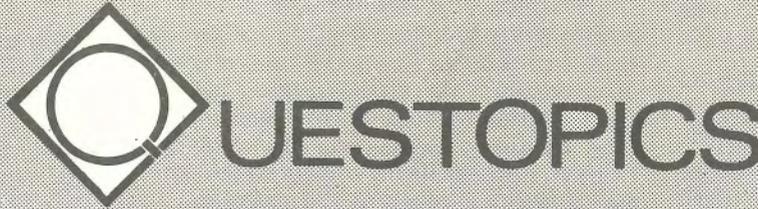


FOCUS
on Students



**What is the
INTERVAL
CLUB ?**

QUESTORS THEATRE

MATTOCK LANE W.5. 567 0011

Box Office 567 5184

JULY 1967

JULY PRODUCTION

THE CRUCIBLE

(A Pro-Fusion of Students)

As members will recall from the Student One-Act plays in January, this is quite a vintage year for students. Add to this from a soupcon of talented ex-students - Mark Langridge, John Turner and David Pearson among them, and you have a sure recipe for an enjoyable evening. What better way could there be to end the 1966/67 Questors season than by supporting the Students in their first main venture in the Theatre - Michael Hoddell's production of "The Crucible". David Pearson, an ex-student himself, writes on this page about the play and the editor of Questopics writes about David Pearson overleaf.



Like Trofimov in "The Cherry Orchard", some of us are eternal students. Each year since I graduated I have returned to the womb for a student production. The attraction is an excitement, a sense of occasion and a team spirit which is seldom found elsewhere. It is a particular pleasure to join the students in a play as magnificent as "The Crucible".

Salem in the spring of 1692. This little Puritan community in the wooded hinterland of the Massachusetts Bay Colony worked the soil of the new continent under the stern eye of an austere church. The villagers' lives were dedicated to sanctity, and children were denied any outlet for their natural energies. Fear, guilt and frustration bubbled under the calm surface of this society. One night a group of young girls danced naked in the woods. In the days that followed, a flood of terror swept through Salem. Innocent and bewildered citizens were taken from their homes, tried and slaughtered. The devil possessed the girls and there was no defence for their victims. Twenty people died.

The impact of the Salem witch hunt has lasted through the centuries. It is a terrifying reminder of man's inhumanity to man. From the verbatim records of the

trials the characters of the accusers and victims emerge as clearly as those of people we know. This is the fascination of Salem.

Arthur Miller had known the story for many years before McCarthyism arrived and it had always remained "an inexplicable darkness" to him. But then he too found himself 'cried out' on. He too was caught up in an atmosphere of public terror, of fear cut off from reason, of the guilt which destroys individual conscience and creates a new subjective reality under the control of higher authority. His masterpiece "The Crucible" is the result of this insight.

At the first performance in this country, at the Bristol Old Vic in 1953, "the audience reacted as if someone had thrown a firecracker into the audience". The fuse is lit once more with Michael Hoddell's production with the Second Year Student Group in July. This is the culmination of

two year's work in acting, speech and movement. In the first year, the students learn the principles of acting under the benign direction of Alfred Emmet. The methods used are broadly based on Stanislavski's teachings - the methodical application of imagination to characters and dramatic situations and the training of the voice and body as expressive instruments. Theory is translated into practice by means of improvisations, which, when they work, are for me the most fascinating and rewarding of all theatrical experience. The students who are accepted into the second year apply what they have learnt to the written play.

The present group was 'blooded' in the one act plays seen in February. "The Crucible" is the final test before the audition for the main acting group. Most of the students will apply for an audition, and their performances in "The Crucible"

Cont'd over: Col. 1.

"The Crucible" (Cont'd)

could decide whether or not they are seen on the Questors stage again. The choice of play is therefore a matter of the highest importance. Everyone must be given a fair chance to display his talents. It is not easy to find a suitable play. The array of strong parts in "The Crucible" makes it an excellent choice. Apart from that, it is a play which the students should do well. The strength of student group productions lies not so much in quality of individual performances but in the group acting. The students have worked and played together for two years, and developed an understanding, a sympathy, which emerges in their acting. The impact of "The Crucible" largely depends on the creation of a highly-charged atmosphere of mass hysteria, which itself demands group acting of a high order. The success of "Dark of the Moon" three years ago gave evidence of student aptitude for religious hysteria. The proximity of the auditions probably helps.

A brief introduction to the newcomers: The sweet, deadly ringleader of the possessed girls, Abigail Williams is played by Marilyn Jones. Lyn will be remembered for her delightful Doto in the February student production of "A Phoenix Too Frequent!" Two of her companions in homicide are Cynthia Ridout, a LAMDA gold medallist, and Ann Bevan, film extra, who hopes to join a repertory theatre. Richard Gaunt, a solicitor in the making, faces the wrong end of a justice gone mad as John Proctor, the defiant hero of "The Crucible". His wife, Elizabeth, is played by another LAMDA gold medallist, Georgina Skilton, who leaves for Philadelphia in the autumn for two years of medical social work. Attractive Jacqueline Pinchin (the revolting Mrs Ann Putman) is off in the other direction, to Hong Kong. The husband she leaves in Salem is Philip Irving. The two Reverend gentlemen, Parris and Hale, are portrayed by Roger de Toney and Tony Garner, who is subsequently seeking sanctuary in the Rose Bruford Drama School. Hubert Blackmore, as Ezekiel Cheever, rounds off the Second Year Student Group.

The cast is completed by 3 first year students and 6 ex-students - all refugees from "Dark of the Moon". The latter have all had some experience in the main acting group, but this does not mean that "The Crucible" is in any sense less of a student production. We 'old boys' are just as much a product of student group tuition as the present bunch. True we had fallen into the slack ways of the outside world, but here we are-caught up in a fine play - surrounded by an enthusiastic cast simply dripping 'units and objectives' - bullied and coaxed by our bearded

mentor of yore, Michael Hoddell, assisted by not-so-bearded Diana Devlin - placed on a scaffold, the stark, simple (and so right) setting by John Rolfe - and terrorised by the wildest girls in swinging London. Rehearsals have never frightened me so much. It tones up the muscles no end.



DAVID PEARSON, the writer of the feature article in this issue, joined Questors as a student in 1962. He had already played a wide variety of parts for The Players, Isleworth, but "wanted to start from scratch - Stanislavski and all that" with Questors. He is one of the few students in recent years who, having shown considerable talent, has not gone on to RADA or one of the other professional schools. "All the fun would go out of acting if I had to make my living by it!" Thus he is happy to be a successful Civil Servant (in the Ministry of Defence) during the day and to devote a large proportion of his spare time to acting at Questors.

Having played Preacher Haggler in "Dark of the Moon" during his last year as a student he sailed through an audition for acting membership in the main group and played his first major role as Colonel Jeffrey in Mike Green's revival of Sweeney Todd. He firmly established himself as a 'natural' melodrama actor last Christmas as Harry Hallyard's partner Jo in "My Poll ...". In between he has played in "Fairy Tales of New York" (three parts), "Macbeth" and "The Beaux Stratagem" (Gibbet).

Currently he is writing a play. When pressed to explain the plot, he said he wasn't sure what it was although Alfred had expressed 'some' interest three years ago. In "The Crucible" he plays Giles Corey.

Westward Ho!

To transpose ancient Greece to Cornwall may seem anachronistic, but less so to those who know the Minack Theatre. Surprisingly hidden in the slope of the cliffs beyond the little village of Porthcurno, this is an open-air theatre where the actors play against a background of sea and sky. With a permanent architectural setting which anonymously suggests the Ancient World, given fine weather one can imagine oneself overlooking the Aegean instead of the Atlantic, awaiting the return of Theseus from his adventures in Crete. This is the setting for Phaedra-Racine's play in Robert Lowell's verse translation which a Questors company will be presenting at the Minack from the 14th to the 19th of August. The cast will include Peggy Butt as Phaedra, Ivan Pinfield as Theseus and Peter Healy as Hippolytus. Alan Chambers is the producer, and the costumes are designed by Margaret Reichlin.

If you are in Cornwall this summer, a visit to the Minack is an event not to be missed, especially while the Questors are there! You will, however, have another chance to see Phaedra, because this production will open the next season at Ealing, in September. Tony Shipley will be writing fully on the play in the next issue of *Questopics* when we hope some of the goings on in Cornwall may also prove suitable for printing.

ORACULARISMS

(A 'FILLER' ARTICLE)

Increasingly in *Questopics* one reads quotations of oracular pronouncements, alleged to have been made in the Grapevine Bar. This hallucination of seeing and hearing the Grapevine as a sort of eighteenth century coffee house though flattering is scarcely true. It is, I suspect, a reporter's device to give location to generally unspecified, and unsupported praise or criticism of the current play. Statements, of a kind, are certainly made in the Grapevine, but as our quota of Boswells and Johnsons is meagre, the oracularism is thin and suspect.

Not so long ago an action known as 'Grapevine Knock' was attributed to us. This, I believe, meant that vicious and unjustified criticism (and what criticism isn't unjustified to the criticised!) was directed against a play on its first night. I used to think that this theatrical *jus primus noctis* was individualistic and spontaneous, but now I can reveal the source of this scurrilous clear-sightedness.

For reasons, familiar to those of you who are habitual liars, I must keep my

Con'd page 4; col. 2.

THE AUTUMN SEASON

by ALFRED EMMET

This autumn promises to be a memorable one, with a season of plays of outstanding quality. We open with the first London production of *PHAEDRA*, Robert Lowell's translation of Racine's "Phèdre". I have read many translations of "Phèdre" and frankly had long since come to the conclusion that the play was untranslatable, that the emotional power and strength of the original, which has had the capacity to sweep audiences off their feet for centuries, was something that simply would not work in English. But Robert Lowell is a great poet, with an ear for the 17th century and a voice for the 20th. When I read his marvellous free translation, I could hardly contain my excitement and was finally moved to tears, both by the play and by the sheer joy of its discovery. I beg you, do not miss this.

For our second production, in October, we again draw on the French theatre. After French classical tragedy, French classical farce. French farce is almost a genre of itself - and it isn't all bedrooms! Perhaps it is the keen French sense of logic that led to the highly skilful plot-making which marked the work of the 19th century masters of French farce, to the superb inventiveness with which every twist and turn of every comic situation was exploited. Among the finest and funniest writers was Eugene Labiche, whose masterpiece, *AN ITALIAN STRAW HAT*, in a new translation especially prepared, will be directed by Barbara Hutchins. This, by the way, will be a Special Production, for which members free seats will *not* be available.

From the 19th century to the 20th - something new, something contemporary, something out of the ordinary! But this does *not* mean lacking in entertainment value, nor does it mean incomprehensibility! At time of going to press, the final choice of plays, to be directed by Christopher Stephens and Michael Custance in November, has not yet been made, but it is likely to include "Out at Sea", a brilliant and amusing satire by Slavomir Mrozek, a Czech playwright, whose work was first seen in London in the International Theatre Season at the Aldwych last year. Fuller details will be given in the next issue.

It has often been levelled at us as a criticism that we have never yet produced a Brecht play. This is not in fact quite correct as we toured a production of "The Exception and the Rule" to the local schools two years ago. We now plan a production of one of his major works in December. *MOTHER COURAGE* is certainly one of the great plays of the 20th century. We do not concern ourselves here with either Brecht's political theories or his artistic theories, it is just a great play. For that reason we approach it with more than usual trepidation and with some reservations. Have we, for example, the actress who can play this enormously demanding part, a role of the stature of Lear? This we are trying to find out. If therefore you find *MOTHER COURAGE* quietly dropped from the programme, you will know the reasons why. If, however it remains it will be directed by David Gower at the beginning of December. And that, I should think, is a programme to tell your friends about. Don't you agree?

A last word to those members who, having been accustomed to the inclusion of a Shakespeare play in the programme at the end of November, are wondering whether we have forsaken the Bard. The answer is "No", but this season we expect to present our Shakespeare production in March, largely because it has been represented to us that this is a more suitable and convenient time of year for the schools.

THE INTERVAL CLUB

It was a fine Saturday evening when he telephoned. How about a topical witty article?" he said.

"A brave idea" I retorted, "but who can write such a literary gem?" "You!" he sneered "Copy by Thursday", and rang off with a low murky chuckle, leaving me no chance to argue.

So here I am, lumbered with it. Topicality is hardly my strong point nor, my friends assure me, is wit. I had no subject matter in mind, nor was my wife of any assistance. In answer to my plea she merely muttered that one 15 minute interval in a long play was insufficient to enable all the troubled ladies of the audience to relieve their feelings with the facilities available.

Finally after some consideration, I turned my thoughts towards the various sections and subsections of the theatre, official and otherwise. Then it came to me in a flash that there was one Club that had never achieved any measure of publicity (with some reason I may add) - the Interval Club.

Let me make it clear that the Interval Club is purely unofficial. It has no rules, no committees, no membership drives, no subscriptions and no appeals for funds. It mainly consists of Grapevine members but this is only for reasons of convenience and no doubt there are many staunch members who never go into the Bar. However, it is the Grapevine members with whom this article is concerned.

As can be deduced from the name of the Club, to qualify for membership, you have to have left a Questors play in the interval and not returned for the second half but remained in the bar.

Naturally the active membership of the Club varies from play to play. Some shows provide no new members at all and almost a complete lapse of old members, (there are not many like this but possibly more than other people might imagine) whilst the average show produces a small but steady influx over the run. Some shows, however, notably long philosophic dramas where the final curtain falls after 10.30, and all new plays, increase membership enormously and it is not uncommon for the crush in the bar at the interval to remain unaltered until the final curtain. Regular members get a quick synopsis of the second half from a passing member of the stage staff and then repair to the discussion to damn the whole play without any apparent stirrings of conscience.

Now you must not imagine that anyone in the Club ever admits to preferring the Bar to the Theatre. Reasons for leaving the play are varied and their utter implausibility is one of the charms of the Interval Club. I have taken a random selection (all heard by me personally) and set them out below with my comments: -

- (1) "It's so hot and close in that theatre - I just had to have some fresh air". (Spends remainder of evening in hot, smoky bar).
- (2) "I read the play beforehand and it relied so much on that last scene that the surprise ending would not have worked for me and spoilt the second half. I enjoyed the first half though very much indeed - marvellous production". (This is my copy-right - use it at your peril).
- (3) "I saw the whole dress rehearsal from the back - no need to sit through it again". (Hopes no-one will check this).
- (4) "My friend couldn't stand it and, as he's not a member, common politeness decreed I should leave with him - I'll see the second half later". (Unarguable if it's not the last night, but such friends are rare).

Cont'd over

Save Our Stamps Watch your valuables

Don't refuse stamps - Green, Pink or what have you when you are offered them. Teresa Collard is building up a useful collection and hopes soon to be in a position to buy a little something to improve the amenities of the theatre. Pop them into an envelope and leave them at the theatre addressed to Teresa.

Just think; if 1,000 members contributed 50 stamps per week (the average number of stamps given with 5 gallons of petrol) for a month, we could probably replace those ghastly wooden chairs in the auditorium, stop that cold air stream in the foyer, even buy some more carpets.

Enjoyment of the recent highly successful Grapevine Dance was somewhat marred by the discovery at the end of the evening that someone had explored the contents of various handbags and 'lifted' any items of value. Empty wallets, purses and keys were found in Walpole Park next day - a thoughtful gesture! Other small items have continued to disappear since.

Unpleasant as it is we must therefore ask members to keep a wary eye on any valuables they may bring with them and in particular to hang on to their handbags.

QUESTOPICS

The Interval Club (Cont'd)

- (5) "Wonderful play - but the producer has ruined it - I knew he was on the wrong track from his comments when I auditioned for the lead". (No comment).
- (6) "It's a terrifying gripping traumatic experience - but my nervous system could stand no more - wonderful theatre". (Beautifully plausible if you had not noticed him dozing off as the opening music faded out).
- (7) "Well I liked it when I wrote it" (Heard once only).

That seems to sum up the Interval Club. It has no aims and no objectives. It has included the most unlikely people and will no doubt continue to do so and flourish even if people disapprove. So remember, when you next drop into the theatre on a show night and see people remaining in the Bar when the curtain is raised for the second half, that beneath those smiling exteriors may lie the grinning masks of the unrepentant members of the Interval Club. Including, yours truly,
W.J.R.

STRATFORD TRIP

A few seats are still available for the motor coach trip to Stratford on Saturday 12th August. Refer to last issue of *Questopics* or telephone the organiser, Betty Ogden at PRImrose 4609 for details. Incidentally, contrary to the impression given in *Questopics* the cost - 38/6d - does not include tea which is an additional 8/6d.

Oracularisms (Cont'd)

information source secret. During the exile of Bonny Prince Charlie, a joint Scotto-franco organisation, named Clan Destine, was formed for purposes then unconnected with Questors, or for that matter with Charlie. Its aims were deliciously vague, but the propagation of truth was somewhere amongst them. Some descendants of this hopeless organisation are still anonymously with us at Questors. They are the warriors of the Grapevine Knock, and are not really genuine Questor members, who are far too busy anyway criticising some other play performed in some other theatre.

But as I say, *statements* are certainly made in the Grapevine. One evening whilst serving behind the bar an Asiatic gentleman approached me and demurely inquired, "Please, everywhere I am hearing that here in Questors you do it in the round. I am liking to join in". Having explained to him the meaning of his statement as *correctly* applied to us I watched his sad departure with attendant sympathy. And that is as near a definite statement about our activities as any I have heard in the Bar.

Diary . . .

July 5th at 7.45 p.m. in the Theatre
STUDENTS AT WORK
All seats at 2/6d.

July 9th at 7.30 p.m. in the Shaw Room.
Active Members' Meeting.

July 12th at 7.30 p.m. in the Shaw Room.
New Members' Meeting. Friends welcomed

July 22nd, 23rd, 25th, 26th, 28th & 29th
at 7.45 p.m.
THE CRUCIBLE, a Student Production.
Members' free tickets available.
Guest tickets 6/6d and 4/6d.

July 30th. Ealing Film Society presents
DON GIOVANNI.

August 12th. Visit to Stratford.

August 14th - 19th
PHAEDRA
at the Minack Theatre, Cornwall.

**Editorial Note:* A 'filler' article is used to complete the issue if insufficient material of a topical nature is available. This one was written by Bill Wall at the eleventh hour. Contributions to form a 'bank' for use on similar occasions in the future would be welcomed.

To: BOX OFFICE MANAGER, Questors Theatre, Mattock Lane, W.5. 567 5184

ATTRACTION	Date	Altern. Date	Members Tickets	Price	Guest Tickets	Price	Total Cash
THE CRUCIBLE July 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29						6/6 4/6	
PHAEDRA Sept. 23, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30.						6/6 4/6	
MUSIC CLUB 1967/68 SUB.				£2			

Music Club 6 concerts for £2 (October to March)

I enclose cash/cheque/P.O./M.O. value £
and stamped addressed envelope for the despatch of the above tickets.

Name

Address

Telephone No. Membership No.

Other members' seats are booked for: Music Club No.

Name: No.

WHEN BOOKING PLEASE NOTE

For the best seats BOOK IN COMFORT - BOOK BY POST but do remember to enclose a stamped addressed envelope. POSTAL BOOKINGS ARE DEALT WITH BEFORE BOX OFFICE OPENS.

The Box Office is open for telephone bookings or personal callers from 6.45 to 8.45 p.m. the evenings of performances and for five nights prior to each major production ONLY.

It is regretted that tickets which have been paid for cannot be exchanged for another performance. Tickets will, however, be accepted for resale and money refunded if sold.

MEMBERSHIP CARD must be produced before tickets are issued.

MEMBERS' FREE SEATS are not transferable.

TICKETS BOOKED BY TELEPHONE must be collected within 48 hours or by 7.15 p.m. on the night of the performance (whichever is the earlier), otherwise they may be sold.

BLOCK BOOKINGS of 10 or more tickets for any one performance may be made at a reduction of 6d per ticket. Not applicable to special children's matinees.

ON NIGHTS WHEN THERE IS A PERFORMANCE please do not call the Box Office by 'phone for Advance Bookings until after 7.45.

Members who have booked seats and later decide not to use them are requested to inform the Box Office as soon as possible or other people may be turned away resulting in a loss to the theatre and disappointment to others.