

THE QUESTORS THEATRE
MATTOCK LANE, EALING



present

“INVITATION
TO A VOYAGE”

by JEAN-JACQUES BERNARD

Translated from the French by John Leslie Frith.

JANUARY 1946

PROGRAMME

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THREEPENCE

JEAN-JACQUES BERNARD

Jean-Jacques Bernard was born in 1888, and though he had had two one-act plays produced before the first world war, and his first full-length play was produced in 1919, these earlier plays he excludes from the work by which he wishes to be judged. The first of his maturer plays, "Le Feu qui reprend mal" ("The Sulky Fire") was produced in Paris by a private society in 1921.

Bernard is essentially a post-1918 dramatist, and was one of a group of young playwrights and directors who did much to revolutionise the somewhat sterile French theatre in the 'twenties. His plays were at first produced by the smaller societies, but he quickly gained a wider recognition, and the first production of "L'Invitation au Voyage" was given by the Theatre Nationale de l'Odeon in Paris on 15th February, 1924, under the direction of M. Gaston Baty. Several of his plays have found places in the repertoire of the Comedie Francaise.

The Everyman Theatre, Hampstead, first introduced Bernard to English audiences when it produced "The Years Between" (since renamed "The Springtime of Others," and not to be confused with the play of the same title now running at Wyndhams Theatre) in June, 1926. It was not until 13 years after its Paris premiere that "Invitation to a Voyage" had its first production in this country, on 3rd February, 1937, at the Gate Theatre. The "Gate," perhaps the most truly intimate of London theatres, provided a peculiarly suitable setting for Bernard's plays, most of which have been at one time or another produced there, either under Peter Godfrey's regime, or by Norman Marshall.

The Questors had planned to produce this play in 1939, but the war necessitated a postponement of six years.

DISCUSSION

There will be a discussion on this production in this theatre on Sunday, January 13th, at 3.0 p.m.

Refreshments will be served, and all members of the audience are cordially invited to come along and give their views and hear the views of others.

Written criticisms are also welcomed, and will be read anonymously at the discussion.

TATION TO A VOY

THE CHARACTERS (in order of appearance):

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------------|
| Marie-Louise | ... | ... | ... | ... | MARY CHANTER |
| Jacqueline | ... | ... | ... | ... | PHYLLIS SHORT |
| Oliver | ... | ... | ... | ... | PHILIP ALLEN |
| Landreau | ... | ... | ... | ... | GEORGE MOONEY |
| Gerard | ... | ... | ... | ... | JOHN ROBIN |

The play produced by ALFRED EMMET

The action takes place throughout in a garden-room adjoining Landreau's house, in the Vosges district of France.

ACT I: Late afternoon in September.

ACT II: An afternoon in March, a year and a half later.

ACT III: Scene 1. Eight months later; in December.

Scene 2. The next morning.

The Setting Designed and Painted by HONOR O'NIANS and constructed by A. KINGSTON, ERIC KINGSTON, FRED BLACKMAN, GEORGE MOONEY and other Members.

Furniture kindly loaned by L. BRYANT, The Mall; ELDRED SAYERS & SON, LTD., The Broadway; and LESLIE BELCHER, New Broadway.

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|------------------|-----|------------------------------|-----|---------------|
| Stage Managers | ... | JOHN MACGREGOR, PETER CURTIS | | |
| Lighting Manager | ... | ... | ... | MICHAEL KELLY |
| Properties | ... | ... | ... | DOREEN COATES |

There will be a 5-minute interval after Act I, and a 10-minute interval after Act II.

TEA will be served in the second interval.

EARLY DAYS

A Historical Note

THE QUESTORS first saw the light of day on the 5th September, 1929, when the constitution was formally adopted, and the first members were elected. Of the original 17 members, only four, Philip and Hilda Elliott (our present Hon. General Secretary), Frank Cockburn and the present writer remain actively associated with the Club. At that first meeting it was solemnly recorded that the financial position showed a balance in hand of 7s. 11½d.

It must be admitted that when the Club was founded it set itself no particular policy such as subsequently grew out of its experience—it consisted simply of a few enthusiasts who very much wanted to act, and a number of others who did not particularly want to act, but who had been bullied into it. The first show, produced at the Park Theatre, Hanwell, on 19th November, 1929, was "The Best People"—not, we would feel now, a very enterprising choice.

We are often asked how the name "THE QUESTORS" originated. Actually, the Club was first formed under the title of "The Ealing Junior Arts Club (Dramatic Section)." Not unnaturally, the long established Ealing Arts Club took some exception to this, and at an historic Committee meeting over lunch in a Soho restaurant, one Sunday morning in November, it was decided to change the name to "The Questors," which was a brain wave on the part of our then Producer, Alec Payne. The odd thing is that the name came first, and before we had any idea of the policy which has since been so much associated with The Questors and which the name seems to express so aptly.

The second production, in March, 1930, was of Noel Coward's "I'll Leave It to You," which resulted in a heavy loss, and precipitated our first serious financial crisis. We were in debt to the tune of some £8 — a sorry state of affairs. An extraordinary General Meeting was called to consider the position, and every member who had participated in the show was called upon to loan the sum of 10/-, to be repayable "if and when Club funds permit." Later, when Club funds did permit, the lenders were invited to waive their claims for repayment, which, as they had never expected to see their money back, most of them were quite prepared to do!

The second season opened with a production of three one-act plays, also at the Park Theatre, in November, 1930, one of which, "The Road of Poplars," was repeated with considerable success in the British Drama League Festival, and was probably a first unconscious step towards establishing any genuine policy as regards choice of play. This production resulted in a further loss, and the Club remained in a pretty insolvent state. It was decided to leave the Park Theatre for the less expensive St. Martin's Hall, where the next show, "A Bill of Divorcement," was produced in April, 1931, incurring another loss. The Finance Sub-Committee reported on "the present deplorable state of the Club's finances," and this report was ordered to be read to the members at the Club's first Annual Dinner in May. Nevertheless the dinner seems to have been a success. The accounts for the year showed a surplus of 10d.

The policy of the Club was as yet, however, very far from becoming set—indeed the records show that at a Committee meeting in August, 1931, it was resolved not to adopt a regular policy as regards choice of plays. A more encouraging sign for the future was, however, that at the same meeting the possibility of securing a permanent home was first discussed. How that aim was ultimately achieved must be told in a later instalment.

(To be continued.)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

AT

THE QUESTORS THEATRE

Sunday, January 13th, at 3.0 p.m.

Discussion on this Production.

Thursday, January 17th, at 7.30 p.m.

Talk: "Theatre—Past, Present and Future,"
by Alfred Emmet.

Saturday, February 9th, for seven days:-

"THE ARBITRATION"

Adapted from the original Greek of Menander
by GILBERT MURRAY

One of the most conspicuous gaps in our salvage of Greek literature is the loss of the plays of Menander, the most famous representative of the 'New Comedy'.

Born 342 B.C., he wrote over a hundred plays, attaining immense and lasting fame throughout the Hellenic world.

About the beginning of this century, papyrus fragments of five of Menander's plays were found in Egypt, none of them complete however, or even nearly so.

The find was extremely tantalising—Professor Gilbert Murray found it irresistible—and at last yielded to the temptation to patch up by conjecture, at times by sheer invention, the missing parts.

"The Arbitration" is the second of the plays so treated, and the result is a richly comic piece, faithfully preserving the Menandrian conventions, and imbued with a freshness and charm wholly delightful to present day audiences.

There will be seven performances—make a note of the

OPENING DATE—SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9th, 1946

Tuesday, February 26th, at 7.30.

Talk: "The Old Vic," by John Burrell.

IF
you are not already a
NON-ACTING MEMBER
OF
THE QUESTORS

you should ask a programme-seller or steward
for particulars.

Membership costs only

10/-

for any period of twelve months
and entitles you to a free 3/6 seat for an excellent
show in a comfortable theatre every few weeks.

TALKS AND DISCUSSIONS IN
THE THEATRE.

The talks on Jan. 17th and Feb. 26th are the first two
of a series on theatre topics in general. All members are
cordially invited, and admission is free on production of
membership card.