

A NEW VENTURE THEATRE PRODUCTION 2019

FEN

by Caryl Churchill

Directed by Ian Amos

photograph: ©Laddus Fen by Steve Dutois

NVT

**NEW
VENTURE
THEATRE**

Bedford Place, Brighton BN1 2PT

PERFORMANCES:

Friday 1st to Saturday 9th November 7.45 pm

Sunday matinee 3rd November 2.30 pm

No show Sunday or Monday evening

BOX OFFICE INFORMATION: 01273 746118

ONLINE BOOKING: www.ticketsource.co.uk/newventuretheatre

Registered Charity No. 268607

50p

An amateur production in association with Samuel French, Ltd.

FEN

by Caryl Churchill

Fen is a play that just keeps on popping-up in my life. It was 1983 and I was studying at Essex University. In January, Joint Stock Theatre Company came to our theatre and premiered *Fen*. I like to think I was there at the first performance, but it may have been the second night (the story sounds better if you are there at the start of it all). Ten years later, in January 1993, I was living in London and involved with The Questors Theatre in Ealing and I wrote the incidental music for a production of the play. That production is mostly remembered for the fact the director insisted on huge amounts of earth being dumped in the space to create a 'real' field. It was a promenade production and trudging through dirt was not popular with the audience! Moving on a little over 10 years, in June 2003 I directed *Fen* for Colchester Theatre Group at the Headgate Theatre in Colchester. And now, 16 years later . . .

"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 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.

Structurally *Fen* is a tapestry of many diverse themes and many, sometimes briefly met, characters, theatrically mirroring the disjunct and diverse nature of the real community. The dramatic lines between reality and dream, past and present are often smudged. Any real alternative future remains obscured. The text is awash with the influences of storytelling, myth, religious imagery and folklore. The language itself is often disturbed and unusual – the dialogue loses order, speeches overlap or even run simultaneously; the actual words struggling as the characters themselves struggle. At the other extreme there is a strong sense of the importance of what Churchill's characters fail to say either deliberately or through an inability to express themselves fully or fear of doing so, with jumps in thought and emotion. Unrealised actions and dreams lost in silence.

Thanks to everyone who has worked with me on this production. And to everyone at NVT who gave me such a warm welcome when I moved here from Colchester 18 months ago. I hope you enjoy this play by one of our truly great and original dramatists. As you tell from the above, it is one that is very special to me.

Ian Amos, October 2019

Set in 1982 in the Fenlands of East Anglia

Cast

Boy, Amy, Shona, Mavis	Helen Betty Ann
Shirley, Deb, Mrs Finch	Angela Gorman
Nell, Miss Cade, Ivy	Kerri Hedley-Cheney
Mrs Hassett, Becky, Alice	Milly Jackson
Val	Sophie Matthews
Frank	James Stallwood
Mr Takai, Mr Tewson, Geoffrey	Apollo Videaux
Angela, May, Margaret	Fi Urquhart

Production Team

Director	Ian Amos
Assistant Director	Cata Lindegaard
Production Manager	Scott Roberts
Set Design	Delphine du Barry
Set Construction	Simon Glazier and George Walter
Set Painting and Dressing	Delphine du Barry
Stage Managers	Sophie Nunns and Cata Lindegaard
Poster	Ian Amos
Publicity Image	Laddus Fen by Steve Dubois
Lighting Design	Keith Dawson
Lighting Operation	Esme Bird
Sound Design	Ian Amos
Sound Operation	Richard Michalec
Costume Design	Delphine du Barry
Costume Assistants	Cata Lindegaard and Helen Betty Ann
Properties	Sophie Nunns
Hair & Make-up	Julie Monkcom
Health and Safety	Ian Black
Publicity	Cata Lindegaard
Programme Design	Tom Kitch

We would like to thank Sussex Beacon, Gladrags and the Molloy family for help with the costumes; Master Req, John Welles and Steven Tonge for their help with painting and dressing the set; Anwar at the Belgian Cafe, Western Road, and Taz from the Salvage coffee shop for their help with props, and as always we would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to the front of house and box office teams.

The production runs for approximately 1 hour 50 minutes, including a 20 minute intermission.



Helen Betty Ann (Boy/Amy/Shona/Mavis)

Helen is looking forward to making her theatre debut in *Fen*. Having participated in stage coach, speech and drama classes as a little girl, she is excited to be rediscovering her passion for theatre in the Brighton community.

While studying for her degree, Helen supplemented her studies with a passion for acting, presenting and dancing, co-starring in films such as *Strange Days*, shown at the This is England Festival in Rouen in 2018 and *Jamal*, which debuted at Cannes Short Film corner in 2018.



Angela Gorman (Shirley/Deb/Mrs Finch)

Making her New Venture Theatre debut, Angela is relishing the variety of characters she plays in *Fen*. Having lived through the 80s as a youngster, she feels that in particular she has found a kindred spirit in her young character Deb.



Milly Jackson (Mrs Hassett/Becky/Alice)

Milly has enjoyed acting from a young age and completed studying at the Academy of Creative Training in 2011 where she played Anya in *The Cherry Garden*, Lottie in *Don Juan in Soho* and Prue in *The Celebration*. Having spent the last 7 years working abroad in the French and Austrian Alps she has really loved becoming a part of the New Venture Theatre and *Fen*.



Kerri Hedley-Cheney (Nell/Miss Cade/Ivy)

Fen is Kerri's second play at NVT, the first being *The Clean House* for which she won the BHAC Best Actress award. Kerri recently completed a run of *Clean* (by Sam Chittenden) at Brighton Fringe which won the Best New Play award. She is loving playing nutty old Nell (among others) and thrilled to be back at NVT. She says, "Being in a theatre is like being let out to play. There's simply nothing better!"



Sophie Matthews (Val)

Sophie is an actress based in Brighton, who graduated from the University of West London in Acting for Stage and Media BA (Hons).

Fen will be Sophie's stage debut with NVT, however she has previously performed at various theatres in many popular roles, such as Fantine in *Les Miserables* and Mrs Lovette in *Sweeney Todd*. Sophie has also previously directed and performed at Brighton Fringe and aspires to continue developing her skills.



James Stallwood (Frank)

James graduated from Drama Centre London a few years ago. He was involved in a piece of new writing for the fringe last year and has been working on local film projects.



Apollo Videaux (Mr Takai/Mr Tewson/Geoffrey)

Apollo Videaux is a regular at the NVT, fulfilling roles on and off the stage. He cut his acting teeth in *Pickwick & Weller* and is excited to follow up with such a different piece.



Fi Urquhart (Angela/May/Margaret)

Fen is Fi's first play at NVT, having not acted since her schooldays. She regularly takes part in the classes at NVT, which she thoroughly enjoys. She is relishing playing a variety of roles, especially Angela. She was bitten by the acting bug at a young age, and has realised there is no cure – thank goodness!



Ian Amos (Director)

This is Ian's second time directing at NVT – the first was *Agency* last July, part of the new writers' season. He has been directing for over 35 years; in London at the Questors Theatre, and North Essex with Colchester Theatre Group, Dedham Players and Priory Players, among others. While there, he won Best Production awards for *The Dog in the Manger* (2006), *The Canterbury Tales* (2011) and *The Dresser* (2016) and Best Director awards for *The Dresser* and *Constellations* (2016).



December's NVT Production

Great Expectations

**Thursday 5 to Saturday 14 December
(additional matinee on 14 December)**

**adapted from Charles Dickens by Neil Bartlett
directed by Diane Robinson**

Using only Dickens' extraordinary words and a cast of 9 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 Havesham'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.



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NVT Acting Class

Monday evenings at 7.30pm for all levels of acting skills. It will cost you just £5.00 per session (£2.50 for NVT Members). First visit is FREE!

Contacting the NVT

For ticket and performance enquiries only, call the Box Office: 01273 746118, or email: boxoffice@newventure.org.uk
All other enquiries: 01273 808353

Become an NVT Sponsor

Advertise your business to hundreds of local residents with NVT from only £250. For a range of print and web publicity options and opportunities for free show tickets, please contact: fundraising@newventure.org.uk

Supporting NVT

We are a membership club, founded in 1947. We perform established plays, both classical and contemporary, and are a showcase for new writing. If you are interested in joining us, please pick up a membership form in the foyer.

In 1983, NVT bought the freehold of this listed Victorian building which needs constant investment to maintain its integrity. To keep NVT going, we rely on the generosity of the community, to provide donations that are essential to the upkeep of the building and the refurbishment of the main auditorium.

For more information on how you can support NVT. Please contact: fundraising@newventure.org.uk

Many thanks to our current donors and our special appreciation to our major anonymous donor.

COMING SOON

29 November 2019

Pale Fire – the Moon in Poetry and Art

introduced by Alexandra Loske

5–14 December 2019

Great Expectations

adapted from Charles Dickens
by Neil Bartlett

directed by Diane Robinson

17–25 December 2020

The Winterling

by Jez Butterworth

directed by Steven O'Shea

www.ticketsource.co.uk/newventuretheatre

Youth Theatre

(11 to 17 year olds)

Every Friday, 4.30pm to 6.30pm, during term time.

The sessions are led by experienced actors, directors, writers and teachers. The first session is free so you can come and try it out before committing. No experience is necessary and everyone is welcome.

For further information, see www.newventure.org.uk/youththeatre

For enquiries, please contact: youththeatre@newventure.org.uk