

NEW VENTURE

T H E A T R E

COMING SOON | DICK BARTON AND THE TANGO OF TERROR by Phil Willmott | directed by Gerry McCrudden | 1 - 10 December

THE CLEAN HOUSE

by Sarah Ruhl | directed by Sam Chittenden | 4 - 12 November



Kerri Frost, Say Alvarez, Jozede Scrivener

Photo by Strat Mastoris

“If you do not clean, how do you know if you’ve made any progress in life?”

In a ‘metaphysical Sussex’, doctors Lane and Charles have hired a Brazilian housekeeper, Matilde. But she is an aspiring comedian, who’s more interested in coming up with the perfect joke than in house-cleaning. Happily Lane’s eccentric sister Victoria loves to clean! Meanwhile, Charles has a confession about one of his patients, the charismatic Argentinian, Ana. We also meet Matilde’s parents in a series of memories, and learn the bizarre story of how they died.

Dreamlike and poetic, yet acerbic and very funny, ‘The Clean House’ blends comedy, surgery, apple picking and infidelity in a cocktail of magic realism. It is a beautiful play about love, death, laughter and the messiness of life. Sarah Ruhl is a young American playwright who was winner of the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize 2003-2004 and a finalist in the Pulitzer Prize in Drama, 2005.

‘The Clean House’ has received critical acclaim:

“This funny, tender play has screwy poetry and penetrating wisdom, oddball humor, deadpan soap, operatic arias, fantasy, spirituality and a soaring sense of romance. Most of all, it has tremendous compassion...It’s her skill at weaving together the jagged edges of conflicting lives ... that makes Ruhl’s play as rewarding humanistically as it is theatrically.” Variety

A play of “...tart humor, theatrical audacity and emotional richness” - The New York Times

From the first time I picked up the script I was blown away by how Sarah Ruhl deals with difficult and dark issues in a beautiful and often hilarious way, and by the strong women in her story. These are played by Say Alvarez (‘Women of Troy’) and NVT debutantes Kerri Frost, Jozede Scrivener and Diane Robinson. Jeremy Crow (‘Love and Information’; ‘How Many Miles to Babylon’) completes the cast.

‘The Clean House’ is being submitted as the NVT’s entry for the Brighton and Hove Arts Council Drama Awards. Some of the more surreal elements of the play have been creatively challenging, but great fun to put together. We have also had the joy of weaving in special effects, foreign text, video and Steve Hoar’s music direction, to create a multi-textured piece of theatre. It has been a delight to work with a brilliant cast and crew to bring this magical piece of theatre to life.

We hope you’ll love it as much as we do. *Seria bem divertido !!!*”

Sam Chittenden

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Welcome to the Start of our 69th Season!

Many thanks to all concerned with our hugely successful production of Tom Basden's 'Holes' which, with its biting, mordant humour and powerful endgame, and fine performances, got our 2016-17 season off to a rousing start! Once again NVT is abuzz with preparations for our forthcoming shows. Very fine work is already evident in rehearsals Upstairs for Sarah Ruhl's extraordinarily original 'The Clean House' - and the Studio and South Hall resound to mirth and music as our highly talented (and very numerous!) cast tune and hone up their singing and dancing skills to add to our pre Christmas extravaganza, the extremely witty and fast moving 'Dick Barton and the Tango of Terror!' Amidst all this, inspiring work continues with our Youth Theatre Group, and our Acting

Classes and there's a good time to be had meeting up in our fine bar on the occasional, one off, Social Evenings. Plus there will be much added fun when the 'Fannytasticals' (with many faces who will be familiar to us all) zooms in with their hot show.

All in all, a clutch of widely different forms of theatre experience, exciting plays and each in their own way, equally unmissable.

The word 'unmissable' brings me to the next point. Happily our NVT productions have been becoming increasingly popular - so much so that the one refrain I now repeatedly hear is "oh, I really wanted to see that show but it was already sold out!" Those who enjoy NVT's work, and atmosphere, are

wised up and know it pays off to book early!

On thinking ahead; keep an eye open for the audition notices, and signing up for involvement in next year's productions. Remember members are most welcome to attend our AGM on Saturday November 19th and have their say about NVT - and to enjoy meeting friends in the bar - and also note that soon we will be inviting proposals from directors for projects for 2017-18 ... New Venture's Seventieth Season!

Rod Lewis



NVT NEW YEAR'S SOCIAL

31st December/1st January from 8pm-2am

The nights are drawing in and we're starting to make plans...

We'd like to make this a themed costume event, so let us have your ideas. Best idea gets a free ticket.

We've already got some great ideas for entertainment which will include a range of NVT talent (we are hoping to have a karaoke slot - TBC) and as always a late (cheap) bar.

We will also be reprising the 'Unwanted Christmas Presents' raffle which proved so popular last time. So any pressies that need a good home, bring them along and we promise to get rid of them for you.

We will also be looking for volunteers to help on the bar, as before, we just want people for two hour shifts (and if you need any more incentive, bar staff go free...)

So put the date in your diaries, get in touch if you'd like to be involved (tamsin.mastoris@outlook.com) - and check the Newsletter and Facebook for when the tickets go on sale.

See you soon!

Nicholas Richards directs this 2013 play by Tom Basden, a four-hander black hole of a comedy in the NVT Studio, with set designed by Charly Sommers and built by Andrew Paul Smith and Simon Glazier. Shorthand naturalism sassily foregrounds sand, strewn luggage, a jungle fringe and part of a crashed airliner.

One young woman lies prone, another girl of sixteen sits apathetically incapable of speech and a dirt-smeared man nurses a broken arm. When jolly hollering breaks the silence we're complete. These four are the sole survivors of an aircrash, and perhaps beyond.

Robert Purchase's Alpha Male Ian is the hollerer. Purchase has lately cornered the unhinged wannabe and here he beautifully unfastens, at first overbearing and bumptious, and later, something other. Scott Roberts' Gus slides the other way, from competent if damaged rationalist to alcoholic mourner for his lost family: the quartet believe after a confused radio conversation they might just be the only humans left.

Despite having to bury the dead – two of whom as the traumatised girl, Erin finally speaks could be buried separately, being her parents – this promises to be a party. The other three are all en route to a Sydney conference for their diaspora-crunching company; Marie's had the hots for Ian for some time. Kate McGann's neatly self-obsessed Marie moves from sunbathing to slithering up and down near Ian with a large banana to attract his ministrations. Ian however is disturbingly drawn to the unimpressed Erin. As months wear on Marie thinks of having a child.

McGann conveys Marie's three breathy strands with their wisps of narcissism: hedonistic heedless do-nothing sunbather, office HR bully treating Erin as the bottom of the food chain sourcing the wrong kind of food; and her almost comic coming-on to Ian. The last's her most appealing suit: indeed on the face of it there's no reason why Ian shouldn't respond to her attractions, even before she's the sexist woman left on the planet.

Why Ian thinks Erin at sixteen would make ideal breeding stock is a pitch-dark guess, but we've crashed the office on the beach and scene-changes show how gradually the accoutrements of civilisation are harvested discarded and buried.

HOLES

by Tom Basden | directed by Nicholas Richards | reviews



Elsa Noad's traumatised Erin discovers a sturdily sane voice, an even more measured counterpart to Gus, who's lost to her as an ally through his descent into alcoholic singing. When Coldplay's last song cuts out, it's Gus's voice amplified by real tracks in the sound design of Jezz Bowden that plays the

soundtrack of what's been lost, existing only in the survivors' heads. Roberts charts this descent with consummate lurches out of clarity, into the most literal and bleakest of holes.

Erin's fruit-gathering doesn't impress Marie, only the berries, which Gus



warns might be dangerous. Marie though wants to impress Ian. In all the horror there's laughter. 'Berries not a good idea'. Ian's team-leader quips remain intact whatever.

Both Gus and Erin can quote Pythagoras as Ian moves to a bizarre new phase of reclaiming all the knowledge of the world they can pool together from bible to scraps of science. Purchase too unhinges just a notch from bumptious Alpha to psychotic cut-price visionary whose reclamation of human knowledge filters through fatuous Jingoism. His contribution is what his grandfather taught him: Rupert Brooke's 'The Soldier' with its racist assumption of an English 'richer dust' in a 'foreign field... forever England'.

The bleak dynamic triangulates as Ian tightens his grip on the others whilst losing it on himself. The denouements jump-cut and must be seen.

Some of this is predictable (Lord of the Flies naturally), some not. Basden's comic writing remains undented by all the literal and metaphoric holes that Gus claims Ian digs – not least those Basden might dig for himself. Holes sashays between naturalism and fable; even Basden can't quite predict what a year will bring to the balance of his premise though his dramatic instincts don't desert him.

Whilst Noad and McGann strongly characterise their performances, indeed wholly convince, Basden has rather slanted development towards his male protagonists. Roberts and Purchase seize the slithery psychosis of male identity wrenched and debased, and make something special and unforgettable out of the comically horrifying – indeed their performances seem definitive. Richards has produced a sovereign reading of a troubled, brilliantly unequal question mark.

Simon Jenner



1. Kate McGann & Robert Purchase
2. Robert Purchase, Kate McGann, Scott Roberts & Elsa Noad
3. Elsa Noad & Robert Purchase
4. Scott Roberts, Elsa Noad & Robert Purchase
5. Robert Purchase, Elsa Noad & Scott Roberts

Photos by Strat Mastoris

BARRY HEWLETT-DAVIES

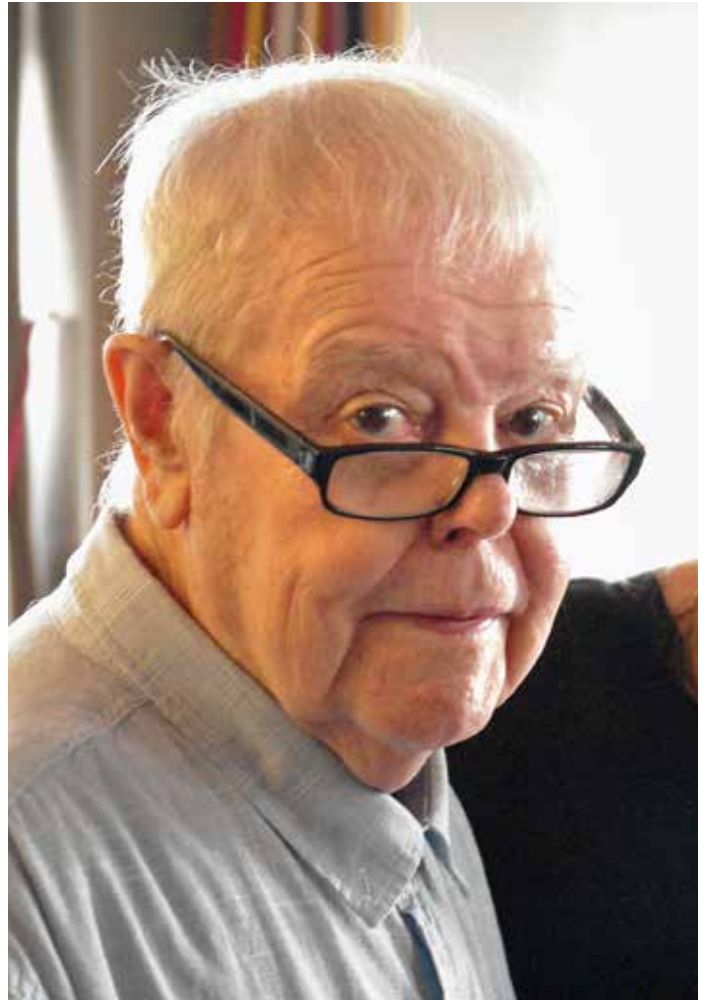
An Obituary

It feels very odd to see Barry Hewlett-Davies's name on these pages, when it's not at the bottom of a review. As NVT members will know, Barry wrote a lot of reviews of our productions for this newsletter. Perceptive reviews - finding fault where it existed, but always with an underlying kindness to them. He wrote reviews on our shows for The Argus, too - shorter of course than the ones he did for us, but still getting to the essentials, often in quite a witty way.

For Barry was a witty man. Over the decade that I knew him, he got quite a number of letters published in The Guardian. Short, pithy pieces, sometimes only one-liners, pointing up the absurdity of something that had vexed him. Witty - when Tamsin and I were in Greece this summer, in Chalkidiki, we got a one-line email asking if the place was 'anywhere near Upper Beeding?'.

Barry had been a professional journalist, on a Birmingham paper I believe, but that was years before I met him in Brighton. I knew him as one half of 'Janet and Barry' (or 'Barry and Janet', always mentioned in the same breath) and I have so many memories of him turning up at NVT to support Janet in one or other of the many plays she's acted in. A gentleman, but also a gentle man, sitting at a table in the bar, peering at me over his glasses as he made some point, always with a slight smile, never seemingly hurried or stressed.

We knew them at their home in Sussex Square, filled with books and theatrical and political memorabilia - staunch socialists both - and on numerous occasions filled too with good friends of long standing, from the theatre world and their local Church. A few years ago we had the honour to be invited to their 50th Wedding Anniversary, at a restaurant in Kempton. An unforgettable day. I have a series of



photographs of an old friend of theirs making the post-lunch speech, recounting a whole set of anecdotes about the couple, and while Janet is convulsed with laughter, wiping away tears of merriment, Barry is sitting calmly, looking up at the speaker over his glasses, slight wry smile on his lips, remembering back over the years.

All of us at NVT who knew Barry will miss him very much.

Strat Mastoris

PROPOSALS TO DIRECT

The New Venture Theatre is now looking for proposals to direct in the 2017/18 season. This will be our 70th season!

You can find a 'Proposal To Direct' form attached to the NVT Newsletter email, or visit the NVT website to download a copy.

The closing date for proposals is Sunday 12 February 2017.

NEW VENTURE THEATRE AGM

Saturday 19th November 7:30 pm

**All NVT members are invited to attend our Annual General Meeting!
Attached to the Newsletter email you can find Proposal Forms, minutes of
last year's meeting, and the agenda for this year's meeting. They can also
be obtained by emailing info@newventure.org.uk**

The closing date for nominations will be Saturday 12 November.

THESPS

BY MARTIN + SEAN



QUOTE CORNER

*"We do on stage things that are supposed to happen off.
Which is a kind of integrity, if you look on every exit as
being an entrance somewhere else."*

- Tom Stoppard

Write in with your favourite theatrical quote to
newsletter@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 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
'The Clean House' by Sarah Ruhl 4-12 November *Theatre Upstairs				
Dick Barton and the Tango of Terror by Phil Willmott 1-10 December Studio				
Fannytasticals 16 & 17 December Studio tickets £10(£9)				

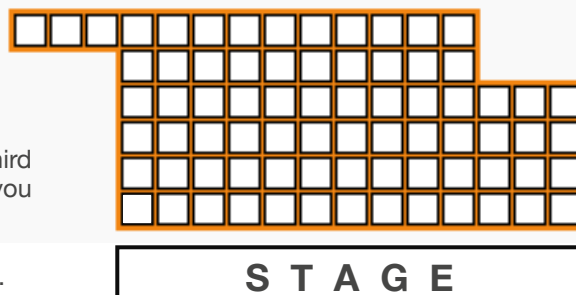
It is important you provide your name, phone number and address, and email address where possible

*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: 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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