

NEW VENTURE

T H E A T R E

COMING SOON | HOW MANY MILES TO BABYLON? by Jennifer Johnston | directed by Gerry McCrudden | 08 - 16 April

WOMEN OF TROY

by Euripides | directed by Ella Turk-Thompson | 26 February - 5 March



Rachael Cohen,
Ruth Tansey, Shaila
Alvarez, Claire
Lewis, Jacqueline
Harper, Rebecca
Polling & Martina
Simeonova

Photo by Jezz
Bowden

*E*peus of Phocis built a Wooden horse – Pegged timbers,
pregnant with soldiers – Saw it dragged inside. Full-
bellied, big with spears.

A common tale, a famous tale, in years to come.

The eternal story of the Trojan women is indeed a common tale: The aftermath of war, the devastation of buildings, bodies and souls, the joyless victory. In Troy, the war is over and the city is burning. The Gods shift their allegiances. The city's once rich and powerful women have been herded together to await their fates at the hands of the victorious Greeks. Hecuba, once queen, has lost everything. Her only remaining child – Cassandra – is running through the city with burning torches, a crazed prophetess. Helen, the catalyst, awaits her fate at the hands of the husband she left, friendless in both camps. The luckless Talthybius, Greek messenger, must close his heart to the women whose fates he comes to tell, even when the orders he bring sicken him.

Euripides' greatest of anti-war plays is not a-laugh-a-minute but what I am discovering with my exciting and creative cast and crew, led by the blazing Claire Lewis as Hecuba, is that it is not simply a sad tale. I am looking forward immensely to exploring the physicality of the piece and the constantly changing mood on stage: Hecuba and the women moving through numbness, grief, anger, love, protectiveness, solidarity, maliciousness, hatred and hope. Words failing and bodies taking over in movement and dance. Sparks flying between Helen and the jilted Menelaus. Cassandra and her madness washing over everyone in a great wave.

Women of Troy is something I have approached with equal joy and trepidation. There are certain challenges: A huge cast, many emotionally and verbally testing roles, seamlessly incorporated song and dance and an awful lot of fire in the stage directions. I am proud to be continuing such an ancient tradition of theatre in such a beautiful space. I am thrilled to be working with such a great and expansive cast and crew and looking forward to the challenge of bringing all the elements together in rehearsal.

Ella Turk-Thompson

MORT

A Performed Reading | 11-12 March

A performed reading of Terry Pratchett's 'MORT'
Adapted for stage by Stephen Briggs
Directed by Dan J Walker

Mortimer needs a job. Perhaps something in farming? There's a reaper hiring but he seems a bit... Grim. Soon, responsibility for a whole world of princesses, priests, wizards, witches and fast food vendors could rest on young Mort's shoulders.

One year after his passing, this Performed Reading is a celebration of Terry Pratchett's life and work, and features one of his most popular and humanitarian characters: Death Himself.



A NEW WEBSITE

For NVT

We are currently in the process of having our website redesigned and would like your input into what you like or don't like about the existing design.

Your opinion is valuable to us. Please complete the short survey on the following link <https://webwise.typeform.com/to/elPy7J> and let us know what you think.

OUR SONS AS WELL

An Evening of Poetry and Prose | Saturday 19 March

“I am the enemy you killed, my friend.”

Wilfred Owen's 'Strange Meeting' reminds us of the human cost of the Great War, and of the individual personalities behind the wartime propaganda and the faceless military uniforms.

An evening of poetry and writing from and about a conflict which affected millions - men and women, parents and children, sweethearts and lovers. The event will feature a selection of poems, letters and prose - some contemporary, some modern - read by New Venture actors and others. There will also be a short extract from the forthcoming production of 'How Many Miles To Babylon'.

The image usually brought to mind is of the trenches of the Western Front - but WWI was truly a World War, sweeping up citizens of many nations. European soldiers of all nations, Indian soldiers of Empire (in France and Belgium as well as Mesopotamia), Turks and Anzacs at the Dardanelles. And all these combatants were supported by families and loved ones, as well as the industries and medical services that underpinned the war effort.

'Strange Meeting' was written from the Western Front, but the shared humanity of soldiers is universal. The monument at Gallipoli reads - "your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well."

'Loot' was a play I chuckled aloud reading on the Northern Line years ago, and so I was relishing seeing it performed as the opening play of 2016 at the New Venture Theatre.

I'd looked up the meaning of 'farce' and its Latin origins of *farciare* actually mean 'to stuff', which it turns out was literally at the centre of the play I went to see in a full matinee house in the Studio theatre. We were presented with a simple but effective set of a room of the McLeavy family residence in which the characters find themselves cornered by events of their own – or no – making.

There were two doors (to the street and the rest of the house), a wardrobe (variously housing a hundred grand of robbed banknotes and Mrs McLeavy's body) and a coffin (containing the same in opposite order – keep up!). Mrs M's mummified corpse posing as a tailor's dummy did the job all too well, which was essential as in its first showing in 1966 the Lord Chamberlain's license insisted that 'the corpse is inanimate and not played by an actress'. It was hard not to gaze at the late Mrs McLeavy being hoiked around the room without some sympathy. One audience member couldn't resist a peek into the coffin at the curtain just to check its contents.

This set design and well paced direction, wholly true to Orton's text, enabled his lethal lines of social satire and farcical drama of the miscreants scrambling to keep ahead of the law to be executed with great aplomb. It only lost a little momentum as the play's plot twists in the last quarter became strained.

'Loot' is very much a vehicle for the characters of Fay (alias serial husband despatcher, Nurse McMahon), the orphaned son, Hal, and Inspector Truscott (posing) of the Water Board (not the Yard). Emmie Spencer plays Fay well: she starts with some great exchanges with the widowed McLeavy, and her wiles, unashamed opportunism and track record of "match" and (quick) "despatch" of spouses means she runs rings around Hal and his bank job accomplice, Dennis. There are periods when it's a shame she's underused by Orton compared with her excellent, centre stage playing of Ruth Ellis in last spring's NVT *The Thrill of Love*.

Hal has the crucial role in 'Loot' for making Orton's simultaneous satire and farce blend and Frank Leon did this commendably. His acting is stretched and succeeds when shifting from delivering deadpan lines – faced with burying his Mum naked, he deplores such 'a Freudian nightmare' – right through to the naïf boy who's never grown up and can't lie where the 'Loot' is hidden, thus failing to convince Truscott that Father Jellicoe is really burying the £104,000 of banknotes

LOOT | review

by Joe Orton | directed by Steven O'Shea



(... by now I'd say it was half-way up the aisle of the Church'). The switch to the violence meted out by Truscott for Hal's insolence shocks well.

Dennis (Jonny Parlett) is the least developed of 'Loot's main characters, but it was interesting to see the careful direction around the homoerotic undertones to Hal and

Dennis's relationship. One concerned physical touch is in line with this underplayed dynamic for Orton, whose text playfully has Fay teasing Hal that 'even the sex you were born into isn't safe from your marauding', with references to Dennis being 'a very luxurious type of lad' with whom Hal is about 'to elope to the Continent'. Yet, Hal is also an aficionado

of brothels and Dennis thinks that his torrid affair with Fay has shown him the way to settle down to matrimony. Yet it is political not sexual anarchy, and societal power plays, that prevail in 'Loot'.

Alistair Lock's lot is hard one. Often in quite static short monologues, the widower has to change register from taking Truscott at face value as the inspector posing as a sanitary inspector ('we can rely on public servants to behave themselves'), through to the indignant householder whose rights to rule in his own home become threatened, culminating in the pennies finally dropping towards the denouement. McLeavy assumes the detective role, realising through identifying the missing glass eye that his departed wife has been defiled and decrying that 'I have reared a ghoul [Hal] at my own expense'. This replays the the dilemma the audience face throughout in judging Hal's actions and morality. Fay has the foreshadowing line to him that 'You'd be some kind of monster' without his mum's influence, but actually Hal is indifferent to stuffing the late Mrs McLeavy on her head in the wardrobe and implores, 'All I ask is an hour or two of Burke and Hare'.

Andy Bell plays Truscott of the Yard consummately. The role has to and does dominate the many scenes he appears in and he equips himself to the usual high standards of his recent Brighton fringe theatre parts. He is at times a dufferish detective in swallowing the dummy (not mummy) plot device, yet sharp enough in catching out Fay by tricking her into revealing her real identity. Bell captures Truscott's unassailable state authority buttressed by crude force to supply the drama and plot drive, but it is the lugubrious menace he imparts in having to reluctantly force his confessions – as per established police procedure – alongside moments of avuncular concern, that is necessary to 'Loot's' success. Bell's demanour reminded me of the redoubtable Kenneth Cranham, who played many inspectors on the stage and television, and who interestingly took the part of Hal in the first London production of 'Loot' in 1966.

McLeavy initially becomes a willing accomplice to Hal, Dennis and Fay's machinations, and then reverts to type not able to face complicity with Truscott, with the poor widower ultimately deciding his own fate when threatening to turn to the safe authority of his priest's confessional instead of taking his share of the spoils. Resorting to type of acquiescing in hierarchies does not bring its rewards is Orton's message.

In fact, Hal's glee at the prospect of his father being hauled off to the police station where he is expected to meet with a fatal accident brings the audience



less to an indictment of Hal and more enlightenment of Orton's position that you get the police that society deserves. For Orton, McLeavy is no innocent victim in the writer's take on lower, middle-class British conformity and deference to public servants. Rather it makes him culpable in society's stifling of Hal, Dennis and Fay's generation's lives and unleashes their lurid enterprises.

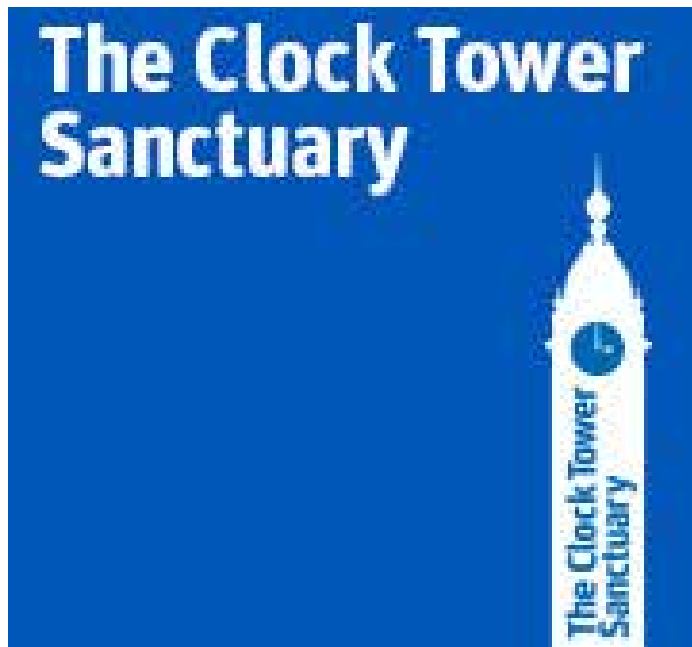
As 'Loot's' epigraph signals, quoting George Bernard Shaw, 'Anarchism is a game at which the Police can beat you'. Yes, while Truscott physically and mentally 'beats' Hal, Dennis and McLeavy, it still begs the question who are the real monsters in the play? The corrupt detective turns these moral tables, asking 'has no one in the house any normal feeling' as he has 'never come across such people' who

behave as if 'affiliated to Bedlam'. Orton decries the family pieties on display and the excellent NVT cast play Hal, Dennis, Fay and McLeavy as devoid of a sense of sin, guilt or immorality. In an Ortonesque world, virtue, if it can be found, is a sham.

Jason Lever

1. Emmie Spencer & Alistair Lock
2. Jonny Parlett, Frank Leon, Emmie Spencer & Andy Bell
3. Andy Bell
4. Emmie Spencer & Alistair Lock

Photos by Strat Mastoris



NVT CHRISTMAS CARDS

Thanks to everyone who bought Isabel Aidallbery's gorgeous NVT Christmas cards during the run of 'A Christmas Carol'. We're pleased to say that NVT raised a profit of £162 to be divided between two charities, including The Clock Tower Sanctuary.

The Clock Tower Sanctuary is the only drop-in service providing all-round information, advice and support to homeless young people (aged 16-25) in Brighton & Hove. They provide a friendly, bright, centrally-located, safe space for young people to engage with their peers and other visiting agencies – without the worry of having to share a service with older people who can be intimidating.

The centre wrote to us to say, "All the support we have had has been fantastic and it is so important for us to get the word out about youth homelessness, which being part of the Christmas play has helped us to do. Thank you so much for all you have done – please pass on our thanks to all the cast, directors and volunteers involved."

This winter The Clock Tower Sanctuary will support over 1000 visits by homeless young people who will have nowhere to call home. £5 can pay for a homeless young person to have shower, wash their clothes and prepare and eat a hot meal. £20 could provide a young person with new shoes or a shirt and tie to attend a job interview/wear on the first day of a new job.

Find out more at www.thects.org.uk

NVT BROCHURE

Correction to Performance Times

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!

February 2016

CASTINGS

How Many Miles to Babylon?

by Jennifer Johnston | adapted by Alan Stanford
directed by Gerry McCrudden

Set in Ireland and France before and during the First World War the play revolves around the friendship between Alec, the son of a landed Anglo Irish family and Jerry, who hails from a very different background. When war breaks out in 1914 both sign up – yet for quite different reasons. They find themselves standing together but once again divided as officer and enlisted man. And yet it is there, surrounded by mud, chaos and death, that one of them makes a fateful decision whose consequences will test their friendship and loyalty to its limits.

Alec
Padre
Alicia - Mother
Mr Cave & Officer
Frederick - Father
Jerry
Blind Fiddler & Wounded Man
Major Glendinning
Sgt. O'Keefe
Bennett
Orderly
French Barman
Musicians

Edward Cave
Adam Kincaid
Red Gray
Philip Davies
Simon Messingham
Fintan Shevlin
Robert Purchase
Jeremy Crow
Culann Smyth
Matthew Mulvay
James Macauley
Mark Green
Adam Kincaid
James Macauley
Mark Green

Broken Glass

by Arthur Miller | directed by Jerry Lyne

Broken Glass is a Festival production and runs from Thursday 12th May, to Saturday 21st, every night at 7:45 pm (except Sunday matinee 2:30 pm) including Monday night.

Brooklyn, 1938: Sylvia Gelburg is stricken by a mysterious paralysis for which her family doctor can find no cause. He soon realises that she is obsessed by the devastating news from Germany where thugs have been smashing up and setting fire to Jewish properties including synagogues. The Kristallnacht. But the event is coiled around what he learns of her relationship with her husband Philip. When the two seemingly unrelated situations collide, a tragic flare of light opens on the age. This beautifully written play demonstrates Miller at his heights.

Margaret Hyman
Harry Hyman
Phillip Gellburg
Harriet
Stanton Case
Sylvia Gellburg

Jen Ley
Olivier Maigniez
Bob Ryder
Lyn Snowdon
Mel Shiri
Janice Jones

THEATRE ETIQUETTE: AN USHER'S VIEWPOINT

An anonymous London-based front-of-house usher shares their perspective on theatre etiquette

Reproduced from www.whatsonstage.com

Original can be found at: http://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/theatre-etiquette-an-ushers-viewpoint_39240.html?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=30nov2015

I've worked on several West End shows and often it's the school parties that are the trickiest as there's no set way of dealing with them. Some schools are brilliant. Most are awful. Schools need common sense when they bring children on outings and should be prepared to be flexible if the theatre staff asks certain things of them. I think a letter should go out before they come explaining how that theatre works: you will get a ticket, you will sit in that seat, you can't just sit anywhere, it's not the cinema. There isn't any of that. We need more preparation.

The extreme examples are when groups just come in with a wedge of tickets and children trailing behind them and a few haphazard adults who are basically on a day out. It's impractical and they get very angry when they can't be accommodated by us in the way they'd envisaged. I once got called a stuck up cow in front of a party of children. The teacher had turned up late and I had explained to her that she would have to wait to get into the show, so, in-front of all her pupils, she called me that.

There generally isn't enough support for front of house staff. It's thought that one duty manager and two theatre managers, at best, per show is enough. But at a huge top heavy theatre on a matinee day it's not enough. And they're regularly understaffed. What is forgotten by certain theatre venues and front of houses is that we are supposed to be the cream of the world's entertainment. We are paid very poorly even though we are the first line of defence and essentially the face of West End theatre.

The theatres sell sweets – great big family bags of candy that make an awful noise and you can't turn it off. It's become all about how much money the theatres can make and how much money they can save.

There's been a lot of drunkenness – even adults in family shows. If you have fun novelty drinks available, people are going to sit and drink them and they are going to get noisy. With phones, it's really hard for an usher to see what's going on from the back of the theatre. Sometimes the lights are only hearing devices but for those people who are really misbehaving, well, I think they should be excluded. Many of my usher friends think we need security, nowadays. I think each theatre should get two designated black suited ear-pieced security guards. Some already do.

I think often we're attracting people to the shows because of celebrity these days. It's the X-Factor appeal. And it's then easy to forget you're in a theatre not a pop venue. I think we should be making good musical theatre people stars of shows, bring back a bit of class.

It's also about keeping theatres clean. In some places I have worked they save money by not doing the pick-up at the end of the evening. If a theatre looks pristine and clean and tidy people won't leave their rubbish on the floor. In many places the carpets are sticky and nasty so the punters just leave all their stuff on the floor. There's no etiquette, there's no occasion anymore.

Where I've worked, I would say around twenty per cent of customers are thoughtful audience members, the rest sadly, are not. People go to excesses these days and we just don't have the manners anymore.

Guest Contributor • London, West End • 30 Nov 2015

THESPS

BY MARTIN



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 director proposals for the 2016/17 season!

Download a 'Proposal to Direct' form from the newsletter email, or NVT website.

The closing date is 14 February.

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
'Women of Troy' by Euripides 26 February - 05 March *Theatre Upstairs				
'Mort' 11 - 12 March *Theatre Upstairs All tickets £6				
'Our Sons As Well' 19 March Studio Tickets £7 (£6 NVT members)				

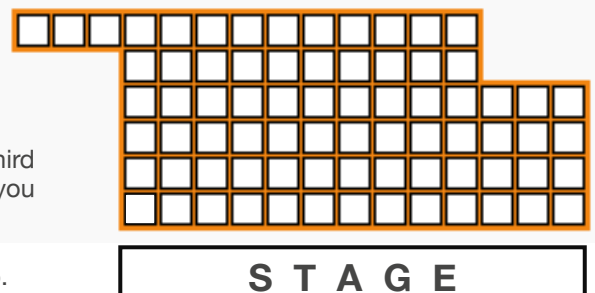
It is important you provide your name, phone number and address, and email address where possible

*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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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.

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