

NEW VENTURE

T H E A T R E

COMING SOON | WOMEN OF TROY by Euripides | directed by Ella Turk-Thompson | 26 February - 5 March

LOOT

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



Andy Bell, Tristan Wolfe, Frank Leon, Jonny Parlett, Alistair Lock & Emmie Spencer

Photo by Strat Mastoris

“Laughter is a serious business, and comedy is a weapon more dangerous than tragedy.”

Joe Orton

On 9th August 1967, Joe Orton was murdered by his long-time partner, Kenneth Halliwell, who then took his own life. These tragic events brought to a premature end a meteoric career with Orton, author of only three full-length plays, dead at the age of thirty-four.

Following the success of his first major work, *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, his follow-up, *Loot*, won the Evening Standard's Best Play award of 1966. The film rights had just been sold for a record sum and he was in the process of writing the film script for the new Beatles' film.

Although his career was cut short, his influence on British post-war theatre was profound, exemplified by the term 'Ortonesque' entering common usage to characterise a scandalous and darkly comedic event or situation.

Loot follows the fortunes of two young criminals, Hal and Dennis. Hal's mother has just died. Having robbed the bank next door to the funeral parlour where Dennis works, and in order to conceal the proceeds of the crime, they hide the money in Hal's mother's coffin. This, however, leaves no room for the body. Their plans are thrown into further chaos when the police arrive in the shape of the psychotic Inspector Truscott.

Orton's macabre masterpiece of black comedy subverts the conventions of popular farce to create a nihilistic, dark, anarchic world which attacks the most entrenched conventions of English society and culture concerning authority, justice, religion and death. Irreverent and iconoclastic, *Loot* represents Orton at the height of his creative powers.

My thanks and appreciation go out to all those involved in the show. In particular to the excellent stage crew and cast; Andy Bell, Frank Leon, Alistair Lock, Jonny Parlett, Emmie Spencer and Tristan Wolfe, and to all those at the NVT who have contributed their time and effort in helping to mount the production.

My hope is that the production may, in some small measure, provide a fitting tribute to a unique talent that was all too quickly extinguished.

Steven O'Shea

From The

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Following on from our three highly successful, though extremely different, Autumn productions, 'The Miser', 'Reasons to be Pretty' and 'A Christmas Carol' we can now welcome in 2016 with the fiercely bright wit of Orton's 'Loot', then the 2500 year old elemental power, combined with present day immediacy, of Euripides' 'Women of Troy' followed by the sensitive, deeply humane, 'How Many Miles to Babylon' by Jennifer Johnson ... all three yet more fine examples from the magnificently wide spectrum of Theatre.

Yet January and February is also planning time, when the seeds for our following 2016/17 need to be planted. The richness and diversity of the plays that we will put on at NVT very much depends on what exciting ideas our directors put forward. The directors' proposals should be submitted by February, for them to be discussed, assessed and giving time for a balanced season to be worked out. So you creatives out there ... think ... be inspired and get in touch with me.

Happy New Year!

Rod Lewis

THEATRE, MAGIC AND PUBLICITY

by Dan Walker

One of Brighton's professional theatres recently asked me to write a few words on "What makes theatre magic, and how can publicity make a difference?" Since we are currently building a new publicity team at the NVT I thought I would share it here too.

Theatre is an incredible medium. It engages both intellectual mind and visceral emotions at the same time. Unlike the passivity of cinema and television it requires the active imagination of the audience, so they can complete the story within themselves – much more like literature than other visual media. Unlike reading a novel, theatre is a social event, with audience and theatre-makers sharing the experience together. Theatre is a profoundly humanitarian, unifying and bonding activity. It may well be the oldest art form in existence, emerging in early-human social groups, predating language itself and contributing to our evolution. Some part of our mind and body responds to this, which is why theatre can become so sublime, as we find truth in the imaginary.

Theatre begins before the audience even enter the building. The words, sounds and images created and spread by the publicity team intrigue and titillate and draw the public in like a trail of breadcrumbs, kindling the atmosphere of the piece within their minds and then building anticipation as they count the days until the show, prepare for the evening and finally find themselves in front of the stage, waiting for the lights to come up. For the actors and crew too, a good marketing campaign reminds them that their work exists not only in the confines of the theatre building, but spreads out into society. As they see words and images and the title of the production in the city around them they feel that they don't simply take part in theatre, but live in theatre too. By bringing the audience and theatre-makers together, the publicity team helps these events to be amongst the most memorable in the lives of everyone that enters the theatre, renewing the cycle and ensuring that such experiences can continue to be made.

Brighton & Hove Arts Council

DRAMA AWARDS

The annual BHAC Drama Awards recognise achievement by not-for-profit theatre companies.

A big congratulations to our production of 'Reasons To Be Pretty' which won:

The Mike Padley Award for Best Supporting Actor: Scott Roberts

Best Actress: Pamela Sian Evans

The Arthur Churchill Award for Excellence

Director Tim McQuillen-Wright would like to say a massive congratulations and thank you to all the talented cast, creatives and crew on 'Reasons To Be Pretty' for their excellent work, drive and ambition on the production. And many thanks to the NVT team for the support throughout.

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.

Did you see 'A Christmas Carol' as a child, a parent, or a granny? We all know Scrooge, the top rated miser. He's as Victorian as a Christmas tree. But does Charles Dickens' play from 1843 say anything to a 21st century audience all a-tweetin' and a-facebookin' through their virtual yuletide? Yep! Select: poetry, politics, or passion.

The play's production (adapted and directed by Sarah Davies) was a poetic delight with every scene a gem. The acting, singing, dancing, lights and music cast the spell. But this was no showy musical in a Box Set – the plot drove the action. The multi-tasking ten strong ensemble, accompanied by an equal number from the youth cast, cut and danced every angle across the stage. Successive scenes had contrasting pace and atmosphere. Wealthy Scrooge (John Tolputt) started in sensible realist tones. Then came white faces gauged with red eyes, fleeting spirits in the dark. The chorus whispered and murmured to an original score, tremulous and probing (Steve Hoar). We glimpsed poor Bob Cratchit's family at the dinner table – frozen like a photographic frame. Below a swaying mast and lantern, sailors coming home for Christmas bathed in purple lighting. Miners underground, waiting for the last shift. Milky faces whirled around an increasingly agitated Scrooge - a bystander to a 3D, three-part, live vimeo of his life. The Ghost of Christmas Past says: 'These are shadows. They cannot see us.' We moved into spectral fantasy. A white sheet made a tombstone. No time to pause.

What about the plot? Politics was everywhere. 'I must attend to my business' Scrooge points out. It's all about profit, loss and value. His clerk, Bob Cratchit, has a wife and five kids – a hard-working family, virtuous and loving. Subtitle: the deserving poor. Contrast them with the destitute vermin on the street who would steal an iPhone from a dead man's body. Yuk. Scrooge inherited money from a business partner, invested wisely in the futures market and was assiduous in his double-entry bookkeeping. He's not a man for bribes or dodgy deals. Yet, he doesn't have much fun with his dosh. Call him anal obsessive but, with a psychological deficit from his childhood, what can you expect? Liven up man! Let's have a party! And that's just what the young hipster crowd of his middle-class nephew are doing. Everything is just dandy. They are

A CHRISTMAS CAROL | review

by Charles Dickens | directed by Sarah Davies



cool and loving - celebs and entrepreneurs - hanging out together with advanced forgiving morality, playing in a band, and gaming with the latest software. It's the economy, stupid!

Or, there's passion. Scrooge's three spirit 'counsellors' take him on a psychological life journey. The implicit question from the Ghost of Christmas Present is: hey! What-kind-of-a-guy-do-you-wannabe? Christmas Past replays Scrooge's lonely childhood which, combined with Christmas Future's vision of his unmourned death,



sparks enlightenment. He understands suffering and discovers empathy. Re-wired as therapeutic New Age: All you Need is Love. Scrooge enters the Ashram, and Bob's family enjoy free bhajis. Meanwhile, Scrooge re-connects with his family, discovers he can dance, and becomes a good guy after all. Sadly, he doesn't get a gal or a guy - we're strictly pre-Hollywood. This alternative remix: unchained feelings provoke benevolence. It's Freud in the temple, stupid!

Dickens understood that poverty was wired into the Industrial Revolution's clockwork. So did he chicken out when Scrooge delivered the gigantic turkey to Bob's house? Brecht might have baked a reduced sugar Happy Ending with lashings of irony. Dickens' plot hinges on rich Scrooge's moral redemption and individual change, which triggered philanthropy. Bob's noble poverty is dissolved for a day - but New Year's resolutions are notoriously fickle.

So, it was poetry, politics and passion – and a packed house. You'd have to be a nerd to not enjoy this. I even felt good to the guy with big legs sitting next to me. And, yes, I'll be taking kids next year. It's Christmas, stupid!

Mike Aiken

1. Lisa Caira, Heather Andrews & Chris Dangerfield
2. Robert Purchase, Lisa Caira, Heather Andrews & John Tolputt
3. John Tolputt, Amy Maynard, Sarah K M Elliot, Megan Batchelor, Ava Aubrey Conboy & at rear Chris Dangerfield
4. Amy Maynard, Jake Cargill, Mark Green & Jeff Moody
5. Heather Andrews, John Tolputt, Amy Maynard & Becky Lewis

Photos by Strat Mastoris



Our Festival Production

BROKEN GLASS

by Arthur Miller

Last call for auditions to be held on 2nd, 3rd and 5th of January.

Production date 12th to 21st May (Brighton Festival)

The audition notice for this beautifully written play is on our web site or click the link at the bottom of the newsletter email.

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'.

Uli and I look forward to seeing you at the auditions. This is not an opportunity to be lost!!!

Jerry
e: jerry.lyne@btinternet.com
t: 07762916888

Uli
e: ulrike.schilling@newventure.org.uk

QUOTE CORNER

"Long experience has taught me that in England nobody goes to the theatre unless he or she has bronchitis."

- James Agate

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

CASTINGS

Women of Troy | by Euripides

The war is over and Troy 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.

Cast:

Hecuba: Claire Skinner
Cassandra: Jacqueline Harper
Andromache: Rebecca Polling
Talthybius: Joseph Bently
Menelaus: Pablo Woodward
Athene: Rachel Cohen
Poseidon: Mark Green
Helen: Shaila Alvarez

Chorus and Dancers:

Heather Andrews
Aimee Humphrey
Alexandra-Roxana Sasaran
Sophie Lewis
Nikki Dunsford
Bethany Holt
Natalie Fowle
Martina Simeonova
Ruth Tansey

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 appologies for any confusion!

CURTAIN UP

The smell of the greasepaint, the roar of the crowd! We talk to some of the people who are keeping the amateur show on the road

Taken from Avanti Magazine (Summer 2015).

Original can be found at :

http://issuu.com/avantimagazine/docs/avanti_summer2015/26

Over this Summer, 14 groups of six actors, plus a director for each group, will find out if they've been selected to work with the Royal Shakespeare Company. To mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, next year the RSC will be touring 12 venues across the UK performing a production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. As part of this the company is recruiting teams from round the country to play the parts of the *Mechanics*, who perform their unwittingly hilarious play within a play, *Pyramus and Thisbe*. The difference is that these performers won't be professionals but some of the people making up the UK's thriving amateur theatre community.

"There's some fantastic and unexpected talent out there in the amateur theatre world," says Erica Whyman, who's the deputy artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company. "It is a real treat to be able to bring the professional and amateur worlds together in this extraordinary tour. I am excited that we are going to be working with such an amazing range of people all over the country to make it truly 'a play for the nation'. It's a glorious challenge to stage this wonderful play with different casts up and down the country!"

Amateur theatre, the term most people prefer to 'amateur dramatics', has always had a huge hold on the UK, from the time of village Mumpers plays. Today, village productions are still going strong, but so are performances of all types, right up to big city centre theatres. "Our research over the past eight years shows that up to seven million people a year attend amateur productions," says Tony Gibbs, Chief Executive of the National Operatic and Dramatic Association, which provides professional support for amateur theatre.

Close to 200,000 people throughout the year in about 5,000 societies are not just acting and directing, but also working behind the scenes, in the box office and front of house, helping with costumes and carrying out a host of theatre related activities. "This is the biggest form of voluntary arts activity in the UK," says Gibbs. "It's a creative outlet but you don't just have to be on stage. All of our members are independently run voluntary groups, relying on volunteer committees. They are usually very social as well, especially in small villages, where the theatre group is often at the heart of the community. It's very good value for money!"

Andrea Bath, who is the Executive Director of Questors, Europe's biggest amateur theatre, agrees. "We're operating with six professional staff and then a whole bank of 600 or 700 keen volunteers, of whom about 150 run the building with us. Some have been with us for around 50 years. It's not just about acting on stage. It's also about working backstage or being a designer." She adds: "Everyone is a volunteer, including those working behind the bar! Our people are incredibly enthusiastic; the only difficulty is sometimes explaining to our insurers that someone is a volunteer rather than an employee."

That's not all. "It's a great way to get involved and see friends and learn new skills, too. Drama makes you think in different ways and helps you tackle some of the challenges in life differently. It's not just acting either; we've got people in their 60s and 70s who came in and started building sets, and are now getting commissions to build sets for professional theatres." It's also a very cooperative enterprise. "It's really noticeable if

someone is ill, in fact, because everyone pulls together to cope. We have members who are in their 80s who are still coming in two or three times a week! Of course, people aren't under a permanent obligation to stay with us but when they're here they give 100 per cent and they definitely enjoy it," she says.

"The quality and production you'll find across the UK spans everything from 'enthusiastic' to 'fantastic' and everything in between," says Gibbs. "It ranges from the annual village show right up to the 300 or so societies putting on productions in big theatres with big budgets (and spending more on a one-week production than the vast majority of professional tours because the theatre hire alone is expensive)."

So who are the people putting in the hours to make sure that curtain goes up? Ian Stark is the chair of TOPS Musical Theatre Company, based in Twickenham, west London. "When I was little, I might be only stepping onto a small stage but as far as I was concerned this was West End theatre," he says. "I loved it, from my first show when I was six (a performance of *Carousel* at York House in Twickenham) and with the exception of one year off to do O-Levels I've been involved in every show since."

In fact, he explains, it's a thoroughly family affair for him, and one that lasts a lifetime too. "My grandfather was the musical director from the 1950s through to around 1980s, when my aunt took over. Now, to come full circle, I'm the chair and I'm directing the next show. I'm certainly not the only one, here or in other groups! I met my wife here and my two sons are now embarrassed teenagers, turning up because the family expects it, just as I was at 16."

Am dram can be cliquey, he admits, so he makes everyone welcome. "We get a lot of retired people and we're happy to take literally anyone of any standard, knowing we can drag a good performance out of them. We're none of us West End level but it's a great opportunity for people who are looking for a new hobby or who've just moved into the area."

Alycia Smith-Howard, who moved from New York to a small Warwickshire village a few years ago, wholeheartedly shares this opinion. Rather to her surprise, she's also found that she loves being part of it. "With a professional background in directing and theatre myself, I swore I'd never do anything like this, but looking back I should have told myself to relax and get over myself. The reality is that it's brought both my husband and me into the heart of our new village. Everyone comes to the performances. The drama group's probably the largest group in the village, and every year we do a variety show, which has been going for around 30 years with the same people still involved."

"We think about it all year, and the rehearsals start in September and we don't look up till the end of November. Then we all complain and we do it again the next year! It sells out every time and people actually queue up for tickets. They go on sale at 7am at one person's house and people camp out on her lawn with deck chairs and mugs of coffee. We've raised buckets for charity and it's great."

There's no doubt that amateur theatre can take over your life. "We have rehearsals for the whole company once a week, some Sunday rehearsals and rehearsals for the principal characters on Wednesday nights too, so for some people it's up to three nights a week," says Stark. "Other companies do a shorter period of two rehearsals for the whole company every week. As chair I'm probably putting in about 20 hours a week, and that's on top of my day job, but I wouldn't change it."

Smith-Howard agrees. "People get involved and have long, extraordinary lives doing amateur theatre. One friend of mine in this village was directing well into her 90s. It really gives people something to focus on and I'm sure it kept at least one of our members going."

"In many places of the UK, in fact whenever you get outside the big cities, amateurs are providing almost all the theatre on offer," Gibbs concludes. "It's not just a hobby, it's a passion."

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 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
'Loot' by Joe Orton 15 - 23 January <i>Studio</i>				
'Women of Troy' by Euripides 26 February - 05 March <i>*Theatre Upstairs</i>				
'How Many Miles to Babylon?' by Jennifer Johnston 8 - 16 April <i>Studio</i>				

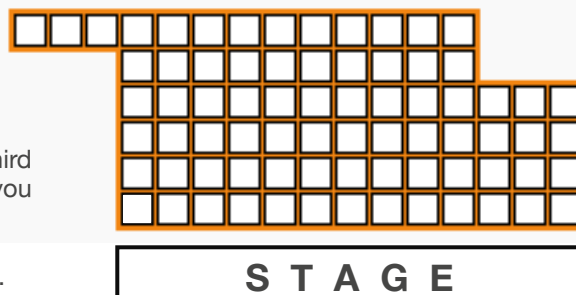
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*THEATRE UPSTAIRS ALLOCATED SEATING

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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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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