

NEW VENTURE

T H E A T R E

COMING NEXT SEASON | THE MISER by Molière | directed by Steven Adams | 2 - 10 October

10 MINUTE PLAY COMPETITION

8 Plays, 8 Directors, 8 Performances | 17 - 25 July



Image by Strat Mastoris

The competition continues. Once again, in association with Sussex Playwrights, we present our 10-Minute Play Competition. This has proved to be a popular production in past years, so book early to avoid disappointment.

The writing part of this year's competition ran from September 2014 until 31 January 2015. Since then the 183 entries – approximately 50% increase on the 2013 competition – have been read by our eight judges, who created a shortlist of eighteen plays. These went to our eight directors, who chose their preferred play. So now we have eight directors with eight plays from eight writers. Auditions took place during May and rehearsals started in June. All of which leads us to the

production, running for eight performances from 17 to 25 July. We have a mix of new and longer term members in the casts as with the directors. A full list of the production plays is below – these are not in performance order.

Chance Encounter by Dorothy Lambert
directed by Ella Thompson

Comfortable by Edwin Preece
directed by David Eaton

Crumbs by William Patterson
directed by Chelsea Mountney

Finn & Tilly by Eamonn Dolan
directed by Alex Epps

Tainted Love by Mary E Davis
directed by Wiz

The Garden of Earthly Delights by Stephen Connolly
directed by Guy Wah

The Gift by Lorraine Forrest-Turner
directed by Inessa Hartmann

Wish You Were Here? by Jonathan Skinner
directed by Richard Conolly

We thank all those who entered the competition and it's a shame we can only produce eight of the plays. Also thanks must go to our eight judges, from the NVT and Sussex Playwrights, who had the huge task of selecting the shortlist. A complete list of the shortlisted plays can be found on the NVT website – www.newventure.org.uk

As with our previous 10-Minute Play Competitions the overall winner is down to you, the audience. After each performance the audience will be invited to vote for their favourite play and the overall winning play will be announced on the last night.

Ian Black

THE PEBBLE TRUST HELPS NVT

We are very grateful to have received a grant of £15,000 from The Pebble Trust which will enable us to carry out a programme of essential building works this summer. This is the second grant from The Pebble Trust in the last 5 years and we appreciate their help very much.

The Pebble Trust is dedicated to supporting organisations and individuals in Brighton and Hove. With this grant and matching finance from our own reserves we will be able to:

- repair the roof
- redecorate and repair the external walls
- refurbish the kitchen
- replace the Studio floor
- add a new surface to the stage of the Theatre Upstairs
- replaster the Green Room
- and redesign and redecorate the South Hall

- a total cost of £30,000.

RADIO DRAMA GROUP

Actors wanted for our radio drama group. We perform plays which are then broadcast by a Brighton charity Radio Station, and on the Internet.

Last year was our first term and we successfully recorded a play called "Alien Depths", written by Jags Arthurson, a published author who lives locally and is an actor in the group. I like to encourage people to write plays for us, and once we have received plays, I send copies to all the members of the drama group to vote for or against performing.

Our next term begins on 30 September, and we will be rehearsing every Wednesday 6.30pm - 8pm. A donation of £3.00 is required towards the hire of the rehearsal and recording space from the charity radio station. The radio drama group is not part of the charity.

Once the play is "in the can" the drama group stops for the summer months and restarts at the end of September.

Performing for radio is fun and there are no lines to learn! We are a friendly group and like an excuse to celebrate in a pub.

Organiser: Kath Newman,

Tel: 07747588146,

email: soulandbluesshow@outlook.com

Huge thanks are due to our fundraising and building project teams in delivering this ambitious programme and we wish them luck over the hectic period ahead.

The Pebble Trust can be found at www.pebbletrust.org

THE PEBBLE TRUST

From The ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

With the 2014/15 season now drawing to a close, a moment to reflect.

Here at NVT we've just enjoyed a fine run of high quality productions, covering a wide range of theatre experience, thanks to the talent and efforts of all those involved ... for NVT is very much a team organisation with everyone relying on each other and benefiting from each other's contributions. It is this teamwork that provides the backup support that allows, and encourages, an individual's creativity to flourish. This, in turn, has led to our audiences, on many occasions, leaving NVT with that special bright-eyed look that one associates with those who have just enjoyed a very stimulating piece of theatre. Long may it continue.

Appropriately, our season is now about to finish on a very fresh note. We usher in new talents with our Ten Minute Play Competition which gives opportunities to new playwrights, directors and provides many with acting roles. It's easy to support this, you simply come along and see them! You also get to vote on which play you think best and take pleasure in our very convivial (and so cheap!) bar.

Of course, as always with NVT, a lot goes on behind the scenes. Successful fund raising ... with heartfelt thanks to the great generosity of the Pebble Trust ... has meant that this summer, when we are ostensibly dark, we can at last forge ahead with a vast amount of essential renovation work - with, hopefully, some innovative stuff too. It is so important that, as we reap the rewards from the efforts of all those volunteers who have, in the past, put so much into providing us such a wonderful theatre space, that we, in our turn, do our very best to pass this on by making things good for those who will follow on.

Now, to enjoy the summer!

Rod Lewis

The Arsonists, written in the 1950's, was premiered in England at The Royal Court in 1961. It was still sufficiently post-war to attract analogies with the rise of Nazi Germany: the character of Biederman representing Mr. Everyman who fails to spot the menace of the unprincipled thug and even goes to his assistance. A later Royal Court production in 2007 starred the young Benedict Cumberbatch as Eisenring. Now Sam Chittenden brings her interpretation of this celebrated fable to the NVT and her stunning production helps explain why it became one of the most successful German language plays of all time.

But no longer does it feel like an explanation of Adolf Hitler. What strikes a modern audience is the similarity between Gottlieb and his assailants. Essentially, they are two sides of the same coin. Gottlieb has become a model citizen from the sale of hair-restorer, which he knows is rubbish, and doesn't work. Irritated with a visit from his business partner, he throws him out and has some responsibility for his death. Schmitz and Eisenring are convicts who like burning down houses. They are perfectly frank about their pleasure, knowing it is too far fetched to be taken seriously. Gottlieb, vaguely conscious of his shady business, seeks to make amends by offering hospitality to strangers – redemption through Christian tenets.

Both are dishonest in their approach, and honest in their motives.

John Tolputt is simply superb as Biederman, moving from bombastic security to reluctant, worried host with unshakeable aplomb. We laugh at his posturing, but we care for him, deeply, aware that his refusal to believe the worst echoes our own reluctance to speak out. Catharine Carr is a wonderful helpmeet, scuttling along with terrified small steps as doom becomes inevitable. Their costumes in particular are a triumph: Biederman's preposterous stripes and Babette's appalling hobbled skirt and birds' nest hair speak words all of their own. Jonny Parlett has to project menace yet remain touching whilst suaver Eisenring remains a waiter without a soul. James Macauley in debut role for the NVT carries this off to perfection. In another debut, Teresa Kuna as Anna usefully reminds the audience that everyone else is mad. Mark Green, Ph.D., has a small, if picturesque, moment.

A Chorus hammers home the uncomfortable fact that Fate has little

THE ARSONISTS | reviews

by Max Frisch | directed by Sam Chittenden



do with anything. That is an excuse and we must accept responsibility for our actions, or the lack of them. James Harkness leads a serious troupe of symbolic Firemen - Claire Coull, Fenia Giannopoulou, Nick Lazar, Igor Goran Macukat and Andy Osborn must become our Conscience. We have been warned.

It is breathtaking theatre, provocative, relevant and funny. Sam Chittenden's production never flags for a moment. Themes,

morals, ideas, leap out, illustrated by tablecloths and perfect timing. The minimal two-tier set, built askew, allows our imagination limitless scope. Could Schmitz really piss through the window, and would the stage catch fire?

Does it relate to international terrorism, nuclear threats, bourgeois complacency, Nazi Germany? Probably. It is about the human condition and so it relates to us all.

Louise Schweitzer



Max Frisch's 1953 parable 'The Arsonists' opens with Biedermann (John Tolputt), owner of a hair-rejuvenating firm, reading the newspaper about a group of mysterious arsonists who "wangle their way in" to people's houses and set them ablaze. Moments later, he is visited by a man who, claiming to be homeless, soon wangles his way in to his attic by flattering his ego and appealing to his desire to be seen as a man of empathy - even though he's not. In his eagerness to ease his guilt over the recent suicide of a sacked employee, Biedermann allows himself to be manipulated into welcoming a series of insidious intruders into his home.

As the play explores the dangers of ignoring the obvious and bourgeois guilt, a Greek chorus of firemen introduce us to a country that is terrorised by arsonists but, as the fire fighters tell us, is protected by their diligence.

Schmitz's (Jonny Parlett) fussily demanding character is given food and board, and on the second day when his suave friend, Eisenring (James Macauley) turns up and stashes petrol-filled drums in the attic, Biedermann is talked into letting them stay.

The chorus rhythmically informs us, as if it wasn't obvious, that Schmitz and Eisenring are the arsonists. However, Biedermann prefers to see good in them and takes their plans for arson as a joke rather than raising the alarm, and even protects them when a policeman senses trouble.

Subtlety isn't Frisch's strong suit: but that's the point. The fire brigade chorus continually condemns the tendency of humans to embrace "stupidity dressed up as fate" and the use of this to avoid responsibility for taking action against



imminent disasters. But of course, nobody ever listens to the chorus until it's too late. Eisenring, for his part, is plainly straightforward about their plans: as he explains to Biedermann while the businessman helps him measure the fuse wire, telling the truth is the easiest way to fool people, because no one ever believes it.

The characters, though none of them particularly likable, from Biedermann's wife Babette's (Catherine Carr) nervous behaviour to Schmitz's appalling table manners and the chorus's constant naysaying, have a way of inducing nervous laughter in the uncomfortable audience with the play's numerous dark comedy scenes keeping us all on edge.

1. Jonny Parlett, John Tolputt & James Macauley
2. James Macauley & John Tolputt
3. Nick Lazar, Fenia Giannopoulou, James Harkness, Igor Goran Macukat, Claire Coull & Andy Osborn
4. Catherine Carr, James Macauley, Jonny Parlett & John Tolputt

The set design makes good use of the theatre's small staging space: the atmosphere of impending doom is aided by the chorus's constant presence, scattered around in the front rows of the audience when they're not on stage, breaking down the barriers between stage and audience. Before the inevitable fire the ear-splitting fire sirens, the red lighting and finally the smoke machines add to the eerie and claustrophobic feel.

The large cast of twelve give a convincing and strong performance, particularly Jonny Parlett, who is exemplary. Director Sam Chittenden's interpretation of this absurdist play about human behaviour results in a thoroughly enjoyable viewing of this surreal tale.

Amy Newson

5. Nick Lazar, Fenia Giannopoulou, John Tolputt, Igor Goran Macukat & James Harkness
6. James Macaulley, Teresa Kuna, John Tolputt & Claire Coull

Photos by Strat Mastoris



FUNDRAISING

Every Little Helps!

You might have noticed when booking tickets on line that you can add a donation to your payment.

Please do more than notice - especially if you think our prices are good value.

We need to raise a lot of money to keep our building weather-tight and your help would be much appreciated

DRESSING ROOM CLEAROUT

NVT's dressing rooms and Green Room will be receiving a good clear out at the end of this season! If any members have any personal belongings in these rooms, do please ensure they are safely collected by the end of the 'Ten Minute Play Competition' run.

SOME BURNING QUESTIONS

Thoughts on Max Frisch's 'The Arsonists'

This isn't a review of our production of Max Frisch's play - I worked on the lighting design so I'm too close to give an unbiased opinion (though I think director Sam Chittenden produced a superb result) - but it's some thoughts about the play's themes.

I was struck that some audiences laughed a lot at a number of the lines and situations in 'The Arsonists', while others did not. If there weren't enough people to set the laughter off - like kindling starting a fire - then the humour of the piece didn't... catch. Frisch's play has some very funny moments, but it's a dark sort of humour, and it's almost as if we need permission to laugh. It seems we censor ourselves, and tailor our emotions to what the whole group is thinking.

That's what the play is about, really. Biedermann is a bourgeois - a prosperous businessman, a homeowner, an upright citizen, a pillar of society. He's used to being correct in his opinions, to not having his judgments questioned. He has no real sense of community and he sees everything solely from his own point of view - he's quite prepared to cheat his long-term employee out of his due reward, denying the man any profit from his own invention. At the play's end, when he can first hear the sirens of the fire engines, Biedermann's response is - "At least it's not our house".

So once the arsonists have talked their way into his house, into his very attic, Biedermann can't admit to himself that he might have made a mistake. Even when he's faced with the obvious clue of the drums of petrol, he wilfully denies the evidence of his own eyes. Significantly, when a policeman arrives in the attic and sees the drums, Biedermann has a perfect opportunity to raise the alarm and remove the threat, but he chooses instead to concoct an alibi - that it's drums of hair-restorer. He's saving the arsonists from arrest, certainly; but more importantly he's not admitting his mistake in front of the authorities. Biedermann's sense of being correct - of living up to his image of himself - won't let him.

Max Frisch understood psychology very well. This shows very clearly in the way the arsonists deal with Biedermann. When the first arsonist arrives at Biedermann's house, entering the dining room unannounced and unwelcomed, the homeowner is outraged. Instead of any apology, though, with his first words the arsonist introduces himself - "My name is Schmitz". From that moment, Biedermann has to treat the intruder as another human being - a person - rather than just as an object or annoyance. Schmitz has made contact, and from then on he never lets go of his prey. He also flatters Biedermann, praising him as a man who "unlike most people" isn't narrow-minded and has a great sense of fellow-feeling. The kind of man who'd offer a homeless person a place to sleep. Biedermann's self-esteem won't allow him to deflate this generous self-image.

The second arsonist is equally skilled at manipulation. When

he is discovered in Biedermann's attic, again unexpected and uninvited; Billy's opening response, after introducing himself (once again that human contact) is to side with the homeowner against Schmitz - "What! You mean you didn't tell him?" Within seconds of being discovered by Biedermann, Billy has almost become the man's ally. Brilliant tactic.

Frisch wrote 'The Arsonists' in 1953, and apparently it's about the rise of Hitler, and how the German people did not allow themselves to see what was happening in front of them. It works on other levels as well, though.

Climate change is a good example - global warming, rising sea levels. So is the general destruction of swathes of the natural environment, and the loss of so many species of animals that scientists talk of a Mass Extinction, on a par with the cataclysmic meteorite strike that killed off the dinosaurs. But most of our political and business leaders can't see any problem - choose not to see any problem. That's partly the profit motive, but also that they don't want to admit - even to themselves - they were wrong.

I wonder what the UKIP people would think of the play, in the current atmosphere of hysterical Islamophobia? Here we have a couple welcoming strangers into their home, in spite of dire warnings in the newspapers, an action which ends up in a conflagration that burns down most of the town. I tend to see the arsonists as Anarchists rather than Nazis, but they could represent any group seen as 'alien'. Muslims? Immigrants? Foreigners? Remember the racist Enoch Powell and his 'Rivers of Blood' speech?

And the constant scrutiny and warnings of the Fire-fighter Chorus, which Biedermann resents as an intrusion of his privacy, feels like the Government demands for total surveillance. CCTV cameras everywhere, GCHQ snooping into our phone and Internet traffic. I wonder what Edward Snowden would think of 'The Arsonists'?

I don't know anything about Frisch's politics - he was German-Swiss - but it's the mark of a great work of art that it can be interpreted in many ways. His play posed more questions, more moral dilemmas, than anything I've seen for quite a while.

Strat Mastoris

6, 13 & 20 July
Sarah Davies
Creative Play

Using a range of drama games and mind-body-breath connection, we'll explore the notion of PLAY. We shall explore releasing our younger selves ability to play, to be in the moment and to experience flow. Each session shall then experiment with how this notion of play and the accompanying attitude can transfer to how we tackle text, discover ways of using the voice and our bodies in performance. All in the spirit of fun, curiosity and discovery.

Sarah is an experienced Drama teacher, performer, director and deviser. She also enjoys a spot of clowning. She runs NVT's Youth Theatre and will be directing (and holding auditions for) 'A Christmas Carol' soon for a production this December at NVT.

NVT ACTING CLASSES

27 July
Ulrike Schilling
Promenade Performance, immersive theatre

In this session we will explore promenade and immersive theatre.

Based on a well known play we will create our own version utilising all performance spaces in the building. We will further look at the audience performer relationship with a moving and guided audience.

NVT TICKET BOOKING INFORMATION

book online at www.newventure.org.uk or by post using the form below

• Ticket prices: £9 (£8 members) Final Fri/Sat £10 (£9 members) First Fri/Tue £8 (£7 members) • Evening performances 7:45pm Sundays are Matinees only 2:30pm • No performances on Mondays • Please note that access to the Theatre Upstairs is only possible by 4 flights of stairs, and therefore may not be suitable for those with mobility difficulties.

 Cut along the line, and return your completed slip together with a cheque to: New Venture Theatre, Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT

	date	member	standard	total cost
10 Minute Play Competition 17 - 25 July *Theatre Upstairs				
'The Miser' by Molière 2 - 10 October Studio				

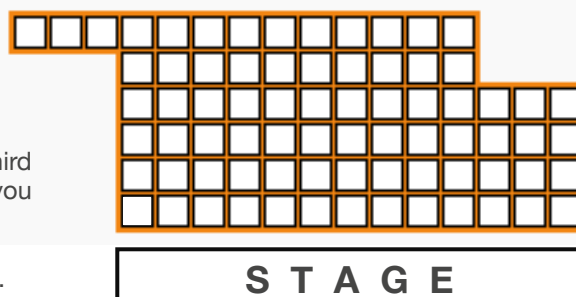
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*THEATRE UPSTAIRS ALLOCATED SEATING

Allocated seating is available for productions taking place in the Theatre Upstairs.

Please mark your preferred seat(s) with 1's, and a second and third option with 2's and 3's, in case your first choice is unavailable. If you leave this blank, seats will be allocated for you.

Allocated seating remains unavailable for productions in the Studio.



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We'd love to hear from you!

Please write in with any comments, articles or reviews of our productions and events to Natasha Borg, Newsletter Editor: newsletter@newventure.org.uk - or by post if you prefer.

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