

NEW VENTURE

T H E A T R E

COMING SOON | **HOMEcomings** by Harold Pinter | directed by Steven O'Shea | 20 - 28 January

DICK BARTON AND THE TANGO OF TERROR

by Phil Willmott | directed by Gerry McCrudden | 1 - 10 December



Jack Edison, Em-
mie Spencer and
Tom Slater

Photo by Strat
Mastoris

‘**W**ith one bound Dick was free’.

Dick Barton, hero of the BBC’s much loved 1940s wireless serial, is brought back to life in this joyful production to kick off the Christmas season. Staged in the style of a 1940s Radio broadcast.

A ruthless Latin lothario has set his sights on the women of London. No gal is safe from his sultry seductions. Thank heavens that square-jawed British hero, Dick Barton, is on hand to save the dignity and diamonds of our dowagers and debutantes – will the fancy footwork of this foreign fiend and the dreaded EFIL (Evil Foreigners in London) defeat Dick and his pals Jock and Snowy. But who is the real brains behind their mischievous plans? Such is the premise of our show. Younger members of the NVT may not be

aware of the power of Radio (or wireless as we used to call it) in pre television let alone Internet days. I remember, like many others, that my family did not get a telly until the early 1960s, and so we mostly got our entertainment from the impressively designed Bakelite wireless residing in majesty in the corner of the kitchen. There was a wide range of popular wireless shows in the 40s and 50s such as and it was against this background that Dick Barton saw the light of day. Broadcast between 1946 and 1951 it aired in fifteen-minute episodes at 6.45 each weekday evening. In all, 711 episodes were produced and the serial achieved a peak audience of fifteen million.

After the series had been on the air for some time, the BBC (conscious that the biggest audience for the programme was schoolboys) wrote a strict code of what Dick and his chums could and couldn’t do, one clause famously stating “Sex plays no part in his adventures.” Such was its enduring appeal that in 1972 as part of the BBC’s Golden Jubilee, the BBC broadcast a new, abridged, ten-episode version of the very first Barton serial - “The Secret Weapon”. The cast included many members of the original cast. In 2013 they produced a completely new live recording of an original 1951 script.

Listened to in the 21st century the ‘Dick Barton’ scripts can seem very hackneyed and clichéd, almost to the point of parody. It gave rise to a popular catchphrase of the late 1940s “With one bound Dick was free!” which made light of the fact that no matter how dangerous the cliffhanging situation Dick found himself in every evening, he would always escape by the easiest - and usually most contrived - method. This element of parody was grabbed with élan by scriptwriter Phil Willmott who fifteen years ago created a critically acclaimed and hugely successful series of musical comedies. The Tango of Terror was the third of his scripts. Our production will be a bit of a romp populated by a cast of lovely eccentrics of the period. It is pure pastiche and nothing and no one is spared in its wicked caricatures. Some may see echoes of current national preoccupations but I could not possibly say!

I am blessed with a wonderful Cast and amazingly talented crew. Added to which are the dulcet tones of our authentic ‘Mambo Radio Orchestra’ lead by Steve Hoar. I hope it will bring a smile to your face as you commence the mayhem of the festive season.

Gerry McCrudden



MAESTRO FINDS LOST CHORD!

Not content with swiping lovely ladies' jewels, the Latin Lothario currently on the run from Dick Barton has nicked the MD's piano!

But, joy, the lost chord has been found and the songs are well under way. Tune in for the latest instalment, 1-10 December.

You hum it, I'll play it!

Chris Stubbs

Does anybody know a good handyman living close to the theatre who we can use on a regular basis for a range of jobs including emergencies?

If so please email mikestubbs2000@gmail.com or text 07990 514949



FANNYTASTICALS 16 & 17 December

Fannytasticals comprises six, sensational, sassy women keen to entertain you with their distinctly female take on life, love and the universe. Expect some topical satire as well as a twist of the ridiculous and just plain silliness in our hour long show. Join us for songs, sketches, ridiculous rhymes and duologues designed to make you giggle and provoke a thought about life from a woman's point of view. We will be lewd, crude and somewhat rude.

We are not raging lesbians, hairy feminists or man-haters. None of us actually hate men, in fact some of us even live with them! Come and enjoy the pre-Xmas fun!

Sam Chittenden directs Sarah Ruhl's 2005 Pulitzer-shortlisted 'The Clean House' – the latest production at the New Venture Theatre, Brighton. Designed by Adam Kincaid in the still-new Theatre Upstairs it features a simple white sofa and small table, with stage left a balcony. It's magically lit on occasion by Strat Mastoris with Rima Stankute's video FX up centre and raised, mainly functioning as a story-board.

Brazilian Matilde the maid to married doctors Lane and Charles, tells jokes. Brazilian jokes which spoken in Brazilian we're not likely to get. She relates too – in English – how her mother died laughing at her father's joke – though we're not told what it is for health reasons. She searches for the perfect killer line though understandably fears finding it, so seems condemned to infinite jest. Matilde can't stand cleaning, though.

However Dr Lane's sister Victoria does, now offering to fill the empty ritual of her day – Greek scholarship having failed her. Lane discovers the ruse, though not the stray undies the others spot. Lane's solidly devoted husband Charles has fallen in love with older Ana on whom he's just performed a mastectomy. Then wondrously plausible narratives take over.

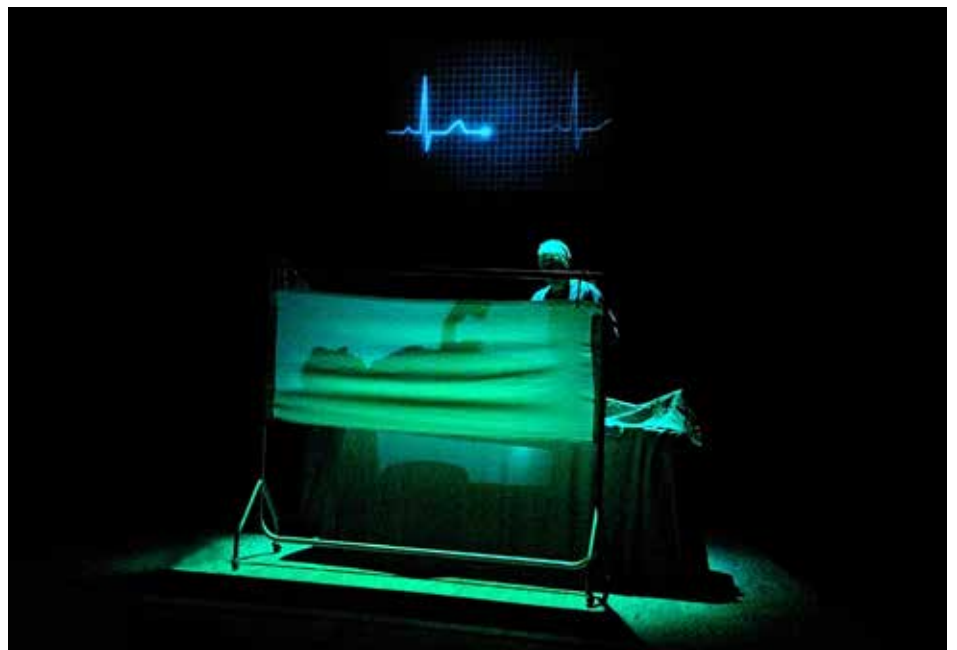
Threaded with Matilde's need to tell jokes – which delivers the plotline – we're treated to how Kerri Frost's uptight Lane unbends, how Jozede Scrivener's beautifully expressive Victoria – each gesture notched to warm irony – bridges subsequent estrangements; how Ana's friendship with Matilde extends beyond apple-picking by the sea – apples are thrown close by the audience – strewn into a path of love and acceptance. The full sheen of this quietly magical drama focuses when the vision clears and an absolute need for jokes assumes an epiphany.

To reveal why Charles shoots off to Alaska to uproot a yew tree, why in 2004 telegrams are sent even from the land of Sarah Palin, would be telling. Minor clunks might be expected in transposing this tale to Sussex, since here a Brazilian and Argentinean are more unexpected, and a trip to Alaska even more surreal than just a hop to another state. It hardly seems to matter.

Shaila Alvarez' Matilde is both personally and physically expressive, like Scrivener able to render something

THE CLEAN HOUSE

by Sarah Ruhl | directed by Sam Chittenden | reviews



aching in a single glance, flecked to laughter. Diane Robinson's Ana (she also doubles as Matilde's mother in dumb show) triumphs in the enormous task of appearing idiomatic in Spanish, and talking English with a strutting opacity laced with Ana's stoic courage. As does Frost's unbending Lane whose

warmth tricks out confronted with something bigger than her personal experience, which she now invites to her home.

Against the authoritative Scrivener, Alvarez, Lane and Robinson, Jeremy Crow's normal amplitude is shoehorned



into a few expressive speeches as Charles, and mute in Matilde's father – his parts aren't the most developed and it needs someone like Crow to flesh them. Crow exudes a puzzled warmth, a baffled ardent awakening to shock him out of his medical carapace.

Steve Hoar's recordings of mostly Villa-Lobos piano music (with a vintage Stokowski of Bachianas brasileiras No. 5) punctuate hauntingly, as does his setting of 'Medicina meum quod est amoris' raptly sung by Crow. Hoar captures the contrapuntal curb and pointillistic wildness of this vast repertoire alongside lesser-known pieces – it perfectly projects the fabulous ripeness of Ruhl's writing as well as this production.

The versatility of some set items – the sofa turning into an operating table for instance – calls for special praise; the versatile FX and lucid unfussy design takes on the shimmering clarity of dream. Chittenden paces this with clean elegance, counterpointing the messiness of existence with the neatness of fable, and the human need to straddle, even celebrate both. She allows this extremely fine ensemble to explore their own weight. Movement too is full of economy so when a character paces across upstage, you know why they pull focus and laugh. We get the joke and far from killing us it offers us a small lesson in loving.

Simon Jenner



1. Diane Robinson, Jeremy Crow & Say Alvarez
2. Diane Robinson & Jeremy Crow
3. Jozede Scrivener
4. Kerri Frost, Jeremy Crow, Diane Robinson & Say Alvarez
5. Say Alvarez, Jeremy Crow & Diane Robinson

Photos by Strat Mastoris

If you do not clean, how do you know if you've made any progress in life?' was the opening quote in the last newsletter to introduce the upcoming production of 'The Clean House'. If this suggested that this 2004 American play by Sarah Ruhl was a gentle comedy of manners, this was far from the case. 'The Clean House' proved to be far from trifling fare, encompassing a story of immigration, sisters with polarised lives, true love and obsessive behaviour as a proxy for female fulfilment. The central conceit of enjoying a peerless joke to fatal excess juxtaposes humour's both life affirming yet also potentially lethal consequences...

The set is centred on the domestic scene of a white settee in a minimalist living room of the plush house of a wedded pair of hospital doctors, Lane (Kerri Frost) and Charles (Jeremy Crow). The former is exacerbated with the slovenly efforts of Matilde (Shaila Alvarez), her live-in maid, to maintain cleanliness and physical order in the house just as Lane's emotional life begins to unravel.

Matilde wins you over from her monologue that opens the play, a slightly unsettling but beguiling device of the writer to signal the housemaid's central role in the events to come. Portuguese speakers would have been ahead of me, as it was excitedly narrated in her native tongue, but some none too subtle pelvic gyrations were perhaps harbingers of the role of passionate love in the tale to come.

A farcical thread comes through Matilde eagerly accepting the entreaties of Victoria (Jozede Scrivener), her employer's sister, to let her come over each day and do the cleaning, a perfect arrangement until Lane comes home unexpectedly and they are caught in the act. The scenes between Victoria and Matilde are beautifully directed and played. During this delightful interplay and later scenes, female empowerment is deployed, near the dusty and neglected surface of Lane's house, as a surging undercurrent of the play.

The sister staves off housewife boredom and an absence of a career through compulsive house cleaning, while Matilde brushes off the label of depression from Lane for the cause of her sloth. She is just rather sad to be cleaning as, she tells the audience, it interferes with the creative process of making up jokes – and not any old jokes, the perfect joke! Their character formation by these fine actors stays just on the right side of parody through a most empathetic treatment of their lives and foibles. Shaila Alvarez is marvellous in portraying the maid's wide-eyed taking in of the world as she finds it. Matilde posits lightly that 'a perfect joke is somewhere between an angel and a fart', yet she is so serious about this quest to honour her late parents' memory back in Brazil and carry on the family tradition.

The staging comes to the fore in the first act when the far left of the stage becomes the café in which she remembers her parents, brought together by shared love of humour and bad dancing, telling each other wonderful and often rude jokes which they can't tell their frustrated little girl. At the scene's end, a lovely touch is her father chucking his cap from past time to Matilde on Lane's settee in time future; and, later, Charles's shirt is hurled from his sea swimming, spontaneous life with his new love, Ana (Diane Robinson) back to moping Lane's living room floor in the parallel scenes.

The script is punctuated throughout by wonderful quips, whether Victoria 'declaring that 'if there was no dust, I think I would die' and Matilde retorting that 'if the floor is dirty, look at the ceiling, it's always clean'. Their secret bonding culminates in the turning point of the play when uncovering Charles's adultery with the gleeful spotting of lingerie in the laundry basket deemed far too exotic to be Lane's, signalling Charles's infatuation with his patient, Ana, and the most romantic and pure affair of the heart to unfold in the second act.

Diane Robinson does not get much chance to develop her character, but quickly sets Ana up as emotive, exotic and idiosyncratic (as per her Iberian roots and Jewish soul) in contrast to the self-constrained Lane. Ana surprises herself in falling for

Charles, as she shares in a brief monologue, given her disdain for doctors who walk too fast and because of the way they smell. Charles inadeptly relays to Lane the metaphysical accompaniment to the mystical power of the joke – the Jewish beshert concept of finding your true, predestined soul mate, that Ana has convinced him trumps all including existing marriage vows.

While rating very highly all five actors in this ensemble production, honourable mention must go to the sixth "member" – the silent movie style caption cards on a back of the stage screen. Deployed sparingly but often hilariously, the captions were reminiscent of Woody Allen films like Purple Rose of Cairo and Crimes and Misdemeanours. Acting as continuity links or providing back story information initially ('Victoria has a deep impulse to order the universe' and 'Charles performs surgery on the woman he loves'), the cards start to have more fun in relaying Charles and Ana's mutual enthrallment: 'They fell in love', followed by 'they fell in love some more', and after another pause, the inevitable 'they fell in love completely', evincing the audience's knowing laughter of this plot device to keep the play moving along towards the third, darker episode of Ana's relapse into terminal cancer.

The set has by then yielded a raised balcony on the right of the stage delineating Charles and Ana's modest love nest overlooking the sea and Lane and Charles's suburban house, as parallel scenes depict Matilde's split time between the two households after she is fought over for custody. While she becomes one of the family and displaces poor Victoria on the settee, the latter does at least have reconciliation with her sister and embarks on a life of classical study in lieu of obsessive cleaning. A highlight of the show was the epiphany of Victoria destroying the immaculately cleaned living room in an orgy of riotous transgression to knock down suburban wifely convention.

Jeremy Crowe's Charles also brings light relief with great aplomb. He can't cope with this medical reality and throws himself into the huge but futile romantic gesture of seeking a curative elixir from a special Yew tree in Alaska. Crowe plays Charles as a hapless explorer driven by unparalleled love: in his clipped upper class tones we knew from 'How Many Miles to Babylon', he records bathetically his telegram home ('Can't get on plane with huge tree. Stop. Need to learn to fly a plane. Stop').

Meanwhile, the growing female solidarity is epitomised by the three women looking after Ana and bonding. Just as she opened the show, Matilde comes back centre stage at the play's denouement, when she enacts a mercy killing on the terminally sick Ana by whispering to her the perfect joke she's been concocting all this time. Just as her mother died of laughing at her own finest joke, this deadly power is passed via Matilde to Ana, her surrogate mother. This is Sarah Ruhl's redeeming yet self-immolating power of humour. Matilde relives her early life, as Ana and Charles transmogrify for the last time to become her parents. For Lane, she is left to reflect on the irony that she and Charles had met and fallen in love as anatomy students over a cadaver, and maybe it is beshert that they look like making up again over Ana's still warm body in their living room.

It was the sort of quirky play, exquisitely staged and formidably acted that some of the younger theatre goers in the audience will I imagine remember in 30 years' time. Not so young myself, I hope to remember the moving scene between Lane and Matilde, when the latter intrudes in her employer's troubling inner thoughts of Charles and Ana kissing passionately (enacted far stage right) and looks aghast at seeing them too! This prompts Lane to reassure her that 'they're just in her [own] imagination', in quite a Woody Allen moment too.

'The Clean House' is a very deserving NVT nomination to the Brighton and Hove Arts Council Awards. It was as delicious a production as the fresh apples picked by Ana, Charles and Matilde in their brief, idyllic life aloft Ana's balcony.

Jason Lever

2016: A TRIBUTE! 31st December 8pm-2am

Join us in paying tribute to this crazy year's events by ringing in the New Year at the NVT's social event of the season! Whether you want to come in fancy dress as something or someone that featured in 2016, or join in the fun by wearing the colours of our logo (black, white and pink), come and welcome 2017 with an evening of entertainment, including live music, laughter, karaoke, and a prize for creativity! We will also be reprising our 'Unwanted Christmas Presents' raffle. So any pressies that need a good home, bring them along and we promise to get rid of them for you.

Please visit www.newventure.org.uk for ticket booking. Tickets £9 for NVT members, £10 for guests. Tickets will initially be restricted to 1 guest per member, we will let you know if more are available nearer the time.



UPCOMING AUDITIONS

The Deep Blue Sea by Terrence Rattigan directed by Pat Boxall

Auditions: Monday 12 and Tuesday 13 December 7:30pm

Hester Collyer is found by her neighbours in the aftermath of a failed suicide attempt and the story of her tempestuous affair with a wartime fighter pilot and the breakdown of her marriage to a High Court Judge begins to emerge. With it comes a portrait of need, loneliness and long repressed passion. Terence Rattigan's 1950's masterpiece is an unforgettably moving portrayal of the destructive power of love and the emotional turmoil of a woman who has dared to challenge the stifling and unforgiving morality of post war British society.

Look out for the audition notice and more details on the website.

If you are interested in getting involved in this production, please contact Pat pat.lyne_47@btinternet.com or Uli ulrike.schilling@newventure.org.uk.

The Real Inspector Hound by Tom Stoppard directed by Mary Allen

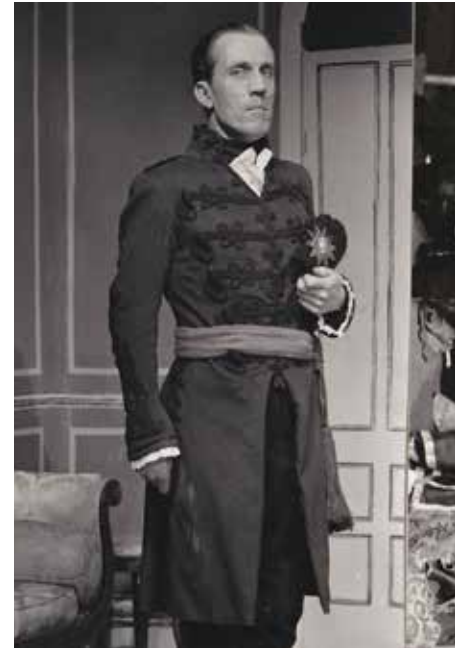
**Auditions: Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 December 10-1 in the
Upstairs Theatre at NVT**

The audition notice for this production is attached to the NVT Newsletter email, or you can download a copy via the NVT website.

NEW VENTURE THEATRE AGM

Saturday 19th November 7:30 pm

All NVT members are invited to attend our Annual General Meeting!



WHO DO YOU THINK THEY WERE?

Some Answers!

Last Season we filled the NVT newsletters with photos from our archive which remained unidentified, and asked our members if they could help name the actors or the productions. Barry Leahy, a previous longstanding NVT member has helped us with the photographs above.

“The first image (top left) which appeared in the April newsletter is my late wife, Marion, with George Ranner in ‘The Pinedus Affair’. I did the scenery for this production which was set in a variety of locations including a car park, a prison, a law court and a banquetting hall. I also had a small part as a policeman.

The next image (top centre) from the same newsletter is my wife again (but this is before we were married so she would

appear in the programme as Marion Ward) as Calpurnia with Ian Middleton as Julius Caesar. I played Octavius Caesar and one of the conspirators.

The final photo (top right) from the July newsletter is Jim Duffel in, I think, ‘The Government Inspector’”



CHRIS GREEN

Chris Green was a member of New Venture Theatre in 1984/85 both as an actor and on the technical team for productions; he continued to support NVT until he left Brighton in 1990 and after that was an occasional audience member when back there to visit his mother. Born and raised in Brighton, Chris caught the theatre ‘bug’ whilst a student at the University of Sussex. By profession he was a museum curator, laterly in Berwick-upon-Tweed, and combined his love of history and theatre not only in projects with schools but also by writing plays that told historical stories. He and I lived in York after he left Berwick and Chris continued to write, direct and act until his unexpect death in October 2015.

A friend of Chris’s and mine visited the NVT on the Heritage Open Day and said that he had seen some material with Chris’s name on it so I am very pleased that you have been able to incorporate it into your archive.

Celia Frisby

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 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
'Dick Barton and the Tango of Terror' by Phil Willmott 1-10 December <i>Studio</i>				
'Fannytasticals' 16 & 17 December <i>Studio</i> tickets £10(£9)				
'Homecoming' by Harold Pinter 20-28 January <i>*Theatre Upstairs</i>				

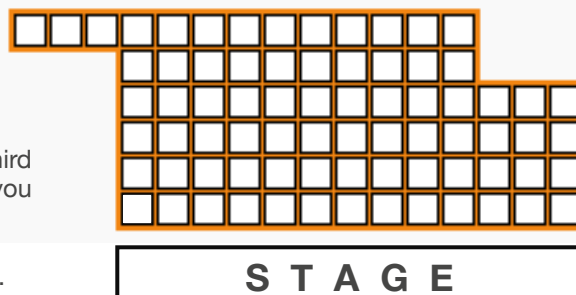
It is important you provide your name, phone number and address, and email address where possible

*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.



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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.

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