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Monday and Tuesday
14th and 15th May
at 7.30 p.m.

Questors Theatre
Mattock Lane
Ealing, W.5

The Questors Theatre

presents

Poor Man's Miracle

BY MARIAN HEMAR

A NOTE ON THE PLAY BY THE PRODUCER, ALFRED EMMET

Marian Hemar, the author of *Poor Man's Miracle*, is a native of Lwow in Poland. Even before the war he had a number of successes to his credit in the theatre in Warsaw. He is not only a writer of plays but also of satirical revue sketches and songs: indeed he has been described as the "A.P.H." of Poland.

Poor Man's Miracle was written in the summer of 1939 and was immediately accepted for production by the National Theatre, Warsaw. The play was to have been produced in October of that year, and rehearsals were about to begin when war broke out.

The author, who was a well-known anti-Nazi writer, left Warsaw and escaped across Europe, losing on the way a suitcase containing all his manuscripts, including his only copy of the play. After arriving in Rumania, he managed to send a message to a friend asking him to find a copy and smuggle it out to him. He heard, however, that all the copies, with indeed the entire library of the Union of Playwrights, had been destroyed by fire when the National Theatre was burned out during the siege of Warsaw.

It then seemed that the play was irrevocably lost, but some time later his friend sent a message to say that he had found a copy in the possession of one of the actors who had been cast in it. It was being retyped and he would send it. Shortly afterwards a young man who had escaped from Poland to join the anti-Nazi forces, called on the author and delivered a copy of the precious manuscript which he had succeeded in smuggling out of Poland.

The play was translated into English and published here in 1943. A radio version, broadcast by the B.B.C., was an exceptional success, and was repeated on three occasions. A much abbreviated version was produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, in December 1943, but the present production of the play is the first in the original uncut version. The Questors are proud to present such an important première.

The author, who is now resident in London and has begun writing plays in English, has himself revised the translation used in this production.

The Questors

The Questors, founded in 1929, have just celebrated their 21st Birthday. Their theatre was opened in 1933, when they were four years old, though it was not until 1938 that they obtained the sole lease of the premises.

The building itself, which is not of very permanent construction, was originally a Roman Catholic Chapel. There is still a stained glass window behind the cyclorama and the foundation of the font in the Box Office.

"Theatre" was perhaps rather a courtesy title during the first few years of occupation: the audience was accommodated on rough wooden chairs, all on the same level and very prone to creak and wobble; and even the heating was largely self-generated. More attention, however, has been given to the stage and lighting, all the work of conversion being carried out by The Questors' own members for a total initial expenditure of about £75.

In 1938, a further appeal for funds was made and, on the strength of it, the auditorium was re-seated and redecorated. The Questors continued to work uninterruptedly throughout the war, though during the "blitz" period performances were confined to week-end matinees.

It is hoped in the course of time to acquire the whole site and to build a new theatre. For this purpose a Building Fund has been started, and it creeps slowly towards its objective.

Perhaps the most important development since the war has been the inauguration and development of the Student Group, which is run under the auspices of the Middlesex County Council Education Committee and now offers a two years' preliminary training to young amateur players.

The Questors Limited, to use the correct title, was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in 1949. Membership is now about 1,100, of which some 80 are Acting Members. The Theatre seats 183.

The Questors are greatly honoured at being invited a second year in succession to participate in the British Drama League Theatre Week, and extend to all fellow members of the League a warm welcome to their theatre.

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