



22nd - 25th April & 28th - 30th April 2015

VOLPONE

The 1980's aren't working



By Ben Jonson, dramaturged and directed by Bernie C. Byrnes

22-25 April & 28-30 April 2015

**Special Souvenir
Edition**

Network
Theatre
Company

THE FOX SAYS...

Our director notes...

Volpone (Italian for "sly fox") was first produced in 1605-06, drawing on elements of city comedy and beast fable. A merciless satire of greed and lust, it remains Ben Jonson's most performed play, and it is ranked among the finest Jacobean era comedies.



Ben Jonson

I wanted to revisit the Thatcher years in preparation for the coming general election, as a response to the current political climate, and in particular Boris Johnson's recent speech harking back to the ethos of 'Greed is Good'. Love her or loathe her it cannot be denied that Margaret Thatcher inherited a broken country when she became Prime Minister in 1979. In 2015 we once again find ourselves on the verge of collapse,

leaving whoever wins the coming election to face serious problems.

Mrs Thatcher introduced a series of political and economic initiatives intended to reverse Britain's struggles in the Winter of Discontent and an ongoing recession. Her political philosophy and economic policies emphasised deregulation, flexible labour markets, the privatisation of state-owned companies, and reduction of the power and influence of trade unions.



Margaret Thatcher

The parallels between *Volpone*, Thatcher's Britain and increasingly the current political climate seemed obvious. In Britain we're seeing benefits cut, arts funding slashed and further education costs rocketing, while the rich and powerful continue to be rich and powerful. The change in government has not made a positive change to most people's lives.

In this version I wanted to show a broken State. The homeless at the

beginning of the play draw attention to the uneven distribution of wealth but as the piece progresses they become increasingly upwardly mobile until they are indistinguishable from the main characters. All the people here are social climbers, conscious of their position in society and resentful at being overtaken by others on the way up. Only the true innocents of the piece - Bonario and Celia - escape punishment.

Mosca is Volpone's parasite, here shown as his PA. Although she behaves in a servile manner towards him, she conceals a growing independence gained as a result of the resourcefulness she shows in aiding and abetting Volpone's confidence game. The decision to make Mosca female arose because there are more talented actresses in the company than the play had parts for. I feel that this change in gender works perfectly. Mosca's growing awareness that the others in the play are just as much "parasites" as herself, since they too would rather sponge on the wealth of others than do honest work, eventually brings her into conflict with Volpone - a conflict that destroys them both.

I have wanted to direct this play for some time and Network Theatre was the obvious choice for this production. *Volpone* will be my fourth play here, after *King Lear* last year, *Faustus* in 2013 and *The Tempest* in 2012. The commitment, enthusiasm and talent to be found in Network Theatre members continually amazes me. It is always an absolute joy to create something together with them.

Bernie C. Byrnes, April 2015

The Arch 200 Club Supports This Venue

The spirit of amateur theatre has survived at Network Theatre through changes of name, nationalisation and privatisation, but is finding it tough to cope with rising costs.

Now in our 76th year, please help us to continue to entertain you by becoming a member of the *Arch 200 Club*.

The aim of the *Arch 200 Club* is to ensure the continued existence of the Network Theatre as a building in the face of ever increasing overheads. Membership subscriptions fund projects that are for the general good of the theatre, not productions themselves.

To date the Arch 200 Club has helped fund a range of improvements including sound, lighting and staging.

Each membership costs just £5.00 a month. Every month three numbers are drawn and half that month's subscriptions paid out in prizes.

There is so much that an audience does not see that is in desperate need of refurbishment and modernisation. The fabric of these arches needs your support. Who knows, if the membership is large enough it might even be possible to shorten the wait for the gentlemen's toilet.

*More details are available from
Nigel Williams at
arch200@networktheatre.org*

FOX FACT: NHS Spend...

In 1982-3 it was £38bn (4.9% of national income). By 2010-11 it had risen to £137.4bn (8.9%)

Source: Nuffield Trust

Fox Celebrity Watch

The Fox had an exclusive behind the scenes visit to rehearsals for *Volpone* at Network Theatre. We asked the cast and crew there to describe their theatrical background in a few words. Here's what they said, from A to Z (well A to W actually)!

Judy Acton (Notario)

A seriously talented, versatile playwright and actress, lead roles in drama school training include a sister in a scene from *August Osage County* and the showcase performance in the London Diorama was as a boss operating a robbery plan.

TV appearance was on the BBC One *Tonight's the Night* Doctor Who sketch 2009 competition with John Barrowman.

Recently filmed a scene in *The Absence of War* as a reporter; proactively involved in reading for TV pilots and stage plays.

The most recent Notary role in the *Volpone* play is an interesting part that brings a unique outlook to the courtroom.

Judith Barbeler (Mosca)

Judith has both acted and directed in the past. Shows include *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Lark*, *The Talented Mr Ripley*, *Rope*, *84 Charing Cross Road*, *Ring Round the Moon* and *The Tempest*.

In London she has performed in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* for Sedos, *Richard III* for KDC, *King Lear* and *The Art of Coarse Acting* for Network Theatre and *Major Barbara* for Tower Theatre.

Bernie C. Byrnes (Director)

Bernie is Associate Artist in Residence at the New Theatre Royal, Portsmouth. She has been working as a professional theatre writer and director since 1996.

Bernie's previous professional commissions include *Another Midas*, *Kipper Tie Theatre*, *AC Random Productions*, *Stone Crabs*, *Arena North*, *Stage Focus*, the *Ashby Youth Group*, the *RSC*, *Scamp*, *Solent Peoples Theatre*, *Ugly Sister Productions*, *Live Theatre*, *The Customs House* and *Pilgrim Films*.

She is currently directing *Where's Your Mama Gone* by Brian Daniels at The Hen and Chickens, Islington, *The Princess and the Pea* for C Theatre, *Adolf in Toxteth* for Adenuff Productions and Ivy Paige's *Filthy Rich* at Underbelly.

Judith Denwood (Advocate)

No comment.

Peter Easterbrook (Vultore)

Peter has performed leads in *True West* and *Gaslight*; and Horatio in *Hamlet*. He was nominated for AETF and GMDF best actor awards for Billy in *The Cripple of Inishmaan*.

His writing includes "camel" play, *Pleasure Up, Bottom Out* (Contact Theatre), "time travelling David Duchovny" play, *Malibu* and "lizard from a parallel universe double date" play, *The Heavy Handed Gingerswine*, (finalist: PULSE).

He won the Robert Bold Playwriting Award for *Wee Thinker*. He is an Oxford Revue alumnus and former Contact Theatre writer in residence.

Peter has directed *Three Sisters*, *Amadeus*, and *The Green Room*

(nominated for Best Comedy 3MT).
peter_easterbrook@hotmail.com

Sophie Farrell (Scoto)

Sophie trained as a contemporary dancer at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, going on to perform with CaraBdanza dance company in Madrid. This is Sophie's first time performing with Network Theatre.

Previous acting credits include: *Tempe Restored*, a re-creation of a 17th c. masque to celebrate the re-opening of The Banqueting House at Westminster Palace; advert for new dating app *Flint*; *A Pageant For Our Time*, a devised work celebrating the 175th anniversary of St Margaret's Church. Sophie will also be appearing in Network Theatre's next production, *Whale Music*.

David Harvey

(Stage & Technical Manager)

David contributes to smooth-running behind the scenes in many capacities. He has a breadth and depth of experience in a wide range of off-stage skills in both production and technical areas.

Recent credits include director for *On the Air* (Streatham Theatre), set for *Calendar Girls* and *Life and Beth*, and stage management for *Love and Deceit* (all Network Theatre), and technical consultant for *School for Scandal* (Park Theatre and Bury St Edmunds), *Othello* (Riverside Studios) and *To Kill a Canary* (Kenton Theatre, Henley).

See more at www.dnharvey.com. David is founder and Chairman of Streatham Theatre Company, and operates a rehearsal space at Vinters

Studios (vintersstudios.co.uk), both in south London.

John Irvine (Corvino)

This is John's second production at Network Theatre, having previously appeared as the Thundering Scot, John Knox, in *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* in 2014. John's previous roles have included Brabantio in *Othello* (The Drayton Theatre), The Doctor in *Woyzeck* (The London Theatre), First Chap in *Largo Desolato* and Tropatchov in *The Parasite / Fortune's Fool* (both at Teatro Technis), Sigmund Freud in *A Knife In The Whale* (The Actor's Centre), Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night* (Brockley Jack Theatre), and Aristarkh in *Dying For It* (Bridewell Theatre).

Charlotte Mackintosh

(Assistant Director)

Assistant Director: *Ionesco*; *The Bald Prima Donna/Jacques* Double Bill, *Who Shot Santa*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Henry V* (all Network Theatre). Producer: *King Lear* (Network Theatre). Production Assistant: *Romeo and Juliet* (Network Theatre). Stage Manager: *The Rake's Progress*, *Dido and Aeneas*, *Cabaret* (all Bristol University). ASM: *Blithe Spirit* (Network Theatre), *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Richmond Shakespeare Society), *Cider with Rosie* (Bristol Old Vic Theatre School) *Guys and Dolls*, *Sweet Charity*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (all Bristol University).

Sheila Murphy (Advocate)

No comment.

Lysanne van Overbeek (Celia)

Lysanne trained in Musical Theatre at Trinity Laban and is founder of Limitless PD, a company to raise awareness for Parkinson's. Credits include: Cannibal Valour Rep Season (St Giles-in-the-Fields), *Charlie Charleston* (Italy tour), *Ruby Street* (Excel Centre) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Edinburgh Fringe).

Last year Lysanne performed as the *Snow Queen* in Bernie C. Byrnes' production at the Fringe and is very excited to be working with her once again on this production.

Sue Small (Advocate)

Network Theatre offers such a range of opportunities that I find myself moving from a Queen in *Henry V* to a Queen in *Henry X* in *The Art of Coarse Acting* - what a difference.

This time I am a corrupt official of the judicial system. We have had tremendous fun creating this piece and I know you will enjoy the mayhem that Dr Bernie has produced!

Grace Sobey (Acsom)

Grace's debut performance at Network Theatre was in Harvey, 2012. Since then she has been in many plays here including *Doctor Faustus*. Thoroughly enjoyed being in another Jacobean show sharing the stage with such a huge and fantastic cast and crew!

Griselda Williams (Lady Would-Be)

Griselda Williams is a Welsh/Irish actress of film, stage and television, an opera singer and a stand-up comedian. She trained at Brian Timoney's Method Actors' Studio and

Anthony Meindel's Actors' Workshop; University of London, Birkbeck Opera Course; and London Comedy School. Making her television debut in BBC 1's documentary *Can you bank on me* in 2009, she has featured in docudramas for Discovery ID with BrightSpark Films; short films with Brain Hownde Films, London and Relentless Filmworks, Los Angeles; appeared in theatre with Brian Timoney Studio and Network Theatre productions, most recently as Mrs Smith in Eugene Ionesco's *The Bald Primadonna*.
www.griseldawilliams.com

Nigel Williams (Volpone)

Nigel works principally with the Network Theatre Company as both an actor and director: Kent (*King Lear*), Faustus (*Doctor Faustus*) Stefano (*The Tempest* RSC Open Stages), Bernard (*Arcadia*), Mr. Boyd (*The National Health*), Lord Capulet (*Romeo and Juliet*), Prof. Higgins (*Pygmalion*), Geoffrey Fisher (*Billy Liar*), Zangler (*On the Razzle*), Frank (*Amy's View*), Dr. Petrie (*Fred and Madge*).

As director: *The Deep Blue Sea*, *Two Planks and a Passion*, *Female Transport*, *A Family Affair*, *Revenge of the Amazons*, *iff* (premiere) and most recently Ionesco's *Jacques or Obedience*. Other work includes *Stag* (*A Karaoke Wedding*), *Lockit* (*The Beggar's Opera*) and *Lionel* in the film *Kid Gloves* (Uncanny Films).

Simon Worthington (Bonario)

No comment.

Terry Wynne (Corbaccio)

Terry has been involved in drama for over twenty years with groups in South London and, since 2007, here at

Network Theatre where he has appeared in *The Kitchen* (The Proprietor), *An Ideal Husband* (Lord Caversham), *Doctor Faustus* (The Devil dressed as a friar), *Antigone* (a member of the “collective”) and *Jacques or Obedience* (Jacques father). He directed *Pack of Lies* here in 2012.

Other recent roles include The King’s Commissioner in *For Ever, in Trust* (The Stage Company) and Alan Bennett (2) in *The Lady in the Van* (Common Touch Theatre Company).

He is also a founder committee member and producer at the recently formed Streatham Theatre Company.

And there’s more: We weren’t able to speak to some people behind the scenes but we’d still like to give them a mention:

Jim Fowler (Music Content Supervisor)

Paul Lunnon (Set)

John Rogers (Lighting)

Gemma Scott (Operator)

Volpone opens on 22 April. It has two acts, with a 15 minute interval, and has a great 1980’s soundtrack.

There is a bar, open before the show, at the interval, and afterwards! You might see some of our celebs propping up the bar after the show...

Network Theatre Company - 76 years of drama and still counting!

Who we are

Our amateur company was originally founded as the Southern Railway Dramatic Society (SRDS) in 1939.

Seventy-six years later we are still going strong.

What we do

We produce a wide range of theatre from classic plays to new writing, from comedy to drama, mixed media and musicals. Past Network Theatre Company productions have also been seen at the Edinburgh Fringe, The Rosemary Branch in Islington, the Prague Fringe Festival and Riverside Studios in Hammersmith.

We also organise social events, improvisation workshops, technical skill workshops and “just for fun” play readings. It’s a great way of meeting new friends and keeping in touch with old ones.

Want to get involved?

Members and non-members alike are welcome to read or audition for a part. You will however need to be a member to participate in a production.

We receive no grants or subsidies. Our survival depends on sales income and membership subscriptions, so to become a member, you will have to pay a small annual fee.

We don’t just want performers - we also welcome directors, backstage team (e.g. costume, props, lighting, sound, stage crew) and people willing to help out front of house with the box office and bar.

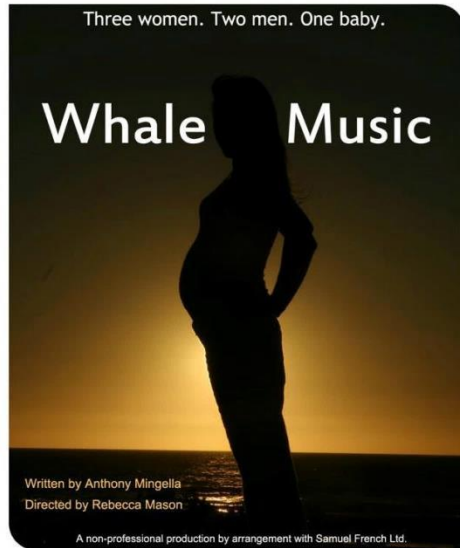
We are a friendly and relaxed group and don’t believe in holding nerve-wracking auditions in order for you to join.

Just talk to someone here tonight or visit our website.

Network Theatre Announces its Latest Shows

Whale Music in June

The next production is Anthony Mingella's *Whale Music*, directed by Rebecca Mason.



The play has nothing to do with sea-going mammals or with Tom Jones' homeland and is in fact about the friendship between three twenty-something girls, in a south coast seaside town in the early 1980's.

Performances 17-20 June 2015

**For much more info, see
www.networktheatre.org,
 where you can buy tickets.
 For all enquiries email us on
info@networktheatre.org**

Flarepath in July

Alastair Callcutt will direct *Flarepath*, the beautifully written example of a "well made" play, in which writer Terence Rattigan demonstrates his trademark ability to craft emotionally restrained yet intense dialogue, which masks a sub-text of complex motivation, passion and fear.

At a country hotel in 1942, a RAF crew from a nearby aerodrome are planning to spend the weekend with their wives. Patricia is preparing to face telling her husband Teddy, a bomber pilot, that she is going to leave him for her former lover Peter.



RAF bomber at an undisclosed location

The situation is complicated when Peter arrives unexpectedly at the hotel, and Teddy is sent out on a night raid over Germany. Patricia is torn between a rekindled love for Peter and loyalty to the husband who relies on her for support.

Performances 22-25 July 2015

**Tickets available through TicketSource
www.ticketsource.co.uk/networktheatre**