

NEW VENTURE THEATRE

newsletter
december 2019

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Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT

Preview

5–14 December 2019

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

adapted from Charles Dickens by Neil Bartlett
directed by Diane Robinson

“All the mists on the marshes had risen . . .
and the whole world lay spread before me like a dream”

Using only Dickens’ 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 Havershaw’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.

This wonderful play and the very talented cast and crew have made this play a joy to work on. It is such an imaginative adaptation of my favourite Dicken’s book. The book itself is an



continued overleaf

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



LEFT Mark Green as Magwitch, Miss Havisham, and Matt Ingram as Pip. (Photograph by Strat Mastoris)

Preview continued

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

incredible read, full of amazing descriptions of characters and places, and this adaptation captures it all – evocative language, well-drawn characters and great opportunities for innovative staging, enabling our creative team, both on-stage and behind the scenes, to bring Pip’s world of the misty marshes, mouldering Satis House and dark and dangerous London bursting to life on stage.

We are really excited to be welcoming new members: Matt Ingrams, Daisy Proud, James Hammond, Jenny Behn and Harry Moss to the talented cast of *Great Expectations*. We also welcome back relatively new comers Dan Dryer (*Hysteria*) and Emma Lees (Short Play Festival 2019), as well as some regular New Venture faces all offering their skill and expertise – Mark Green, Justine Smith, Diana Banham, Cata Lindegaard, Sam de Costobadie and Martin Ryan.

The backstage and technical teams’ skills, expertise and wonderful creativity will all ensure this play bursts into life on stage. We have the very talented services of Musical Director Liz Ryder-Weldon, last seen acting at NVT in *Jumpy*, who is making sure the play evokes the sounds of the marshes, the river, London and Satis House with the help of Bob Ryder. We are also very lucky to have the services of choreographer Alex McQuillen-Wright, who is busy jumping backwards and forwards from *Big* in the Dominion Theatre, where she is Associate

Director, to NVT to put the cast through their paces. Judith Berrill is our very talented Production Designer, with an eye on the look of the whole thing, she has designed a beautiful set which Simon Glazier, George Walter and Peter Wood will be realising. Strat Mastoris is our wonderful Lighting Designer – so important as light plays such a significant part of the story, both symbolically and in evoking the atmosphere of the piece. The very experienced Richard Blennerhasset returns to NVT with fantastic ideas as Costume Designer, supported by new member Lindsay Midali, and then we have our wonderful backstage team led by Carol Croft, our Stage Manager who is already getting her hands dirty making the turkey!

I have been acting and directing since studying Drama at University of London Goldsmiths College. I have done some professional theatre work along the way, but most of this experience has been in education and community theatre.

To date, I have directed over 30 productions, both with young people (many of them special needs) and adults. I must one day count up just how many plays I’ve put on, I might shock myself. I have most recently directed *Jumpy* at NVT (2018), and the award-winning productions *Brief Encounter* (2017) and *Daisy Pulls it Off* (2015) for the Wick Theatre Company.

Diane Robinson (director)

FEN

written by Caryl Churchill

directed by Ian Amos



Some plays haunt you into reviving them. Ian Amos attended the original production while a student in January 1983: the set as the dramatist remembers a striking single field. Struck by it and by the way other productions got literally bogged down in mud (one he was writing music for in 1993), Amos directed *Fen* for the Headgate Theatre in Colchester in 2003 and now brings it to NVT. There's ghosts in this play and they won't let Amos go. They shouldn't let you go either.

ABOVE Milly Jackson, Sophie Matthews, Angela Gorman, Fi Urquhart and Helen Betty Ann. (All photographs by Strat Mastoris)

Churchill worked with Joint Stock actors who gleaned stories quotes and memories from people native to the fenland. They presented their findings and Churchill wrote one of the great pioneering plays using verbatim. Not wholly verbatim, which gives *Fen* its reach and power.

Twenty-odd characters scramble over the land they work and dream upon. Language too gets scumbled over like half-dry paint. Words and storytelling's fragmentary, isolated or keeps re-emerging, crumbling through your fingers.

Eight actors – six women, two men – mainly multi-role scenes both stand-alone and recurring. The core concerns a group of women planting and reaping in a way their forebears did. Helen Betty Ann's Boy looks out from somewhere in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He's timeless. But the land shifts under his feet.

It's not even owned by Apollo Videaux' Mr Tewson any more, the farmer who cajoles the luckless Frank (James Stallwood) into staying because his father looked after Frank's afflicted brother. Coming straight after the Boy, Videaux tops the play with Japanese Mr Takai gloating over the land he's bought for his company.

Fen is sound-designed by Ian Amos; the sparse field set is designed, painted and dressed by Delphine du Barry, who also designed the costumes, and built by Simon Glazier and George Walter. Sedge thickets punctuating the edges are vividly realized, as is the occasional application of dry ice for mist effects. The rear door owns a function and a ghosting of its own. Potatoes and other vegetables scatter on the paint-scumbled floor evoking earth, and there is a token pile of it hoed by one character. It's lit with refractive density by Keith Dawson (the operator's Esmé Bird). The sound design's operated by Richard Michalec



ABOVE Apollo Videaux and Kerri Hedley-Cheney.

lapping the sounds of the fens. And the occasional period pop song.

It's the women whose stories impact. The group's differentiated with Milly Jackson's taskmistress Mrs Hassett cracking the whip, and Kerri Hedley-Cheney making the first of her memorable contributions as the radically-minded Nell, who fights off comments from Hassett and witch-calling children alike. Later she's smooth-suited Miss Cade, persuading Tewson to sell to Takai (whom we've already seen exulting). Hedley-Cheney's blistering Nell, suave Cade and 90-year-old Ivy in circular recall make an impressive trio. Hedley-Cheney's Ivy gives first-hand

FEN

accounts of what it was like to pick beet, indeed survive at the turn of the century. It's mesmerising. Even more so is Nell's account of her grandfather as a boy running away and being party to a man taking vengeance on his faithless wife and her lover who think they've poisoned him and is let out of his coffin to pinion them with a pitchfork. And Nell's grandfather sworn to terrible secrecy.

There's a cruelly sharp sequence between Fi Urquhart's cruel Angela and stepdaughter: Angela tells her charge Becky (Jackson) she doesn't want Becky to like her. This recalls *Top Girls*, Churchill's preceding play before *Fen*, but in a far more twisted manner as Angela exacts sadistic punishments and taunts. It's such scenes that broaden Churchill to savage epic.



There's above all Sophie Matthews' Val who's leaving her husband and painfully her children (Angela Gorman's Deb and Helen Betty Ann's Shona) for Frank, who's left his wife long ago. Val's acute dilemma howls across this drama in some of the most memorable scenes – and characters – Churchill has created. From the pulsing disco lights of the Eurythmics' 'Love is a Stranger' when the lovers entwine, to Val's final devastating plea to Frank – to be released from more than Frank – Churchill takes a news cutting and makes it unbearably moving. Also recalling *Top Girls* with its portrayal of children at play, Gorman and Betty Ann twist away from Val, Urquhart's May dispenses wisdom to her runaway daughter, and Vidaux' Geoffrey and Gorman's Shirley lend a nuanced damnation.

Geoffrey summarises the insular response to Val: 'I don't hold you personally responsible, Val. You're a symptom of the times. Everything's changing. Everything's going down. Strikes, militants, I see the Russians behind it.' Churchill's way of evoking vast scope by invoking narrow prejudice is breathtaking and breathlessly funny. If it wasn't so alienating for Val.

Val turns to Jackson's Alice in a religious revival (Urquhart's alcoholic Margaret giving witness, Gorman's Mrs Finch presiding, Betty Ann's innocent Mavis) in a delicious array of churchy clothing.

LEFT James Stallwood.



'I'd rather take Valium' Val tells Alice. Churchill's way with vignettes such as these crafts the kind of patchwork such religious women might recognize as metaphor but not effect: the red thread of Val's passion burns through the play to the last haunting pleas to Frank. 'What are you frightened of?' Val asks Frank. 'Going mad. Heights. Beauty.' 'Lucky we live in a flat country' she ripostes but they both know the other two things are live.

Amos directs some outstanding performances. Matthews' Val and Hedley-Cheney's Nell centre this production, the heart and wry commentator of the play. Betty Ann and Gorman impress as Shona and Deb, and Jackson's Becky and Urquhart's Angela (who also makes a pass at Frank in a pub with darts board) add another dimension to close-set lives inbreeding

ABOVE Sophie Matthews and Kerri Hedley-Cheney.

cruelty. Exploit, alienate from themselves, dominate. Churchill's critique of government refracts with vivid marsh-lights.

Churchill's comments via Hedley-Cheney's Cade persuading Vidaux' Tewson out of his farm emphasize that political dimension: how new Tories harm those who naturally support them – bar the switched-on Nell and few others.

A stunning play beautifully revived by one who knows it intimately.

Review by Simon Jenner. First published at fringereview.co.uk on November 4, 2019

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

December

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

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

4

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 7:45pm **5**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 7:45pm **6**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 7:45pm **7**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 2:30pm **8**

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

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 7:45pm **10**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 7:45pm **11**

No performance –
 General Election **12**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS 7:45pm **13**

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

Cast Iron Theatre/NVT
SHORT PLAY NIGHT
 7:45pm **15**

Acting class 7:30pm **16**

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January

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Sussex Playwrights 6pm **5**

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

THE WINTERLING 7:45pm **18**

THE WINTERLING 2:30pm **19**

20

THE WINTERLING 7:45pm **21**

THE WINTERLING 7:45pm **22**

THE WINTERLING 7:45pm **23**

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

THE WINTERLING 7:45pm **25**

26

27

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29

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NVYT 4:30pm **31**



Coming soon

15 December

SHORT PLAY NIGHT

Cast Iron Theatre/
New Venture Theatre

An evening of script-in-hand performances of new work selected from the best and the brightest local, national and international writers – every quarter! Expect a night of play reading delivered on a black box stage; a celebration of words, story and writing.



Coming soon

17–25 January 2020

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.



Coming soon

14–22 February 2020

TALK

written by Mark Wilson
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.

NVT is trialling a new artistic direction

Leading on from the successes of the current system of artistic direction, and in order to spread the workload, four volunteers have been co-opted to help NVT's Artistic Director.

The plan is that the new team will share the responsibilities currently borne by the Artistic Director Rod Lewis, to help co-ordinate productions, looking at and overseeing where necessary the various areas that drive the creativity of the theatre, and to be a sounding board for the directors of this and the following seasons' plays.

There will also be an opportunity to create and shape the 2020/2021 season, get more members involved in productions and training opportunities, ensure all directors are aware of the support available to them from the team so that any directorial or cast and casting

issues can be flagged up quickly, and ideas can be bounced off a willing pair of ears.

The team consists of Bryony Weaver, Katie Brownings, Mark Lester and Uli Schilling, and was announced at the AGM on 13th November, but bear in mind this is a 'rolling programme' – the current individuals bring to the project a wealth of experience from the fields of admin, performance, creativity and support, but membership may well change as the year goes on.

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, bottom right. Please email your proposals to:

Rod.Lewis@newventure.org.uk

and ensure you copy in:

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



[@NewVentureTheatreBrighton](https://www.facebook.com/NewVentureTheatreBrighton)



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[@brightonnewventuretheatre](https://www.instagram.com/brightonnewventuretheatre)

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Acting Class Coordinator

Gina Laine
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, 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.

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

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, but no performances on Monday 9th or Thursday 12th.

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

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Production	Date	Members tickets (£9)	Non-member tickets (£10)	Total cost
GREAT EXPECTATIONS (5–14 December) Theatre upstairs – mark seat preference below. Please state matinee or evening for 14 December				
SHORT PLAY NIGHT (15 December) Studio theatre (unreserved seating)	15 December	(£2.50)	(£5.00)	
THE WINTERLING (17–25 January) Theatre upstairs – mark seat preference below				
TALK (14–22 February) 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