

NEW VENTURE

T H E A T R E

NVT Newsletter - January 2019

**COMING SOON - The Language Archive by Julia Cho
Directed by Sam Chittenden - 15 to 23 February 2019**

**LAUNDRY & BOURBON / LONE STAR by JAMES McLURE |
DIRECTED BY MARK LESTER | 18 to 26 JANUARY**



Bella McCarthy Sommerville, Sarah Drew & Kate McGann

Double bill Laundry and Bourbon and Lone Star are two one-act comedies set in small-town Texas in the late 1970s. Opening on a baking hot afternoon, Laundry and Bourbon sees Elizabeth and Hattie reflecting on their high school days and what life in Maynard has dealt for them since. Elizabeth's husband Roy, the last "wild thing" in Maynard, is missing and she's harbouring a secret. Hattie advises her best friend on how best to move forward, while escaping her 'high-spirited' children and the chaos that follows them wherever

they go. The women have a lifelong friendship cemented by growing up in a town where everyone knows everyone else's business. Nevertheless, their lives have taken different trajectories and tensions are set to rise even further with the arrival of Amy Lee. Married to Cletis, owner of the local hardware store, she brings fresh gossip, news for Elizabeth and a bombshell for her nemesis Hattie: Bridge may soon be a thing of the past and a new game is coming to town.

That same evening Lone Star sees war veteran Roy, Elizabeth's husband, going through his Friday night rituals out the back of Angel's bar, sharing snacks and his favourite Lone Star beer with younger brother Ray. Still struggling to come to terms with how much life has moved on without him since serving, Roy drunkenly relives the past glories of his youth, as stories of driving girls around in his prized 1959 pink thunderbird convertible intertwine with the horrors of Vietnam. Not being the quickest on the uptake, Ray hilariously struggles to relate to Roy's experiences, but his innocence and admiration for his brother guarantee he'll do whatever it takes to keep him happy. Yet the brothers'



Matthew Davies, Cai Jones & Neil Drew

relationship will be severely tested that night as Ray's friend Cletis arrives, who Roy hates with a passion, and revelations emerge that will shatter Roy's already uncertain world.

Written by James McLure, the plays were first performed together in 1980, followed by successful performances on Broadway, across the USA and in London. Born in Louisiana, McLure never achieved major fame, yet his work was well-respected by the theatre community with his other acclaimed works including *Pvt. Wars*, *The Day They Shot John Lennon* and *Max and Maxie*.

McLure's sister plays stood out for me for several reasons: they are wonderfully scripted with a sharp wit that provokes wry smiles to belly laughs, while sharing an underlying poignancy that could be so easily obscured by his bitingly funny dialogue. With a plot arc that runs through both plays without their characters ever meeting on stage, it seems difficult to believe that McLure could go beyond the character sketches of typical one-act comedies, and yet they are all cleverly crafted, thought-provoking and relatable individuals. These

inhabitants of Maynard are as complex as you or I, making it impossible not to connect and root for them, though you could so easily dismiss their small-town lives and small-town existence.

Working on these plays has been a hugely interesting journey, and I've been so lucky to work with two incredibly strong and talented casts with the support of an amazing backstage team. As an actor, I've always valued the "invisible people" who put so many hours and so much love into helping a production come to life, but as a director it has taken this appreciation to a whole new level. It's impossible to thank everyone, but I would like to show my gratitude to all those that have helped bring *Laundry* and *Bourbon and Lone Star* to the NVT stage: your hard work, advice and support have been greatly appreciated and without which I would have been lost.

We all, cast and crew, hope you enjoy the plays as much as we do and look forward to seeing you there.

Mark Lester | Photos - Patrick Dalla Torre & Sandy Bi

Review of *Be My Baby* by Amanda Whittington | directed by Jerry Lyne | 30 November to 8 December

Be My Baby introduced us into the world of single mums in the 1960s. Mums who had to go through a harsh time in a mother and baby home before potentially giving their child up. As this was a time where mindsets about single mothers were reluctant to change in the older generation, the relationship between these young girls was highlighted.



Elizabeth Kroon, Diane Robinson, Rosie Blackadder, Georgia Cudby & Ella Verity

Despite the strict Christian conditions, the play focused not just on these strong friendships, but it enabled us to question how much of the truth was actually revealed to these women. Were they ever told the full story of what happened to their child after it was born? Also what happened to them after they left? These questions and many more were sensitively explored and performed by a very strong cast of women.

Elizabeth Kroon played Mary, our main lead. She explored the role with undying optimism and a curiosity as she settled into her new role in the

home. The sheer strength she showed on her journey was refreshing to see and hopefully this experience will lead her onto a bright career ahead.

Diane Robertson played Mrs Adams, Mary's mother. It seemed to begin with she would not have much to do with the storyline, but the second act revealed a totally different side to her. Diane captured the reality of the older generation at the time - not wanting to accept times were changing, yet she had her own story to share that was an eye opener. To find out what her story was, I would recommend seeing this show.



Ella Verity & Kate Browning



Georgia Cudby, Rosie Blackadder & Ella Verity

The hard hearted Queenie was played by New Venture newcomer Rosie Blackadder. What a role to kickstart her career! Rosie made sure that despite the character's obvious hard nosed attitude, she too had hopes and dreams which she shared with Mary. This was a lovely journey to watch for the sheer vulnerable outlook to her despite everything she puts out.

Ella Verity had the most difficult role to do I personally felt, but one which was heartbreaking, her descent into madness as she found out what happened to her child was so well handled. It may be her second production, but this is an actress who is worthwhile keeping an eye out for in the future.

Georgia Cudby played the ditsy Delores who not only had the most dark storyline out of all of them, but had the most comic repartee. The timing was perfect as she lived in her own world and also learned to be herself, despite her not being able to read or write well. Again a very strong actress who made her debut with the New Venture Theatre.

Kate Brownings' Matron was the most intriguing. It takes a special actress to keep the audience guessing as to what the character is really thinking - she again gave a strong stoic performance, but only on the odd occasion let herself slip out of professional mode as she protected her girls. But the reality she showed was that you cannot show what you really think in a system that dictates what these women do next. She again is worth keeping an eye on.



Elizabeth Kroon & Rosie Blackadder

Despite at times struggling to hear the more intimate moments, it did not distract from the fact this was a cast that handled a tough subject as this with such sensitivity and respect. Highly recommended show which was not to be missed.

Sascha Cooper | Photos - Strat Mastoris

Proposals to Direct for 2019/20 Season now open.

2018 proved to be another successful year for NVT. This meant many diverse productions giving plenty of opportunities for our company members to develop their skills, resulting in very appreciative audiences. It was dependent on all our volunteers pulling together and contributing so much. There have also been noticeable improvements to the building, including a wonderful new kitchen. The thriving acting class, often the introduction to the NVT for new, enthusiastic volunteers, has been going from strength to strength. Basically, all departments have done very well and we have been blessed with highly satisfactory box office returns. Now is the time to look ahead. One of the foundations of our creative policy is to invite potential directors to put forward ideas for productions which are meaningful to them. It is this that gives rise to the wide variety of work that we do and it is the commitment of those involved that drives us to achieve the finest quality we are capable of. We are open to proposals for productions, whether from experienced or new directors and are currently inviting proposals for next season. Although our goal is always to be as successful creatively as we can, we must never forget that everyone involved should find working as part of an NVT team a happy and personally rewarding experience - and not just in our convivial, cheap and exceedingly well run bar!

So, let's do our best to make 2019 another great year.

Rod Lewis

We are now open for directing proposals for 72nd Season - October 2019 to July 2020

Our window for proposals closes on 16 February 2019

Claire Lewis wins Best Director for Happy Now? at BHAC Drama Awards 2018

The New Venture Theatre walked away with one award and a handful of nominations at this year's Brighton and Hove Arts Council Drama Awards.

The October production of Happy Now? was shortlisted in seven categories: Emmie Spencer and Max Videaux for Best Publicity; Keith Dawson for Best Lighting Design; Ian Black for Best Sound Design; Robert Purchase for Best Supporting Actor; Simon Hudson for Best Actor; Sophie Dearlove for Best Actress; and Claire Lewis for Best Director. And it was Claire Lewis who won.



"For me, directing is all about collaboration," she said afterwards, "and I couldn't have wished for a better team of actors and production crew to share this experience with."

The Brighton and Hove Arts Council Drama Awards were held at Brighton, Hove & Sussex Sixth Form College (BHASVIC) on Tuesday, 4th December. In the running were eight different productions from eight different theatres.

Among them was Steady Rain by the Burgess Hill Theatre Club - a two-hander starring two New Venture Theatre regulars: Ben Pritchard and Culann Smyth. It was this duo who would both, remarkably, go on to win Best Actor. Steady Rain will be returning in the Brighton Fringe in 2019.

New Venture Theatre chairman Ian Black also managed an award, sharing Best Sound Design with Dan Skelt for Saints Theatre Group's production of A Ghost Train.

Best Overall Production went to the Henfield Theatre Company for Brighton Beach Memoirs.

The other theatres adjudicated throughout September and October were Hurstpierpoint Players, Wick Theatre Company, Rottingdean Drama Society, and Southwick Players.

The adjudicator was Jane Collins, professor of theatre and performance at Wimbledon College of Art. "What I saw was seriousness, originality, generosity on stage and off, and a selfless commitment to performing that is often lacking in the professional productions where actors fall back on tired technique," she said.

"What was common across all the groups was the passion. This has been a real learning curve for me and a privilege and a pleasure to see your work.

"All eight productions had qualities I felt should be recognised. High standards were maintained right across the board."



Best Overall Production: Henfield Theatre Company's Brighton Beach Memoirs

Best Director: Claire Lewis for New Venture Theatre's Happy Now?

Best Actress: Louise Yeo in Southwick Players' The Corn is Green

Best Actor: Culann Smyth and Ben Pritchard in Burgess Hill Theatre Club's Steady Rain

Best Supporting Actress: Victoria Thomson in Wick Theatre Company's Plaza Suite

Best Supporting Actor: Sam Bullen in Rottingdean Drama Society's Mother Courage

Best Set Design: Martin Oakley for Southwick Players' The Corn is Green

Best Sound Design: Ian Black and Dan Skelt for Saints Theatre Group's A Ghost Train

Best Stage Crew: Saints Theatre Group's A Ghost Train

Best Technical Achievement: Burgess Hill Theatre Club's Steady Rain

Best Costume Design: Hustpierpoint Players' Habeus Corpus

Best Publicity: Southwick Players for The Corn is Green

Coffin Mew Award (for outstanding achievement): Rottingdean Drama Society's Mother Courage

Excellence/Most Promising Newcomer: Stephanie Gilbert in Rottingdean Drama Society's Mother Courage

Robert Purchase | Photos - Nick Ford

NVT Newsletter

As part of a review of the NVT publicity processes we have been looking at the newsletter and its value to our members. Suggestions have included stopping the newsletter and expanding the brochure, changing its current format to an email version only. However, it isn't a simple decision as the newsletter may be the only direct contact some members have on a regular basis. Therefore, this article is intended to give you, our members, the details and ask you for suggestions.

Currently we have a newsletter that is produced as a pdf document, which is emailed to most members each month (except August & September). It appears that on average about 30% of members actually open the newsletter, we do not have any figures for how many read it. In addition to the pdf version we have 150 copies printed each month. These are only in black and white, so the colour images are not as strong. Of these printed copies 25 are posted to members who do not have internet access. The rest are available in the theatre and a number are read / taken by audience members.

What are the options?

- We could continue as we are if there is a desire for the newsletter in its current format.
- Change to a production based email with the coming production details only.
- Move to an online newsletter, which would have to be printed for members without the internet.
- Expand the brochure to replace the newsletter for audience members.
- Something else completely - suggestions welcome
- A combination of some of the above

Please let us have your thoughts on the newsletter and how you would like to see it in the future.

NVT Membership

At the last AGM our membership rate was formally changed to £15 a year, after a successful trial. To renew, or join if you are not yet a member, just go to our website.

www.newventure.org.uk/joinus

NVT ACTING CLASS

Mondays 7:30 9:30pm - Cost: £5 (NVT members £2.50) ~ In these drop in sessions you will be working with various teachers and cover acting 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 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 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 our 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 Angel Coordinator Gerry McCrudden: angels@newventure.org.uk. If you are a UK tax payer your donation may 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: Members £9, NonMembers £10 ~ Evening performances 7:45pm Sundays are Matinees only 2:30pm ~ No performances on Mondays ~ 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.

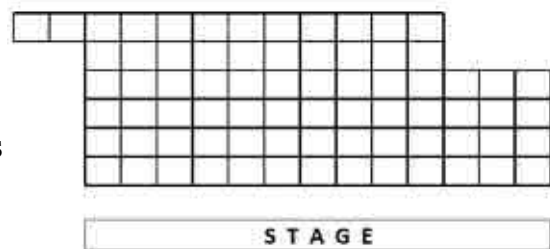
	Date	Member	Non-Member	Total Cost
Laundry & Bourbon / Lone Star by James McLure - 18 to 26 January - Theatre Upstairs				
The Language Archive by Julia Cho 15 to 23 February - Studio Theatre				
The Father by Florian Zeller - 15 to 23 March Theatre Upstairs				

It is important you provide your name, phone number & 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 1s and a second and third option with 2s and 3s, 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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Our Sponsors Our sponsorship deal is £250 for a year's advertising on our website and in our brochure, newsletter and programmes, plus 2 complimentary tickets for each production in that year.



We would love to hear from you!

Please write in with any comments, articles or reviews of our productions and events to the Newsletter Editor - newsletter@newventure.org.uk or by post to the New Venture Theatre.

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