

THE QUESTORS THEATRE
MATTOCK LANE, EALING

SEASON 1946-47. FOURTH PRODUCTION



present

“THE SEAGULL”

translated by

CONSTANCE GARNETT

from the Russian by

ANTON TCHEHOV

FEBRUARY, 1947

PROGRAMME - - - FOURPENCE

BRAVO—THE STUDENTS!

Since early 1946 Questors have known that there was a Club Student Group that was meeting regularly on Saturday afternoons, but it was not until a number of the Students made an appearance in "Children in Uniform" that most members became aware of the quality and promise of their work. A small band of Club members have worked tirelessly to help these younger members of the Club to equip themselves to find pleasure for themselves and provide entertainment for others in the theatre. At the recent Student Group production, the Club had a chance to measure the standard of their attainment.

It was unfortunate that a number of circumstances combined to prevent the three performances of the Students from being fully attended, but those who saw "Cranford," "Exercise Letter" and "The Cradle Song" will know that the Students gave an excellent account of themselves. They may derive satisfaction from the knowledge that their performances were highly rated by older members of the Club, whose critical faculties are not notoriously under-developed, and their mentors are entitled to feel that hard work over many months has paid handsome dividends. Bravo—the Students!

WANTED—MUSICIANS

Wanted—singers: Basses and baritones, tenors and trebles, contraltos and coloraturas! Wanted—pianists, violinists, flautists; in fact—wanted musicians!!

Is it not strange that a Club which possesses some seventy Acting Members should number no more than four or five amongst them who will even admit to any musicality—let alone display it? Nevertheless, that is the brutal truth, and hardly does it hit us on occasions.

Of course, there are a lot of us who are awfully good on the gramophone—and that is an art not to be belittled and justly to be proud of when perfected. But as regards actual *music-making* amongst ourselves, well—two pianists, one of whom sings soprano, two further sopranos and a bass doesn't allow of much scope, does it?

So we turn to you—the Non-Acting Members—as, of course, we always do in the end. . . . Can you sing? Or play an instrument? Then would you like to help us with productions where a gramophone would only be second best? We would like it very much, and are sure that, if we knew we had a pool of singers and instrumentalists to draw upon, we could do much to improve the quality of our presentation—from the musical standpoint. The musical direction of our productions has, of necessity, played a very minor role so far. Will you help to make it more worthy of notice?

But what if you don't sing, or play? There is still something you can do. The playing of interval and introductory music isn't just a haphazard pulling out of a record. It is always carefully selected to catch or prepare for the mood of the play—or to be in keeping with the period. But to do this well we should need a large library of records; we haven't a large library and many of them are old and cannot be replaced. Have you any in your personal collections which you think we might find helpful on occasion and which you would be prepared to let us borrow? All we would need would be a list of such records, and from whom they could be obtained. This would be of enormous value to us when selecting interval music, particularly in these days when it is often impossible to buy the records we want. And again, it would help to raise our musical standard.

So we leave this plea with you. If you will help in this—your fellow-members cannot but be grateful.

B. M. H.

"THE SEAGULL"

Anton Pavlovitch Tchekhov's "The Seagull" may truly be described as a landmark in theatrical history. When first produced at the Imperial Theatre, St. Petersburg, in October, 1896, it failed miserably. Nemirovitch Dantchenko, in "My Life in the Russian Theatre," describes how the most poetical lines and the loveliest scenes met with laughter; the actors of the old school were incapable of interpreting the simple expressions and thoughts that were then peculiarly Tchekhov's. The old theatre had reached the limits of its expressiveness; the free creative atmosphere necessary for the interpretation of Tchekhov was non-existent.

When a little later the Moscow Art Theatre was founded by Stanislavsky and Dantchenko, it was decided to do "The Seagull" in the first season. The opening productions of this season had not done very well: it was essential for the continued existence of this young theatre that it should have a success. There were long faces in the Moscow Art Theatre as the day for opening approached: hardly anyone believed it would be a success. Rehearsals had gone badly; Stanislavsky, who produced, demanded a postponement or the removal of his name from the bills; Tchekhov himself was seriously ill, and his sister was daily at the theatre, begging them not to risk a failure, as that might kill their beloved Anton Pavlovitch. Much depended on that performance when the curtain went up.

The description by Dantchenko in his book of this performance and its reception is one of the most exciting passages in dramatic literature. It was a great and glorious success; the future of the Art Theatre was assured, so was the continuance of that collaboration between the Art Theatre and Tchekhov, which was to make such a mark on the whole of theatre development and history.

The Moscow Art Theatre still carries on its front curtain the sign of a Seagull, symbol of the play that saved and made it.

“THE SEAGULL”

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by ANTON TCHEHOV

Characters (in order of appearance):

Semyon Semyonitch Medvedenko, a Schoolmaster	JOHN GRAY
Masha, Shamraev's daughter	BARBARA HUTCHINS
Pyotr Nikolayevitch Sorin	FRANCIS W. SMITH
Konstantin Gavrilitch Treplev, Madame Arkadina's son	CYRIL BOX
Nina Mihailovna Zarechny	MARY BALLINGER
Yevgeny Sergeyeveitch Dorn, a doctor... ..	BILL LANDERS
Polina Andreyevna, Shamraev's wife	ELIZABETH ODDIE
Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina, an actress	ELIZABETH DIXON
Boris Alexeyeveitch Trigorin	PHILIP ALLEN
Ilya Afanasyevitch Shamraev, Sorin's steward	TOM W. FRANKLIN
Yakov	PETER BOWEN-EVANS
Cook	JOHN HITCHES
Housemaid	ROSEMARY GRANT

The play produced by ALFRED EMMET.

Associate Producer: PETER CURTIS.

Sets designed by NORMAN BRANSON.

Behind the Scenes:

Stage Manager PETER ELLIS.
(Assisted by DENIS ROBINSON).

Lighting GERALD ISENTHAL, CARL JOHNSON.

Costumes JOAN PYLE and the Wardrobe Staff.

Properties ISOBEL BENNS, EDNA LAFLIN.

Sound BETTY OGDEN, BRENDA WOOD.

Fishing Tackle kindly lent by F. J. YOUNG, 7c, Station-Rd., Harrow.

The Set built by LISTER BECK, BERT DARLISON, JOHN EWBANK, C. GOLDING, VIVIAN ISENTHAL, JOHN KING, JOHN MAYO, J. MICHELL, HAL MORRIS, and "JIMMY" KELLY.

Stage Director GEORGE BENN.

House Manager ARCHIE COWAN.

There will be an interval of 15 minutes after Act II, and shorter intervals between the other Acts.

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.

- ACT I ... The park of Sorin's house.
ACT II ... The garden of Sorin's house, a few days later.
ACT III ... A room in Sorin's house, a week later.
ACT IV ... The same as Act III, two years later.

DISCUSSION

There will be a discussion on this production at the Theatre on Wednesday, February 19th, 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. 8

1940/1 was the testing year; it was also the year that was the turning-point in the Club's fortunes. It started vigorously enough; we abandoned our previous practice of a "close season" during the summer months—partly because we felt that under war conditions there was real need for our theatre work to be continuous, partly from sheer financial necessity—and put on an extra production in July: a triple bill under the title of "The Magic Carpet." A full programme was planned for the year and published. The man-power situation was getting ever more acute, and we went into rehearsal with "The Romance of the Western Chamber," originally chosen as a play that might *in extremis* be played with an all-woman cast, though in the end we managed to scrape a few men together. Then came the "blitz." Rehearsals continued, of course, but many times the cast had to spend the night in the next door basement, for in those early days all transport ceased on an "alert." We changed the times of performance to week-end matinees only. A week before we were due to open a bomb on the path severed the gas and electricity mains, and another at the side of the building caused some damage. The crater of the second lapped the wall of the theatre—another six feet and it would have gone through the roof. Fortunately, it was a very little bomb, and the damage was only superficial. The show was put off for a week, to enable us to tidy up and get the electricity on again, and we played for three performances to a total audience of 166—less than would fill the house once. The planned programme had again to be abandoned, and we immediately started work on the next show, "Shilling Shakespeare"—a season of "potted" Shakespeare, each programme lasting about an hour. This was produced in January, and all through that bitter winter the players rehearsed in a theatre completely devoid of any form of heating except one small oil stove. The raids were a minor worry compared with the cold. Fortunately the gas was on again just in time before we opened to another series of infinitesimal audiences. The following show was rather a land-mark, the first full-length play by Michael Kelly, whose work is now familiar to many of our members, and whose latest play, "Final Dividend," is to be our next production. "Icarus Preserved" was performed in March, 1941, and with the lengthening days audiences began to get a little better. The season wound up with our Ninth Annual Drama Festival.

The bombing had, of course, again seriously affected our non-acting membership, which at the end of the season had fallen to only 99. The average audience was only 195, compared with 449 in the last pre-war season. By means of strenuous economies (our average production cost in that year was just over £7), we managed to keep our accounts just on the right side.

"A year of sustained battle," as our Annual Report described it, and to the warriors of that year, those who came after owe an immeasurable debt. Had they failed, The Questors might well have stopped. But the ground was held. The tide began to turn.

A. E. J. E.

(To be continued.)

The Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain

This month, The Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain, of which The Questors were one of the founder members, meets in Ealing for its third conference since the Guild was inaugurated last May.

There will be three main sessions, all at THE QUESTORS THEATRE.

Saturday, February 15th, at 3.15 p.m.

Business Meeting.

Sunday, February 16th, at 10.15 a.m.

Discussion on Publicity Methods.

Sunday, February 16th, at 2.0 p.m.

Discussion on Criticism and Methods of obtaining it.

The Questors are proud to welcome the delegates from nine other Little Theatres to The Questors Theatre as their guests, and at the performance of "The Seagull" on Saturday, February 15th.

MISCELLANEA

PROPOSED VISIT OF NETHERLANDS' AMATEUR THEATRICAL UNION—19th MAY.

Mr. J. de Blicck, the President of the Union, is bringing a Dutch Little Theatre Company to England to play at the Highbury Little Theatre, Sutton Coldfield, in May, and has offered to put on a performance at The Questors Theatre on the date mentioned. But to enable firm arrangements to be made it will be necessary to arrange private hospitality for the members of the Company, perhaps 20 in all. Questors will not wish to let this opportunity pass, and it is hoped that sufficient offers of hospitality will be forthcoming from Club Members to make it possible. Anyone who would be willing to take a member of the Dutch company into their home for the nights of the 18th and 19th May is asked to tell the General Manager, who will be happy to provide further details.

TIMES OF PERFORMANCES.

A ballot was conducted during the run of "Much Ado About Nothing" to find out whether there was any general desire among the membership for a later start for the evening performances at The Questors. The result was to show an overwhelming preponderance against making any change, and the Club will accordingly stick to 7.30 p.m. for the start of evening performances.

BRADFORD CIVIC MAGAZINE "THEATRE."

Copies of this excellent production, by one of the North Country Little Theatres, are available at The Questors, and may be obtained from the Stewards, price 2/6.

THEATRE NEWSLETTER

THEATRE NEWSLETTER, the national theatre fortnightly, was first published in July, 1946. It is the only Magazine which covers all the theatre all over the world. Reviews and reports are published of the principal London and provincial productions and, so far as space permits, of the most important activities of Amateur Societies. Special articles deal with School Drama, with problems of production and stage management.

THEATRE NEWSLETTER has correspondents in twenty-five countries and regular reports are published of new plays, important productions and other events.

Important topical and controversial problems are dealt with in articles by, or interviews with, experienced theatre people, who have included *E. Martin Browne, Professor Edward Dent, George Freedley (New York), Gordon Daviot, Peter Zadek, William Armstrong, Robert Henderson, George Devine, Frank McMullan, Jan Russell, Clifford Bax, J. B. Priestley, Patrick Henderson, Flora Robson, Phyllis Hartnoll, Alfred Emmet, Ashley Dukes, Leo Baker, Andre van Gysegem, Sir Barry Jackson and Charles Lanástone.*

THEATRE NEWSLETTER, therefore, provides the best possible means of keeping in touch with current events in the world theatre.

Annual subscription is 10/- per annum (25 issues), and applications for subscriptions should be addressed to the Circulation Manager, "Theatre Newsletter," 77, Dean Street, W.1.

COMING EVENTS

February 15th and 16th : Conference of Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain at The Questors (see details on page 7).

Monday, March 24th : The Programme Director has, in response to many requests, arranged a further "Brains Trust." Fuller details will be announced later, but in the meantime Questors are invited to note the date and to send to the Programme Director, at the Theatre, any questions they would like to hear discussed by the Brains Trust.

Saturday, April 12th : Opening date for the Fifth Production of The Questors' 1946-47 Season. The play will be an original play by MICHAEL KELLY: "FINAL DIVIDEND."

Saturday, April 26th : The Programme Director has arranged a social occasion. On this date, from 7.30 p.m. till midnight, there will be

A QUESTORS DANCE

AT THE ABBEY HOTEL, NORTH CIRCULAR ROAD.

Further details of the arrangements will be announced later, but in the meantime Questors and their friends are asked to book the date. Tickets, at reasonable prices, will be available, from March 24th onwards, from the Membership Secretary, Mrs. Ina Coates, 2, Ealing Court Mansions, St. Mary's Road, W.5. (Ealing 2767).