

NEW VENTURE

T H E A T R E

COMING SOON | SHORT PLAY FESTIVAL | Six Writers & Directors | 21 - 29 July

PROOF

by David Auburn | directed by Claire Lewes | 16-24 June



BridgettAne Goddard, Bill Griffiths, Marie Ellis, Robert Purchase

Photo by Miles Davies Photography

Auburn's poignant family drama is one of the most acclaimed American plays of the 20th century. He has a gift for elegant dialogue, complex characterisations and gentle twists and turns that draw the audience in. Rehearsals have been enormously rewarding. It's a real pleasure working with four talented, hard-working and committed actors that all love the play as much as I do.

The challenging role of Catherine is played by Marie Ellis. She writes: "It's just evidence, it doesn't finish the job, it doesn't prove anything."

Auburn's play asks the question: what do we have to prove? For Catherine, she needs to prove to others and herself that she is worthy in her own right, outside the ever-present shadow of her father's genius. But what do we all have to prove, to society, to our families, to ourselves? Proof speaks to our fundamental desire for validation, in turn, pointing to the necessary interconnectedness of the human experience. In the midst of our often dehumanizing digital culture and divisive political climate, Proof elegantly unmasks the universal desire we have to prove that our individual existence is, in fact,

valid, meaningful, and remarkable. Robert Purchase, playing Hal, writes: What is genius, a blessing or a curse? Does it mean you can create what others cannot because your mind works differently to theirs? If it does, how do you relate to them? There are so few who think like you. Imagine the loneliness. Imagine the longing for someone else who understands.

A genius to David Auburn is just a person, someone who looks like you or I. Someone with hopes and fears and ambitions, someone swept this way and that by the unpredictable flow of life. Proof is a touching story about humans, and those unforeseen moments that shape our lives forever.

Bill Griffiths, making his debut for NVT, playing Robert, writes: *Resentment and anger coupled with self-sacrificing love; intellectual fervour mixed with growing love and desire; paternal love mixed with gratitude, fear, humiliation and terror of mental decline and mania; desire for reconciliation and guilt at having fled the call of duty. The characters in this compelling play all have a lot to cope with. The play is also laced with comedy. It's a remarkable piece of work.*

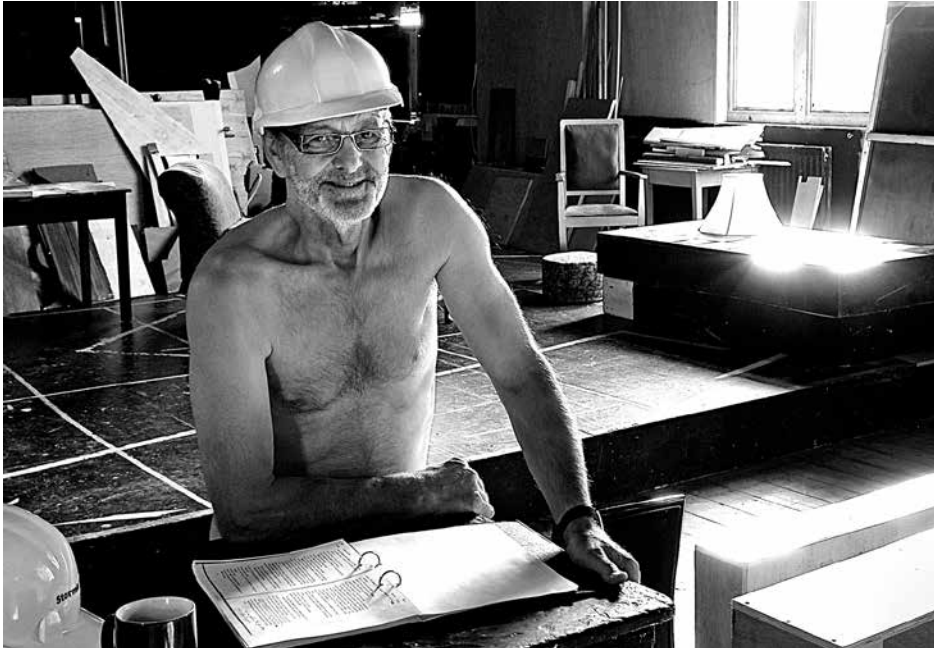
BridgettAne Goddard, seen recently at NVT in *The Homecoming*, plays the multi-faceted role of Claire.

I am extremely thankful to have a fantastic team around me, starting with Tom Kitch as Production Manager: beautiful poster artwork by Dan Walker, who is also designing our lighting. An intimate back porch design by Michael Folkard, realised by the fabulous Simon, Moni and George. My wonderful stage management team, led by Melissa, and sound design by Ian Black with original music composed by Adrien Rodes.

Claire Lewis

RICHARD GAMPER

10th March 1944 - 8th May 2017



A great power of photography is the way a picture freezes an instant in time, a moment in somebody's existence, and holds it unchanging for years, for decades.

This photo of Richard Gamper was taken for our *Calendar Boys* nude calendar fundraising project back in 2013, and it tells us such a lot about Richard.

First - Richard was up for it. He was a real team player, happy to pose (almost) nude for a good cause and a fun project. Second - look at the location. Richard was pictured there because he was a prime mover in the refurbishment of our Theatre Upstairs, helping to plan the new space and carrying out a huge amount of the construction himself, as a central member of the working group. He did the same when the South Hall floor was replaced - I have vivid memories of him kneeling between the joists, manhandling floorboards and nailing them into position. Richard had spent a lot of time liaising with Brighton Council over those floorboards, to ensure he found ones that were suitable for our listed building.

But the NVT's purpose is to produce plays, and Richard worked on the stage sets of many, many of our shows - too many to list here. For years, we could always find him in the props room on a Saturday morning, part of the small team of members who sorted out design problems over cups of tea - then during the week he'd be up a ladder securing a flat, or doing precision work with a chisel or a plane to ensure that a scenery door or window opened smoothly. For years he oversaw our Health and Safety policies, as well.

Richard was artistic as well as practical. He was a photographer himself - an enthusiastic member of Hove Camera Club, with his own darkroom at home. It was only in the last couple of years I found that he was a painter, too. He had a talent for producing powerful urban landscapes, and evocative views of St Ives, which he and his wife Eleanor loved to visit. We used details from two of those in the NVT's quarterly brochure earlier this year.

But that's just Brighton. Richard had enjoyed a remarkably full and varied life before they arrived on the south coast. For a number of years he and

Eleanor ran a theatre in Surbiton, where Eleanor was Artistic Director and wrote and produced shows, and Richard took charge of the administration, and seems to have kept the building functioning. This was while he was working as a very senior Human Resources manager for British Gas, a career that occupied him for two and a half decades. Richard was as precise in his language as he was with a circular saw, and on several occasions he was keen to explain to me that a 'gasometer' is not the same thing as a 'gasholder'.

But British Gas was actually Richard's second career. On leaving school he joined the Metropolitan Police. For many years he was based in London, at West End Central, and he had a great fund of stories about the villains he encountered in Soho. It seems that one night he was the duty officer, and had to take Ronnie Kray's fingerprints! Early on in his time in the police, a detachment of officers were sent to accompany troops to keep the peace in Anguilla, one of our colonial possessions (it was still the sixties) where there was a supposed insurrection.

As Richard told the story, the trouble was just a rumour; so the policemen, armed with pistols but with no-one to point them at, spent their days swimming and enjoying the sunshine. Eleanor has often recounted the sequel - that Richard returned to Britain, a tall, fit, tanned man in his twenties who'd travelled the world, and swept her off her feet. Irresistible.

But there's so much more to tell about this man's life. How he and his brother used to go mountaineering in the Dolomites. How he'd helped a friend sail a forty foot yacht. How Richard's uncle, Juan Gamper, was the Founder of Barcelona football club (and how Richard and his son Edward were feted when they went to see 'Barca' play at their stadium). Being Richard of course, none of this was paraded in front of people - these stories slipped out late in the evening after a few pints in the pub, or after a good dinner and several glasses of wine.

So many stories from before. So many good memories from the time that we knew Richard and Eleanor in Brighton. Richard was our good friend. He will be greatly missed.

Strat Mastoris

“(S)he became the destroyer of all because everyone destroyed her” - Karl Kraus, Austrian journalist and satirist

Having seen the Almeida production of *Lulu* back in 2001, with Anna Friel in the title role (underwhelming, lack-lustre), and last year’s operatic version by Alban Berg at English National Opera (German Expressionist artwork slides and angular, cutting tones – better), I was very keen to see Scott Roberts’ Brighton Fringe Festival brand-new adaptation of Frank Wedekind’s 1895 and 1904 *Lulu plays*.

Lulu (Lizzie Stanton), captivating and wild, has been rescued from a life on the streets and become the lover of wealthy newspaper publisher Schoning (Samuel Dutton). He has married her off to a doctor so that he can make a prestigious marriage. As the play opens, she is in the studio of an aspiring young photographer, Schwarz (Matthew Davies), whom she teases and seduces. Her husband, arriving to see them together, has a heart attack and dies. Now a wealthy widow, Lulu marries Schwarz, who is soon famous and wealthy in his own right, thanks to Schoning, who cannot stay out of his former lover’s life.

Her abuser/‘father’ Schigolch (Gordon Foggo) turns up at the flat while Schwarz is working and demands money. When Schwarz comes up, Lulu tells him of her dissolute past and in horrified grief he kills himself.

There follows a string of husbands and lovers, male and female – Schoning, unable to live without her, his son Alfie (Chris Knight), the Countess Geschwitz (Kasha Goodenough) and Fernando, a driver. All are dashed against Lulu’s hard exterior, mesmerized by her fatal beauty and vulnerability, each using and wanting to possess her in varying measures.

Finally, destitute and reduced to living in a squalid garret in London, Lulu is sent out by her new husband Alfie (who is shot by one of her punters) and Schigolch to prostitute herself. She picks up and is murdered by ‘Jack’ – written in the original play as Jack the Ripper (lodged very much in the consciousness as the archetypal killer)

Breaking away from its fin de siècle origins, Roberts’ adaptation was not a set in any particular time – the cast were asked to wear whatever they felt most comfortable in except where a casting demanded a uniform – and

LULU

By Frank Wedekind | review by Bryony Weaver



further distanced itself from reality by the use of an excellently edgy and disorientating lighting and set design. As a prologue, a white box was lit up with a progression of images from 50s’ and 70s’ advertising through to modern fashion plates, showing women as objects of lust and subjugation, as dummies and ‘things’ to be used,

sexualised and restrained.

The box’s transparent flat became alternatively the external walls of a studio, the interior of rooms, orientated at different angles with dizzying speed by the cast thanks to the brilliant design idea of having been fixed together with magnets. It was ingenious and slick.

The flat was also used as a screen from behind which a hand-held lamp threw shadow images of actors, hands, guns and other props in plot progressions that echoed the shadow and lighting experiments of Fritz Lang and even Hitchcock, but always to comically gruesome rather than sinister effect.

Designer Charly Sommers's use of props was also inspired. A tin can in the hands of Schoning became a mobile phone, an empty picture frame was a camera (simultaneously becoming both the object that takes the image and the mount in which it is displayed), a wooden cross a Bible and also a gun. Stand-alone doorframes were carried by the cast to different positions, turned on their axes to show two characters passing in a doorway or one person's different viewpoints. The cast clapped to change slides which represented objects or ideas, and plastic doll babies were nailed up around a bare stage, suggestive of abortions, perhaps, or, given their broken state, of Lulu herself. Sommers created a masterful setting, angular and brash like the music that heralded the rapid scene changes.

And in Brechtian style, Roberts broke the fourth wall by having actors sit on stage observing the action and by talking directly to the audience, appealing directly for a response to their comments and drawing the audience into the action.

Performances generally were excellent. Knight was a little weak on vocally delivery in places, but good in terms of energy, while Goodenough (also playing Lulu's louche maid Hattie) was clear and strong in Geschwitz's impassioned pleading with Lulu for love. Foggo, in his acting debut with NVT, brought a sense of prowling corruption to the part, oozing debauchery and dangerous sleaze, while Davies, building on promise he showed in *The Deep Blue Sea* in March, gave two sharp and very well-defined performances as Schwartz and Fernando.

The focus of the play is mostly, however, on the interaction between the characters played by Dutton, who delineates Schoning, the pimp Casti-Piani and Lulu's nemesis Jack with crisp precision and restless energy. Casti-Piani was perhaps a little too camp, but this production was never meant to be about subtlety.

The title role is not easy to get right; too much 'giggly girl', and the play descends into a simple tale of debauched child becoming used



goods (thank you, Ms Friel). Too much knowing, manipulating femme fatale, and the suicides of the men around her become predictable and boring.

Wedekind based Lulu on Lou Salome, the vivacious, intellectually accomplished and rebellious daughter of a Russian general with whom he, among other illustrious men such as Nietzsche and Rilke, was in love. Like her real-life model, Lulu needs to be aware of how to manipulate and why, while allowing just enough of the raw, damaged side of herself to show.

While Stanton (last seen on stage in September 2016 at the Southwark Playhouse in Tennessee Williams's *Confessional*) was a little wooden to start, estuary accent disappearing into

- 1&2. Lizzie Stanton & Mathew Davies
- 3. Lizzie Stanton, Chris Night & Kasha Goodenough
- 4. Lizzie Stanton & Mathew Davies

Photos by Jezz Bowden

her chest – first-night nerves, perhaps – she warmed up brilliantly and gave what promised to be a fully-fleshed, contrastingly angular performance.

And it was all there is Roberts' direction – the space to be unpredictable as well as obvious. The audience was invited to come to its own conclusions as to whether Lulu is victim or destroyer, femme fatale or another casualty of our desire to observe and own the observed.

The *Lulu plays* (Erdgeist [Earth Spirit, 1895] and Die Büsche der Pandora [(Pandora's Box, 1904] were the result of the splitting of an original five-act play, and translator Freia Metzger (costumière for *Blood Wedding*) updated the dialogue well, with perhaps

only a couple of anachronisms; in the second act, Schigolch upbraids the Countess as 'disgusting' in a manner more suggestive of an 80s' apologist desperate to raise the ghost of Thatcher than of modern feeling.

The first night of any production is always likely to have a few teething problems, and the second act appeared unfocussed and less tight than the first. Hearing that the cast didn't get the final acts to learn until late in the rehearsal period went a long way to explain this (and Stanton's early nerves, perhaps), but it also reassured that the looser focus and slight preoccupation of the cast would have time to sharpen through the run.

OUR 70TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON! 2017-2018

With our current season about to have its final two productions - David Auburn's very fine play, *Proof* directed by Claire Lewis, followed by our experimental venture *The Short Play Festival* of NVT new writers and directors - the time has come to announce next season's productions.

Many, many thanks to all those who have contributed their ideas and proposals for consideration.

There has been much reading of scripts, a lot of meetings with potential directors to discuss their ideas, balancing out casting opportunities, dealing with logistical problems that needed to be sorted out - all in the search for an adventurous selection of plays that will explore a broad landscape of dramatic experience. Once again, I am hugely indebted to the many NVT stalwarts for their invaluable advice and help.

Thanks to our members' collective efforts, many of our performances have sold out this season. This, although a great compliment for our achievements and good news financially, has meant many people have been left disappointed about missing out on our shows. So next season we intend, when viable, to trial out most productions with a second matinee on the final Saturday of each run - hopefully this will give more people a chance to see our shows.

For our 70th Anniversary Season we want to continue to build on our past successes and once again provide rewarding opportunities for our members to get creatively (and pleasurably) involved in the many exciting aspects of producing high quality theatre.

Let's continue to do our best and enjoy ourselves while we're doing it!

Best wishes to all.

Rod Lewis, Artistic Director

June 2017

6-14 October **Antigone** by Sophocles
directed by Sam Chittenden *Studio*

10-18 November **Anna Christie** by Eugene O'Neill
directed by Jerry Lyne *Theatre Upstairs*

8-16 December **The Messiah** by Patrick Barlow
directed by Rod Lewis *Studio*

19-27 January **True West** by Sam Shepherd
directed by Steven O'Shea *Theatre Upstairs*

16-24 February **Our Lady of Sligo** by Sebastian Barry
directed by Mark Wilson *Studio*

16-24 March **Bad Jews** by Joshua Harmon
directed by Bob Ryder *Theatre Upstairs*

13-21 April **TBC** (possible 70th Anniversary Celebratory production TBC in the Autumn) *Studio*

11-19 May **1984** by George Orwell (adaptation)
directed by Nick Richards *Theatre Upstairs*

15 -23 June **Jumpy** by April de Angelis
directed by Diane Robinson *Theatre Upstairs*

20-28 July **Lovesong** by Abi Morgan
directed by Kirsty Elmer *Studio*

Also; A performed reading of Elephants Graveyard by George Brant directed by David Eaton

Youth Theatre Production dates TBC

FROM THE MEDIA...

5 Ways You Can Show Respect To Those Auditioning

For many performers the audition process is a tiresome, nerve-wracking and endless process. It's a task plays with our emotions and exploits our insecurities. So I'm basically saying, it's tough enough already, it doesn't need to be made harder by the behavior of those behind the table.

Yes I'm talking to you, the directors, the casting professionals.

Over my career I've sat in on hundreds of audition sessions, everything from Broadway productions to middle school musicals. I've worked with folks who have won Tonys and those just starting out. With this vast gap of experience, I can pretty much say, I've almost seen it all when it comes to audition behavior by those in front and behind the table.

While much of what I'm talking about applies mostly to local, non-union, college, high school auditions, surprisingly enough, I've seen some of it from Broadway "professionals" as well.

So here are five ways that auditioners can show respect to the folks who are auditioning for them.

1. Give us your undivided attention

You might be surprised to know how quickly casting teams make a decision regarding your audition. Sometimes it's the moment you're done singing or speaking, sometimes it's the moment you begin and sometimes it's even when you first walk in the door.

Given this, especially if it's going to be a "no", some auditioners tune you out and stop paying attention all together. Whether its fiddling with resumes, doodling or even looking at their phones, they're not giving you the time of day while you're still auditioning.

So my advice to the casting teams, give them your undivided attention. Most auditions are 1-2 minutes, not that long at all, so it's not an eternity that you have to acknowledge these people. They're giving you 100%, so you could at least meet them halfway, even if it's not going to work out.

2. Be discreet with your notes

I would hope in most situations, a performers audition might inspire you to take some notes. In those cases, try not to make it obvious what you're writing while the performer is auditioning.

I've seen everything from directors making exaggerated "X" notes to writing something and passing it around like a 7th Grade math class, while the performer is in the middle of their 32 bars.

I've also seen some who aren't very carefully when it comes to concealing what they wrote. One audition I was in, I saw the director write down in big letters "NEVER IN A MILLION YEARS". She then put the resume with the note face-up so anyone, including the performer, could see it as they walked out of the room.

3. Don't use the audition to inflate your own ego

There is a director, and I won't say who but some may know him, that whenever he's in auditions, he likes to not only give



you his entire bio but also likes to ask nonsensical questions that have nothing to do with the show.

"If you could be a tree, which tree would you be?"

"If you could have one drink right now, which would it be?"

"If your house was on fire, what would be the first item you would grab?"

Do questions like these have anything to do with casting South Pacific? No. They're only being used to further put actors on the spot and inflate the ego of the director.

I've also seen one director who said to an actress, "I'm seeing 100 Maria's today, why are you memorable?"

Again, why would you ever ask that in an audition? Are out-of-the-blue questions common in job interviews? Sure. But in a job interview, you go in knowing that you're going to be answering a slew of questions. In an audition, actors prepare for very specific things. Whether it's 32 bars of a song or a one minute monologue, not to answer what kind of cereal they would eat right at that moment.

Actors don't need to acknowledge how great or well known you are, you're behind the table and are the deciding factor on whether they get the job or not. That would be enough for your ego.

4. Say "Thank You"

Nobody says thank you anymore! Usually a common refrain in most interactions but surprisingly also in auditions.

Almost every performer I've ever seen has always said some form of "Thank You" after their audition. However I haven't always heard it from the people behind the table. Common courtesy shouldn't be thrown out the window, no matter the situation. That's why I always say thank you to the actor or try to say it before they can.

5. Be timely with your response

We've talked about this before, but it deserves mention again. When it comes to local, college or high school productions, it's proper to give a timely response to the actors.

Keeping actors in the dark about their chances, for elongated periods of time, is wrong. If the decision hasn't been made yet, at least tell them that.

These requests aren't exactly asking for the moon from people behind the table. Just simply a reminder that theatre is a collaborative space and behavior trends that threaten that should stop immediately.

Reprinted from OnStage Blog
By Chris Peterson | Founder & Editor-in-Chief

<http://www.onstageblog.com/columns/2016/12/23/5-ways-you-can-show-respect-to-those-auditioning>

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.

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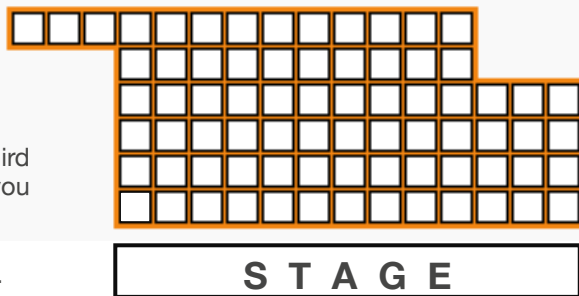
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*THEATRE UPSTAIRS ALLOCATED SEATING

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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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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