

Sci-fi legend takes on American classic

The New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, presents

Desire Under the Elms

by Eugene O'Neill

Fri 24 Sep – Sat 9 Oct, 2010

Sci-fi comes to Staffordshire this month as a revered cult actor takes to the stage at the New Vic.

Former sci-fi star Gareth Thomas became part of TV history as hero Roj Blake in BBC cult classic, *Blake's 7*. The actor is now taking to the North Staffordshire venue for a stage classic: American drama, *Desire Under the Elms*.

Thomas became famous for his role, appearing in the weekly prime time show in the late '70s/early '80s. *Blake's 7*, which originally ran on BBC One between 1978 and 1981, followed a gang of rebels fighting an evil federation that ruled the galaxy. Written by creator of the Daleks, Terry Nation, the show was hugely popular and remains a much loved cult classic. In a recent poll, the series was named one of the UK's top telefantasy shows of all time, beaten only by *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, *Red Dwarf* and *Doctor Who*.

Thomas has since become both a regular face on screen and much respected stage actor, appearing in *Torchwood*, *Children of the Stones*, *Coronation Street* and for the Royal Shakespeare Company, as well as being nominated for two BAFTA awards.

On stage at the New Vic this month, Thomas stars as Ephraim Cabot in epic tale of ambition, love and passion in nineteenth century New England, *Desire Under the Elms*, by Nobel Prize-winning playwright, Eugene O'Neill.

Ephraim Cabot and his three grown-up sons lead a life of hard work and loneliness on the remote family farm. In his 70s, a widower who has worked two wives into early graves, he rules over his children with Old Testament harshness. The Cabot boys hate him, waiting only for his death and the chance to claim their inheritance.

But when the old man brings home a seductive new wife, their schemes for escape and revenge are thrown into confusion. The alluring Abbie, half his age and twice as calculating, has plans of her own. And, as passions run high, she'll use any weapon in her fight for a home, for security, and for love.

Heading a stellar creative team is one of the UK's brightest directing talents, New Vic Artistic Associate James Dacre, whose West End production of *The Mountaintop* made the headlines when it scooped a surprise Olivier Award for Best New Play earlier this year.

The 13-strong cast also includes stage and screen actor Tim Chipping (*Troy*, Warner Bros. and *The Crucible*, RSC and West End), Owen Oakeshott (*Copenhagen*, Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh) and RADA graduates Cary Crankson (*Flight Path*, Bush Theatre) and Victoria Lloyd (*Measure for Measure*, Almedia, Michael Attenborough), as well as an ensemble of student actors and musicians from Manchester Metropolitan University's drama programme.

Tickets for *Desire Under the Elms*, which cost £8.50 – £17.50 (with concessions available), can be booked by calling the New Vic's Box Office on 01782 717962, or online at www.newvictheatre.org.uk

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Notes for journalists:

Useful links [New Vic plays: *Desire Under the Elms*](#)
[Gareth Thomas: The Times](#)
[Gareth Thomas: Wikipedia](#)
[Gareth Thomas: IMDB](#)
[New Vic talent celebrates Olivier victory](#)

Cast and Creative Team

Simeon/Farmer	Tim Chipping
Eben	Cary Crankson
Abbie	Victoria Lloyd
Peter/Farmer/Sheriff	Owen Oakeshott
Ephraim	Gareth Thomas

Ensemble from Manchester Metropolitan University:
Zora Bishop, Darrell Davy, Oliver Devoti, Katrina Innes,
Rebecca Letford, Kayleigh McDonald, Majid Mehdizadeh, Cliff Myatt

Director	James Dacre
Designer	Lis Evans
Lighting Designer	Daniella Beattie
Sound Designer & Original Music	James Earls-Davis
Video Designer	Dick Straker for <i>Mesmer</i>
Musical Director	Susan Moffat
Fight Director	Philip d'Orleans
Movement Director	Lesley Hutchison
Voice & Dialect Coach	Charmian Hoare
Assistant Director	Paschale Straiton
Casting Associate	Anji Carroll CDG

For further press information, images or to arrange review tickets, interviews, photography or filming, please contact Clare Hargreaves on 01782 717954 ext 317 or e-mail chargreaves@newvictheatre.org.uk.

Fri 24 Sept – Sat 9 Oct: Monday to Saturday, 7.30pm

Matinee: Sat 9 Oct, 2.15pm

Captioned performance: Tues 5 Oct, 7.30pm

Audio Described performance: Sat 9 Oct, 2.15pm

Talkback (meet the cast): Tues 5 Oct, 7.30pm