

NEW VENTURE

T H E A T R E

COMING SOON | ANTIGONE by Sophokles | Directed by Sam Chittenden | 6 - 14 October

SHORT PLAY FESTIVAL

Six Writers | Six Directors | 21-29 July



Photo by Dan Walker

This year, NVT continues its tradition of offering high-quality, original and exciting work to Brighton audiences by developing the skills of new writers and directors.

The work of six emerging playwrights has been placed in the hands of six carefully-chosen first-time directors, each of whom will take the fresh visions from page to stage.

Sarah Charsley, Sam Chittenden, Michelle Donkin, Amy Onyett, Nicholas Richards and Charly Sommers were guided and mentored through the editorial process, conducted at a level they would experience if aiming to present their work on a professional stage.

The 15 to 20 minute-long plays have been crafted to a very high standard, workshopped – a number of the NVT's acting members have given their time and effort in trialling the writers' ideas – and given into the care of new directors Jeremy Crow, Erica Fletcher, Sabrina Giles, James Macauley, Tom Slater-Hyndman and Emmie Spencer, each of whom brings to the process their own expertise in other areas of

dramatic working. They were also offered support from more experienced director colleagues as they worked with many of the company's talented actors to bring the plays to life.

Artistic Director Rod Lewis, explains a little more.

"Some years ago, a young writer, Rebecca Porter, approached us at NVT because she wanted to develop her writing, and she presented something that showed exciting promise.

"I'd worked professionally with new writers before, and co-opted Barry Purchase, who has 30 years of writing experience and a couple of BAFTAs to his name, onto the project.

"After some hard workshop sessions, Rebecca's work was presented for further development to the Royal Court New Writers' scheme and was eventually performed there.

"Following her success, we decided to offer the same professional level of help and support to other local writers, whose work has impressed me, and six directors to take the work on, four of whom are highly-proficient actors, two of whom have stage-management backgrounds. We offered them an approach based on the level of rigor and hard work they might expect if they submit work to professional theatres, TV or publishers."

Chairman Ian Black was largely instrumental in the festival being brought to the stage, and has also handled expertly a lot of the organisation required to bring this exciting festival to fruition.

"I'm delighted," says Rod "that our final production for our adventurous, highly successful 2016/17 season will be another new venture. The Short

Play Festival has given opportunity for the expression and development of yet more exciting talent. Introducing this excellent work, I'm confident that with its fine quality mix of tragic and hilarious pieces it will provide our audiences an evening of dramatic pleasure. Heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed so much to our 2016/17 season.

Some of the directors/ writers offer a taster of what you can expect:

Emmie on Moving Slowly:

"Moving Slowly is set in a BBC radio studio in 1956 where we meet Amanda, presenter of The Shipping Forecast. The play, a female two-hander, explores the themes of loss and purpose amidst the politically charged backdrop of the Suez Crisis."

Sam on Moving Slowly:

"The outlook looks unsettled as a radio announcer considers her 40s."

Tom on The Dopplegänger:

"Nick's script was laugh-out-loud funny, and I want to make sure the production keeps that fun, light, humorous element while communicating some of the darker themes at play."

Charly on The Swing

"The excruciating details of my friend's foray into the world of swinging were cringeworthy... and inspiring! As soon as the story came to what I'll knowingly call its climax, I thought, 'That absolutely could be a play!' The Swing is a toe-curling comedy about the peaks and troughs of a couple of first-time swingers and their more experienced counterparts. Writing it has been enormous fun, and I can't wait to see where James takes it with his fantastic cast."

James on The Swing

"It's a story of sexy revelations, a bowl of Wotsits and a potato masher. It's an incredibly funny play"

Jeremy on You'll Do

"After five years together, two years engaged and a year of planning, Hannah and Matt have finally reached the altar. Matt's mum and dad have declared a temporary truce, Bob and Sue have spent a day on the motorway, and great aunt Vera's been practising her moves. Will the day go without a

hitch?

Sarah's witty, sharply observed comedy asks what couples are really looking for from their wedding day, their marriage and one another."

Erica on Impact Statement

"...if I do it, it's got to mean something, say something...it has to be good words, clever and meaningful...if I don't do it, it's like they're judging me and not, not him."

June is struggling to write a victim's impact statement to read out in court the following day.

Her daughter Helen is with her to support, encourage, to get her to eat.

This is an intricately detailed study of a mother and daughter. By focussing on that detail, we're uncovering the beautiful complexity of the relationship; what is spoken, possibly for the first time, often for the hundredth and what is left unsaid."

Bryony Weaver

THE PLAYS

YOU'LL DO

by Sarah Charsley | Directed by Jeremy Crow

THE SWING

by Charly Sommers | Directed by James Macauley

MOVING SLOWLY

by Sam Chittenden | Directed by Emmie Spencer

SORRY

by Amy Onyett | Directed by Sabrina Giles

THE DOPPLEGÄNGER

by Nicholas Richards | Directed by Tom Slater-Hyndman

IMPACT STATEMENT

by Michelle Donkin | Directed by Erica Fletcher

NVT HERITAGE OPEN WEEKEND

Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th September 2017

NVT will be taking part once more in the annual national Heritage Open Days scheme, where historic and unusual buildings across the country open up to the public for free, inviting them to explore their unique architecture and histories. It's a once a year chance for hidden or forgotten historic buildings to fling open their doors and show off their unique history and charm which, as we all know, the NVT has that in spades. Over 80 people attended our HOD weekend last year, many of whom were unfamiliar with NVT, and received

two generous financial donations.

Over the 9th and 10th, there will be tours of the building, fun activities exploring all aspects of life at NVT, and the chance to delve into the archives of our theatrical history. Look out for updates on the NVT website and Facebook page of our full list of activities and how to get involved.

Alex Epps



Proof, an acclaimed drama by American playwright David Auburn, explores grief, mental illness and family ties against an academic and mathematical backdrop. It is a family drama that shows the weight of genius, and the difficulty of trying to prove oneself and find validation in the people around us or from a world that thrives on insecurity.

Catherine (Marie Ellis), daughter of a celebrated mathematician, Robert (Bill Griffiths), is mourning his recent death after his battle with an undefined but all-consuming mental illness. Catherine struggles with her loss while also trying to step out of her father's shadow and prove herself as a credible intellectual force in her own right. Catherine abandoned her academic career so that she could care for Robert, and only when his death opens the doors of possibility again does resentment begin to bubble inside her. She is also fighting against her older sister Claire (BrigetteAne Goddard), who tentatively tiptoes towards moving Catherine to New York with her, fearing she might be suffering from or developing the same illness that consumed their father and robbed him of his genius. And then there's Hal (Robert Purchase), a former student of Robert's with affections for Catherine, who, while reading through Robert's innumerable notebooks in the hope of finding some of his professor's best work, stumbles across a book full of Catherine's best work. However, Hal struggles to believe that the groundbreaking calculations are indeed Catherine's. This issue takes somewhat of a backseat to the emotional drama that gently rolls out during the play, and as such is one element that feels undervalued throughout the piece, despite its importance to the central character.

The set is simple: just a shabby back porch with two chairs and stacks of magazines. Michael Folkard's design, coupled with Dan Walker's lighting design, created a soft, mellow ambience, gently lending impressions of place and season. Its simplicity allowed the intricate script to speak volumes, its stillness quietly mirroring the suspended state of Catherine's life during her father's illness and after his death.

Catherine is a strong central character whose wings are clipped by those around her, and at a time when she is questioning the direction her life has taken, so much about herself is being questioned too; her sanity,

PROOF

By David Auburn | reviews



her mathematical genius, even her handwriting is under contention. Trust, or the lack of it, quietly brews in the centre of the Proof.

Marie Ellis deftly balanced Catherine's strength and insecurity. She delivered a passage, both passionate and self-conscious, about Sophie Germain, a Parisian woman born in 1776 who confounded mathematicians of the time with her superb



mathematical ability. Catherine speaks of an idol and delicately foreshadows the latent sexist attitudes Hal betrays in his denial of her abilities. He seems constantly on the brink of refuting her talent because she is a woman, however, it's a bullet that threatens in the barrel, but is never fired.

Purchase delivered an endearing performance as Hal, his portrayal at once charming and comedic, with an innocent, jittery awkwardness that juxtaposed his invasive and at times insensitive behaviour.

Hal occupies an interesting space in *Proof* in the sense that his mistrust for Catherine is reflected back on him by the audience, who cannot trust that he isn't using Catherine and Robert's work for his own gain. He seems to assign love (or perhaps simply lust) for Catherine and respect for her father, and there is no intersection until he, somewhat patronisingly, concludes that the proof must be Catherine's. It's only then, almost with Hal's permission, that Catherine is allowed to express her talent.



Somewhat on the outskirts, BridgettAne Goddard embodied Catherine's glamorous, confident and successful sister Claire without ever seeming arrogant, delicately expressing a deep love and concern for her sister, but a cold lack of understanding for her vulnerabilities and sentimentality. Suggestions of doctors and institutions make her insistence that New York is the best place for Catherine sinister.

For the story's tragic catalyst, the audience only acquaint themselves with Robert after his death, through hallucinatory interactions with Catherine and a handful of flashbacks. Bill Griffiths played a loveable and caring, if slightly eccentric, father, making the moments in which he raged against his illness all the more shocking and desolate.



The cast as a whole were extremely strong, knitted together by good chemistry and command over the text, all of their performances deftly exploring all the subtle sides of their complex and multi-faceted characters. Their handling of the sensitive scenes was mesmerising. A scene particularly steeped in raw emotion sees Catherine read out Robert's new mathematical equations, only to voice the deterioration of his mind and confront him with the reality he was either unaware of or denying. Having thought

his mind was finally working at its best again, Robert writes in a fever: 'Let X equal the quantity of all quantities of X. Let X equal the cold. [...] Let X equal the month of full bookstores. The number of books approaches infinity as the number of months of cold approaches four. I will never be as cold now as I will in the future.' It is a scene particularly stricken with grief and tenderness. That moment, surrounded by the scenes after Robert's death, shows how grief can be present in life before death, with Robert mourning the loss of his mental stability and his intellectual genius that he felt had burned out by 25. His jumbled equation creates a singular kind of poetry, at once ordered and thorough, but wandering and bleak.

In a play that could threaten to meander, Claire Lewes' direction kept the story moving at the perfect pace, fast enough to not lose the audience, but slow enough that the emotional nuances of the script had space to breathe. It was overall an excellent and atmospheric production. Critically acclaimed and gracefully realised by New Venture Theatre, *Proof* is a play that unfolds with tenderness, sensitivity, and elegance, a play whose story and characters linger long in the mind.

Lois Zoppi



This remarkable American play, premiered in 2000, won the Pulitzer Prize in 2001 for Drama and the Tony Award for Best Play. NVT's Claire Lewis loves reading plays and was instantly struck: she found *Proof* 'intelligent, moving and funny' and set about planning a production.

The story opens – and stays – on a ramshackle Chicago verandah. Michael Folkard's set is compact and imaginative: there are sagging chairs and piles of newspapers. Robert is lounging around, musing on life. We do not yet know that he is dead. Bill Griffiths' pitch perfect performance conveys a combination of laidback insouciance with the fury of a frustrated career. Enter his daughter Catherine in scruffy clothes and careless mien. She is a brilliant mathematician, just as her father: does she live in his shadow? How can she prove her individuality? It says much for Marie Ellis that she manages to convey Catherine's astonishing academic gifts under an appearance



of modest isolation, but Marie Ellis is the pivot on which the play stands or fails. All revolves around her – geeky student Hal and his instant, if unlikely attraction, for and to, Catherine, her father's uneasy combination of hero and villain and her uptight sister Claire who wants to manage Catherine but cannot manage herself.

It is a stunning achievement by Marie Ellis. Her genuine American accent is put to most effective use, rising in power as she claims possession of the precious mathematical proof, softening as she falls for Hal and finally on equal terms with him in the triumph of a happy ending. There is a touch of feminism here, but it's lightly worn - we accept the proof that mathematicians are not a gendered species.

We do believe that they are like Robert Purchase, whose flashback appearance as a young Hal is a brilliant caricature of the ultimate nerd. Despite the awkward social jumpiness which signals a brain busy elsewhere, he still manages to enrapture the daughter of his esteemed Professor, proving that love can exist in the unlikeliest of situations. He becomes more sophisticated – but wavier. Bridgett Ane Goddard scores beautifully as Claire, initially as tight and controlled as her dress, and only relaxing to become human with the magic of alcohol and a late night. A uniformly excellent cast and justice done to a great play.

Louise Schweitzer

1. Robert Purchase & Marie Ellis
2. BrigettAne Goddard & Marie Ellis
3. Marie Ellis & Bill Griffiths
4. Marie Ellis, Robert Purchase & Bill Griffiths
5. Robert Purchase, BrigettAne Goddard & Marie Ellis
6. Marie Ellis & Robert Purchase

Photos by Dan Walker

OUR THEATRE GARDEN

Rumble, rumble, big fat jungle!

Just when you thought it was finished, the lovely Charly Sommers has been working her 'Charly Magic' and has given us a jungle to be proud of!

There're new plantings and arrangements, and the lavender is about to make its presence felt (& smelt!). A transformation of the under fire escape area has brought a café ambience to a tricky spot.

So, when you've a few minutes' respite from rehearsals, set building, painting, costumes, etc, do make use of our theatre garden... Summer will be over before we know it!

"It's nice and cool in the garden." (Noel Coward)

Chrissie Stubbs



RICHARD GAMPER

10th March 1944 - 8th May 2017

A good friend, NVT life member and wonderful supporter of our theatre, we all had the pleasure and privilege to work with Richard on the committee, on shows and on theatre projects. His boundless enthusiasm, wit and persistence in the face of all sorts of difficulties has left a lasting legacy which has enriched our theatre and those of us who were lucky enough to know him.

Richard you are greatly missed.

Jerry Lyne on behalf of friends, trustees and management at NVT



HELP A LOCAL CHARITY

Help a local homeless charity secure £25,000 with your vote!

NVT have previously raised money for The Clock Tower Sanctuary - Brighton's only day centre providing support and advice specifically for young homeless people aged 16-25. Isabel Aidallbery created a gorgeous set of Christmas cards which were sold during the run of NVT's 'A Christmas Carol' to raise funds for the centre.

Now they need your help again! The charity are in the running to receive an incredible £25,000, but they need your votes.

Simply go to mcf.org.uk/region/sussex, scroll down to The Clock Tower Sanctuary and vote. What a great way to help Brighton's young and homeless get their lives back on track.



Vote for The Clock Tower Sanctuary and help us secure £25,000!

mcf.org.uk/region/sussex/

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.

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 McCruden: angels@newventure.org.uk. If you are a UK tax payer your donation will also benefit from Gift Aid.

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
Short Play Festival 21-29 July *Theatre Upstairs				

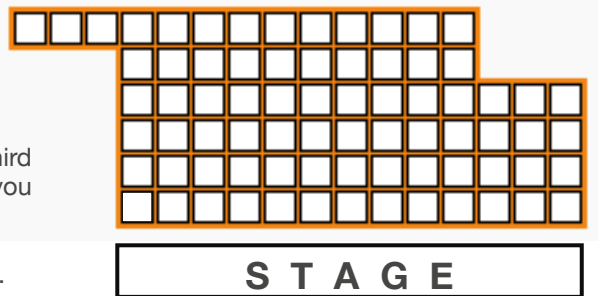
It is important you provide your name, phone number and address, and email address where possible

*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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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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