

NEW VENTURE THEATRE

newsletter
november 2019

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Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT

Preview

1–9 November 2019

FEN

written by Caryl Churchill
directed by Ian Amos

“Fen is a play with more direct quotes of things people said to us than any other play I’ve written . . . It is a play with a particularly lively sense of how much it owes to other people.”

Fen grew out of meetings between Caryl Churchill, the Joint Stock Theatre Group cast and director Les Waters and people living in the Fens. They spent two weeks in a Fen village, knocking on doors, talking to as many people as possible; asking questions about their lives, their memories, what they would like their lives to be like and what they dreamed of. During the third week, back in London, the actors



continued overleaf

ABOVE Fen rehearsal. Photograph by Cata Lindegaard

NVT 2019/20 SEASON

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

The newish newsletter

As you have no doubt noticed, the newsletter has changed. We felt that having the separate newsletter and quarterly brochure was unnecessary and instead we could produce something new and more portable.

So we are doing a trial run of halving the size but doubling the length of the newsletter and incorporating into it the calendar from the brochure. The saving

by not having the separate brochure also allows us to print the newsletter in full colour.

Do you like the new format, or do you prefer the old newsletter? Do you have any other suggestions about it? Please send your feedback to:

newsletter@newventure.org.uk

Preview continued

FEN

presented their findings – championing people they had met, discussing the ideas that the play might involve. Churchill used these meetings, workshops and other research as the basis for writing the play.

Fen is a vibrant and moving play that broke new ground at the time it was written in the way that it placed local people's words and stories at its heart. That community is represented by over 20 characters that span the generations from young children to a woman

celebrating her 90th birthday. It focuses on a group of women working on the land in East Anglia in the early 1980s. Their lives are harsh, but punctuated with humour: Haunted by the past and with dreams of what might be, but trapped in the present - work, home, children, money, men . . .

Caryl Churchill is one of the UK's leading living playwrights and *Fen* is one of her major works.

Ian Amos (director)



ABOVE *Fen* rehearsal. Photograph by Cata Lindegaard

GABRIEL

written by Moira Buffini
directed by Gerry McCrudden



Light plays over the darkened stage, revealing themselves as waves and throughout the whole of Britten's 'Dawn' from *Peter Grimes* this morphs in the longest, most atmospheric introduction to a play I've seen anywhere.

Guernsey, 1943. A naked young man is washed up on the beach, his identity a secret, not helped by his speaking both English and German but with complete amnesia. To some in the Becquet family he's an angel; for others devilishly hard to pin down or throw out. Moira

ABOVE Lyn Snowden and Mark Lester
RIGHT Chelsea Newton Mounthey, Jack Lynn, Lyn Snowden and Naomi Horsfall.
(All photographs by Strat Mastoris)

Buffini's 1997 play is as fresh as it was debuting in a world almost as different as the 1943 it depicts; which perhaps is nearer now.

There's too many questions. Gabriel, the infatuated child Estelle calls him, the prayer to her squares of power we

see her drawing as the play starts tenebrously. Then 'Cockney' daughter-in-law Lily and housekeeper Margaret Lake – who keeps them alive with black market deals – wrangle over whether it's worth saving the man Lily finds on the beach.

Living in a hermitage because they have been kicked out of their manor house by occupying Germans, there are four women, now with two secrets. Lyn Snowden's aristocrat soignée widow Jeanne unthinkingly reveals the more dangerous, chattering to their new liaison officer. Dumb Major von Pfunz can only say 'very nice'. 'Do tell me about your wonderful name, Major,' Snowden drawls, 'it sounds like flatulence.' She adds tauntingly, since he doesn't understand a word: 'You're a very handsome race. Some of you anyway.

And some of you look like goblins!' She should know. She slept with his predecessor out of choice. She lets fall a devastating fact about her daughter-in-law Lily. Over-attached to her son, an RAF pilot, she confesses she dislikes his 'Jew-wife'.

Then of course von Pfunz urbaneily corrects her, later telling her Peterhouse in a Cambridge, not Oxford, college. This while shredding her Gabriel backstory. She thinks he might be an RAF pilot. Von Pfunz thinks very differently. Later still the grudging Lake has evidence – in Amanda Harman's wonderfully curmudgeonly performance – that he's someone else again. So she thinks.

As loyalties tauten and shift, as Estelle (in Naomi Horsfall's keen, fresh performance) continually pushes the



GABRIEL

brinkmanship further with misplaced pluck, Jeanne has to use all her equivocal resistance, and row back from guilt too. That's not easy. A woman who's also boasted unwittingly that her son wasn't her husband's is somehow irresistible to von Pfunz. But he won't possess her. He admires her disdain for him so much he wants love instead.

There's a magnificent egotism too in the way Jeanne refers casual 'three years' to Gabriel asking about the war: she unthinkingly refers to the occupation of the island, not the war itself, which has continued four.

There's Jack Lynn's fine Gabriel, a convincingly tousled performance managing to convey a genuine perplexity together with affection – he touches Lily's wrist momentarily, and it says everything that happens. He's particularly good at conveying Gabriel's identity as a lit numinous thing, almost angelic, a single memory of falling a long way, but not by parachute or plane. Lynn brings the right innocence and the bewildered edge which could reveal him from the most pitch-black as well as blinding of places.

Mark Lester's layered Nazi is a thing of repellent beauty, a compelling mix of the knowingly, intelligently brutish, just held in check, and the romantic who dreams a man who can fill a book with pose poems of horrors. A book that's stolen and shared. But Lester's gift for exuding the



ABOVE Amanda Harman

pain in the monster, the desire to be appreciated, unvarnished for who he is, a man who's able to articulate what chaos and war release, makes him more than a stereotype. His continual cat-and-mouse with Snowden is the core tension of the work as they play off each other's vulnerabilities and intimate fears. And they come to know each other intimately in a different way than you'd expect.

Chelsea Newton Mounthey as Lily is another compelling performance, whether in her sullen vehemence, someone only Estelle feels close to, and then her discovery of Gabriel which shifts things for her, as well as Jeanne's slipped words. There's a daring and nobility in Lily that Mounthey catches perfectly, though when it comes to true daring Horsfall Estelle takes the palm. Horsfall suggests a girl older than her



ABOVE Mark Lester, Lyn Snowden Naomi Horsfall and Chelsea Newton Mounthey

nominal ten years, both child-like yet quickly apprehensive, alert, electric, mischievously defiant and ultimately heroic.

Directed by Gerry McCrudden, the Theatre Upstairs set (designed and built by Adam Kinciad, Simon Glazier and others) is a consummately realized farmhouse with a darker slate-coloured wall with a central door and passageway, a kitchen area stage left and stage right a red carpet and chairs. The period selection of chairs and surfaces is exemplary. Furthest stage left is a raised area where Gabriel's bed is placed, with a door behind. Lit by Strat Mastoris – responsible for the remarkable light-show at the beginning, and various blackout effects via Max Apollo Videaux' videography and tech, it's operated by Alex Epps. The sound design by Alistair

Lock encompasses Britten and surround storm effect, operated by Erica Fletcher. Ian Hollands and Mark Green produce authentic costumes from German uniform to wartime handkerchief hat-fashions to cricket flannels.

This is an engrossing story, certainly, but so much more than that. It examines delusions we have of ourselves the degree to which we can lie or assume we can, and degrees of denial. The eponymous figure's a catalyst certainly, but the impure truth – pace von Pfunz – is so much more dangerous and fascinating. With sovereign production values, fine pace and a flawless cast, you won't see a better revival of this drama anywhere.

Review by Simon Jenner. First published at fringereview.co.uk on October 5, 2019

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

November

Acting class 7:30pm **4**

FEN 7:45pm **5**

FEN 7:45pm **6**

FEN 7:45pm **7**

FEN 7:45pm **1**

FEN 7:45pm
Talk recalls **2**

FEN 2:30pm
Sussex Playwrights 6pm **3**

Acting class 7:30pm **11**

12

NVT AGM 7:30pm **13**

14

NVYT 4:30pm **15**

FEN 7:45pm **9**

10

Acting class 7:30pm **18**

19

20

21

NVYT 4:30pm **22**

23

Quartet auditions:
[check the NVT website](#) **24**

Acting class 7:30pm **25**

26

27

28

PALE FIRE 7:45pm
NVYT 4:30pm **29**

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

December

The Herd auditions:
[check the NVT website](#)
Acting class 7:30pm **2**

The Herd auditions:
[check the NVT website](#) **3**

4

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 7:45pm **5**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 7:45pm **6**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 7:45pm **7**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 2:30pm **8**

The Herd recalls:
[check the NVT website](#)
Acting class 7:30pm **9**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 7:45pm **10**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 7:45pm **11**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 7:45pm **12**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 7:45pm **13**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 2:30pm (matinee) and 7:45pm **14**

15

Acting class 7:30pm **16**

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The Herd auditions:
[check the NVT website](#)
Sussex Playwrights 6pm **1**



Coming soon

29 November

PALE FIRE: THE MOON IN POETRY AND ART

The Moon has inspired lovers, poets and artists since time began and was in fact our first timekeeper. This year it has been 50 years since humans first set foot on the Moon. Join us for an evening of lunar poetry hosted in collaboration with the The Frogmore Press. Writer and editor Alexandra Loske will introduce new and classic writing on the Moon, composed, chosen and read by contemporary poets and NVT members.



NVT AGM

Wednesday 13 November at 7:30pm

1. Apologies for absence
2. Approve Minutes of the last AGM
3. Matters arising from the Minutes
4. Chairman's Report
5. Artistic Director's Report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Report on Projects and Developments
8. Ticket pricing trial January 2019
9. Proposed New Post: Company Stage Manager
10. Election of Officers
11. Any Other Business

Coming soon

5–14 December

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

adapted from Charles Dickens by Neil Bartlett
directed by Diane Robinson

Using only Dicken's extraordinary words and a cast of 13 actors, this powerful stage version of the much loved story is exciting, imaginative and evocative. From its opening image of Pip, alone on the windswept marshes, to the haunted darkness of Miss Haversham's cobweb-strewn bridal chamber, this inventive and atmospheric play brings to thrilling, theatrical life this classic exploration of childhood terrors and hopes – and adult dreams and regrets.



Coming soon

17–25 January

THE WINTERLING

by Jez Butterworth
directed by Steven O'Shea

In a dilapidated farmhouse on rural Dartmoor, in the depths of winter, West, a gangland fugitive, awaits the arrival of two old associates he has summoned from London to deal with some unfinished business. There is only room in the car for two people to leave. Meanwhile someone sits waiting upstairs.

Multi award winning playwright Jez Butterworth, author of such modern classics as *Mojo*, *Jerusalem* and *The Ferryman*, deploys his trademark pump-action dialogue as the characters' power plays become increasingly desperate and deadly.

Auditions

Quartet by Ronald Harwood

directed by Richard Lindfield

Audition Date

Sun 24 November, 6pm

Reggie – 70+, neat and tidy, jacket and tie man. Sang the tenor lead, the Duke, in their production of Rigoletto

Jean – 70+, theatrical and rather brittle. Sang the soprano lead, Gilda.

See the [NVT website](#) for further details

The Herd by Rory Kinnear

directed by Charly Sommers

Audition Dates

Sat 30 November, 12–4pm

Sun 1 December, 12–4pm

Mon 2 December, 7–10pm

Tue 3 December, 7–10pm

See the [NVT website](#) for further details

Andy – 21, physically and mentally disabled. A small but pivotal role. At this point, we are only inviting disabled actors to audition for this part.

Carol – early to mid 50s, Andy's mum. Controlling, loving, neurotic, keeping it together – most of the time!

Claire – 33, Andy's sister. Private, assertive, kind, but with a bitter streak.

Patricia – mid to late 70s, Andy's grandmother. Sharp, acerbic, direct; a real force of nature.

Production Dates

13 to 21 March 2020

Wilf – 70+, slightly shambling and obsessed with sex. Played the hunchback, Rigoletto

Cecily – 70+, a worrier who is beginning to lose it. Sang the contralto, Maddalena

Recalls

Monday 9 December

Production Dates

17 to 25 April 2020

Brian – mid to late 70s, Andy's grandfather. Warm, witty, young at heart, despite being physically decrepit.

Ian – mid to late 50s, Andy's father. Well-intentioned but feckless, with a track-record of making poor decisions for which he is universally hated.

Mark – Early 30s to mid 40s, Claire's new partner. A Lancastrian poet. Creative, amiable . . . Perhaps a bit quirky or bohemian. Not what the family were expecting!

Contacting the NVT

The New Venture Theatre
Bedford Place
Brighton BN1 2PT



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[@nvt_brighton](#)



[@brightonnewventuretheatre](#)

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*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, 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 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/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 is an additional matinee for *Great Expectations* on Saturday 14th, 2:30pm.

No performances on Mondays

HOW TO BOOK TICKETS

You can book online at:

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

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.

CUT ALONG THE LINE, AND RETURN YOUR COMPLETED SLIP TOGETHER WITH A CHEQUE TO: NEW VENTURE THEATRE, BEDFORD PLACE, BRIGHTON BN1 2PT

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

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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.



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Production	Date	# Members tickets	# Non-member tickets	Total cost
FEN (1–9 November) Studio theatre		(£9)	(£10)	
PALE FIRE (29 November) Studio theatre; an evening of poetry	29 November	(£6)	(£6.50)	
GREAT EXPECTATIONS (5–14 December) Theatre upstairs – mark seat preference below. Please state matinee or evening for 14 December		(£9)	(£10)	
THE WINTERLING (17–25 January) Theatre upstairs – mark seat preference below		(£9)	(£10)	

	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