

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white lace-trimmed corset-style top, stands in a boxing ring. Her right hand is raised, holding a black boxing glove. The background shows the ropes of the ring and a hanging punching bag. The title 'THE SWEET SCIENCE OF BRUISING' is overlaid in large white letters.

THE SWEET SCIENCE OF BRUISING

BY
JOY WILKINSON

DIRECTED BY
GABY BOWRING
& BRYONY WEAVER

NVT
NEW
VENTURE
THEATRE

Friday 12th - Saturday 20th July 2024 at 7.30pm
Matinee: Sunday 14th July at 2.30pm

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Bedford Place,
Brighton BN1 2PT

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THE SWEET SCIENCE OF BRUISING

1869, Islington. Four Victorian women are drawn into London's underground world of exhibition pugilism: Violet Hunter, a nurse with ambitions of becoming a doctor; Anna Lamb, an abused wife and mother for whom boxing is a way to fight back; Matilda Blackwell, who finds flashing her fists more satisfying than flashing her ankles when times are hard; and Polly Stokes, a pit brow lass who dreams of becoming a prize fighter. Each woman enters the ring under the instruction of 'Professor' Charlie Sharp, fighting against the expectations of the men around them, for the title of 'Lady Boxing Champion of the World'.

Little is known of the early history of women's boxing in the UK. While the 18th century often celebrated women prize fighters, the 19th century didn't. Recent research from University of Southampton found that between 1850-1900 over 162 prize fights involving women took place, but concerns about the more visible role of women in society, women's rights and public order, meant that many more went unreported.

Joy Wilkinson's thought-provoking play is one of contrasts. It encounters the harsh realities of an era defined by scientific advancement but stricken by poverty, of social morality versus hypocrisy, and social order versus self-fulfillment. It imagines what its heroines' lives could be, and considers what risks they would take, if given the opportunity to fight for a better future.

At its heart is the importance of power and of passion in each character's pursuit of self-realisation, whether at home, work, or in the ring. It's as timely as ever.

Collaborating on this piece has been an amazing experience. We're immensely thankful for the creativity, commitment and enthusiasm of our brilliant production team, and especially of our talented cast, the hardest-working actors around. They have each embraced the play's challenges with dedication and determination. A special mention must go to Chris, George and Sam from Noble Science of Defence for their patience, humour, and inexhaustible support of the cast during their boxing and fencing training – the result is a thrill to watch!

Gaby Bowring & Bryony Weaver
Directors

CAST

Anna Lamb: Kasha Goodenough
Matilda 'Matty' Blackwell: Kate Thomas
Polly Stokes: Laura Scobie
Violet Hunter: Charlotte Atkinson
Professor Charlie Sharp: Jeremy Crow
Aunt George: Sarah Donnelly
Emily/Nancy: Elaine Larkin
Paul Stokes/Captain Danby: Thomas Dee
Gabriel Lamb/Lord Cavendish: Neil Drew
Dr James Bell/Dr Forster/Referee: Ben Pritchard

CREW

Directors: Gaby Bowring & Bryony Weaver
Production Manager: Ian Black
Stage Manager: Katie Brownings
Assistant Stage Managers: Lauren Fassam
Costume: Karl Petrie
Costume Assistant: Jane Marlton-Howard
Hair & Make Up: Richi Blennerhassett
Set Design: Simon Glazier
Set Build & Painting: Simon Glazier, Katie Brownings, George Walters, Sam Deards, Tomasz Baraniecki & Chris Kent
Lighting Design: John Everett
Lighting Rigging: John Everett, Carol Croft, Sabrina Giles & Isaac Freeman
Lighting Operation: Alex Epps & Sabrina Giles
Sound Design/Operation: Ian Black & Esther Dracott
Props: Carrie Hynds, Simon Glazier, Carol Croft & Martin Gordon
Poster: Tamsin Mastoris & Strat Mastoris
Programme: Tamsin Mastoris
Publicity/Headshot Photography: Strat Mastoris
Publicity & Social Media: Greg Donaldson
Health & Safety: Ian Black
Stage Combat Training & Choreography (Boxing/Fencing): George Metcalf, Chris Connah & Sam Pugh from Noble Science of Defence

Many Thanks - To Noble Science of Defence for the boxing and fencing training; Martin Gordon for the Victorian-style boxing posters; Carol Croft for the breakaway plates; Jerry Lyne; Culann Smyth; Katie Brownings; Mike Whittaker for the rehearsal space at Champion House in Southwick; Gladrags for their wonderful help with the costumes; Milla Hills from Southwick Players and Myles Locke from Brighton Little Theatre for the additional costume; and, as always, to the Front of House and Box Office teams, without whom no show would ever go on.



Kasha Goodenough – Anna Lamb

Kasha joined NVT in 2015, attending the Monday night acting classes before securing roles in productions such as *Blood Wedding*, *Lulu*, *Consent* and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. She's also worked with several other independent theatre companies for Brighton Fringe over the years, including a debut at BLT last year in *Black Mountain*. Kasha is delighted to be bringing Anna's story to life in this powerful production that packs a punch.

Kate Thomas – Matilda 'Matty' Blackwell

Kate trained at East 15 Acting School. Her theatre roles include Miranda in *NSFW* (NVT), Kleopatra Maximovna in *Dying For It* (Battersea Arts Centre), Sandy in *Recipe for a Perfect Wife* (The Charing Cross Theatre), Vestra in *Sleeping Beauty* (The Panto Company) and Bob Dylan in *Blood on the Tap* (Flat50 Productions). Other credits include Carrie Cash in *Biopic - Johnny Cash* (ITV), Skepta in 'Lit Like This' Jimmy Fallon LIVE, *Bling Ring* (Producer/Channel 4), *Moment of Proof* (WPC/BBC), *Fraud Squad* (WPC/ITV) and Eva Braun in *First Dates of History* (Get Pulped).



Laura Scobie – Polly Stokes

This is Laura's tenth NVT production. She was last seen playing Kate in *Bedroom Farce*, Violet/Zuzu in *It's a Wonderful Life* and Shirley in *Hangmen*. Other recent roles include First Voice in Identity Theatre's *Under Milk Wood* at BOAT, and Lizzie the scullery maid in *Town House Voices* at the Regency Town House. She is chuffed to bits to be playing Polly in 'Sweet Science', a character that she will forever keep close to her heart.

Charlotte Atkinson – Violet Hunter

Lottie has been performing in theatre in Brighton for over 15 years. Her past credits include: *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and *1984* for the NVT; *Hay Fever*, *The Pride*, *Earthquakes in London* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Brighton Little Theatre; *The Blonde*, *The Brunette and the Vengeful Redhead* for Theatre iNQ; and *Summerland*: Shoebox Films..



Jeremy Crow - Professor Charlie Sharp

Jeremy most recently appeared at the NVT in April as Fenwick/Tom in *An Experiment with an Air Pump*, and previous roles here have included Dr Miller in *The Deep Blue Sea*, Charles in *The Clean House*, Major Glendinning in *How Many Miles to Babylon?* and David in *Benefactors*. He has also appeared at Brighton Little Theatre and with the Southwick Players. Other roles in Brighton include Noel Coward in *Mad About the Boy* (Dandyking Productions) and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Slurring Words Productions).

Sarah Donnelly – Aunt George

This will be the third stage role for Sarah at the NVT, following *Suddenly Last Summer* and *A Kind of Alaska*. She is also a singer and comper for the Sassy Cabaret Club, and has really enjoyed the opportunity to learn a little fencing for her role as Aunt George!





Elaine Larkin – Emily/Nancy

Elaine holds a Bachelor in Theatre Studies from Trinity College Dublin, and since then she has worked in theatre and education across Europe. She was a founding member of Scratch That Comedy Improv, and has performed for BBC Radio 4. This is her third show with the NVT, having directed Chekhov's *The Proposal/The Bear*, and performed in *It's a Wonderful Life*, directed by Gerry McCrudden.

Thomas Dee – Paul Stokes/Captain Danby

The Sweet Science of Bruising will be Thomas's fourth production with NVT, having previously appeared in *NSFW*, *Turpin* and *Not Talking*. He's delighted to be a part of this production, and to work with such a great team!



Neil Drew - Gabriel Lamb/Lord Cavendish

Neil has been involved in theatre in Brighton for over a decade now, appearing in numerous productions. Recent roles include Professor Bhaer – *Little Women* (BLT), Valmont – *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (NVT) and Khlestakov – *The Government Inspector* (Southwick). Previous favourite roles include Freddie in *The Deep Blue Sea* (NVT), Edward in *Sense and Sensibility* (BLT), Chief Weasel in *Wind in the Willows* (BLT) and Ralph in *Accrington Pals* (BLT). Neil is looking forward to performing in the Studio for the first time, and is really enjoying working with such a talented and fun cast & crew!



Ben Pritchard – Dr James Bell/Dr Forster/Referee

This marks Ben's return to acting after a five-year hiatus. An NVT stalwart, he's performed in a range of productions over the past 18 years, including *American Buffalo*, *A View From The Bridge*, *Hay Fever*, *The Deep Blue Sea*, *Hedwig & The Angry Inch*, and *Parlour Song*. Other productions include: *The Full Monty* (Worthing Musical Theatre Company), *Brief Encounter* (The Wick), *Blue Remembered Hills* at BOAT (Identity Theatre) and *A Steady Rain* (FKP.media), for which Ben jointly won The Art Council's 'Best Actor' Drama Award with his fellow actor Culann Smyth. He's hugely excited to be part of such a vital, poignant and incredibly empowering production with such a wonderful team.

Gaby Bowring – Director

This is Gaby's first full-length play, having previously directed Pinter's *A Kind of Alaska* for the Short Plays 2022. As a stage manager, she's worked on a variety of NVT productions since 2017, most recently *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *The Proposal/The Bear* and *Suddenly Last Summer*, as well as with the Wick Theatre Company, Southwick Players, BOAT and the Rialto. Working backstage with Bryony is always a joy, but co-directing *Sweet Science* with her is unmatched – Gaby's very proud of their work together, and that of their brilliant cast and crew.



Bryony Weaver – Director

Over 40 years, Bryony has worked extensively in both amateur and professional theatre. Her acting roles have included Hester Salomon in *Equus* and Olivia in *Twelfth Night* for profit-share ENR Productions, and her professional work includes being PA to Richard van Allen at the National Opera Studio, and to actor/practitioner Steven Berkoff. This is Bryony's 26th NVT show. She was assistant director for *Laundry & Bourbon/Lone Star*, and while she and Gaby have SM and ASM'd together many times, co-directing '*Sweet Science*' with her and this cast has been the absolute highlight.



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NVT Acting Class

Monday evenings at 7.30pm for all levels of acting skills. It will cost you just £5 per session (£2.50 for NVT members) First visit is FREE! See website for details.

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