

questors

QUESTORS THEATRE MATTOCK LANE W.5 567 0011 Box Office 567 5184

No.58 JUNE/JULY, 1971

New Plays Festival

June 19 : 23 : 27 July 1

THE LAST EMPERORS

by David Shellan

June 20 : 25 : 30 July 3

JOHN

by David Mowat

June 22 : 26 : 29 July 2

BLEACH

by Arnold Meyer

POOR DUMB ANIMALS

by James Hepburn

Below: New plays people (l-r) Dick Roberts, Peter Anderson (director) – Last Emperors; Alexandra Gwynne-Jones – John and Sonia Klauber – Poor Dumb Animals.

Once again the new plays festival is upon us. This annual event, stretching the theatre's human and technical resources to the limit (last year the festival cast and crew looked something like the London telephone directory) sums up what the Questors exists for – to encourage new and original theatre, both in production and writing.

This year, as always, the plays are as different from each other as chalk and cheese: they provide Questors audiences with an opportunity to see theatre history in the making – the very first public performance of a new play, one which may

go on to another place to break all box office records.

One man who has had his fair share of success from the new plays festival is James Saunders whose *Next Time I'll Sing to You* was first performed at Ealing in the 1962 festival. Subsequently, this and his other plays, have had successful runs in the West End and elsewhere. In 1969 his *Borage Pigeon Affair* featured in the new plays festival.

Who better than he to contribute his own thoughts about this year's festival and the plays which will be making their appearance for the first time?

There was a rumour that one of the plays in a New Plays Festival was only there because they had to make up the threesome. Quite untrue of course, who'd run a theatre like that? The question is rhetorical. This year, happily, it doesn't apply; I think we have a vintage year, and I'm not just saying that. (Notes for expansion in Grapevine: Vitality of Theatre depends on keeping links with present; danger of becoming Arts Museum. Responsibility to new authors. Shakespeare

was once contemporary. Etc.) Never mind that, theatre is entertainment. Brief run-down:

THE LAST EMPERORS by David Shellan. Historical. Eleven ounces close-typed Sizeable cast but leaving some over for the other plays we hope. Good taut dialogue, idiomatic without jarring. All about the decline of the Byzantine empire. Who cares about that, they're all dead. Well, who'll care about the decline of the West when we're all dead?

Continued overleaf



New Plays Festival

from front page

Machiavelli said 'A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness must necessarily come to grief'. Don't be put off, the play's not about goodness. It's about, to me, Christianity as a subversive revolutionary doctrine, destroying temporal power structures from within. Among other things. This was the 15th Century, but it's still happening.

The Romans knew what they were doing, throwing the early Christians to the lions; but they still got subverted. Lucky Turks, so single-minded, no conflict between ethic and action. Never mind all that, go and see it, very entertaining. Produced by Peter Anderson, first big production, hope he can handle all those spears.

JOHN by David Mowat. Fourteen ounces but bigger type face. David Mowat is your very own resident dramatist, courtesy of the Arts Council. Members may recall his earlier plays and their strange preoccupation with the primitive borderline just this side of the unconscious we all float in. (Yes, even you). This play has the same flavour, but it's compellingly naturalistic. I think *John* is the play to put Mowat on the Map. Come and see if you agree. He's producing it himself, assisted by Peter Whelan, who did his *Others*.

BLEACH by Arnold Meyer and POOR DUMB ANIMALS by James Hepburn. Double bill, ten ounces the two. Both plays say f***, so don't come if you'll be offended unless you want to be, or want to complain at the discussions, held after every performance—an extra entertainment thrown in for nothing, it's all theatre. *Bleach* is American, Vietnam comes into it but it's only a play, don't worry, you won't get killed. Two characters, more or less, so it all evens up, see above. It's about pollution, more or less. Not that any good play is 'about' any one thing. A good play is about a play being good, as you are about yourself. (Question asked of a dying old man after recounting his life story: "Yes, but what's it about?"). *Poor Dumb Animals* is weird. The author may be mad. Or perhaps

just original. Japanese influence. (Work that one out). The nerve of the man! I can't wait to see it. *Bleach* produced by Mike Custance (*Collier's Friday Night*). *Poor Dumb Animals* by Cecil Hayter, of Studio Group fame.

Something for everyone, you see. Love, lust, blood, mud, impressionism, expressionism, naturalism, shmatualism—all grist to the mill. Four good plays in a fortnight. Not bad! I don't know what Questors is coming to. They don't write plays like they used to.

James Saunders

CORRESPONDENCE

May I, through the medium of *Questopics*, thank those members of the cast and staff of *The Duchess of Malfi* who were not at the last-night party, but who contributed towards the splendid gift the company gave me — a screen on which to project my colour slides. I'd been going to try making one myself (looks easy, probably isn't!) so it was a delightful surprise to be presented with the real thing.

One never works with exactly the same cast and crew twice, so I may not see some of them until several productions hence; which is why I'm putting my gratitude into print.

Sincerely,

(Mrs) Hilda Collins

Foyer Finished for Next Season

As the walls rise and the building takes shape, it is becoming easier to imagine what the new extension is going to look like when finished. And the finish is promised for August, in time for the new season.

What, it seems, is not so easy to imagine is what the extension is going to mean to the life of our theatre. There are still members who think of it merely as a new foyer for the audience, and rather dear at the price. The well-being of the audience is immensely important: a theatre should be a good place to come to, so that one has a sense of pleasure even before entering the doors, which continues until one sits in one's seat and the play begins. This adds to the success of any show, and on performance nights this is what the new extension will do.

But this is only one aspect. More and more our activities are being handicapped by lack of rehearsal space. The Questors has always had a reputation as an adventurous theatre whose work has been spiced with experiment. It is perhaps inevitable that in the main, theatre productions tend to be rather 'Establishment'. The place for experiment is in studio or workshop productions. We lack the space.

There is an ever-growing demand for more work with children. There are waiting lists of youngsters wanting to join our young people's groups. A substantial field of activity is beck-

oning to us from the local schools. To develop a love of theatre among children of all ages is the one sure way of ensuring the future of our theatre. Again, we lack the space.

The new extension, freeing the Shaw Room when a show is running and providing additional rehearsal space at other times will relieve this pressure.

We have no doubts about the rightness and timeliness of this extension, even though it involves going into the red with a bank overdraft until the money is raised. As I write this, the Fund is just coming up to £10,000, including a magnificent profit from the Spring Draw. Many other events have contributed, such as the Gala Concert, when both Michael Redgrave and Rachel Kempson, with many other friends from the profession gave us an outstanding programme. There were also the more home-grown Music Hall and the Motor Treasure Hunt, while the list of members supporting the appeal by donations and covenants continues to grow.

It is an exciting thought that by the time the next *Questopics* goes to members, the extension should be finished.

P.S. Do you realise that just 4 members each covenanting £2 a year for 7 years would add almost £100 to the Fund? Why not make a pact with three friends each to do this and so notch up another £100?

To: BOX OFFICE MANAGER, Questors Theatre, Mattock Lane, W.5

NEW PLAYS FESTIVAL – JUNE/JULY, 1971

	Date	Alter. Dates	Members Tickets	Guest Tickets	Price	Total Cash
The Last Emperors June 19, 23, 27 July 1					50p 35p	
John June 20, 25, 30 July 3					50p 35p	
Bleach & Poor Dumb Animals June 22, 26, 29 July 2					50p 35p	

Guest Season Tickets for all 3 New Plays	Dates	Alter. Dates	Guest Tickets	Price	Total Cash
				125p 85p	

Box Office open to personal callers and for telephone bookings:
June 14 to July 3 – 6.45 p.m. to 8.45 p.m.

I enclose cash/cheque/P.O. value £ _____ & S.A.E.

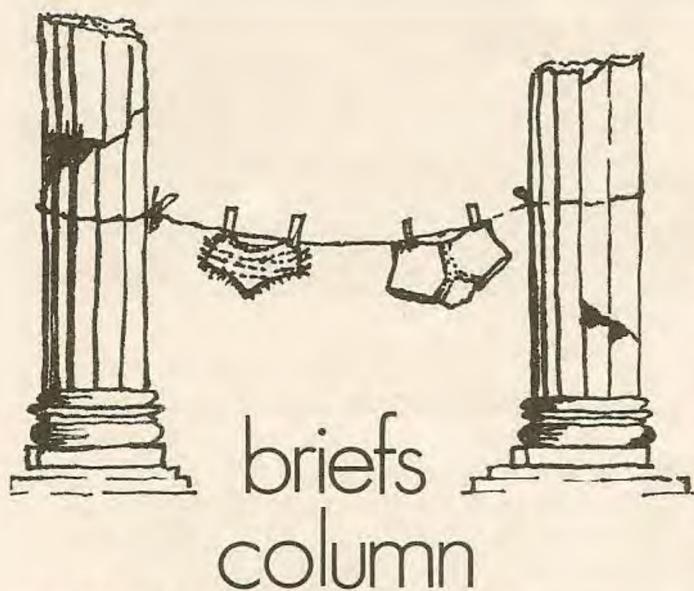
Name Mem.No. Tel.No.....

Address.....

Other mems. seats for: Name.....Mem. No.....

Please Note:

All Members seats for this New Plays Festival are free of charge.



Bad News First—Advance box office bookings for *The Schoolmistress* were so low that a special circulation was made to members reminding them to book seats. Each circulation costs the theatre something like £65 in postage alone and you have to sell a lot of seats to get it back.

When the first edition of the new bi-monthly *Questopics* came out, a stirring editorial implored you all to keep your copy in a safe place and to remember to use the booking form for the second show. Please remember that this *Questopics* is the last circulation this season and that you will not receive another notification of the Student production of *The Rivals*.

* * * * *

The First Year Student Group invite you to watch them at work on Wednesday, 7th July at 7.45 p.m. in the Stanislavsky Room. Get a fascinating glimpse into the world of the training of an actor and an opportunity to assess the coming talent. Under the direction of Alfred Emmet and the Student Group Staff. Tickets, price 20p are available from the box office.

* * * * *

Junior Drama Workshop. In addition to the under 14 groups, there are now 5 young people's groups comprising the Junior Drama Workshop, each of which meets weekly for imaginative exercises, etc., on the way to learning about acting. Between the 9th and 12th July, each Group will hold its own 'Open Day' when parents and a few friends will be allowed to be present at the weekly class, and on Friday, 16th July, at 7.45 p.m. in the Stanislavsky Room. There will be a Workshop evening drawn from all the Groups, giving Questors members an opportunity to see what the young people are up to. Tickets, price 15p are available from the box office.

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Next Year's Productions. In September we kick off with *The Italian Girl* by Iris Murdoch. In October the production will be Albee's *Delicate Balance* while in November David Gower directs *Hamlet* (Played by John Wilson, who is already hard at it rehearsing) while in March, Anne Jellicoe of *The Knack* fame directs her own version of *The Seagull*.

Intervening productions have not been fixed yet, but rumour has it that among those

plays being considered are a programme of one-act plays, including one by Slavomir Mrozek for December, the Victorian play *The ticket of leave man* by Tom Taylor for Christmas and plays by Miller, Feydeau and Artaud.

* * * * *

Questors membership must mean something. Ex-Questor directors have been sprouting all over the West End like mushrooms in a warm, damp cellar. Stephen Hollis (*The Homecoming*) directed Jeremy Kemp, Simon Ward and Anna Massey in *Spoiled* at the Haymarket; Roger Williams (*Look Back in Anger*) directed Roy Dotrice in Dennis Cannan's *One at Night*, at the Royal Court and Kenneth Ives (*The Father* and *Dogs of Pavlov*) directs *The Lady for the Sun* at Greenwich Theatre.

* * * * *

Overheard from a lady in Mattock Lane just before a Fringe Festival Production...! I know it's experimental, but we don't have to undress do we?.....

INTERNATIONAL AMATEUR THEATRE WEEK

ALFRED'S TRAVELS

International Amateur Theatre Week is the brainchild, protégé and enfant terrible of Alfred Emmet. The last one, which took place in 1969, was a great success, in spite of the somewhat disappointing turnout. Since then, the word has gone round, and the next Week in September should be a sell out. Here, Alfred writes with infectious enthusiasm about his experiences combing Europe for suitable material.

So successful and exciting for all concerned was our first International Amateur Theatre Week in 1969 that it was no sooner over than we had decided to hold another in 1971. From that moment began the search for suitable companies.

A business trip to Ceylon early in 1970 gave the first opportunity to look around. A visit to Paris and Rapallo on the way out and to Basle and Karlsruhe on the way back gave me contact with four very different groups, all immensely enthusiastic and without exception, charming and delightful hosts. One put on a run-through rehearsal of two shows on a makeshift fit-up in the Town Hall

Council Chamber; one, unable to get the use of their hall, played *Huis Clos* for me in the drawing room; at one I saw a performance in their tiny cellar-theatre.

The next opportunity was in December when a visit to Munich for a German television programme about The Questors gave me a chance to revisit the companies in Paris and Karlsruhe and see something more of their work.

Meanwhile I had heard great things from a friend who had visited a Drama Festival at Hronov in Czechoslovakia. These concerned a production of Chekhov's *The Bank Anniversary* by our old friends from Brno and a Romanian company from Lugoj. We have always kept in touch with our Czech friends and contact was now made with Romania (though one finds that 'contact' is a little tenuous owing to inordinate postal delays).

Floods in Genoa

I next planned a round trip — to Paris to see a performance of Sartre's *The Trojan Women*, on to Rapallo for a performance of *The Queen and the Rebels* (Ugo Betti), from there to Romania and back via Czechoslovakia. Came the postal strike and a series of confused telegrams, read over the telephone to and from John Clemow in Paris, until at the last moment I learned by telephone from Rapallo that they had had to postpone their show as rehearsals had been interfered with by floods in Genoa — their letter telling me so had been lost in the postal strike. So I had to settle for a visit to Paris and start again.

Eventually, but only after telephone calls to Bucharest and Prague, I set off on my final ten days tour.

There is not space here to tell of my wonderful entertainment in Rapallo, my journey in a few hours from the warm spring sunshine of the Mediterranean to the bitter winter in Eastern Europe; of how I found myself driving in a rickety bus out into the suburbs of Belgrade without the remotest idea of where I was going; of sitting in an empty theatre in Lugoj and watching three performances in two days by a highly talented company; of being snowed up for 5 hours in Bucharest airport with no means of communicating with the outside world; of losing my luggage at Budapest and having to sleep starkers until I got it back three days later; of losing my air tickets in Brno and getting them back in the nick of time before flying back to Prague; of a wonderful evening in a wine cellar with our friends of the Studio Josefa Skrivana (which was where I lost the air tickets!); of the great warmth and friendliness which I met everywhere.

The outcome is that we have a programme for September which, in entertainment value and excitement, will rival that of 1969. The companies invited are the **Teatrul Popular** of

ALFRED'S TRAVELS

Lugoj in *Broadway Melody 1492*, a witty satire with catchy songs about Christopher Columbus, performed with great verve and panache by a company which recently celebrated its 125th anniversary; *Le Cercle D'Art Populaire* from Paris in *Les Troyennes*, a modern production with a strikingly original sound track by the famous 'Les Percussions de Strasbourg'; and, making a return visit, the **Theatre Studio Josefa Sjravana** from Brno in a double bill of Nekrassov's *The Usurer of Petersburg* and Chekhov's *The Bank Anniversary*.

Those members who were involved in the last IATW will, I think, never forget it. It was a marvellously heart-warming experience of international camaraderie as well as being theatrically stimulating. Many people made the surprising discovery that a play in a totally unfamiliar language could, nevertheless be hugely entertaining and enjoyable, and that in the atmosphere of such an international occasion communication can be achieved and friendships formed despite any language barriers.

Undoubtedly those members who derived the most from the occasion were those who took visitors into their homes for the week. The Week depends upon our members being willing to put up the members of the visiting companies – the terms of their invitation are that they pay their own travelling expenses and we look after them from the time of their arrival to their departure.

Theatre Supper

We will give them lunch every day at the theatre and supper every evening after the performance, so that bed and breakfast is all that hosts are called upon to provide. Our guests arrive on Saturday, 18 September, in time to see the last performance of our production of *The Italian Girl*, and depart on Sunday, 26 September, each company having given two performances in repertoire during the week.

This private hospitality is important. Partly because frankly we could not finance such an occasion without; but more importantly because this mixing in of our foreign visitors into the homes of our own members seems an essential element in the general friendliness and international understanding which are part of the object of the whole exercise.

We shall have some 50 or 60 visitors to look after – quite an undertaking. We need offers of accommodation, help with catering, with interpreting, with car ferrying. Please return the enclosed form as soon as possible.

I can promise that those of you who get yourselves really involved in this Week will have a stimulating experience which you will long remember!

Alfred Emmet

**FESTIVAL
LATE-NIGHT
SHOW**

Fri. Sat. Fri. Sat.
June 25 26 July 2 3

at 11 p.m. in the Theatre

Mike Green's and Alan Chamber's
Informal documentary

STEAM

*A light-hearted look at the Railway
age with songs, sketches and verse.*

WHEN BOOKING PLEASE NOTE

For the best seats **BOOK IN COMFORT – BOOK BY POST** but do remember to enclose a stamped addressed envelope. **POSTAL BOOKINGS ARE DEALT WITH BEFORE BOX OFFICE OPENS.**

The Box Office is open for telephone bookings or personal callers from 6.45 to 8.45 p.m. on the evenings of performances and for five evenings prior to each major production **ONLY.**

It is regretted that tickets which have been paid for cannot be exchanged for another performance. Tickets will however, be accepted for resale and money refunded if sold.

MEMBERSHIP CARD must be produced before tickets are issued.

MEMBERS' FREE SEATS are not transferable.

TICKETS BOOKED BY TELEPHONE must be collected within 48 hours or by 7.15 p.m. on the night of the performance (whichever is the earlier), otherwise they may be sold.

BLOCK BOOKINGS of 10 or more tickets for any one performance may be made at a reduction of 5p per ticket. *Not applicable to special children's matinees.*

ON NIGHTS WHEN THERE IS A PERFORMANCE please do not call the Box Office by 'phone for Advance Bookings until *after 7.45 p.m.*

Members who have booked seats and later decide not to use them are requested to inform the Box Office as soon as possible or other people may be turned away, resulting in a loss to the theatre and disappointment to others.

Diary

June 19 - July 3 NEW PLAYS FESTIVAL

June 19, 23, 27, July 1
THE LAST EMPERORS by David Shellan

June 20, 25, 30, July 3
JOHN by David Mowat

June 22, 26, 29, July 2
Double-bill
BLEACH by Arnold Meyer
POOR DUMB ANIMALS by James Hepburn
Members free seats available. Guests 50p & 35p
Guest Season Tickets 125p & 85p

June 24 in the Stanislavsky Room at 8.00 p.m.
JOHN ROLFE'S JAZZ MEN
Members & Guests 15p

June 25, 26 & July 2, 3 in the Theatre at 11 p.m.
Festival Late-Night Show
Mike Green's and Alan Chamber's informal documentary **STEAM**
A light hearted look at the Steam Railway Age with song, sketches and verse.
Members & Guests 20p.

July 4 in the Redgrave Room at 3 p.m.
PRODUCERS & DESIGNERS CONFERENCE

July 7 in the Stanislavsky Room at 7.45 p.m.
STUDENTS AT WORK
Members and Guests 20p.

July 11 in the Shaw Room at 7.45 p.m.
ACTIVE MEMBERS MEETING

July 14 in the Shaw Room at 7.45 p.m.
NEW MEMBERS MEETING

July 16 in the Stanislavsky Room at 7.45 p.m.
JUNIOR DRAMA WORKSHOP EVENING
Members and Guests 15p.

July 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24 at 7.45 p.m.
The Student Group presents:
THE RIVALS by Richard Brinsley Sheridan
Members free seats available. Guests 35p.

*Last Questopics
this Season*

**DON'T FORGET
THE RIVALS
in July**

To: BOX OFFICE MANAGER, Questors Theatre, Mattock Lane, W.5

THE FESTIVAL FRINGE

	Date	Alter. Dates	Members Tickets	Price	Guest Tickets	Price	Total Cash
Steam: June 25, 26 July 2, 3	11 p.m.			20p		20p	
John Rolfe's Jazzmen	June 24 8 p.m.			15p		15p	

Box Office open to personal callers and for telephone bookings June 14 - July 3 : 6.45 p.m. - 8.45 p.m.
I enclose cash/cheque/P.O. value £ & S.A.E.

Name Mem. No. Tel. No.

Address.....

Other members seats for: Name..... Mem. No.....

STUDENT GROUP

The Rivals

As a climax to their acting course, the second year student group will be presenting Sheridan's comedy of manners and situation, *The Rivals*. Wyllie Longmore, who is directing the play, considers it a particularly fitting choice for the students, as the principal parts cast well within the group. His situation is very close to that of the author, who tailored the play to fit the talents of a specific company of actors.

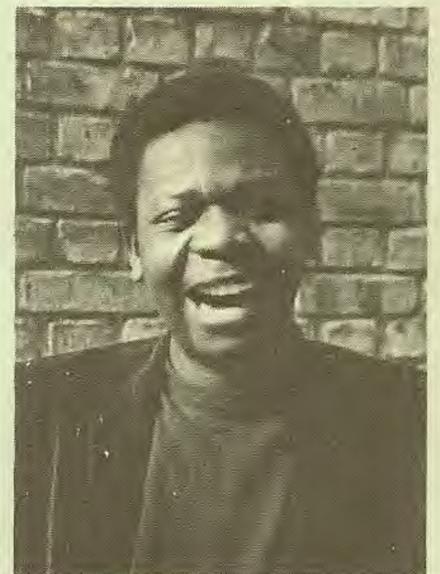
Encouraged by the manager of the Covent Garden theatre, Sheridan wrote *The Rivals* in 1774, when he was only 22. It was his first play and was not a success at its opening night – possibly this was the fault of the actors. Let us hope that Paul Lewis (Sir Anthony Absolute) and Tom Jennings (Sir Lucius O'Trigger) do not emulate their illustrious predecessors in the original cast, as it is said the prompter could be heard constantly when they were on the stage.

Weak in humour!

At the time, the play was also considered too long and weak in humour. However, Sheridan, who thought of his first night audience as a '... candid and judicious friend attending on behalf of the public...' revised the comedy and it has delighted audiences ever since.

The second year student group are anxious to convey the techniques they have learnt during their course and Wyllie considers *The Rivals* an ideal play for them to put on as it combines the three main activities of the group, period movement, speech and acting.

Jeanne Smith has the enviable opportunity of portraying Mrs Malaprop, Susan Reeve is her niece, Lydia Languish and the romantic Julia and Faulkland who so moved the 18th



Above: Members of The Rivals cast. Susan Reeve (*Lydia Languish*) and Stephen Hallmark (*Captain Absolute*); Paul Lewis (*Sir Anthony Absolute*) and Sam Small

century audiences are played by Carolyn Hayfield and Bruce Cowan. The dashing Captain Absolute is played by Steven Hallmark, whilst Peter Garrett considers himself typecast as Bob Acres. The other member of the group in the play is Sam Small.

The rest of the cast is filled by members of the first year student group and three Acting Members of Questors. Perhaps as a result of the illnesses which dogged the student one-act plays, every major player has an understudy.

Apart from one innovation of presentation which he is not empowered to disclose, Wyllie hopes to follow the wishes of the author in his production. In which case the audience should have an enjoyable and amusing evening, for Sheridan's view was 'the scope and immediate object of a play is to please a mixed assembly in representation'.

The Rivals will play on July 17, 18, 20, 21, 23 and 24.

Coach to Antoine

Betty Ogden is organising another coach trip to the Festival Theatre, this time to see Anouilh's *Antoine* with Edith Evans. The coach leaves Mattock Lane on Saturday June 12th at 9.30 a.m. *sharp*. Tickets at £2.50 (for very good seats) from Betty Ogden, 24 Princess Road, London, N.W.1 Send a stamped addressed envelope.

HELP! HELP! HELP!

We are sorely in need of extra help to fill envelopes for circulations.

We shall be delighted to hear from anybody who can spare an hour or two on the afternoon or evening of our circulation dates.

Please drop us a line or telephone 567 0011 or 5184.

To: BOX OFFICE MANAGER, Questors Theatre, Mattock Lane, W.5

THE RIVALS July 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24

Date	Alter. Date	Members Tickets	Price	Guest Tickets	Price	Total Cash
					35p	

Box Office open to personal callers and for telephone bookings: 12th to 24th July – 6.45 p.m. to 8.45 p.m.

I enclose cash/cheque/P.O. value £ _____ & S.A.E.

Name Mem. No Tel. No.....

Address

Other members seats for: Name Mem. No.....

To: BOX OFFICE MANAGER, Questors Theatre, Mattock Lane, W.5

	Members Tickets	Price	Guest Tickets	Price	Total Cash
Students at Work July 7		20p		20p	
Junior Drama Workshop Evening. July 16		15p		15p	

I enclose cash/cheque/P.O. value £ _____ & S.A.E.

Name Mem. No Tel. No.....

Address.....

Other members seats for: Name Mem. No.....