

NEW VENTURE

T H E A T R E

COMING SOON | THE CLEAN HOUSE by Sarah Ruhl | directed by Sam Chittenden | 4 - 12 November

HOLES

by Tom Basden | directed by Nicholas Richards | 7 - 15 October



Elsa Noad, Kate McGann, Robert Purchase & Scott Roberts

Image by Strat & Tamsin Mastoris

Holes is 'Lost' meets 'The Office' or 'The Beach' meets Beckett... but with more laughs!

A single-minded and ignorant overbearing office type, a self-obsessed superficial attention seeker and the seemingly 'normal one' are en route to a work conference in Australia, but find themselves crash landed in the tropics along with teenager Erin, whose parents died in the crash.

There's no time to mourn Erin's loss when there's sunbathing to be done, and other passengers' suitcases to loot for goodies. The gravity of the mysterious plane crash is never really digested and is treated as a holiday.

Office politics, ridiculously grandiose survival ideas that know no boundaries and the fate of mankind, are just some of the themes that the marooned bunch of misfits explore on this deserted island as they wait to be rescued. A series of unfortunate events threaten their view of the world, and eventually each other, as everything becomes a micro-managed competition. However, what begins as a comedy, soon gives way to something much more sinister as they are faced with a series of morally complex dilemmas.

What attracted me to 'Holes' wasn't just the story of these dysfunctional characters lost and alone or the boundless comedic moments that encapsulate them. It was also the way in which Tom Basden presented our contemporary world, and how the 21st-century is hurtling headfirst into some sort of catastrophe which we can't see, yet is right there in front of us, ostensibly from a very British stand-point.

I love the way it delves into the absurdities of the human condition but also the fragility of life itself through social, global, political and economic comments that capture the zeitgeist. Despite being written long before Brexit, before flight MH370 went missing, before it all kicked off somewhere else and before it was ok to like Coldplay again, I completely agree with what Philip Breen says in his introduction, 'one of the aspects that make directing a Tom Basden play satisfying and unnerving. Today's jokes become tomorrows' real life nightmares.'

Nicholas Richards

HAMLET

The Greatest Theatre Tour on Earth | 1 October 7:45pm

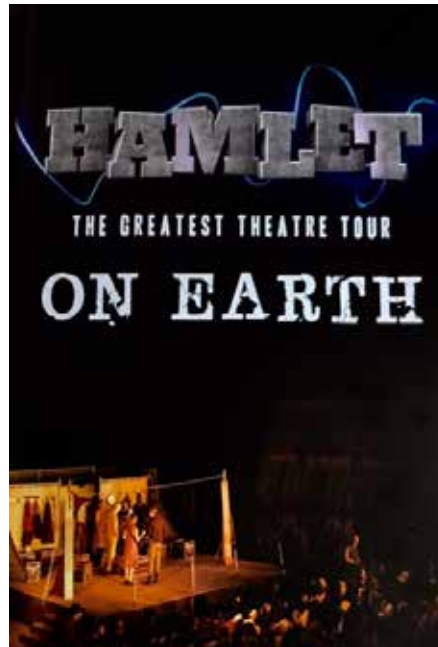
The Shakespeare's Globe 'HAMLET' company travelled over 300,000 kilometres and played 293 performances in 197 countries over a two year period - surely the greatest theatre tour on earth!

They performed at the United Nations, and to the good and the great all over the world, including President Obama. Venues ranged from prestigious theatres to makeshift spaces in small Pacific Islands, throughout Africa, the Middle East and beyond.

Acclaimed RSC and National Theatre actor Keith Bartlett, one of the actors who played *Polonius* and *Claudius*, will give an illustrated talk telling some of the incredible stories from the tour. Come hear about the madness and the magic!

Keith Bartlett was greatly impressed with the work of the charity Mary's Meals when they performed in Malawi. This charity provides meals that feed over a million deprived children per

day in local schools throughout Africa. Tickets available now - all ticket sales will go to Mary's Meals to support their work.



NVT Social Calendar

Saturday 24th September
First social svening of the new season
(South Hall Bar)

Doors and Bar open from 7pm, come in for a chat and a catch up. Bar open until 11pm.

Friday 28th October
Second social svening
(South Hall Bar and Studio)

Doors and Bar from 7pm
New members especially welcome!
The first hour will be focused on you and your interests and ambitions at NVT.

NVT Quiz - Test your knowledge against our very own Quizmaster. There will also be a performance of a Harold Pinter short play; "Victoria Station" during the evening. It runs about 15 mins, not including any laughs we might get. Laugh with Pinter? Can it be true? We'll see...and it's free...

Dennis Evans was a long standing member of NVT. In his time he held a number of roles including Artistic Director and Secretary. He also developed a long association with Sussex Playwrights assuring a long and beneficial relationship with NVT. Over many years, he appeared in numerous productions, being a fine actor and much in demand. He also produced and directed a large number of successful plays, winning awards for his productions.

It is because of the hard work by people like Dennis that we find ourselves in a relatively strong position both organisationally and financially. Denis did not forget the theatre in his will and we received a **£2000** legacy from Dennis which will go towards improving our facilities at theatre. In recognition of Dennis' legacy the committee has decided to make him a Posthumous Arch Angel.

Jerry Lyne

DENNIS EVANS

A Legacy



Please look out for more info on our Facebook page regarding other social events coming up, including this year's AGM, more fantastic productions and our New Year's Eve party.

Dennis Evans
as Gloucester
& Derek Mason
as Lear in Martin
Nichol's Yr. 2000
Production of
King Lear

Drama is to entertain and excite: Ideally, it reflects and informs. Occasionally, it frightens. 'Love and Information' managed to do it all. In 28 bite-size dramas selected from Churchill's original 50, some of the grimmer aspects of modern life were held up to the spotlight - primarily our obsession with computers, television and mobile telephones.

The title comes from two characters in bed together who decide that love and sex are nothing more than mechanisms for passing on variant genetic information. The unappealing notion reflects a modern speed-date courtship with no time to spare, any more than the audience had time to grasp the bewildering rush of ideas, presented with dazzling skill and superb direction. Tiny fragments of drama, spoken, filmed or mimed, flashed around the stage, registering on the retina before our brains could process the result. Nine actors flew into constantly changing characters, hurling themselves into airport lounges, Scottish wilderness, school classrooms, wedding parties or bedrooms - when not glued to small screens. All shared equal status: no starring or central roles, no walk on parts or spear-carriers, just nine actors dressed in uniform black against constantly changing back projections of brilliant imagination. NVT newcomers Elsa Noad and Charlotte Sommers joined a familiar crew of Scott Roberts, Amanda Harman, and Jeremy Crow together with recent members Daniel King, Amy Onyett, James Newton and Dottie James to jump in and out of beds, chairs and sofas with minimal props and fragments of costume accessories, usually at breakneck pace and always with choreographic skill.

Not all the scenes were bleak. There were some surreal moments of comedy, real or incidental - one of the best laughs of the evening came from a character who announced that they lived in Brighton because you could get there easily by train. Scott Roberts was convinced his virtual girlfriend was in love with him, and Amanda Harman was hilariously unworried by the dissection of a chicken's brain. Playlets of varying length from dialogue to monologues, two lines or two minutes, even occasionally entirely silent mime, managed to be touching or poignant, sad or comic, actual or virtual. One continual thread was communication - or the lack of it.

The script was written without directions, which allowed Kirsty Elmer and her superb cast and crew

LOVE & INFORMATION

by Caryl Churchill | directed by Kirsty Elmer | reviews



a completely free hand. Their skill and creativity produced an evening of dramatically exciting episodic theatre. But - the stroboscopic nature was disturbing and ultimately less than entirely satisfying in human terms. Perhaps that's the point: information overload demands an ever-shorter attention span just as our ability to

connect electronically risks isolating us personally. We are in danger of moving so fast that we have no time to develop either ourselves or our relationships. Brave New Venture, scary new world.

Louise Schweitzer.

Caryl Churchill's 'Love and Informatio'n continues NVT's championing of our greatest living playwright, actively our finest since the early 1980s.

Churchill's text has seven sections and a 'Random' one at the end, a grab-bag of tiny shorts. You can take any number of scenes from each section and in any order, but the one instruction is to sequence the sections in order, and this director Kirsty Elmer doesn't do. With so many variables open to her it seems a bit churlish - however esoteric that instruction might seem, Churchill knows the limits of her randomness. Still, that said it doesn't harm the dazzle of either Churchill or Elmer's vision.

This work broaches the limits of our capacity to take in information with overload and technical saturation, in a play designed to replicate intravenous Taurine on ice, a thrilling chilled-energy drink ride-till-you-crash info-freeway absorption: scenes of aspiration turned, declaration falling flat, news deferred or accelerated, destruction of hope, solitude and every human condition imaginable, quite apart from the many not seen here buzzing to be let in - Elmer brings out the feel that the work could expand and of course it could, almost to half a day.

This production works superbly for the most part, Elmer consummately alert as to how Churchill's drama requires this rapid dissolve through the twenty-eight sections she's chosen. The nine actors mill around in musical chairs interludes (chairs and sofas also wheeled on and off) and settle often into duets - Churchill doesn't designate lines to speaker - and some of it thus come across like Turgenev's duets on a trip.

Elmer and her cast improvised to trick out what the bare texts mean: Churchill liberates you but there's huge work here. Thus in 'Ex' the couple in bed (a vertical hanging with an enthusiastic Charly Sommers and Jeremy Crow) have had sex again after many years, but the touching conversation ends with Noad peeking at her mobile increasingly. 'Sex' has a sexual prelude so a discussion of generation becomes more bizarre than it might, taking a hint from the text.

Others like 'Virtual' and 'Schizophrenic' more easily play themselves. In both these Scott Roberts shines as the weirdo fixated on a love interest which turns out to be a computer (his sceptical friend King appears on screen, a



superbly synchronized affair); and in the latter he's creepy, threatening. Others like 'Memory House' with the fine Daniel King and Charlotte Sommers (excellent elsewhere too) require a little dumb show of imaginary items. 'Savant' too proposes the human engines we create to deal with memory organically and compete with machines. 'Facts' which ends the entire sequence in Churchill is here moved to end the first half, where the screens tell us we're in a departure lounge, forever. King tests Noad on unbelievably arcane facts, even formulae, as if they've been there a millennia. And she breaks out in an affirmative answer of love to a popped question set earlier in the middle, then goes on to answer the more difficult-than-usual question in a blink.

Others eschew the very information the work tackles, as in 'Remote' where Amanda Harman mordantly strips away her visitor's questions, no signals of any kind penetrate here. 'Mother' where Amy Onyett and Dottie James interact as sisters at the opening and mother and daughter at the end where the newly-branded daughter (thirteen years younger) dismisses the new relationship: 'I don't think this works.' The simple 'Terminal' with Noad and a bleached-out dignified Onyett etches Onyett's tricking-out from Noad's detached doctor just how long she might live. It's over in five lines. Sommers and Scott Roberts end the production's sequence with 'Grass' about informing on a friend.

Each cast must flesh and reinvent these disembodied meditations. Churchill's challenge emulates the information

overload in its disembodied text that demands actors and audience collaborate with giving them a local habitation and several names.

It's an exceptional production, with only tiny quibbles about vocal projection - two or three times it dropped just below audibility on punch-lines. It's true Roberts had two prime parts, but he handled them with squirmingly good finesse. Sommers too brings presence and clarity. Others like Crow approach this level, and Harman's stillness is charismatic.

This isn't going to become one of Churchill's best-loved plays, since we naturally tend to anchor preferences in her realised characters. But here Churchill negotiates just what love, information and conveying anything meaningful might be, and the forces in ourselves that conspire to negate this. Dazzling in depth, and fleeting caveats aside, Elmer's production could hardly be bettered. Her remix works; everything she touches at NVT brings a pristine singing surface so we see the drama more clearly, like mercury stilled. Yet there's a fibrillating heart.

Simon Jenner

1. Amanda Harman, Jeremy Crow, Daniel King, Amy Onyett, Dottie James, Charly Sommers, James Newton, Scott Roberts & Elsa Noad
2. Charly Sommers & Jeremy Crow
3. Daniel King, Elsa Noad, Amanda Harman, Amy Onyett, Jeremy Crow & Dottie James

Photos by Jez Bowden

NVT HERITAGE OPEN WEEKEND

A Successful Weekend!

In September, NVT took part for the first time in the annual national Heritage Open Day scheme, opening up our doors for both members and the general public to explore our building and find out about our theatrical history. We welcomed over 80 people across the weekend who took part in free tours of the building, hosted by the inimitable Gerry McCrudden, and browsed through our archive displays in the South Hall.

The tours were treated to a unique behind the scenes view of NVT, including a journey into the mysterious world of NVT's props with propmaster extraordinaires Mark Green and Leanne Mackenzie, plus a chance to look in on the rehearsals and the set build for the forthcoming production of 'Holes'.

Many of the people attending were new to NVT, two of whom became new NVT Angels. Thanks are due to Tim McQuillen-Wright and Martin Nichols for the loan of various pieces of NVT history, and to the many volunteers who helped out with FOH, Box Office, and the bar.

Alex Epps

Our burgeoning archive proved a popular attraction with visitors during our National Heritage Open Day events. Indeed during the Saturday I was able to take possession of two posters from our 1951 production of 'The Merchant of Venice' and our 1952 production of 'The Day is Gone'. These were found in the attic of Montpellier Hall which used to be the home of NVT stalwart and supporter Alwyn 'Mac' Beasley. The posters were handed over by West End director and choreographer Carole Todd, and by Roger Amerena of The Brighton and Hove Heritage Commission. Roger is the current owner of Montpellier Hall. We are grateful to NVT Angel Christopher Jessop for generously providing the funds for us to buy these wonderful posters for posterity. Do have a look at them when you are next in the NVT!

Some others have also come forward with contributions to the Archive. Trish Bayliss, our former props woman extraordinaire, has given me the minutes book from the first meetings of the NVT in the late 1940s - it was found under a floor board and make fascinating reading.

On the next page you can read about

Paul Middleton, and his parents' involvement in the NVT - Paul is the son of the late Mollie and Ian Middleton. Mollie sadly passed away a few months ago and I have hung a photograph of her in the stage door corridor. Paul is planning to present us with papers from their family archive once he has sorted through them.

My thanks must also go to Delia Spinks (Cholerton) for her donations, and to Celia Frisby for donating 1980's production photographs. Also thanks to Paul Ritchie for sourcing a missing programme on eBay!

Thank you everyone. Hopefully our archive will be as complete as it can be in time for our 70th anniversary in 2017.

Gerry McCrudden



WHO DO YOU THINK THEY WERE?

Some Answers!



Page 6 of the July 2016 NVT newsletter posed the question “Who do you think they were?” A chance comment led to the NVT archiving team meeting up with Paul Middleton, the son of Mollie and Ian Middleton - who were stalwarts of NVT from the first production in Bedford Place in 1958 right through until the late 90’s.

Paul himself was involved with NVT in the early 70’s and following the recent death of his mother Mollie had been sorting through his late parent’s archives and had rediscovered a gold mine of programmes, photos and press cuttings. He was able to easily answer the question in relation to the top left picture which featured his mother Mollie Faulkner (her stage name, as she was an Equity member), and Gerry Whitmore seated as “The Young Woman” and “The Young Man” in “The Life and Death of Almost Everybody” by David Campton. The lady standing behind is probably Eileen Miller playing “The Aunt Harriet”.

An interesting aside note for this production was that the play was performed as part of the 1972 Brighton

Festival at the Pavilion Theatre, where the Brighton and Hove Repertory Company – which was the name for the group, originally performed its productions in the 10 years before it settled in Bedford Place.

Paul visited the theatre in July this year for the first time since he left Brighton to go college in 1975. He now works as a professional lighting designer for TV, theatre, conferences and exhibitions. He spent some time looking through the archives and identifying a number of pictures of previously unidentified productions. He reminisced that the main theatre upstairs had undergone several changes over the years. As can be seen from some of the pictures from the early 60’s the stage was originally built with a normal proscenium layout with a row of footlights straight across the front of the stage and a row of overhead battens as the main source of lighting. By the start of the 70’s some new thinking saw the front of the stage brought forward with the footlights being rearranged to bring the front of the acting area some 4 feet further towards the front row of the audience, whilst the tabs (stage curtains) were kept in the same place. The advent

of electronic thyristor dimmers (which were first installed at Glyndebourne Opera in 1964) saw the replacement of the old large wirewound dimmers at New Venture with twelve new Strand Electric Mini-2 dimmers and a control panel that allowed the operator to see what the lighting looked like whilst sitting in the audience during rehearsals. The footlights and battens were removed and replaced with a number of Strand Patt 23 and 123 lanterns. Take a look at the <http://www.strandarchive.co.uk/> for more details.

Paul and his father also rewired the lighting and installed a special control box position that had a reasonable view of the stage, from what would have traditionally been called a “Perch” position on the Prompt side of stage (Stage Left). The sound control occupied a similar position on the OP (Stage Right) side. As well as the dimmers there were special switched circuits to allow UV lamps, fans etc to be remotely controlled as well. Sound effects were played live from records and mixed in the same way as a DJ works.

Paul went to the Brighton and Hove Grammar School on Dyke Road where he was also involved in lighting the annual school productions at Christmas time. In order to boost the amount of lighting equipment available at the school and at the theatre he negotiated a loan agreement whereby lights could be borrowed from each venue when not in use, which at the school was about 48 weeks per year...! For one show - which required extra lights front of house he arranged to borrow a 12’ long bar from a local scaffolding company for a few weeks. Lacking a lorry to move it from the school to the theatre he, and a friend, had to carry it on their shoulders through town and then negotiate it up the back stairs into the theatre.

As well as lighting Paul also worked with his father on the stage management and set design of productions. One production called ‘The Witch of Endor’ required the witch to be spotted by a soldier who was supposed to fire at her from off-stage, killing her just before the curtain came down. The gun used was an old starting pistol with .22 blanks, which was not very reliable. On the last night, despite three attempts to shoot the witch the gun refused and the Witch had to adlib and collapse with a sudden heart attack!

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
HAMLET: The Greatest Theatre Tour on Earth 1 October *Theatre Upstairs Tickets £9 (£8 Members)				
'Holes' by Tom Basden 7-15 October Studio				
'The Clean House' by Sarah Ruhl 4-12 November *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.

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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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