

# NEW VENTURE THEATRE

newsletter  
january 2020

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Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT

Preview

17–25 January 2020

## THE WINTERLING

by Jez Butterworth

directed by Steven O'Shea

“You fall asleep out here, something creeps up and eats you.”

Over a decade ago I attended my first production at the NVT. It was *Mojo* by Jez Butterworth. It was the first play of Butterworth's that I had seen, and I'm delighted all this time later, to be a part of presenting this, another example of his outstanding body of work. Multi-award winner and author of such modern classics as *Jerusalem* and *The Ferryman*, this particular piece has perhaps, been somewhat overshadowed by the huge success of his later plays. It remains however one of his seminal works, investigating, as the author put it, 'the question as to whether there is any mercy in the world'.

The action takes place in a dilapidated farmhouse on rural Dartmoor, in the depths of winter, where West is waiting. A gangland fugitive in exile, he has



summoned his old associates, Wally and Jerry, from London to deal with some unfinished business. But Jerry is dead, and Wally brings along his stepson, Patsy, as a replacement. There is only room in

*continued overleaf*

October 4-12	<b>Gabriel</b> by Moira Buffini
November 1–9	<b>Fen</b> by Caryl Churchill
December 5–14	<b>Great Expectations</b> by Charles Dickens
<b>January 17–25</b>	<b>The Winterling</b> by Jez Butterworth
February 14–22	<b>Talk</b> by Mark Wilson
March 13–21	<b>Quartet</b> by Ronald Harwood
March (to be confirmed)	<b>NVYT production</b>
April 17–25	<b>The Herd</b> by Rory Kinnear
May 15–23	<b>Consent</b> by Nina Raine
June 19–27	<b>Miss Julie</b> by August Strindberg
July 17–25	<b>Hangmen</b> by Martin McDonagh

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Preview continued

## THE WINTERLING



the car for two people to leave. West finds himself locked into a deadly game for survival.

First performed at the Royal Court in 2006, the play deploys his trademark pump-action dialogue as the characters’ power plays become increasingly desperate and deadly. Verbal exchanges, seemingly polite and genuine, are in fact malicious and destructive in nature. Language is utilised as a weapon, according to the psychological or strategic needs of the present, to control, dominate and humiliate. Here humankind, like nature, is trapped in a remorseless struggle for survival. Taut, tantalisingly

**ABOVE (LEFT TO RIGHT)** Mark Lester, Stuart Curlett, Jonathan Howlett, Charlotte Hesk and Thomas Hobart. (Photograph by Strat Mastoris)

enigmatic and savagely funny – *The Winterling* underlines Butterworth’s reputation as one of the leading figures in British drama. As always, I am deeply indebted to the hard work and commitment of the theatre staff, production team and outstanding cast, Stuart Curlett, Charlotte Hesk, Thomas Hobart, Jonathan Howlett and Mark Lester. I would like to express my immense appreciation to them all.

**Steven O’Shea (director)**

# GREAT EXPECTATIONS

adapted from Charles Dickens by Neil Bartlett

directed by Diane Robinson



Neil Bartlett's 2007 adaptation of *Great Expectations* is different to the Ormerod and Donnellan *Cheek By Jowl* 2005 version that thrives on choric muster and dissolve; Bartlett presents a fluid, stripped-away retelling using only Dickens' own words.

This atmospheric production is directed by Diane Robinson. Production Designer Judith Berrill's vision has everything literally opening onto something else in the guise of empty doorframes save one solid door. There's a series of doors swinging shut at

**ABOVE (LEFT TO RIGHT)** Matt Ingram, Emma Lillie Lees, Justine Smith, Martin Ryan, Mark Green, Cata Lindegaard and Harry Morris  
(All photographs by Strat Mastoris)

right-angles too, and a gamut of empty doorframes, and even an empty table doing service once as a rowing boat.

Everything's in gunmetal grey, black and smirched with crosses to denote a graveyard; the funerary world never quite leaves. Panels dissolving stage left and right, and backstage the glow of a bellowed forge. Bob Ryder's sound

design includes everything from the hiss of metal to the eerie marsh sounds, with the ominous firing of cannon to alert everyone to escaped convicts. Strat Mastoris's lighting shimmers with spent force on gloaming: it's iridescent, twilight.

Richi Blennerhassett's costumes are spectacularly period, including not a few top-hats. Sumptuary and shoddy is lovingly rendered in satiny and matte black, white and a chessboard of monochromes. Liz Ryder-Weldon's musical arrangements of the *Ivy Green* and Handel's *Harmonious Blacksmiths* haunting in the ballads drifting off salt-marshes. Alex McQuillan-Wright's choreography is one of the things that make this a consummate production. Not a hint of awkwardness, made all the easier by a uniformly fine cast. Moog Gravett's fight direction is like a punctuation of vacuum, swiftly filled.

The familiar story's given a more stripped-down myth. It's more clearly a moral tale, despite startling bouts of realism. One of Bartlett's great strengths is invoking storytelling within the story. Newcomer Matt Ingram's Pip emerges to tell of his genealogy from the graveyard his family's buried in, while, Miss Havisham's too is related with unusual stillness.

Daisy Proud's Mrs Joe, Pip's punitive elder sister, is ferociously rendered in vinegar. Mrs Joe is succeeded by the softer Biddy, the help who becomes indispensable. She is also played by Proud, and actors relishing contrasts in this thirteen-strong ensemble is one of the tightly calibrated requirements of this version. For the most part it's

consummate. Proud excels too as kindly lawyer's clerk John Wemmick. She catches Wemmick's querulous but warmly confiding nature, his famous admonition to use 'portable property' however struck out.

Ingram's Pip is attractively callow, moving from gawkish childhood to flop-haired youth. From a boy nurtured by a kindly brother-in-law at his forge, he's plucked by Miss Havisham to play with Estella, the child she's brought up to revenge herself by proxy on the whole male sex.

Ingram perhaps over-projects his voice a tad, but he's so completely at one with Pip – in boyish shiver and shallow sneer, veneer peeling – that you don't notice for long. It's an exemplary core performance.

Dickens's brilliance in stranding together the apparently disparate story of Pip forced to help Mark Green's glowering escaped convict Abel Magwitch, with that of Miss Havisham and lawyer Jaggers is one of his most consummate. Pip's kindness to a wronged man on the run leads to confusion. Pip's informed he has 'great expectations' of riches and concludes it must be Miss Havisham. The apparently dark, certainly forbidding figure of Jaggers reveals a more intimate connection between the protagonists than any, save Pip at the end, could countenance; and the comfort of one dying man.

Most of all it's Pip's transition that's most telling: from orphan boy at the forge to a young prig ashamed of his connections, most shamefully with that of his brother-in-law Joe Gargery, a better person than any in the book

# GREAT EXPECTATIONS

alongside the young Biddey (who fancies Pip, something that Bartlett cuts right back and in doing so causes a moment to jar late on). And of course Pip's redemption.

It was a theme Dickens had handled in *Little Dorrit* and would return to in his novel after *Great Expectations*, *Our Mutual Friend*, with several characters. Here though it's central, combined with Pip's hopeless passion for Estella, frozen emblem of the frozen things he pursues.

And here's the brilliance of this version. Dan Dyer plays the opposing characters of both Gargery and Jaggers. He manages Gargery's warmth with affecting directness and utter conviction. He never loses his rationale or vocal centredness: a mix of tender toughened.

Dryer's Mr. Jaggers by contrast is less lean, more physically imposing here than I'd imagined; it works well though less naturally than for Gargery. Jaggers, Bartlett decides, is no lean lawyer of ice and has cast him as a foil to Gargery. Despite his forbidding mien this is a man of caged righteousness. That's surely right. Dryer exudes presence, expressing himself not icily but with hauteur, hinting later at a man who has done exactly what Magwitch has: tried to rescue one person. In Jaggers's case two.

Ingrams plays off several actors possessing enormous presence. Green's Magwitch for one broods and snarls with an animal power and vocal strength that

gives way to a melting sentiment, rather than sentimentality that Pip can't abide at least till he's been humbled. Green's searing capacity to hold an audience whilst relating his tale is realized here in a wholly different bear-hug of a voice. Initially too with chains.

Justine Smith's Miss Havisham has all the vocal and physical agility this eldritch spider requires, flyaway wig and steel trap six inches below it. Smith's voice is high-lying, sounding slightly girlish, exactly as if her development's arrested. It's chillingly perfect for one view on the wedding-attired ancient who shuns daylight. Havisham's transition from poisonous deceit to begging genuine forgiveness, is touching in Smith's hands.

Smith has the dubious pleasure of enacting the most startling theatrical coup in this performance, indeed technically it's exciting not only for lighting effects but the way ensemble storytelling melts it out again.

Emma Lillie Lees's Estella embodies the part, less waify than some feel compelled to portray her, and more the substance of her parents turned to terrible account. She avoids Estella's standard brittleness, exuding iced hollowness looking to melt. When she and still-aching Pip meet again eleven years later, there's shared pain and recognition.

Harry Morris's superb as the warm, honourable, generous Herbert Pocket,



LEFT James Hammond, Dan Dryer and Daisy Proud

who befriends Pip after Jaggers has asked him to attend to Pip's finishing school as it were. He's not the conventional slight figure but substantial and vigorous – and believably alert, quicker to realize Magwitch's worth.

Morris revels too in the brief persecutory role of Compeyson; again a deliberate pairing of opposites: the man who deserted and persecuted Magwitch, jilted Miss Havisham. Compeyson has only a few walk-ons, though Morris chillingly smoothes himself out in manner for it, alluding to a scar.

Martin Ryan's rich braggart Bentley Drummle is here a fantastically lowering brute who marries Estella at one point, and his unusual roughness – no conventionally smooth wooer with a violent streak but a near-sociopath – explains why Ryan's given the role of Sergeant: authority briefly in check.

James Hammond thrives as the village's upwardly-thinking Uncle

Pumblechook. Finally, Sam de Costobadie takes the fussy parish clerk Wopsle. Other ensemble parts are taken by Jenny Behn, Cata Lindegaard (who announces the interval mordantly) and Diana Banham.

There's some decisions Bartlett takes to ensure everything points back to Pip. Thus Biddey's shrinking as a character the odd decision to have Havisham to make out a cheque to Pip, not Herbert Pockett, so that everyone leaves Pip to his epilogue and encounter. Bartlett's a superb adaptor but here he loses the truth of the story a little for the sake of thematic slickness. The epilogue though is warmer in its ambiguity, with a tender shock in one gesture.

This is though a professionally-realized NVT production, consummate and brooding, here the melting of scenes into each other seem as fluid as a salt marsh, or a great story shimmering just out of reach.

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**Monday**

**Tuesday**

**Wednesday**

**Thursday**

**Friday**

**Saturday**

**Sunday**

**January**

Acting class 7:30pm **6**

**7**

**8**

**9**

**10**

**11**

**12**

Acting class 7:30pm **13**

**14**

**15**

**16**

NVYT 4:30pm  
**THE WINTERLING** 7:45pm **17**

**THE WINTERLING** 7:45pm **18**

**THE WINTERLING** 2:30pm **19**

Acting class 7:30pm **20**

**THE WINTERLING** 7:45pm **21**

**THE WINTERLING** 7:45pm **22**

**THE WINTERLING** 7:45pm **23**

NVYT 4:30pm  
**THE WINTERLING** 7:45pm **24**

Consent auditions:  
[check the NVT website](#)  
**THE WINTERLING** 7:45pm **25**

**26**

Acting class 7:30pm **27**

**28**

**29**

Consent auditions:  
[check the NVT website](#) **30**

NVYT 4:30pm  
Miss Julie auditions:  
[check the NVT website](#) **31**

**February**

Acting class 7:30pm **3**

Miss Julie auditions:  
[check the NVT website](#) **4**

**5**

Miss Julie recalls **6**

NVYT 4:30pm **7**

Consent recalls **1**

Sussex Playwrights 6pm  
Miss Julie auditions:  
[check the NVT website](#) **2**

Acting class 7:30pm **10**

**11**

**12**

**13**

NVYT 4:30pm **14**

**15**

**16**

Acting class 7:30pm **17**

**18**

**19**

**20**

**21**

**22**

Hangmen auditions:  
[check the NVT website](#) **23**

Acting class 7:30pm  
Hangmen auditions:  
[check the NVT website](#) **24**

Hangmen auditions:  
[check the NVT website](#) **25**

**26**

**27**

NVYT 4:30pm **28**

**29**



# GREAT EXPECTATIONS



LEFT Matt Ingrams and Justine Smith

Any audience for anything Dickens is freighted with expectation. Since his books were written, they have attracted scores of adaptations, films and recordings from dozens of celebrated directors, actors and film stars: we have become accustomed to a starry Dickens of international fame whose original serials for Blackwood's magazine in the 1860's now fill box sets and pack out the cinema.

But a local theatre production of *Great Expectations*? With a cast of just thirteen actors and minimal sets? Well, this stunning version is up there with the best. Neil Bartlett's powerful dramatization tells the story in Dickens' own words with a fizz and a punch that leave you gasping. The New Venture Theatre players, choreographed with lightening speed and dusted with theatrical magic, take several parts at the double: Dan Dryer swaps accents and neckties

between Jo and Jaggers whilst Martin Ryan shares his menace between the sergeant and Bentley Drummie. Matt Ingram's Pip travels some twenty years between rough boy and urban gent as well as managing the narration and breathtaking gymnastics. He is brilliantly charming – why wouldn't Justine Smith's abandoned bride adore him? Eventually, even the icy Estella of Emma Lillie Lees melts for an adult Pip and a happy ending. Mark Green is fitting rival to Finlay Currie, David Lean's churchyard convict in the 1946 film, and no higher praise is possible.

Diane Robinson directs with fantastic skill, assisted by a creative team whose selection of musical scores, set devices, costumes and lighting immediately evoke the atmosphere of the marsh, the ruined Satis House and the Victorian streets of London.

# TALK

written and directed by Mark Wilson

Set in the 1850s in the criminal wing of Bethlem asylum this is a play about the birth of psychotherapy. It is the story of the struggle between those advocating traditional and quite Medieval treatment of the mentally ill and those struggling towards an understanding of the centrality of childhood experience and the curative value in articulating it – the curative value of talk. It is a play about stories, but more than that, it is a play about the universal and, indeed, timeless need to be heard.



# QUARTET

by Ronald Harwood  
directed by Richard Lindfield

Jean, Cecily, Reggie, and Wilfred were once the glittering stars of English opera – their iconic recording of the quartet from Verdi's *Rigoletto* has just been re-released. Currently three of them are seeing out their final days in the peace and tranquillity of Beecham House, a genteel home for retired opera singers. That peace is about to be shattered by the arrival of Jean, the diva of the group, whose marriage to Reggie was poisonous and short-lived.



Once a year, the residents combine their faded talents in a concert to celebrate Verdi's birthday. So will the Quartet be revived? Over Jean's dead body!

## Call for proposals to direct for our 73rd Season 2020/21

2019 saw another strong year at NVT with a wealth of diverse productions, established plays as well as new writing! With the last show of 2019 waiting in the wings, and several productions cast and in rehearsal, it is already time to plan for the next season.

The Artistic Director's team is looking for proposals for productions, whether from experienced or new directors and are currently inviting proposals for next season.

Our 73rd season runs from October 2020 to July 2021. The deadline for submissions is Saturday 15th February 2020.

The Proposal to Direct form can be found on the website in the formal documents section:

<https://www.newventure.org.uk/37-indexing/220-formal-documents>

Please email your proposals to:

[Rod.Lewis@newventure.org.uk](mailto:Rod.Lewis@newventure.org.uk)

and ensure you copy in:

[Ulrike.schilling@newventure.org.uk](mailto:Ulrike.schilling@newventure.org.uk)

Due to recent changes in the industry which make it much more challenging to obtain a license for a production, we suggest to submit a back up play along your first choice play.

If you are unsure about directing a full length production or just want to discuss options and other ideas, please do get in touch with Rod and Uli, who will act as contact for the Artistic Director's team. 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 the success of NVT relies on all of our amazing volunteers who ensure we can continue and remain a supportive, open and welcoming club.

**Rod Lewis, Bryony Weaver, Katie Brownings, Mark Lester and Uli Schilling**

## Contacting the NVT

The New Venture Theatre  
Bedford Place  
Brighton BN1 2PT



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### General Enquiries

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### Acting Class Coordinator

Gina Laine  
[actingclass@newventure.org.uk](mailto:actingclass@newventure.org.uk)

\*Asterisks indicate trustee committee members.

## NVT information

### 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 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](mailto:angels@newventure.org.uk)

If you are a UK tax payer your donation may also benefit from Gift Aid.

### Our sponsors

Our sponsorship deal is £250 for a year's advertising on our website and in our newsletter and programmes, plus 2 complimentary tickets for each production in that year.

### NVT membership

Membership is £15. To renew, or join if you are not yet a member, just go to our website:

[www.newventure.org.uk/join-us](http://www.newventure.org.uk/join-us)

## Booking tickets

### TICKET PRICES AND PERFORMANCES

Members £9

Non-Members £10

Evening performances at 7:45pm

Sundays are matinees only at 2:30pm

There are no performances on Mondays.

### HOW TO BOOK TICKETS

You can book online at:

[www.newventure.org.uk](http://www.newventure.org.uk)

or by post using the form below

**Please fill in both sides of the form**

### CONTACTING BOX OFFICE

Box Office (answerphone only):

01273 746118

For all ticketing enquiries, please email:

[boxoffice@newventure.org.uk](mailto:boxoffice@newventure.org.uk)

### STUDIO THEATRE SEATING AND ACCESS

The Studio has unallocated seating.

There is one step at the entrance to the theatre.

### THEATRE UPSTAIRS SEATING AND ACCESS

The Theatre Upstairs has allocated seating; please use the seating chart overleaf and indicate your first, second and third choice seats using 1s, 2s and 3s respectively, and fill out your contact details below. Access to the Theatre Upstairs is only possible by 4 flights of stairs and therefore may not be suitable for those with limited mobility.

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Production	Date	Members tickets (£9)	Non-member tickets (£10)	Total cost
<b>THE WINTERLING</b> (17–25 January) Theatre upstairs – mark seat preference below				
<b>TALK</b> (14–22 February) Studio theatre (unreserved seating)				
<b>QUARTET</b> (13–21 March) Studio theatre (unreserved seating)				

	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12			
Write '1', '2' or '3' for your first, second and third choice seats. Seat F1 is normally unavailable.	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10				
	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10	D11	D12	D13	
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12	C13	
	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11	B12	B13	
	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9	A10	A11	A12	A13	

STAGE

EXIT