

NEW VENTURE

T H E A T R E

COMING SOON | LOOT by Joe Orton | directed by Steven O'Shea | 15 - 23 January

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

by Charles Dickens | directed by Sarah Davies | 4 - 12 December



Back - Judey Bignell, Mark Green, Jeff Moody & Chris Dangerfield
 Front - Heather Andrews & Jeremy Crow

Photo by Tamsin Mastoris

‘This is Ignorance. This is Want. Beware them both, but most of all beware of Ignorance, for on his brow is written Doom unless the writing be erased.’ - Ghost of Christmas Present

Everyone knows Scrooge. Dickens’ unforgettable miser became a cultural icon overnight when ‘A Christmas Carol’ was first published in 1843 and has remained a popular ‘unpopular’ character ever since. Scrooge hates Christmas - tight-fisted, mean spirited, friendless; he seems to hate just about everyone and everything. Then, on Christmas Eve, he’s haunted by the restless ghost of Marley, his dead colleague, followed by three Spirits of Christmas, who show him his past and present life - and the miserable future which awaits him unless he changes his ways.

Each ghost takes him on a journey the first through the predominantly sad memories of his past - which contrasts with the joys others are having in the present - followed by the horrors of isolation and the effects on not being loved in a possible future. Dreamlike sequences of scenes follow

fast one after the other. The stories leap from busy London streets to alleyways to cosy interiors to dances and even to a lighthouse and to a ship at one point then back to Scrooge’s bedroom briefly before hurtling off once more to the Stock Exchange and then to a foul-smelling area of ill-repute. How on earth do you do all that on stage on a tiny budget and without a tardis?

Our answer was to cast one person as Scrooge and have the episodes that the ghosts reveal recreated by an ensemble. NVT stalwart John Tolpitt is horribly good as the clutching, covetous, old sinner Scrooge, and delightful once the character finds redemption. All the other parts and locations are recreated by an extremely capable, mutli-role playing cast. Together this collective of talented youngsters and experienced adults have developed a slick ensemble physical performance style. They do everything: shift set, switch costumes and transform before your eyes into a range of familiar characters adding a few new creations of their own whilst underscoring transitions with singing. Expect multi-role playing, a fast pace, people playing objects, objects playing people, singing, dancing and a clever set. Traditionally drama is symbolised by two theatre masks - this team switch repeatedly between the two: thrilling and frightening, then raising a giggle or two.

It’s been a pleasure and an honour working on this project with such a collaborative team of performers. I’m full of gratitude for this hugely talented cast, many of whom are also experienced directors themselves

(continued from previous page)

- a massive help in problem solving! Everyone has been committed and creative throughout the process. Heather and Robert will be doing their debut at the NVT and I'm sure you'll enjoy her fantastic physicality and his fiddling amongst their general marvellousness! Jeremy Crow brings a massive brain and heart to the piece. It's been a personal joy to see Jake develop from original Youth Theatre member to a confident adult performer tackling serious roles as well as comedic ones. I'm so proud of the NVYT members who are responsible for this piece being put on at the NVT; in its origins it was for the youth to have a chance to perform as part of the wider NVT community. They have managed being part of a mixed aged team brilliantly. I'm confident they have learned an enormous amount through the experience and look forward to witnessing the remainder of their journey as the show receives an audience.

The piece features an original score by our fabulously gifted 'maestro' Steve Hoar, whose visionary twist on classic carols has added so much richness to the piece. From the outset, I knew that I wanted to include carols in some way in the performance and sought Steve's advice. On our first meeting he suggested transposing the carols into minor keys to create an eerie effect. It's quite a special experience to have music written to suit your own voice. The cast's attitude to the sung aspects of the work has been hugely impressive. When we began I had no idea that music and singing would become such an integral part of the way we are telling the tale. It's been a delight and an honour to work with Steve and this group of talented and daring performers.

'Bah humbug' has become a phrase epitomising a dislike of the Christmas seasons and its jollities. Why tell this tale again? Apart from it being a good yarn - Dickens intended it as a condemnation of greed, and a way of informing the middle and upper classes of the plight of the poor and the needy. In our time, across the world, across the UK and in this town there persists a great imbalance between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. Thus the transformation of Scrooge continues to hold a relevant message for us all - reminding us that we are inter-connected and can gain by helping others.

This show is a testimony to the power within us all to shine and be the best that we can be. It has been full of creative challenges which we have tackled collaboratively: cast, crew, designers, makers, production team and chaperones. Taking on challenges, going into the unknown, trying, experimenting, working collectively and collaboratively to pull off the magic. I hope we don't disappoint you. It won't be for lack of trying. I am humbled and so grateful to all the people working on and supporting this show and wish you all the very warmest of seasonal greetings of goodwill and kindness to all. Let our hearts never atrophy, may we all be encouraged to unstick ourselves when we get stuck, may we give and receive love freely, giving gratitude for what we have and being aware and generous to those who have not.

What's the appeal of this bad-tempered, bitter, friendless, old man? Is it that we can all be a little Scrooge-like sometimes? Is it that we all like the notion that we can change - and indeed can be forgiven?

Sarah Davies

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

With most of the Summer's major renovations to our venerable building now complete, NVT is once more abuzz with what we do best - creative activity!

Having just opened our 2015/16 season with a fresh take on Moliere's 17th century French classic 'The Miser' - with a robust production that successfully achieved the tough task of combining the anarchic vitality of the original with modern day accessibility with its spot on, vibrant, present day humour - we move on to Neil LaBute's 'Reasons to be Pretty', a very contemporary, red hot four hander that has practically sizzled it's way over to us from across the Atlantic. This will be followed in December with a special new venture for us as young members of our youth theatre group join forces with some of our most experienced actors, to present our very own take, rich with home grown originality, of Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'. This should be a warm, moving theatrical event that, complete with its music and

movement, and its extra matinees and slightly earlier starting times, should appeal to a wide family audience. With continuing acting classes, auditions, play readings and social events (19th December!) there'll be plenty to get involved with to take us into the new year when, in January we kick off 2016 with Joe Orton's extremely wild and witty 'Loot'. A very black farce that, judging from the laughter already generated by a finely comedic cast at its initial read through, promises to be funny indeed!

Finally. At the last AGM I was honoured to be given the go ahead to continue as Artist Director of this wonderful company for another two years. I see this role as a sort of relay race - one is passed the baton by the previous incumbent (in this my case from the wonderfully talented Uli) and then one takes on the task of trying to run with it as best one can (in my case sometimes rather shakily) with a view to maintaining, or even to help improving, the strength of the company - before

eventually passing it on in, hopefully, as good a shape as possible. All of us who now enjoy the fabulous riches that NVT can give us owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the countless volunteers who have, over many years, contributed with their hard work and talents, to what we are now so privileged to enjoy. I am also very conscious of, and have the greatest respect for, the amazingly deep and widely ranging talents those who work alongside me and I am extremely grateful for the tremendous help, advice and generous support I have received from all of you at NVT over the past two years.

My heartfelt thanks!

Let's make 2015-16 season a happy and good one for everybody!

Rod Lewis

One brief, ill-considered throwaway comment from Greg, and his relationship with Steph is over. His mistake? He has described her face - over beers with his male colleague - as 'just regular'.

The play opens with snapshots and home videos of the couple together: beautifully shot and completely naturalistic, the audience instantly know the pair and giggle along with their saccharine silliness.

The sleek realism of the opening sequence does perhaps make the stark stage and artificial nature of the theatre a little jarring as the play itself begins, but does create a successful contrast between the social-media-sheen of the photos, and the bickering, angry couple we're presented with onstage.

Each character in the play is clearly defined and tall handsome Greg (Fintan Shevlin), while initially seeming like a great catch, is quickly revealed to be wet behind the ears - awkward in his own body and unable to express himself or even to really work out what he wants.

While never quite transforming her into a completely natural character we might recognise from our own lives, Pamela Sian Evan's Steph is successful in grating on the audience as she tortures Greg with mood swings and indignant anger, while still delivering the funniest monologue in the play with great aplomb.

It is Scott Roberts (playing Kent) who shines through the production as Greg's loudmouth, fun-loving, best friend. Kent is the perfect contrast to Greg's nervy unease and Roberts wears this character like a glove, flexing every aspect of his personality and slowly transforming him from cheeky chappy to a sleazy leech and violent bully.

Kent's wife Carly is a little underdeveloped as a character, and it isn't until a sudden hug with Greg towards the end of the play that we realise she's been quietly enduring her own anxieties.

The best parts of this play are the tiny windows into the ordinary everyday of relationships. Little moments of less significant dialogue are staged in a very real and sensitive way, exploring the odd way we tend to act quite differently when alone with our significant other. We're also left questioning the importance we place on appearance;

REASONS TO BE PRETTY | review

by Neil LaBute | directed by Tim McQuillen Wright



Steph expects her partner to never see beauty in any other face, yet by the end of the play she is cruelly jibing at Carly for losing her looks during pregnancy. Kent is willing to risk hurting his wife and child because he's obsessed with the good looks of a young co-worker. Each character at some point outlines their very precise requirements for 'good looks' in others, without realising it is this very thing keeping each of them trapped.

By the end both couples have moved forward a little in life. It's an easy play to



watch, though parts will undoubtedly hold up an uncomfortable mirror to any relationship. A well put together production, the minimal set cleverly manipulates the space on stage. Together with unobtrusive props and costume, the dialogue is allowed to be the star of the show – although the action is a little too static at times.

Despite a few first-night nerves in the first half the performances were polished and energised; this play will stand out as a gem in this NVT season.

William Griffin



- 1 & 2. Fintan Shevlin & Pamela Sian Evans
- 3. Jen Ley & Scott Roberts
- 4. Fintan Shevlin & Scott Roberts

Photo by Tamsin Mastoris

GLADRAGS 21ST!

The Gladrags Big Birthday Charity Fundraiser

Gladrags Community Costume Resource celebrates its 21st Birthday with: **Fast Forward Flashback: a party through the decades from 1921 to 2021!**

Gladrags is a unique charity providing costumes to community groups, schools and health & wellbeing projects at subsidised rates. We further reach disadvantaged communities by providing them with children's dressing-up activities and interactive storytelling, sewing-skills workshops,

and reminiscence sessions with older people.

Huge thanks to the New Venture Theatre Team for hosting this shindig for free and providing a skilled team of volunteers to run it with us! The event of the year is coming soon...spread the word and get ready to party!

Friday 27th November, 7pm - midnight. Tickets: £10
www.ticketsource.co.uk/date/205949

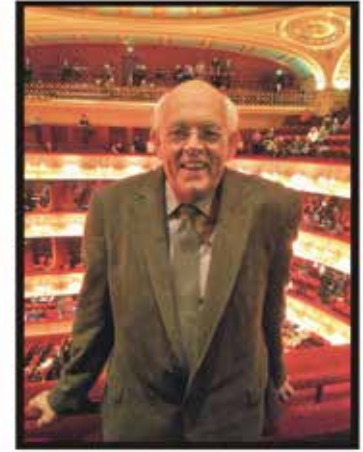


TONY SHOESMITH

A Master Craftsman

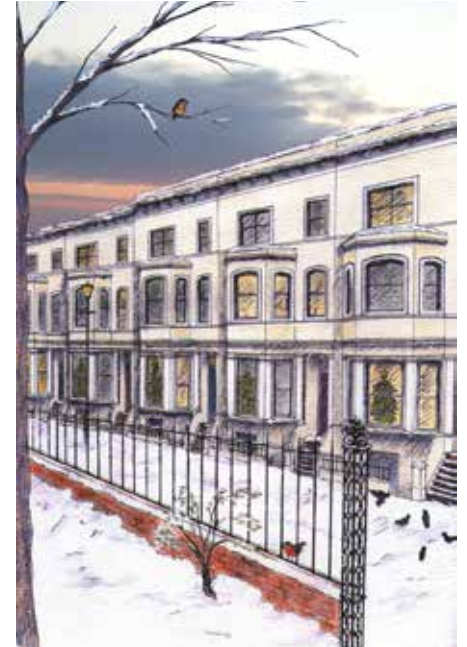
Tony's family were at the unveiling of a commemorative plaque for Tony on the 21st November. This plaque is in recognition for the work Tony put into the theatre, there is not one place his hand has not touched. He created and built the bar, the Studio Theatre and Theatre Upstairs, lighting boxes, the refurbished Theatre Upstairs stage, rake and entrances. From the smallest to the largest jobs, Tony was invaluable. Sadly missed.

Jerry Lyne on behalf of the Committee



Tony Shoesmith
Master Craftsman
10/06/1940 - 20/05/2015

His Fine Handiwork & Generous Spirit Are
Woven Into The Fabric Of This Theatre



CHRISTMAS CARDS

In the spirit of 'A Christmas Carol', we will be selling christmas cards for charity in the run up to the show. Designed by Isabel Aidallbery, the packs are 8 x A6 cards and envelopes (two each of four designs) and will sell for £5 per pack. All proceeds will go to the Clock Tower Sanctuary and YMCA DownsLink Group - local charities supporting homeless young people in Brighton.

This is a limited print run, so first come first served. Please contact tamsin.mastoris@bt.com if you would like to buy a pack.

Our Festival Production **BROKEN GLASS** by Arthur Miller

The audition notice for this beautifully written play is now out in this newsletter and on our website.

This was a later work by Miller (1994) but considered to be a masterpiece, a late flowering, by many commentators and actors alike. Certainly the power of his language and emotion in 'Broken Glass' resonates back to his earlier works such as 'Death of a Salesman' and 'A View from a Bridge'.

I do hope to see you at the auditions. This is not an opportunity to be lost!!!

Thank You
Jerry Lyne

REASONS TO BE PRETTY

Rats in a Cage

It's the buzzer that does it for me. Loud, harsh and completely inhuman, it breaks into Greg and Kent's conversations in the staff-room, insistently summoning them back to work. If they don't move pretty quickly it sounds again, menacing, causing Kent to worry that if they're late they are "gonna get written up" by their manager.

This is the reality of shift work in a twenty-first century capitalist economy. The guys work in some kind of warehouse or distribution centre - it's not specified but the exact location doesn't matter - what matters is that their time, a lot of hours out of every day, is not under their control, it's not their own. In the scenes at work, we only see the staff room, but we hear them talk about the outside; about pallets of products that have to be dealt with, and some of their interactions with other workers. It's like 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead', but instead of Elsinore offstage, it's Amazon or Wal-Mart.

They're working-class men without a decent education and with no obvious career prospects. As are their women - Greg's girlfriend Steph works in a hairdresser's and Kent's wife Carly is working in security at the same warehouse as the guys. Like all office and factory security staff - a uniform, a badge and a torch, and you do the rounds at night checking the doors and windows. Another dead-end job.

The monotony, the boredom and the purely physical nature of the work give these people no sense of fulfilment. But they're human beings, so they need to carve out a personal identity somehow. Carly has a baby coming, so she will soon have an identity as a mother. Steph, though, is overly concerned about her appearance, her need to be as beautiful as it's possible to be: as she says - "I don't have that much going for me, not all educated and smart or anything, and not completely gorgeous, not like some girls out there - but I like what I've got and so I'm gonna protect that"

Kent puts his energy into activities outside work - a space where he can exert some power and influence that his job doesn't allow. Like a lot of men, he finds that power in sport, captaining the company's baseball team, and he finds it in sex as well. He's proud that his wife is beautiful - or rather, he's gleeful that other men find her attractive - but he's driven to chase other women too. He's sleeping with a newly employed young woman at the company, and it's unlikely that this is Kent's first extra-marital adventure. He's totally self-centred, constantly trying to put down Greg, who's supposed to be his friend, and he never allows himself any time for reflection.. A psychiatrist would probably say that Kent is a 'driven personality', but it's the buzzer that defines him for me - he's trapped, he's a laboratory rat in a cage.

The main plot device of 'Reasons to be Pretty' concerns a remark Greg has made about his girlfriend, suggesting that, though he loves her, she is - 'just regular'... Steph's devastatingly angry response is incomprehensible to Greg

- but then Greg's not completely hung up on physical appearance. He has wider horizons than the others, he reads classic literature during his meal breaks - Swift, Edgar Allen Poe, Washington Irving. Greg will escape the cage - at the play's end he's got himself enrolled in a university. As he says - "I could stack boxes all my life, but eventually I'd have to buy a rifle and come through here killing everybody and that just seems excessive" A joke, of course, but with an uneasy edge to it.

One of the best things about a theatre like ours is that we are exposed to around a dozen plays a year. If we're working on them we get to see them close up and we can examine them in detail. I knew nothing of Neil LaBute's work until Tim McQuillen-Wright started work on 'Reasons to be Pretty', but as a result I've now read seven or eight of his plays. This piece isn't a review of Tim's powerful production - I worked on the lighting so I'm too close to comment - but it's some thoughts about the economic system that LaBute is describing for us.

Neil LaBute has a reputation of being a misogynist writer. I disagree - there are any number of anti-female and anti-feminist lines in his plays, but they're all spoken by stupid, badly-educated, self-centred men. The playwright seems to specialise in writing men like Kent, but my feeling is that his real target is not men per se, but rather the economic and educational systems that lead to men and women living lives completely devoid of meaning. As Kent tells his wife, while checking the time - "I don't like doing a shoddy job, is all. If I do then somebody notices and I'm not the guy they call for the extra shifts or the holiday hours or that type of deal ... and you know you like the money"

Money. Driven by the fear of not having enough money to take part in consumer culture. The culture of cars and clothes and being 'beautiful'. But a culture where the pressure on women to resemble catwalk models produces thirteen-year-old girls suffering from anorexia.

In his introduction to 'Reasons to be Pretty', LaBute says - "The play talks a bit about our country's (and by extension, the world's) obsession with physical beauty, but it's really the first coming-of-age story I've written. A boy grows up and becomes a man". In an era of call centres and zero-hours contracts, that story of growth and escape is hopeful. This is a very timely and relevant play.

Strat Mastoris



CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

We're planning on having a Christmas Social Evening on Saturday 19th December. The event will be free and welcome to all members. We hope to have a raffle, as well as a special prize for the most ridiculous Christmas pullover/outfit. We'd love to see as many of you there as possible to join in the festivities!

Anyone willing to contribute to raffle prizes or anything else regarding the evening, please email Scott: social@newventure.org.uk



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 IS NOW
ACCEPTING
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PROPOSALS FOR THE
2016/17 SEASON!
DOWNLOAD A
FORM FROM THE
NEWSLETTER EMAIL,
OR NVT WEBSITE**

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
'A Christmas Carol' 4 - 12 December *Theatre Upstairs <i>Matinee performances on 4, 5 & 12 Dec at 2.30pm</i> <i>All evening performances start at 7.30pm</i>				
'Loot' by Joe Orton 15 - 23 January Studio				
'Women of Troy' by Euripidese 26 February - 05 March *Theatre Upstairs				

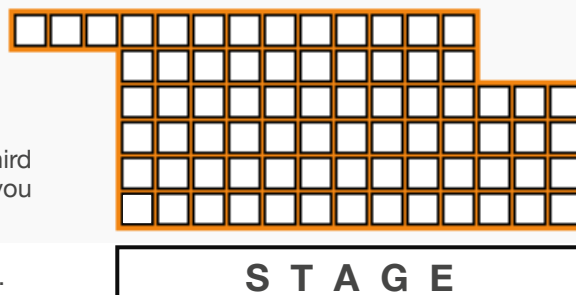
It is important you provide your name, phone number and address, and email address where possible

*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
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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: gerrymccrudden@hotmail.com. 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.

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