatre akimbo has joined forces with Worthing WOW to create Scripted4 - a competition for One Act shorts, seeking to encourage new and exciting writing for theatre. The competition is now open and winning scripts will be performed at the Worthing WOW festival this June.

Worthing WOW is an inspiring new festival for Worthing created to celebrate the joy of words through poetry, film, theatre and books. Focussing on local Worthing and Sussex based writers, performers, playwrights and film-makers, Worthing WOW will present a diverse range of events at the Connaught Studio, Pavilion and various venues around the town for one whole week - 15th to 22nd June 2014. Worthing WOW is working in partnership with Worthing Theatres and is sponsored by WSCC and World of Books.

theatre akimbo's Scripted4 will be kicking off WOW on 15th June at the Connaught Studio and they are looking for bold, relevant and compelling pieces that will communicate to, connect with and challenge today's diverse audiences. Submissions are welcomed from anyone and anywhere in Sussex, from 16 to 116 years old, about anything and everything, from experienced writers to those who've never held a pen in their life, no previous writing experience necessary. The closing deadline is 11th April 2014. There is a £5 entry fee for all submissions with writers being limited to submitting a maximum of three plays. On the judging panel for Akimbo are Artistic Director, Glenda Harkess; theatre practitioner Martin Harris and published playwright and actress Suzanne Heathcote.

The 4 winning scripts will have the opportunity to be developed further and will be performed as rehearsed readings at the opening of WOW on 15th June in the Connaught Studio. One of the 4 will win first prize of being developed into a full length production to be performed in full at the Connaught Studio in spring 2015. For full competition details email: info@theatrekimbo.co.uk

Artistic Director, Glenda Harkess says: "Running Scripted4 as part of WOW is an exciting opportunity to seize on and celebrate local talent. It's a great chance for

writers to test their scripts by working with directors and actors to develop and refine their work by seeing it jump from page to stage in an inventive and bold way. We hope to find some groundbreaking pieces that we can develop into full scale productions, and we guarantee that these rehearsed readings will be innovative and a little bit out of the ordinary. We're particularly chuffed to have Suzanne Heathcote on the Scripted4 judging panel, she started her writing career on the Royal Courts Young Writers Programme and has enjoyed much success since - I'm hoping Scripted4 will discover more raw young talent like hers."

Scripted4 performances will be on Sunday 15th June at 7pm in the Connaught Studio, tickets for the performance are just £6.50 from Worthing Theatres 01903 206206.



NVT Youth Theatre

NVTYT is growing and gradually we are forming a group of talented youngsters who are committed to serious play and exploration on Fridays in the South Hall. There is plenty of movement, lively activity and noise (a recent NVT passer-by commented that she thought we were having a party and was surprised how so few people could make so much noise - marvellous vocal production darling!). I love it and am thoroughly enjoying the energy and abandon that the youngsters attack every activity with. I know through discussion with my colleagues, Sandie Armstrong (actress) and Guy Waah (actor/writer), that they too share this sense of awe and wonder with me.

Summer term May-July will be filled with more new games and learning points. We hope to end each term with a showing of work covered. New members always welcome. First session is a free trial.

Summer term NVTYT will run on Wednesdays 4.30 - 6.30 pm; £30 per term
Further info youththeatre@newventure.org.uk

Sarah Davies

THE WINSLOW BOY—Review by Barrie Jerram

Terence Rattigan, once the darling of the West End until the arrival of John Osborne and the other angry young men in the mid-fifties, fell out of favour with audiences and critics. His work was considered to be dated and only suitable for those legendary maiden aunts who must not be shocked.

This play, set just prior to the outbreak of World War I, shows just how wrong those critics were and continues the welcome revival of interest in the playwright's work. It reconfirms his talent and masterly craftsmanship.



His characters come across as real people and are far from caricatures. The writing demonstrates a true understanding of feelings and emotions and yet, in the midst of serious argument, he provides witty interjections that would have made Oscar Wilde jealous.

Inspired by a real-life case, the play centres round Ronnie Winslow, a 13 year old Naval Cadet, who is wrongly accused of stealing a five shilling postal order, the property of a fellow cadet. His father, believing his protestations of innocence, embarks on a mission to get a judicial hearing in order to clear Ronnie's name. It becomes a long and costly battle against the Establishment. – the cost not merely financial but also on the lives of the family. His own health suffers; his wife turns against him; his daughter has her engagement broken whilst his other son, Dickie, has to leave Oxford.

Director Gerry McCrudden and his creative team came up with a first class production that oozed quality from the moment the audience set eyes on the set that recreated, beautifully, an Edwardian drawing room. I liked the attention paid to detail where the passing of time was reflected by subtle changes to the furnishings – flowers, cushions etc changed.

McCrudden has a proven track record of fine productions for NVT – members will recall "Biloxi Blues", "Dancing at Lughnasa" and "It's a Wonderful Life". He has the knack of getting to the heart of the text and has it delivered as the playwright intended. Yet he is not afraid to add subtle touches of his own. And of course he knows how to pick a cast! Once again he drew out superb individual performances from his actors as well as setting them amongst an example of fine ensemble playing. There was little with the direction to find fault apart from a couple of occasions where standing positions interfered with sight lines.

As Arthur Winslow, the boy's father, John Tolputt gave a strong yet understated performance that fully conveyed the man's stubborn determination as well as the tenderness required in the scenes with his daughter, Kate. His droll delivery maximised the humour in the part.

Nikki Dunsford brought to the part of Grace Winslow an air of gentle mischievousness which evaporated with a passion when the loyal support for her husband finally snaps.

Daughter Kate Winslow is a modern thinking woman who works for the advancement of the Suffragette Movement. Emma Hutton was excellent -blending the character's feistiness with a softer feminine side.

Her frivolous brother Dickie, was played with gusto by Fintan Shevlin who managed to create sympathy for the silly ass character when his idle world collapses on being told he can no longer be kept at Oxford. Louis Mallen-Curtis completes the family as Ronnie and gives a fine portrayal of the innocent victim.

Tom Slater brings just the right amount of mild pompousness and stuffiness to Kate's fiancé, John. Kate's other suitor is the family solicitor, Desmond Curry. He is a beautifully drawn character straight out of a Chekhov play and Simon Messingham plays him as such. He gets the right mixture of comedy and pathos – a sheer delight to watch.

Continued on page 7

Coming Soon!

'The Herbal Bed' **By Peter Whelan** **Directed by Tamsin Fraser**

Friday 20 June 2014 - Saturday
28 June 2014



I've been involved with NVT for many years now, but only more recently turned my hand to directing. The first dip of my toe into the water (it you'll excuse the pun) was with 10 Minute Play 'Still Waters' in 2012. In January last year I followed that with Caryl Churchill's intriguing 'Far Away'. Well, they're letting me at it again - this time with the beautifully evocative 'The Herbal Bed' by Peter Whelan.

It's about Susanna, William Shakespeare's daughter, married to a physician, who is accused of adultery by her husband's apprentice. This is a serious charge, and the case ends up before an ecclesiastical court, where the family's souls, as well as their moral reputations, are in danger.

The action takes place mainly in the 'physic' garden where many medicinal herbs were grown and the doctor's dispensary adjoining the family home. I aim to create a period feel to the piece, but not to have over-elaborate, realistic sets which get in the way of the gripping dialogue of this unforgettable drama. I am lucky to have a very experienced creative team of designers, who

are well up to the challenge of creating the impression of an Elizabethan Herb Garden - with not a herb bed in sight...

Most of the production team is already in place, but I'm especially interested in any newcomers who'd like to fill the other roles. Do email me on tamsin.fraser@bt.com.

As for the actors, I've already cast the two young girls who will play Susanna's daughter and have had a lot of interest in the other roles, both from existing NVT members and a few newcomers. So am looking forward to the forthcoming auditions.

Roles which still need filling for this production are: Sound Design, Sound Operation, Props, Hair.

Tamsin Fraser

Acting Classes at NVT

Finding Your Light

31 March and 7 April

Ulrike Schilling

We will be entering the stages of the upstairs Theatre and the Studio theatre to find our light in front of an audience. You will be working in groups and as solo performers. No need to prepare a text, it is more about getting the performance feeling and overcoming stage fright.

Auditions—What do I need to do?

14, 21 and 28 April

various teachers/directors

If you have not been to an audition at NVT yet, or you just don't really know what is expected of you, this is your chance to find out! We will address what you need to prepare and experience several audition techniques with various directors, so you can get a broad picture how different directors audition and what you can expect and should prepare.

Review of The Winslow Boy – continued

There was more delight in watching NVT's two distinguished thespian Dames return to the stage. Sheelagh Baker's nosey journalist who is more interested in the family's furnishings rather than details of the ongoing case provided plenty of understated visual comedy. There was more comedy from Janet Hewlett-Davies as she almost stole the show as Violet, the untrained maid. A lovely performance that was kept well in check and never allowed to go over the top. The biggest laugh of the night came from just a look she gave.



The role of Sir Robert Morton, the barrister who takes up the case for the Winslows, is a key one. The decision to cast Colin Elmer in the part was a bold stroke and one of genius. The part is usually played by a much older actor. His youthful looks brought a sexual frisson to the verbal exchanges between him and Kate. Their last scene together had an added edge not sensed in other productions. Elmer's was a bravura performance especially in his interrogation of Ronnie. The coldness and ferocity he generated brought to mind Sherlock Holmes –Jeremy Brett's not Cumberbatch's. It was all there in the steely voice and the looks.

Completing the cast was Mark Hyndman in the spit and a cough part of Fred, the photographer – a part that was over in a flash!

Barrie Jerram

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

21-29 March

'The End of the Beginning' by Sean O'Casey

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

02-17 May

'Hedwig and The Angry Inch' by John Cameron Mitchell and Stephen Trask

All tickets £10 (£9 members) for this show

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

23-31 May

'Not About Heroes' by Stephen MacDonald

All tickets £10 (£9 members) for this show

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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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

MANAGEMENT: Who we are and how to reach us

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

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