

NEW VENTURE

T H E A T R E

COMING SOON | 10 MINUTE PLAY COMPETITION | 8 new plays with 8 directors | 17 - 25 July

THE ARSONISTS

by Max Frisch | directed by Sam Chittenden | 19 - 27 June

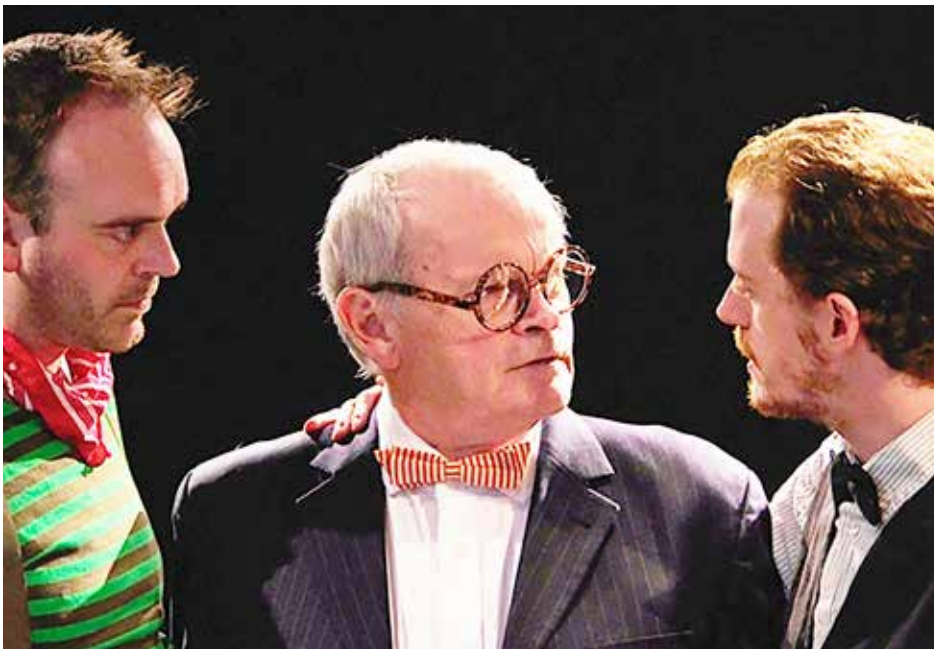


Photo by Kellie Smith

“Many things burn, but not every fire is determined by fate. Sometimes the fire can be prevented.”

Fires are becoming a problem in this town, with shocking reports of arsonists conning their way into people's homes. Mr Biederman, a respected member of the community with a loving wife and a flourishing business making hair restorer, thinks he is immune. An egalitarian and a philanthropist, who has donated to the fire service, his sense of civic duty leads him to give shelter to two new guests. And when they fill the attic with petrol drums, he'll even help to set up the fuse... But can we tell who is fooling who?

Originally known as 'Biederman and the Fireraisers', Max Frisch's parable ('a moral play without a moral') was written in the 1950s, just after the Second World War, and is said to highlight what happens when good men and women turn a blind eye to wrong doing. 'The Arsonists' is a translation by Alistair Beaton, and was presented at The Royal Court in 2007.

With Brechtian overtones, an absurdist plot, and a Greek chorus of firemen helping to relate the tale, 'The Arsonists' is a unique view on the art of the con. Although its themes can be read as political, its main focus is human behaviour - on how we see ourselves and the psychology of self deception.

The production has been great fun to put together. We have a large cast of 12, some known to NVT audiences, including Jonny Parlett ('Hedwig & The Angry Inch', 'Hamlet'), John Tolputt ('The Winslow Boy'), James Harkness ('Hamlet') and James McCauley (stepping out from the NVT Box Office), alongside a gaggle of lovely newcomers.

The creative team, including Tomasz Baraniecki (set) and Mark Green (costume) have brought a surreal look and feel to the production. Set in the intimate Studio space, the show breaks down the barrier between actor, chorus and audience. As its themes apply to us all, this isn't to be a comfortable ride.

'The Arsonists' is hilariously dark, fast paced and surreal.

There will be fire!

Sam Chittenden



Saturday Morning In The Props Room: Working Party Tea Break | Left to Right Trish Bayliss, Richard Gamper, Tony, Peter Milner, Mike Stubbs, Tim McQuillen Wright, Michael Yates | Photo by Strat Mastoris

Tony Shoemsmith

1941 - 2015

The above picture captures entirely the spirit of Saturday mornings at the NVT. Not just because everyone is having tea!, but because of the spirit and inspiration instilled by Tony that made everyone want to get on and create and work together on projects and productions in such great humour.

Tony was a mine of knowledge. If you wanted a piece of furniture, an old wheel chair, a writing desk, he knew how to find it. If you wanted advice on a set, how to construct in a certain way, ask Tony. If you were really lucky he would build it for you.

There is not one area in the whole of this theatre that Tony has not been involved in. Leading from the front with advice and crucially employing his vast knowledge and skills in construction. The refurbishment of the South Hall Floor, The Bar, salvaged from Victoria Station by Tony, the Lighting Boxes in the Studio and Upstairs Theatre. The scene docks, storage areas and vitally, crucially, the refurbishment of our lovely Upstairs Theatre whose redesign is Tony's lasting memorial.

It is because of people like Tony that we have such a wonderful theatre and facilities. We should be proud of that and thankful for the example he sets us all. His is a hard act to follow. It was a pleasure for us to have known him.

Jerry Lyne on behalf of the Committee and Friends at NVT

JUNE 2015

When I first met Tony, here, perhaps only two years ago or so, I immediately recognised him as being a real theatre man.

When I was young I worked backstage with Master Carpenters in many West End theatres and it struck me that Tony, with his knowledge and humour, his humanity, would have made him such a fantastic person to work for. In our first conversation together we discovered that, way back in the last century(!), we must have both been working at the Theatre Royal around the same time. We talked of old shows, swapped names of people we both knew, shared reminiscences.

Chatting with Tony took me back to a world I used to know so well, I felt very at home. I was lucky enough to work with Tony when he agreed to design the set for O'Casey's *The End of the Beginning* which was to be the first show to re-open the Theatre Upstairs after many years. This was very appropriate, bearing in mind how much Tony had done to help make Upstairs into such a fine and exciting theatre space - well, he did a magnificent job on the set too.

Tony was such a talented, wise and generous hearted man - who gave so much not only to New Venture but also, I'm sure, to anyone fortunate and privileged enough to know him well. He will be deeply missed, not only by his family but also by many others as well.

Rod Lewis
Artistic Director

A nice bit of Butterworth.

'Parlour Song' is a surreal, dark comedy by 'Jerusalem' writer Jez Butterworth. Ned, the demolition expert, dreams of more hair, the perfect body and to get rid of his tits and improve his marriage. He has the perfect life - well in his eyes anyway - but why can he not sleep at night? Why are his things going missing around the house? Joy, his bored housewife, has lost interest in her husband and is filled with a sexual frustration and longing to break free. Lucky enough Dale their neighbour is there to help. The rugged man next door who attempts to help Ned improve his cunnilingus skills, and who loves to get things 'foamed up' with his chain of car washes. A dysfunctional neighbourhood maybe, but things get a lot more complicated between the neighbours before it starts to rain as the piece concludes. Butterworth's play is a definite homage to the works of Pinter with a slight hint of Ayckbourn throughout. What his characters face is a common 'forty something' mid life crisis, whilst cooped up in their suffocating miserable suburban life.

Director Claire Lewis's production packs a punch, bringing Butterworth's witty and dark material to the stage with an interpretation that is visually effective. The use of moving projections against a mundane black colour scheme, adorned with simple grey printed household objects reflects the setting perfectly. I have to admit the transitions between scenes in act one were a tad slow and could have picked up in pace. This may have related to an issue with the lighting or sound cues, but something didn't quite click. However, Lewis's three actors gave strong portrayals, darkly funny and ultimately tragic in the ending. Ben Pritchard, with his physically demanding role of Ned-the-sweating-stress-head with his ever-increasing paranoia, gave memorable scenes listening to a sex cd with his expressive tongue, and a hilarious exercise scenario with Dale. Pritchard could have pulled his performance back in parts I feel, as sometimes lines can be inaudible when there is too much volume, but nevertheless he showed great comedy timing.

Hunky Tony Bright gave us the married-with-two-kids Dale, who hops the fence and beds his mate's wife while he's off blowing things up. With a strong narrative and interaction breaking the fourth wall, the front row definitely enjoyed his 'foaming action'...

PARLOUR SONG | reviews

by Jez Butterworth | directed by Claire Lewis



right ladies? Perfectly paced with a great tone, giving us the conclusion of the story.

Finally Sophie Dearlove is the sultry housewife who's had enough, giving us a subtle performance with simmering, dark undertones, making us question her actions and whether she's the culprit behind all of Ned's confusion and distress. Dearlove's reactions were superb especially in the dinner

scene, as she described the details of the dinner to her sickly perfectionist husband.

A thoroughly enjoyable fringe production and I commend Lewis for her directing skills, and in pulling together a cast that definitely hit the spot.

Brian Sheridan



Sex in Suburbia, does it exist? Well in Hatfield it does. Jez Butterworth's dark comedy reveals what goes on in the barbecue-smoke-filled gardens and bedrooms, in the land of lace curtains and Ford Mondeos.

Ned is a little boy in a man's body. In the Daytime he is happily blowing up 1970's Arndale Centres and other hideous derelict buildings. It's his life, and he likes to bore everybody he can with his video clips and demolition stories. However something sinister keeps happening. He is starting to lose his possessions and his memory. Is it the hair regrowth pills he is taking or is there a more sinister reason? Ben Pritchard is astonishing in his portrayal of this chubby little bear-type 'Essex man'. He plays him with much empathy, so that despite the estuary twang and the cliché dialogue you still love him a bit. He agonizes over everything and wants to be loved, like a little puppy who keeps getting brushed away and told to 'Sit!' Ben is sensational in the bedroom tape sex advice scene - the audience were laughing and squirming at the same time.

Dale (played by Tony Bright) acts as narrator for the play as well as Ned's best mate. Tony is excellent as the sexy car wash owner and employer of Kosovans, with just the right amount of swagger and testosterone for the character. A caring friend, he soon forgets his loyalty after the smoldering Joy, Ned's wife, sets out to seduce him at a car wash - involving lots of 'ups and downs', and a lemon...

Sophie Dearlove as Joy also gives a convincing performance. Her face during the brilliant dinner scene was a picture. Trapped in a sexless, loveless marriage, this scene wasn't rushed and you could feel the discomfort and tension of the marriage. Joy is humorous and bitter, and Sophie portrays the trapped bored suburban wife that exists on many streets in Britain.



The play was very popular with the audience. I did think that the first half was a little too long, and could do with a few cuts; some of the dialogue in the exercising scene was rather wordy and could be edited.

However it's a minor note in what is a great play directed with skill by Claire Lewis, with good lighting and sound too.

I'm sure this will be one of the hits of the Brighton Fringe.

Jeremy Goodchild



1. Sophie Dearlove & Ben Pritchard
2. Tony Bright & Ben Pritchard
3. Tony Bright & Ben Pritchard
4. Ben Pritchard

Photos by Romain Ley

HOW TO MAKE DRAMA

Thoughts on the Fringe Festival

You might recall, that at the last AGM the floor questioned the committee's thoughts regarding participation in the Fringe Festival. The question of whether or not we should be part of the Fringe had come up a few times before, as we did struggle with various supporting aspects as well as the Fringe organisation over the last six or seven years.

I remember when I joined NVT in 2006, the Fringe was a very different organisation and the focus was on small venues and a variety of shows. Being part of the Fringe was a very exciting experience, a privilege to perform for two weeks not to forget the financial gain for NVT. Also, new writing had the opportunity to reach audiences outside of NVT.

The organisation itself was very basic and a nightmare for our box office. There was no one person who could be contacted or who would check that tickets were not being oversold. In addition we struggled to fill the bar with volunteers to support the three weeks of Fringe, and just two or three volunteers covered the twenty-ish nights between them as Front of House managers.

With the Fringe growing and developing as an organisation, many things have changed. It now runs for four weeks instead of three, which shows how much it has grown. The box office system is much more reliable and a communication between the venues is being developed. Of course the Fringe has also turned more commercial with sponsorships and so on, and this again requires more participants. In the last three or four years the amount of venues has pretty much doubled, we are now competing with over 180 venues! There are over 700 shows - not performances, shows! - in the Fringe, so every day audiences have between 60 to 100 events to choose from. Most shows run for just a few nights, and many groups are not Brighton based, but the local input is growing as well.

The Brighton Fringe aims to rival Edinburgh Fringe Festival, to be bigger and longer. One issue with this is that Brighton is not able to accommodate that many audiences and performers. So we have 700 shows competing with each other over an audience that is not expanding in volume at the same rate as the participants. We have noticed this over the last few years in tickets sales and audience numbers during the Fringe.

New work did not sell very well, the only sold out shows were the 'classics', and the cult musical 'Hedwig & The Angry Inch'. So to ensure we pull audiences during the Fringe, we are very restricted in the choice of play we can put on and ideally we need blockbusters rather than new writing. Is this what NVT wants, and stands for?

Whilst the Fringe used to be a great showcase, it is not doing us such favours anymore. We have the same reviewer requests, with one or two different faces, so not much more promotion for NVT as the reviews will focus on one production rather than NVT as whole organisation. And of course we still get review requests on the last few days of a two week run, ironically by the Fringe itself.

Based on discussions raised before the AGM, and the promise of more support during the Festival, it was decided to be part

of the Fringe but to try a slightly different format of only one production during the Fringe, moving a second production to a time outside the Fringe. 'The Thrill of Love' ran for 8 nights prior to the Fringe in April, in the Theatre Upstairs, and pretty much sold out. That is just under 600 tickets sold.

Our Fringe entry 'Parlour Song' during its two week run in the Studio sold over 650 tickets out of 812, which is a good result, but shows the pressure we have dealing with our competition. Posting on facebook and twitter seems to be the way forward, but there is a lot of competition as well. Every day many posts were promoting shows and competing with each other. The comments underneath often read:

'So sorry, I'm doing my solo show then I kinda feel we need to do post fringe performances cos there is so much competition and when you perform it's not always easy to see lots of other stuff.'

'already at another show, i'm afraid - good luck with it though!'

The reduction from three weeks of performances to two allowed the Front of House team to breath between the two shows, and many volunteers were able to help out. Well done to our Front of House Manager Jez Bowden! From the production side however, this looked very different. With many of our members creating their own shows or helping out in various capacities, we struggled to find a crew for 'Parlour Song'.

Whilst at the AGM many people were in favour of being in the Fringe and support was offered, hardly anyone came forward when we asked for support. We did managed to finalise a great crew in the few weeks before the show opened, but with the help of many new members. This provided a great training opportunity and of course ensured the show could go on, but created more work and pressure for the experienced members of the crew, who had to support the many new members - getting experience in the various backstage roles naturally takes time.

Being part of a two week run at the end of the Fringe does unfortunately mean you are extremely unlikely to see anything else in the Fringe, and it seems to be falling to the same members over and over again, because someone has to be there and do it. This is likely to be a deciding factor as to whether you are a member who feels we should remain part of the Fringe, or rather not.

Do we really base our decisions on people who are not even present at NVT during the Fringe? Or should the people who are living through the same stressful, work intense experience every year make the decision?

Moving one production before the Fringe seemed to work really well! Why not move the other production just after the Fringe with a few nights overlap? There have been some requests by NVT members to hire the theatre as rehearsal space for external productions, which would not require performance setup, a set, lighting, box office and bar support, and so on. That might be a better alternative - or even to offer workshops. The Fringe is expanding on development opportunities, often they are mainly showcasing the industry and are sales orientated rather than focusing on theatre skills or knowledge gain. But, who would be willing to support and run the workshops? Any volunteers?

Ulrike Schilling
NVT Training-Coordinator and Volunteer-Liaison



WHO DO YOU THINK WE WERE?

So Many Children | NVT 1974

Do you have any memories or stories of NVT's history that you would like to share? Get in touch at newsletter@newventure.org.uk

And next time you attend a performance at NVT, don't forget to take a look at the newly opened NVT archives, located in the cabinet in the South Hall!

NEW VENTURE PRODUCTIONS
 present
 THE BRIGHTON & HOVE REPERTORY COMPANY
 in
SO MANY CHILDREN
 by
 GERALD SAVORY

CAST:

PAUL LATIMER	<i>John Griffiths</i>
SLIPPY WOKINGHAM	<i>Ronald Newman</i>
CORNELIA BRIGHAM	<i>Patricia Penney</i>
AGATHA THOMPSON	<i>Mollie Faulkner</i>
MR. ARKWRIGHT	<i>Roy Lacey</i>
ANNA BAILEY	<i>Jenny Percy</i>
DOCTOR MYERS	<i>Gerry Whitmore</i>
MATTHEW GUNTON	<i>Eric Cotton</i>
MRS. RAMSKILL	<i>Margaret Corbin</i>

Directed by *Kay Alexander*
 Setting designed and built by *James Burroughs*

The action of the play passes in the front parlour and kitchen of Agatha Thompson's house in a poor section of a North-country seaport in 1958.

ACT 1 Early in December. Late one afternoon.
 15 minute interval during which coffee will be served.

ACT 2 Scene 1 Christmas Eve
 Scene 2 Christmas Day
 5 minute interval.

ACT 3 Three days later.

Production No. 186

Jan 74

Stage Manager	Margaret Corbin
Asst. Stage Managers	Fenny Malsey Kay Lacey Derek Mason
Lighting	Paul Middleton
Sound	Tony Smith Philip Doolill
Wardrobe	Pam Driscoll

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Producer's Secretary: Eileen Mills	Publicity: Hans Batten
Membership Secretary: Ivy Gerratt	Production Photos: Harold Collins

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EMERGENCY EXIT - TOP OF STAIRS

NVT ACTING CLASSES

1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 June

Andrew Allen
Earning Your Lines

Learn to rip the script apart, dig beneath the text, treat the words with a healthy (lack of) respect, and to use any play as the blueprint for the stories that you want to tell. For five Mondays in June, Andrew Allen (*Medea*, *Four Play*, *The Snow Queen*) will open up the toolbox that enables you to own your place on the stage, from confident stalwart to nervous reluctant beginner.

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 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
'The Arsonists' by Max Frisch 19 - 27 June <i>Studio</i>				
10 Minute Play Competition 17 - 25 July <i>Studio</i>				

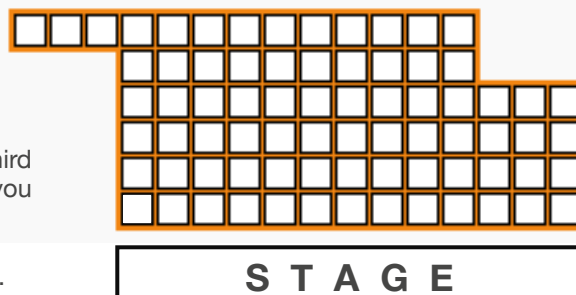
It is important you provide your name, phone number and address, and email address where possible

*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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