

THE QUESTORS THEATRE
MATTOCK LANE, EALING

SEASON 1946-47.

FIFTH PRODUCTION



present

**“THE PLAYBOY OF THE
WESTERN WORLD”**

by

J. M. SYNGE

APRIL-MAY, 1947

PROGRAMME

- - -

FOURPENCE

MEMBERSHIP AND ITS OBLIGATIONS

When we invite new members to join The Questors, it is natural enough to stress the privileges and advantages that membership confers. And, indeed, the Club has no reason to be other than proud of the benefits it is able to offer to those who join our company. But those who have the best interests of the Club at heart will know that it is in a positive contribution to its development that real and enduring pleasure and satisfaction is to be found. It is not enough that we should have a large non-acting membership of people who can be relied upon to provide a regular audience for productions at the theatre—the passive contemplation of the results of others efforts is an empty thing. The Quest which we have undertaken demands more than this from us—it requires that our members should, each according to his capacity, seek out that sphere of the Club's activities in which he or she can most usefully make a definite contribution. There is practically no aspect of the Club's work so well staffed that willing helpers will not be welcome.

The fields in which members can render service on both sides of the curtain have been recited too often for it to be other than tedious to recite them again. There are all manner of jobs to be done, some large, some small—all important—and all contributing to the well-being and advancement of the Club. The essential question for each to answer is whether he or she is pulling his or her weight according to talents and circumstances. The Questors have built up their Club on the voluntary contributions of the time, energy and skill of the membership extending over many years. The appetite of the Club for further contributions is voracious. Are you making yours? Have you faced up to your obligations to give as well as to get? Have you? Why not see the General Manager about it right away?

“THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD”

John Millington Synge, who became one of the three directors of the famous Abbey Theatre, Dublin, was a genius of a very original and forceful kind. His plays are full of robust humanity and colour set forth with the heightened expression that is the gift of the Irish imagination, its unsuppressed poetry. The joy of living and the virility of his characters are unique, and this feeling in them reminds us of the characters so well represented in the Elizabethan drama. Synge was an observer of life, his philosophy is not deep and intellectual, he works out none of life's problems, but he loves a scene because it has colour, and above all because it is alive.

“The Playboy of the Western World,” says Allardyce Nichol, “is unquestionably the chief masterpiece in comedy which the Irish theatre has provided.” Its force of realism was so great as to cause a wild storm of indignation from the patriotic Irishmen when it was first presented in Dublin. Fortunately, the attack of the patriots and the Puritans has not in any way lessened the acute perception and truth of Synge's characters. The “Playboy” was the climax of Synge's work for the theatre and was written when he was at the height of his creative powers. He says: “On the stage one must have reality and one must have joy.” In this play he seeks excitement and vivid personalities and with the aid of a language, which is rich in imagery and has a rhythm all of its own, he expressed his observations with profound beauty.

P. C.

“THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD”

by

JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE

Characters:

Christopher Mahon	...	...	...	ALFRED EMMET
Old Mahon, his father, a squatter	...	...	...	BARRIE PITT
Michael James Flaherty, a publican	...	...	...	FRANK WHITE
Margaret Flaherty (called Pegeen Mike), his daughter	...	...	...	BARBARA HUTCHINS
Shawn Keogh, her cousin, a young farmer	...	...	...	TREVOR ELDRID
Widow Quin, a woman of about thirty	...	...	...	JEAN CANDY
Philly Cullen	} small farmers	...	{	PETER BOWEN-EVANS
Jimmy Farrell				WILFRED SHARPE
Sara Tansey	} village girls	...	{	FLORENCE CHEDZEY
Susan Brady				EDNA LAFLIN
Honor Blake				BRIDGET SPALDING
Nelly Bly				JOAN PYLE
Other village girls	...	...	{	ROSEMARY GRANT
				DOREEN COATES
				JOYCE WHEELER
				PAMELA RICHARDS

Producer: PETER CURTIS.
Designer: BERYL ANTHONY.

The action of the play takes place in a country public house or *Shebeen*, near a village, on a wild coast of Mayo.

ACT I ... The evening of an autumn day.
ACT II ... The following day.
ACT III ... Later that day.

Stage Management:

Stage Manager PETER BOWEN-EVANS.

(Assisted by EDNA LAFLIN, ELLEN DEAN).

Costumes JOAN PYLE and Wardrobe Staff.

Lighting GERRY ISENTHAL, CARL JOHNSON.

Properties JOYCE JONES, ELIZABETH DIXON.

Sound DIANA RUTLAND, CARMEN NISBET.

House Manager AACHIE COWAN.

Set constructed by the Stage Staff.

Barrels kindly lent by MESSRS. WHITBREAD & Co., LTD., and other properties by EALING STUDIOS.

There will be an interval of 15 minutes after Act II, and a shorter interval after Act I.

Light refreshments will be on sale during the main interval and will be brought to members of the audience in their seats by the Stewards.

DISCUSSION

There will be a discussion on this production at the Theatre on Wednesday, May 7th, at 7.30 p.m. Refreshments will be served, and all members of the audience are warmly invited to attend and contribute their views on the merits of the production.

THE STORY OF THE "QUEST"

Historical Note No. 9

1941/42, in the absence of any sustained blitz, was a year of record activity and in many respects marked the turn of the tide. Membership and audiences began to creep up again, though they were still well below the pre-war level. A total membership of 242 at the end of the year compared with 190 twelve months previously. On the other hand, difficulties of acting personnel continued to grow more acute, narrowing the range of choice of play which could be put on. Despite this, and due to the high level of enthusiasm and the spirit of service of the players we still had, the record number of five productions was achieved in addition to the Drama Festival. The plays were still produced for a run of only three performances, but these were extended by a number of additional performances, either for other organisations in our own theatre, or outside, at A.R.P. Depots and the like. The plays performed that year were Rostand's "The Fantasticks"; our first Tchekov production, "Uncle Vanya," which in many ways was a high spot of artistic achievement, and found our audience at the final curtain, not content with the usual applause, literally shouting their approval; "The Playboy of the Western World," which is now being revived, for which at one performance we had to cope with a complete failure of the lights, finishing the play by candlelight; Katayev's "Squaring the Circle"; and, finally, our first truly experimental production of the war period, "As You Like It," in a stylised production with an all-women cast; for this special music was written by Barbara Hutchins and the scene changes were performed by costumed attendants in a ballet technique in full view of the audience.

The year also saw visits to our theatre by two professional companies, The Adelphi Players and The Pilgrim Players. The season closed with the highly satisfactory financial result of a surplus of £108.

The progress in that year was more than matched in 1942/43. The membership increased by some 50 per cent.; the total audience was nearly three times that of 1940/41; and, though we still were doing only three performances as our regular run, we were now frequently playing to full houses and for the first time in our history had to make a "House Full" board. The quantity of work done was slightly less, though by arranging for performances by The Pilgrim Players as part of our members' season, we were able to maintain the value we gave in return for our members' subscriptions. The productions that year were James Bridie's "Jonah and the Whale," with a distinguished décor designed by Graham Heywood;

Ashley Duke's "The man with a Load of Mischief"; Ostrovsky's "Its a Family Affair—We'll settle it Ourselves," believed to be the English première of this hundred-year-old play and produced in a mildly experimental style; and, finally, the world première of Rodney Ackland's "The Dark River." The latter saw in many respects a great advance in our artistic method and was repeated at the special request of the author for an audience of his own theatrical friends. This play has a part for a young boy and it is perhaps of interest to record that when the play was subsequently produced at The Whitehall Theatre, the boy was chosen from our production to play there. The Drama Festival of that year was particularly notable for the fact that it produced no fewer than five original plays. The practice of obtaining the services of a professional critic to assess each production, which had been started the previous year, now became an established policy. For the financial-minded it may be recorded that a further surplus of £65 was realised on the season's working.

A. E. J. E.

(To be continued)

ON SMOKING

At the discussion on "The Seagull," one of the points raised, incidentally, was that of smoking in the auditorium. To smoke or not to smoke is a question which can, and sometimes does, engender fierce argument. How far Tchekov, Shakespeare, Shaw or Synge is improved if their works are viewed through a gentle haze of rising smoke from contented puffers of pipes will be a question on which the pipe smokers, the cigarette smokers and the non-smokers may well be expected to take different views. Does an audience which smokes concentrate more and cough less than one which is denied the privilege? Should those who find that smoking adds to their enjoyment of a play forgo their simple pleasure in the interests of those who find it objectionable? There is no simple answer to this, and the Committee, with becoming restraint, are disinclined to attempt to legislate.

It will probably not be contested, however, that in a small theatre, such as ours, smoking can be overdone and, without imposing specific restrictions, it is thought that the membership will recognise the desirability of limiting it to some extent. The co-operation of the audience is, therefore, invited in a policy of confining smoking to the intervals in the interests both of the players and of those of the spectators who object to taking their pleasures in a smoke-laden atmosphere. If you are a smoker, may we ask for your co-operation in this matter?

COMING EVENTS AT THE QUESTORS

Monday, May 19th, at 7.30 p.m. : Visit to The Questors of the Dutch Amateur Company, "De Plankeniers," from Bussum, Holland.

The Company will present a new play in Dutch by Dr. H. M. Planten, "Rembrandt." Full details will be given in a special leaflet, but members are asked to book the date now. There will be one performance only.

In connection with this special production we are hoping that members of the Club will offer hospitality to individual members of the Dutch company on the nights of May 18th and 19th. The General Manager will be most glad to hear from anyone who is willing to offer accommodation to one or more of the Dutch actors in their home on these nights and will provide all further particulars.

Saturday, June 7th. : Opening date for the Sixth Production of the current Season. The play will be the long-awaited original play by Michael Kelly :

“ FINAL DIVIDEND.”

Monday, July 7th, at 7.30 p.m.: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

Under the amended Rule 17 (b) written notice of any resolutions that members desire to move at the meeting must reach the Hon. General Secretary not later than June 7th.

NON-ACTING MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Club costs 15s. for any period of twelve months. Membership means the right to one free ticket for each of the major productions of the Club and to participation in all the other activities of the Club, including discussions and talks.

The intimate atmosphere of The Questors' Theatre provides an ideal setting for extracting the fullest enjoyment from good plays well produced.

Ask a steward for further particulars. If you are already a member, show this programme to your friends and don't keep a good thing to yourself.