

QUESTORS' CALENDAR.

- January 7—16 "Christmas in the Market Place" and "The Bear."
,, 17 SPECIAL BUILDING FUND PERFORMANCE OF ABOVE.
,, 19 Discussion on above production. 7.30 p.m. Theatre.
,, 24 Active Members' Meeting. 7.30 p.m. Theatre.
,, 26 Publication of "Forestage" No. 2.
- February 1 CLUB NIGHT. "New Zealand Theatre," talk by Ngaio Marsh.
7.30 p.m., Theatre.
,, 11 First Night of "Shadow and Substance," by Paul Vincent Carrol.
Fourth production produced by Eric Voce.
- March 25 First Night of new play, "Paradise Street," by Anthony Brown
(details will be given in "Forestage" No. 2).
- May 13 First Night of "Gentle People," by Irwan Shaw.
- July 8 First Night of Student production.

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THE QUESTORS



present

"CHRISTMAS IN THE MARKET PLACE"

BY

HENRI GHEON

and

"THE BEAR"

BY

ANTON TCHEHOV

SEASON 1949—50

THIRD PRODUCTION

PRICE 6d.

ON RECORDS.

As The Questors enter 1950 it is very pleasing to report that at the last production a number of records were broken. The attendance at "Othello" was higher than at any previous Questors' production, and the takings at the Box Office were also the highest on record. At such a time when the Questors is embarking on a number of new ventures culminating in the building of a new theatre, it is very gratifying and helpful to the Committee and others in the theatre to know that there is this whole-hearted and strong support. As has been said on many occasions, an enthusiastic and solid membership is the basis of all our work.

Another pleasing thing has been the rise in the membership. Since the Publicity Manager wrote to all members and appealed for **one** new member from each, there has been a rise in membership of **57**. The membership on October 1st was **940**, and at the time of going to Press it is **997**. This means that nearly 57 members of The Questors have obtained new members in this drive, and to them we extend our grateful thanks.

BUT, there are still nearly nine hundred members who have not responded. If you are one of them will you help here and now to get the next three members so that we can top the thousand mark—please don't leave it for someone else to do. If you are a visitor full information about the theatre and subscription rates can be obtained from the General Manager or from literature at the end of the theatre. Membership tokens are on sale in the theatre, and for 15s. you can make your friend a member for the whole of 1950. Give one as a New Year's present or as a birthday present; if you enjoy The Questors' productions you will know that it will be appreciated.

A word to members only. If you are interested in The Questors and wish to help with our experiments in theatre production such as we are presenting to-night; if you want to help us plan and build the new theatre there is no better way than by increasing the membership; in this way you make individually a considerable contribution.

To all Questors we put the question :

HAVE YOU GOT YOUR NEW MEMBER YET?

WHAT'S THE POINT ?

Why the arena? Why not do this production on the stage in the ordinary way? What is the idea of this whimsical putting of the players in the auditorium and the audience (some of them) on the stage?

Well, first of all, let us make it clear that it is not mere caprice. There is reason behind it, and moreover some sort of plan. Secondly, let us stress that it is not just some little pet idea of The Questors, but an experiment in key with a very wide based movement towards a greater freedom in the theatre.

"Arena theatre" is, properly, a playhouse in which the actors are almost completely surrounded by the audience, but the term may conveniently be applied to conditions under which the audience is on more than one side of the players. Thus the ancient Greek theatre was an arena theatre (on an enormous scale); the Elizabethan playhouse was an arena theatre on a much more intimate scale.

I will not elaborate here the reasons why there is such a strong desire in so many quarters to get away from the picture frame stage. It would, however, be unfair not to point out that it is a subject of some controversy—I have heard well-known actors argue against it with a passion worthy of a Lear, for actors and theatre folk well deserve their reputation for conservatism. Much attention has been directed to arena theatre recently by Tyrone Guthrie's exciting production at the Edinburgh Festivals in 1948 and 1949 of "A Satire of the Three Estates" and, this year, of "The Gentle Shepherd." On another plane, it has been the subject of a great deal of interest in educational circles in recent years, where acting "in the round" (the not very happy phrase which is used to describe this form of production) has been hotly sponsored by many keen advocates.

But it's not such a new idea, either. Perhaps one of the earliest pioneers in this country against the picture frame stage was Terence Gray, whose famous Festival Theatre at Cambridge was opened in 1926. Terence Gray, however, was somewhat extreme and limited in his view of theatre (for him the appeal of theatre must be purely aesthetic, without emotional or intellectual content), and his work therefore never really bore much fruit. There are a number of purely arena theatres operating in the U.S.A., one of the earliest of which was the University of Washington's "Pent House Theatre," and one of the most famous, the "Theatre '47" of Dallas, directed by Margo Jones. Our friends the Highbury Little Theatre have recently started a professional group, known as The Intimate Theatre, which travels with its own arena stage set up, rather like a miniature circus. Robert Atkins' productions in the Blackfriars Ring in 1937 may be remembered by some of our members. We ourselves were experimenting with an arena stage in 1937 when we played scenes from "Twelfth Night" in the middle of the auditorium with the audience on four sides.

More recently, we experimented with an exaggerated apron stage for our production of "The Trojan Women," in April, 1948, and most of our productions in recent times have had some form of forestage, and have helped us to gain more knowledge about producing plays under those conditions.

And that, of course, is the point—to gain more knowledge about producing plays outside the picture frame. We need that knowledge as we plan the new theatre which we intend to build.

A. E.

“ THE BEAR ”

By

ANTON TCHEHOV

Characters :

Yelena Ivanovna Popov RACHEL WOLF
Grigori Spepanitch Smirnov TREVOR ELDRID
Luka PETER BOWEN-EVANS

Producer ABRAHAM ASSEO
Associate Producer IRIS COE
Décor NAN ROWLEY

“ CHRISTMAS IN THE MARKET PLACE ”

By

HENRI GHEON

Characters :

Melchior LEON HANICK
Columba EVE AIKMAN
Joey ALBERT HOOPER
Maria PEGGY POPE
Bruno DONALD MANNING

Producer ABRAHAM ASSEO
Associate Producer ROSEMARY JONES
Décor ROSEMARY JONES

STAGE MANAGEMENT FOR BOTH PLAYS:

Stage Manager RUTH MILNER
Assistant Stage Managers FRANK WHITE
MARGARET BENHAM
Props. WENDY MITCHELL

Wardrobe ELIZABETH WELLMAN, assisted by
JOYCE HORNETT
and the Wardrobe Staff
Lighting GERRY ISENTHAL
Music arranged by ALBERT GIBBS and ELSA SANDER

There will be two intervals. The first of ten minutes between the two plays and the second of 15 minutes after the first part of “Christmas in the Market Place,” during which refreshments will be served.

DISCUSSION DATE: JANUARY 19TH, 1950

In the interests of both players and audience, you are requested to restrict smoking in the Theatre while the play is in progress.

LIST OF PRIZE WINNERS IN THE QUESTORS CHRISTMAS DRAW.

The Christmas Draw realised approximately £160—not much compared with the need of the Building Fund, but more than enough to warrant our warmest thanks to the four hundred odd members who sold tickets or sent contributions. Thanks also to those who, unable to sell, returned their books—our organisers are grateful. The prize-winners were:—

Name and Address	Ticket No.
Mr. S. K. GAY, 12, Park Road, W.7	15232
J. RITCHIE, 36a, Little Ealing Lane, W.5	2987
Mrs. COCHRAN, 22, Villiers Road, Southall	4007
Mrs. ABRAMS, 136, Haven Green Court, W.5	20912
Miss V. NEWBERRY, 3, Cumberland Park, W.3	1948
Miss H. HOWARD, 4, Langland Gardens, N.W.3	6525
H. COLLINSON, 28, Holyoake Walk, W.5	20878
Mrs. LOCKE, 217, Boston Manor Road, Brentford	1452
Miss M. VOCE, 71, Argyle Road, W.13	19076
IRIS WOOD, 19b, Creffield Road, W.5	20335
Mr. A. JACKSON, 2, Brocket Close, Welwyn Garden City	4042
Mrs. F. STEWART, 21a, Seaford Road, W.13	6817
Miss R. MILNER, 80a, Thornton Avenue, W.4	15930
Mr. E. VOCE, 71a, Argyle Road, W.13	19218
The Questors Theatre	16168
Mrs. F. J. WILLIAMS, 1, Craiglockhart Road, Edinburgh	20644
Miss M. GOLDING, 5, Blakesley Avenue, W.5	15855
Mr. W. E. ROBINSON, 101, Milton Road, W.7	20501
Miss WHITE, 12, Manor Road, W.13	3169
Miss E. ELDRIDGE, 38, Inglis Road, W.5	15450
Miss L. BULLOCK, Woodville, Woodville Road, W.5	15159
Mrs. E. PERRETT, 32, Crichton Road, W.5	2262
Mrs. E. COLEBROOK, 41, Castlebar Park, W.5	15118
S. BROMHAM, 4, Long Drive, W.3	7772
H. DALE (?), 264, Greenford Avenue, W.7	10344
Mr. C. N. ELLWOOD, 8, Chester Gardens, W.13	3283
Mrs. G. N. ANDERSON, 9a, Queens Parade, W.5	20794
Mr. BOYLES, Millwood, Hove	19717
Miss O. BERRY, 66, Castlebar Road, W.5	15384
Miss E. HOAR, 6, Castlebar Road, W.5	19541
Miss S. P. QUIN, Church Road, Folkestone	3964
Mr. G. LONSDALE HANDS, End House, Burnham	8682
M. COLEMAN, 35, Grange Road, W.4	4826
Miss N. LERRY, 31, Lynwood Road, W.5	20150
Miss C. KEMP, 87, Freemans Lane, Hayes	6887
Mr. E. VOCE, 71, Argyle Road, W.13	19220
N. W. BARNETT, The Wellhouse, Kington Hill	3582
I. FINNIMORE, 139, Chase Side, N.14	15101
Mr. J. MELVILLE, 46, Rosemary Avenue, Hounslow	17694
Mr. R. G. EALES, 23, Chestnut Grove, W.5	15878
R. P. COE, 14, Cranmer Avenue, W.13	4003
Mr. P. NEWMARK, 130, Ealing Village, W.5	18126
Miss M. ANDREWS, Green Lane, Edgware	6218
Mr. H. P. WHILLEY, 59, Ferryhead Gardens, Greenford	1670
Mr. H. FOSTER, 4, Woodville Road, W.5	9984
Mr. E. H. WATTS, Eaton College Road, N.W.3	16250
Miss F. COX, 66b, High Street, Poole	9697
Miss WILSON, Perivale Maternity Hospital, Special price for complete book sold.	

FORESTAGE

The first issue of the new Questors Magazine, "Forestage," has now been published and is available in the theatre. Price 6d. (free to members).

GENERAL MANAGER.

Rena Rice, our popular General Manager, will shortly be leaving us in that capacity, though it is hoped that she will not be altogether severing her connection with the Club.

The Committee are now considering an appointment in her place, and will be pleased to hear from any member of the Club who might wish to be considered for the post. No particular previous experience is regarded as essential though ability to type would be an advantage.

Will any member interested please get in touch in the first place, quite informally, with Alfred Emmet, Hon. Director, The Questors Theatre?

A NOTE BY THE PRODUCER.

I feel that I should explain why I have upset the seating plan—the good old order of our little theatre—and even asked members of the audience to climb up on to the stage, and troubled the stage staff to build a special one for the actors.

Trying to be original? Well, even if you had not known, Mr. Emmet is giving you some idea in this programme of arena staging, which in itself is as old as the stage of the theatre.

It is also a coincidence that my production in such a style follows his recent broadcast when he said "attempt to burst out of the picture frame." (I was well into rehearsals then but felt quite encouraged in my crazy ideas by his broadcast).

When I read the script I was already aware of the advantages of such a form of staging, and I was fascinated by Tyrone Guthrie's production of "The Gentle Shepherd" in Edinburgh. "Christmas in the Market Place" struck me by its simplicity and its qualities of intimacy which I personally felt would be best conveyed through a direct contact with the audience.

This note and the re-arrangement of the theatre will be better appreciated I hope after you have seen the show.

A. A.

Music for the lullaby "Sleep, baby sleep," composed by H. J. Lifshitz.

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ERRATA.

The English version used for "The Bear"
is by Constance Garnett.

"Christmas in the Market Place" has been
adapted for the English stage by Eric Crozier.

Vocal music for "Christmas in the Market Place"
composed and arranged by Haha J. Lifshitz.