

NEW VENTURE

T H E A T R E

COMING SOON | **BROKEN GLASS** by Arthur Miller | directed by Jerry Lyne | 12 - 21 May

HOW MANY MILES TO BABYLON?

by Jennifer Johnston - adapted by Alan Stanford | directed by Gerry McCrudden | 8 - 16 April



Edward Cave

Photo by Strat Mastoris

Against all odds Alec and Jerry have forged a firm friendship. Alec's patrician Anglo Irish background was one of privilege, while Jerry's was cut very differently, but they have become good mates. Alec, in defiance of the strictures of his class-bound mother, will not, nay cannot, give up his friendship with Jerry. As the story unfolds Alec recounts the events of his life, which have led to his present circumstances.

When war breaks out in 1914 these two young men decide to sign up. They do so, though, for quite different reasons, and now in the trenches they also find themselves divided as officer and enlisted man. Surrounded by mud, chaos and death, one of them makes a fateful decision whose consequences will test their friendship and loyalty to its limits.

'How Many Miles to Babylon?' transforms the novel's first person narrative into a memory play in which Alec is compelled – much like Michael in 'Dancing at Lughnasa' – to re-live his past, a personal, redemptive and often painful act of remembrance. American writer Flannery O'Connor once wrote "There is something in us as storytellers and as listeners to stories, that demands the redemptive act, that demands that what falls at least be offered the chance to be restored".

As in some of her other works, Jennifer Johnston's novel draws upon the literature of the Irish "Big House": fictional representations of the social and cultural organisation of the Anglo-Irish or Protestant ascendancy class. Johnston is herself a daughter of that class, and a society which struggled to find its place and voice in the emerging post independence Ireland. As a group they are now melting away into history. Yeats was a friend of the family, and Johnston met him when she was young, along with O'Casey, Shaw and others who have also faded into legend.

I was intrigued that in telling her tale Johnston frequently uses the imagery of the swan. There are swans on the lake of Alec's family estate when the two lads meet, they see swans in France – indeed a soldier shoots a swan which greatly upsets Alec. In Irish mythology swans are seen as symbolic of friendship, fidelity and the soul. I sensed some faint echoes of 'The Children of Lir' in which the Children of Lir are banished and transformed into swans, condemned to continually wander the earth until their redemption.

When I saw 'How Many Miles to Babylon?' staged at Belfast's acclaimed Lyric Theatre I was deeply affected by it and hoped I might be given the opportunity to bring this rarely performed piece to the NVT stage. In the midst of these centenary commemorations I do hope you will embrace Jennifer Johnston's different take and deeply humane approach to those caught up in the Great War. She is a fine storyteller and Alan Stanford's adaptation captures it well.

Casting decisions are rarely easy and I was delighted that so many fine people auditioned. We are blessed with a pool of great talent in the NVT. So I am very grateful to them and to the inspiring cast and creative team ready to do this story justice.

Gerry McCrudden



SHAKESPEARE'S WAKE

23rd April 7.30pm | Studio Theatre

As a theatre, it seems fitting that the NVT celebrates the Bard's passing - 400 years to the day. "My hair doth stand on end" (Shakespeare - Hamlet), when one considers the impact of this man's life, so long ago, on our culture and language. Join together in our community to celebrate his incredible theatrical contribution. Through his words we explore aspects of the human condition in an evening of entertainment via extracts from those fabulous tales and sonnets. Meet or become reacquainted with some of those unforgettable characters who chart a plethora of significant life moments through his beautiful poetry performed by our youth and adult members.

£7 (£6 NVT members); £4 under 16s

CASTINGS

Accidental Death of an Anarchist by Dario Fo | directed by Rod Lewis

End of the 60's, a time of fervent political turbulence and bombs have been going off in Milan. The suspected bomber (the Anarchist) falls to his death from a police station's fourth floor window - did he jump or was he pushed?

**Maniac
Superintendent
Pisanni
Bertozzo
Constable
Feletti**

**Des Potton
Culann Smyth
Robert Purchase
Nick Richards
Jack Llewellyn Roberts
Heather Andrews**

WHAT A PERFORMANCE

written by Trevor Harvey

*Just an 'out-of-town' show -
NOT the 'West End', I know -
But I feel there WAS plenty of 'Magic'!
That the curtains got stuck
WAS a bit of bad luck -
And the scenery falling was... 'tragic'.*

*I'd have watched it all night
But they turned out the light
And they said it was time I should leave;
Then the stalls usherette
Was as rude as they get -
Why she works there it's hard to believe!*

*The show started late -
We'd ONE HELL of a wait -
And some of the patrons WERE hissing;
And the music was - well,
Rather 'weak'... you could tell
That the man who conducted was missing.*

*The programme note said
The Director was wed
To the 'feminine lead' in the Show;
And his cousin, called Art,
ALSO had a large part -
As did his young brother, called Joe...*

*Costumes WEREN'T a good fit,
For the lead's trousers split
When he was half-way through a song;
Then the 'star' missed her cue -
She got stuck in the loo -
So 'one or two things' DID go wrong...*

*Several leads sang off-key
And their phrasing was... 'free' -
And I've always said 'size doesn't matter'.
'Though the hero was bald,
He did strike the right chord.
(And the heroine WAS eight stone fatter.)*

*I sat there and clapped
As my sweets I unwrapped
And their rustle was drowned by my sneeze;
Then I dropped the whole box,
And did cause a few shocks
When I scabbled about on my knees.*

*I recovered them all
Long before Curtain Call -
And was able to lead the 'ovation'!
I whistled and cheered -
But the rest mainly 'jeered'...
No, we're NOT a great 'show-going' nation.*

Try winding the clock on your computer back to the year 415 BC. Change your location settings to Greece/Turkey and look up the U-Tube archive. Not got the legacy software? Pull down 'favourites' from the top box and take out 'Women of Troy' by Euripides. It's pregnant, it's punchy. It's a Greek tragedy 2,500 years old that's happening right now.

The enemy has come, the palace is detonated, smoke is rising. There are executions. Your child is wrenched from your breast and thrown off the tallest tower. Those who survive are captors or they are fleeing, chained up in leaky boats and taken to sea. Women and children are the spoils of war: sold into slavery and rape. It's a tragedy as ancient as this morning's tweet.

In this twilight zone, between regime-change, we join the women waiting to learn their fate. This is the pregnant pause in the antechamber of terror. Andromache contemplates a final exit: 'The dead feel no sorrow any more and know no grief.' But Hecuba argues caution 'Death and life are not the same, my child; the one is annihilation, the other keeps a place for hope.' Jackboots and trench coats enter stage right.

We know how it happened. The Greeks built a wooden horse on a wheelie bin, stuffed its belly with soldiers and the Trojans pulled their bitterest enemy right into their own backyard. Euripides was smart enough to text '... in days to come men shall tell of "the wooden horse", with its hidden load of warriors.' On a crackling line across the centuries, the words are crystal clear.

This production, directed by Ella Turk-Thompson, deliberately uses movement and sound to accentuate the script's emotion and mood. The stage is wide and empty, broken columns, snapped off chairs, moody desolate light. We follow the slinky lines of coloured dresses from the women dancers and chorus. Nine heads bend forward like refugees bearing their packs. We hear their whispers, we feel their moans. A choreography of foreboding spirals round the stage. Finally, Helen - the movie star - gets down from her plinth and weaves sweet words to save her skin. The women's chorus hisses at her like a prison full of cats.

The director acknowledges this alternative approach might baffle Euripides. We can imagine him hollering on a dodgy Skype call with a 2.5k time delay: 'Oh woe! I can't always hear my

WOMEN OF TROY | review

by Euripides | directed by Ella Turk-Thompson



script.' And he has a point.

On the other hand, we might shout back: 'Listen, Euri! There are lots of words! Too much explanation! Hecuba is the mother of Hector, now dead, who was married to Andromache, whose baby son is alive at the start but dead at the end, and Menelaus was married

to Helen, while stomping Gods like Poseidon are plotting thunderbolts. Euri! Bedford Place is not the Acropolis and we're due to meet Bacchus in the bar!

Taking the story to stage is no mean feat. The lead actors drew out the subtleties. Hecuba (Claire Lewis) was made prisoner yet never quite surrendered. Her poise and diction said, yes, this is still a woman with power. The Greeks' messenger, Talthybius (Joseph Bentley), was the little man bringing the women piecemeal news of their fate from his masters. We felt his guilt, even shame, we noted his respectful rites. Cassandra (Jacqueline Harper) gulped air in fits while she foretold the future. At times elsewhere, the words and story went too quick to savour. That's when I voted for Euripides.

But this got me hooked. Give me more Greek drama. The women floating in the Aegean need less.

Mike Aiken



Director Ella Turk-Thompson's decision to modernize this 415 BC play isn't the brave thing about it – Craig Raine's 1953 adapted it to Nazi Britain. Putting on Kenneth McLeish's version, with a non-naturalistic speech-delivery pushes everyone in this contemporary vision of torched palaces too easily evoking Iraq, Syria, Gaza. With kicked-over chairs, this razed land is hollow.

The Trojans have lost. Queen Hecuba's sons are dead, her youngest daughter sacrificed, grandson - Hector's child - here torn from his widow and flung over a tower wall. A chorus ritually mourn, dancing enslavement. Hecuba's Claire Lewis gaining authority and dark power in her central role is confronted by daughters: first Jacqueline Harper's prophet Cassandra, doomed virgin concubine of Greek supremo Agamemnon. Harper's extremes are riveting, her vocal explosion sadly hoarse and smothered.

Soon-to-be-grieving mother Andromache's Rebecca Polling is outstanding, instinctively balancing nuance with non-natural projection and expressiveness. Chorus-members Ruth Tansey and Margot Jobbins cut through vocally with the declamatory incisiveness to grace London stages (which also often



lack it), both distinct and tragic. It's the poise needed throughout. Pablo Woodward's Menelaus promised much though shouts one-note; Mark Green's Poseidon fares better, as does in part Shaila Alvarez's Helen. Turk-Thompson's heartfelt production is risk-taking, timely and necessary: we need more Greeks. It just begs vocal finesse.

Simon Jenner

1. Rebecca Polling & Claire Lewis
2. Nikki Dunsford, Claire Lewis, Margot Jobbins, Aimee Humphrey, Sophie Lewis, Martina Simeonova, Natalie Fowle, Alexandra Sasaran & Ruth Tansey.
3. Pablo Woodward & Say Alvarez
4. Joseph Bentley, Rebecca Polling & Martina Simeonova.

Photos by Jezz Bowden

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I attended the Sunday matinee performance of LOOT and wholeheartedly agree with the review in the last newsletter. I thought the set was simple but impressive (the flexibility of NVT's Studio space for staging productions must be a real bonus for designers and directors) and the acting was excellent, the standard being very professional throughout. It was a true company production, the strength being in the close and effective teamwork which kept the play flowing well.

Orton's dark, somewhat dated farce still has the power to both amuse and (slightly!) shock. The script perhaps 'flagged' a little towards the end and was in danger of becoming repetitive (a fault of the writer, not of the production) but, as your reviewer said, it had an amusing and satisfactory ending and made an excellent entertainment.

Congratulations to all concerned for a quality production - the cast, the director, the set designers and those dealing with costumes, lighting and props - and, of course, special congratulations to whoever managed to ensure that when the 'body' was in the wardrobe the door, vitally, ALWAYS remained shut!

Trevor Harvey

OUR AIMS AND VISIONS

Following our 'away day' last August, we have agreed to adopt, without any changes, the original 'vision' as first set out by NVT in 1947.

- To encourage authors and actors and to give audiences a chance to see plays they would not see elsewhere.
- To give an intelligent and imaginative approach to new plays and to experiment with all forms of theatrical presentations.

More specifically, our aims are to:

QUOTE CORNER

"As in a theatre, the eyes of men, after a well graced actor leaves the stage, are idly bent on him that enters next."

- Shakespeare

Write in with your favourite theatrical quote to newsletter@newventure.org.uk

- be an ambitious production house developing small scale theatre as an art form.
- present a balance between classics with an NVT twist and cutting edge plays most other amateur companies don't tackle.
- include, where possible, 1st amateur performances of new work recently performed in the pro world.
- continually learn about theatre by adding external venues and street performances.
- develop volunteer teams in skill groups, with training for theatrical skills and a support framework to make best use of them.
- develop a higher profile in Brighton and Hove.

It's a tribute to the NVT members of seventy years ago that after all this time we remain committed to the vision they created. In the next newsletter there will be more about decisions taken following the 'away day' and an opportunity for members to respond with their views.

Mike Stubbs





WHO DO YOU THINK THEY WERE?

The NVT archiving team still has a small collection of photographs and material which remains unidentified, and we'd love to hear from anyone who recognises any of the productions.

Do you recognise any of the on-stage couples here? The production? Who do you think they were?

NVT ACTING CLASSES

Mondays 7:30 - 9:30 PM

Please arrive in good time to begin promptly at 7:30 PM

COST: £5 (NVT members £2.50)

In these drop in sessions you will be working with various teachers and cover acting techniques as well as theatre skills. We will be looking at audition techniques, working with text, movement, comedy and stage presence amongst other themes. The classes are mixed levels and open to anyone 18+, no previous experience needed. Attending the acting class is the best way to get involved with what we do and find out about auditions and productions. We encourage all our members as well as those who want to get involved in the theatre in anyway to come along.

To find out more, come along to a class or to request more information about a particular block of sessions, have a look at our website at www.newventure.org.uk, where you can sign up to our mailing list, or email: actingclass@newventure.org.uk.

NVT BROCHURE Corrections

Sunday matinee performances will continue to start at 2:30pm, with doors opening at 2pm. The new January - April NVT brochure incorrectly lists Sunday start times at 7:45pm, so apologies for any confusion!

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
'How Many Miles to Babylon?' by Jennifer Johnston-adapted by Alan Stanford 8 - 16 April <i>Studio</i>				
'Broken Glass' by Arthur Miller 12 - 21 May * <i>Theatre Upstairs</i> Seats available: A 1-13, B 1-13, C 1-13 and D2-13				
'Accidental Death of an Anarchist' by Dario Fo 17-25 June * <i>Theatre Upstairs</i>				

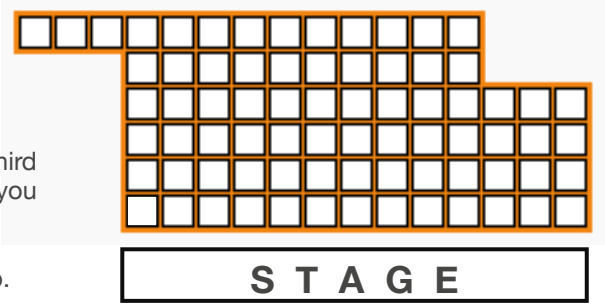
It is important you provide your name, phone number and address, and email address where possible

***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.



CONTACT US

Bedford Place
Brighton BN1 2PT

General Enquiries 01273 808353
info@newventure.org.uk

Box Office Info 01273 746118
boxoffice@newventure.org.uk

www.newventure.org.uk
@nvt_brighton

Chairman
Secretary
Artistic Director
Treasurer
Production Coordinator
Technical Coordinator
Buildings Manager
Fundraising
Marketing & Publicity
Volunteer Coordinator
Front of House
Box Office
Newsletter Editor
Membership Secretary
LTG Rep & CPO
Social Events Manager
Youth Theatre Coordinator
Angels/Archives Coordinator
Acting Class Coordinator

Ian Black
Jerry Lyne
Rod Lewis
Iain Hay
Tom Kitch
Vacant
Mike Stubbs
Mary Allen
Vacant
Ulrike Schilling
Jezz Bowden
Romaine Mitchell
Natasha Borg
Anne Gilson
Pat Boxall
Scott Roberts
Sarah Davies
Gerry McCrudden
Ulrike Schilling

chairman@newventure.org.uk
secretary@newventure.org.uk
art.dir@newventure.org.uk
finance@newventure.org.uk
prod.mgr@newventure.org.uk
tech@newventure.org.uk
buildings@newventure.org.uk
fundraising@newventure.org.uk
publicity@newventure.org.uk
volunteering@newventure.org.uk
frontofhouse@newventure.org.uk
boxoffice@newventure.org.uk
newsletter@newventure.org.uk
membership@newventure.org.uk
pat.boxall@newventure.org.uk
social@newventure.org.uk
youththeatre@newventure.org.uk
angels@newventure.org.uk
actingclass@newventure.org.uk

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.



blue starfish

Bringing business training alive through actors

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



Finding an investment manager
needn't be a performance.

Contact Paul Morley on 01273 322 435
or email paul.morley@thesis-plc.com
www.thesis-plc.com

Professional
investment partners
Authorised and regulated by the FCA



EMBE MAIL BOXES ETC.

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

Tel: 01273 70 60 20 www.mbebrighton.co.uk
Email: print@mbbrighton.co.uk 81 Western Road, Brighton, BN1 2NW



DEEPDENE SCHOOL & NURSERY

Nursery - 0 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 BN2 4ED
www.deepdeneschool.com Tel: 01273 418984

OUR ANGELS

Why not become an Angel, Fallen Angel, Archangel or even Archangel Gabriel to help us support the current and future improvements to our theatre. Our Angels have proven to be generous in the assistance they give us.

For further information please contact the Angels Coordinator Gerry McCrudden: angels@newventure.org.uk. If you are a UK tax payer your donation will also benefit from Gift Aid.

THE PEBBLE TRUST

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.

Printed by RePrint (LCC) Ltd. 47 Highcroft Villas, Brighton
BN1 5PT www.reprintbrighton.com