

# NEW VENTURE

T H E A T R E

COMING SOON | ANNA CHRISTIE by Eugene O'Neill | Directed by Jerry Lyne | 10-18 November

## ANTIGONE

by Sophokles | translated by Anne Carson | directed by Sam Chittenden | 6-14 October



**“We come out of the dark”**

War, tyranny, incest, suicide, visions and Gods. Common fare for the ancient Greeks, for whom theatre was both escape and moral instruction.

In *Antigone*, civil war has decimated Thebes. Born out of incest, Oidipous' sons, Eteokles and Polyneikes, have fought over the throne and killed each other, leaving their sisters Antigone and Ismene alone. Oidipous' brother-in-law Kreon is now king. Threatened by dissidents, he must keep a grip if his new government is to be strong and stable. He decrees that the traitor Polyneikes can't be buried; choosing the emergency powers of secular law over the laws of the Gods. When Antigone defies Kreon

and buries her brother so he can go to the afterlife, she sparks a series of catastrophic events.

Stark choices, but Sophokles gives us no black-and-white answers: Is Antigone a criminal with terrorist leanings, a brave voice of reason, or simply a loyal or obsessed sister?; Is Kreon a heartless dictator, or a man trying to balance the needs of state and family?

*Antigone* was first performed in Athens, in around 441 BC, at a time of national fervour. It makes references that would have resonated with Athenian audiences. One the one hand, arguing against civil disobedience, a very real concern; on the other, exposing the folly of tyranny. Athenians, proud of their democratic

tradition, would have pitied the people who have no voice to tell Kreon he is wrong.

Sophokles' Thebes is a patriarchy in which women have little voice, and cannot hold property in their own right (instead having to marry their father's nearest male relative to 'keep it in the family'). Yet the women here show different kinds of strength - determination, stoicism, agency - that ultimately break Kreon's world apart.

Anne Carson's colloquial translation brings these extraordinary personal and political circumstances into the present day - a world where civil war and despotism are still rife; a world that longs for truth and courage. Carson's text is a gift of poetic yet conversational style, that we have hugely enjoyed working with. There are amazing characters, all both strong and weak in their individual ways, some stonking monologues, and dry humour, as well as the inevitable tragedy.

This is very much an ensemble piece performed by both familiar faces and new comers: Keziah Israel, Jessica Smith, Chris Parkes, Toby Davies, Scott Roberts, Paddy O'Keefe, Claire Skinner, Maisie Chalk, Des Potton and Chris Knight. The studio space lends itself well to an intimate staging in the round, and a few theatrical surprises. My gratitude is due as ever to the amazing team who have helped create a modern Thebes, with echoes of some more familiar places far and near.

**Sam Chittenden**



# FRI-UP-COMEDY NIGHT

Friday 3 November

NVT presents Fri-Up, an evening of sizzling stand-up comedy served up by some of the South Coast's favourite and freshest comedic talent.

Tuck into a plateful of gut-busting one-liners, side-splitting storytelling and curious character/musical comedy. From the hilarious to the sublime to the downright surreal, there will be humour to alight all taste-buds.

A Friday night out guaranteed to leave you bursting at the seams!

## NEWSLETTER EDITOR WANTED!

Do you have a few spare hours each month to collate and edit content, and put together NVT's monthly newsletter?

I am stepping down this month after several years as Editor, and I am looking for someone to take the reigns on a permanent basis.

Training on the relevant software can be arranged - or perhaps you would like to take over the role and create something of your own!

Please do get in touch via [newsletter@newventure.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@newventure.org.uk)

*Natasha Borg, Newsletter Editor*

## BREAKFAST CLUB

Saturday 11 November

We would love it if you would join us for breakfast on Saturday 11th November! This is the launch of our new monthly venture - time to get some jobs done whilst enjoying a chat and some danish pastries with other lovely volunteers. Our first project will be prop making, more to be revealed closer to the time. Breakfast is served at 10am - we'll work until 1pm then go and get some lunch together. Hope to see you there!

Please RSVP to [volunteering@newventure.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@newventure.org.uk) so I know how many pastries to buy.

*Melissa Noble*

### NVT'S PRODUCTION of ANNA CHRISTIE by Eugene O'Neill CASTING ANNOUNCEMENT



Isabella McCarthy Sommerville  
as  
Anna Christie



Lyn Snowdon  
as  
Marthy



Jerry Lyne  
Director



Mark Lester  
as  
Chris Christopherson



Martin Ryan  
as  
Johnny the Priest



Chris Gates  
as  
Mat Burke

PRODUCTION  
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We are also  
delighted to  
welcome  
aboard a great  
design team  
and crew



Uli Schilling  
Production Manager  
&  
Assistant Director

## NVT AGM

Our annual AGM  
will take place on  
21 October

**S**ix new plays – two by actors taking part – and six directors, all developed by NVT’s nurturing over the past year culminates in this short festival. Simon Glazier and George Walter ensure the Upstairs theatre varies even with elegant minimal propos neatly recycled on a few occasions. Steve Coulson modifies lighting as required from the glare of a police room to the shadows in a vestry. Ian Black’s sound brings comedy and drama, sometimes with telling results in a few seconds.

This puts New Venture Theatre onto a new footing, where it joins established theatres like the National, Royal Court, Young Vic, Orange Tree and just a few others in profiling new writing and directing talent. NVT’s not on their funded scale, but in its own category it’s as far as I know, unique. It’s in fact the successful mentoring of one dramatist by NVT who went on to the Royal Court which has inspired this. If it was an annual, even bi-annual event, it would change things in the south east.

Six new plays – two by actors taking part – and six directors, all developed by NVT’s nurturing over the past year culminates in this short festival. There’s gender parity with directors and hearteningly five dramatists are women, which echoes something of the national gender shift of emerging dramatists. Just as usefully, it’s not highlighted.

There’s several patterns running through these plays. Two are legal, involving witness statements or police interviews. Two mention weddings though one’s about one. Two involve doubles of a kind. Only the last doesn’t fit and that’s because it’s a foursome!

Simon Glazier and George Walter ensure the Upstairs theatre varies even with elegant minimal propos neatly recycled on a few occasions. Steve Coulson modifies lighting as required from the glare of a police room to the shadows in a vestry. Ian Black’s sound brings comedy and drama, sometimes with telling results in a few seconds.

**Amy Onyett - *Sorry***

This monologue directed by Sabrina Giles places Jenny Alborough’s Anne as a sensitive, mouse-timorous woman whose keynote is the title she’s attempting to overcome through relating in an interview why she’s acted as she has.

Mostly we’re treated to Alborough’s convincingly flinch-ridden Anne relating the pattern of her non-confrontational life. The climax really introduced new

# SHORT PLAY FESTIVAL

six writers | six directors | review



material and the title word takes on a new meaning in her mouth, a courageous affirmation. In one sense this could have been shorter, though in extending it Onyett’s attempting to hallucinate us with one mindset whilst ambushing us with its consequences. Alborough’s ideal in this, dextrously conveying her hand-wringing resolve.

**Sarah Charsley - *You’ll Do***

Charsley – who appears in the last play – also deploy a key phrase as the play’s trigger. It’s Kasha Goodenough’s response as Hannah to Deborah Slots Vicar when asks if she takes Chris Gates’ Matthew to be her husband. Matthew’s livid and I front of us, the congregation takes Hannah backstage where their real



desires unravel.

Slots manages deft shock, Goodenough a sparky backsliding outrage, and Gates a winning cringe-worthiness that energize and blast their confrontations. Jeremy Crow, familiar onstage, knows how to pace a real swathe of wit so it never drags like an overlong bridal veil, or trips anyone up.

It's a wonderfully mouthy play: jokes about appalling guests invited to the evening instead because they're unknown or disliked, Chris's parents declaring a truce for the first time in years, others stuck on motorways; great aunt Vera practising her jive moves. All the compromise diets and planning hang on the fact that each thought to please the other and not themselves.

This comprises the most sparkling toe-curling dialogue of the sequence, and the conclusion's heartwarming, carrying its own un-churchy lessons. And there's a thought about champagne and what to do about those evening guests.

**Michelle Donkin - *Impact Statement***

Erica Fletcher delicately picks out what Diane Robinson's June is confronting when composing her impact statement as a victim for the monster in the dock who's perpetrated a crime she'll not forgive. Luckily her daughter Helen, Charly Sommers (whose own ply comes last) is on hand when June intones: '... if I do it, it's got to mean something, say something... good words.. clever and meaningful' otherwise they're judging her, not him.

Helen's been on a creative writing course and at each stage too acts as foil and counsel to her mother. Each detail's significant and a plot giveaway. You might feel it's a straightforward guess but the creative elegance of this piece is the decision made at the end. Sommers' role is low-key reasonableness so Robinson can bounce her feelings, ideas and resolutions off her. Lighting at the conclusion is helpful here too. Expertly designed for its scope *Impact Statement* exactly delivers.

**Nicholas Richards - *The Doppelganger***

There's always a baggy monster that makes you want to extend the conclusion and reflect it's more a half-hour in embryo than twenty-minute piece.

*The Doppelganger* vies with *You'll Do* for dialogue. Jack, Mr Saturday night is a stand-up celeb who's boring off-stage and is all for giving up to return to his wife and children. His management, the marvellously-acted duo of Lewis' loud





Paddy Cooper and Peter's American moustachio'd twirl of Barry O'Shea think otherwise: they need him outrageous, offensive, drunk, three-in-a-bed, breaking up with his wife to get back, the usual. And they have a weapon.

Before Jack we're treated to his double loud-mouthed near-talentless wannabe stand-up, also acted by David Eaton who manages his two-brain identity with aplomb. Gareth will enact everything Jack never dares, and does. Alex Louise's chat-sow host Lavinia is duly insulted – Louise shifting from smarm to scream in a beat. Jack's insulted as much and there's a showdown.

I longed for the one confrontation not envisaged, the real Jack and Lavinia, and some twist and masterstroke at the end. Something to lift a hilarious premise beautifully delivered away from its predicted arc. Tom Slater-Hyndman times this to a turn, which is what we often get. It's tight, very funny, and the acting superb. Eaton's excellent though his agents Cooper and O'Shea almost steal the show. But then Eaton has Gareth up his spectacles.

#### **Sam Chittenden - *Moving Slowly***

Sam Chittenden's appearance here is only a faint anomaly in that we know her – not only as a superb actor, but in such pieces as *Underworlds* and other Fringe one-woman shows more than an emerging dramatist. Perhaps more than a two-hander might have stretched her further but this reviewer doesn't care. Here we're in the presence of an accomplished master of atmosphere.

*Moving Slowly* does exactly what its forecast title suggests. To a litanic incantation of shipping areas Sarah Williams' Amanda intones in a 1956 accent and dress the kind of recitation still familiar to us, though as her friend Mandy identically dressed behind a screen reminds her, 'Heligoland' is now 'German Bight'. But is it here that Amanda's Robbie was lost to German U boats? These eddies like isobars knotting emotions in vectored swirls around lows and depressions contour Emmie Spencer's pacing of this atmospheric play, as refracted and dense as one of those fogs around Mumbles.

Williams is superb, Emma Hutton's Mandy equally so in her bright-toned positiveness. Spencer having played Hester Collier in *The Deep Blue Sea* here so recently knows exactly what she needs from this work as well as her actors.

We're treated to a voyage around Amanda, forty-two, unable to move on with her



life, trapped in a circle of depression that never lifts. Mandy, luckier and more objective cajoles and corrects her, as she tries to grit through her recitation. There's Outlook Unsettled: shrewd historical placements, Barbara Castle and Hugh Gaitskill and their response to the Troy political front led by Anthony Eden, the outfall of the Suez Crisis meaning Britain can't honourably deal with Hungary's Uprising.

Perhaps a few less recits and more arias around what that history might mean to Amanda and Mandy might anchor this very specifically set piece. I felt a Hungarian refugee might make an off-stage appearance, obvious as that may seem – but Chittenden would know exactly what to do with such a situation. The reveal is hinted at, you can ignore or embrace it.

Chittenden already promises so much, and this is the most original drama – as opposed to comedy or farce – on show here. What we have though is haunting, heartening and inhabits its world so thoroughly you want to know what life, even more than Chittenden, will do with Amanda or Mandy.

#### **Charly Sommers - *The Swing***

Charly Sommers declares farce this was inspired in part by a friend's experiences. Blokey Dave – Nicholas Richards handsomely seedy in demeanour and delivery – has cajoled his shrinking wife Catherine (Sarah Charsley) to meet experienced swingers Cyndi and Mario. Charsley's squirming embarrassment recalls an Ayckbourn character bullied by a noisy husband who gradually learns confidence beyond his liking. James Macauley paces this at the gentle

breakneck of situation farce so although there aren't multiple doors opening the noises off tell us everything.

And what a tale with. Vamp Cyndi bowls in, Kate McGann having appeared in *Holes* and making the same explosive impact edged with eye-rolling comedy as she adjusts to Dave's displaced awkwardness. His wife's so nervous he claims, it worries him.

Mike Stubbs' Mario however last seen in *The Homecoming* looks like her father at least but carries that glint of authority that made him memorable in the previous play. Yet of course it's Dave who's thrown, Catherine, well Mario isn't a monster. There's just the one bedroom. In fact the onstage couple encounter every embarrassment whilst the couple upstairs... But this experienced duo have more tricks for the bashful or embarrassed than you'd ever imagine. Unless of course you're an experienced swinger. The denouement's delicious, unexpected and ah... satisfying. Expert farce, with a life as well as leather to it.

The polish and work with these plays shows. I'd love to see them again, whilst a wish list would have two of them slightly longer, to let their potential mastery breathe even more freely. Many of us will hope with NVT that we can see this formula repeated regularly, to enrich drama, dramatists and directors – indeed actors and everyone involved – in the south-east.

**Simon Jenner**

*Photos by Dan Walker*

# 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](http://www.newventure.org.uk), where you can sign up to our mailing list, or email: [actingclass@newventure.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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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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
<b>'Antigone' by Sophokles</b> 6-14 October <i>Studio</i>				
<b>NVT Fri-Up-Comedy Night</b> 3 November <i>Studio</i>				
<b>'Anna Christie' by Eugene O'Neill</b> 10-18 November <i>*Theatre Upstairs</i>				

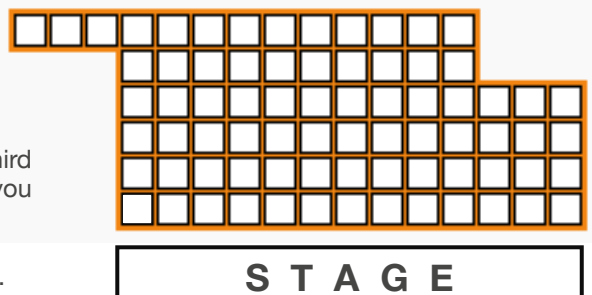
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Allocated seating is available for productions taking place in the Theatre Upstairs.

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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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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