



by Dylan Thomas



THE QUESTORS THEATRE STUDENT GROUP PRODUCTION





# THE QUESTORS THEATRE COMPANY

First performance July 12th 1980

## DYLAN THOMAS AND 'UNDER MILK WOOD'

After acting in an amateur production in Laugharne in December, 1939, Dylan Thomas told Richard Hughes 'What the people of Laugharne need is a play about themselves'. That was the first seed of *Under Milk Wood* and for the next few years the idea was turning over in Thomas' mind and taking various forms.

In 1944, in response to a commission by the B.B.C. for a short radio talk, Dylan Thomas wrote *Quite Early One Morning*, which in a number of respects was a kind of embryo of the later work: the time sequence of a day, or a morning, in the life of the town, the dreams, some of the characters, some images and even phrases were later incorporated in a more developed form in *Under Milk Wood*.

About the same time, however, he was working on another plan for the play. It was to be called *The Town Was Mad* and in it the non-conforming town was to be declared an 'insane area', to be isolated from the outside world, but when the indignantly protesting citizens heard a description of what was officially regarded as an ideally sane town, they begged to be cordoned off immediately. This play he started to write in Laugharne in 1949, but by the time he was half way through he had changed his mind. Willy Nilly the postman never brought to Captain Cat the letter from the authorities which was to precipitate the main action and Thomas returned to the time sequence plan of *Quite Early One Morning*.

By this time Dylan Thomas, who had never filed an income tax return in his life, was harassed by the Inland Revenue for payment of large sums of back income tax and was desperately trying to raise money. He sold the still unfinished play to Princess Caetani, the owner and editor of an avant garde magazine, *Botteghe Oscure*, in Rome, in which the first half was published in 1952 under the title *Llareggub, A Play for Voices*.

He still had to finish the play. Now in bad health, plagued by debts and with his marriage almost breaking up, his progress was desperately slow. The Princess never got the second half of the work she had paid for. Early in May, 1953, during an American tour to raise a little money, he gave a solo reading of the unfinished piece at Harvard University. A public reading, with Thomas and a professional cast of five actors, had been announced to take place at the Young Men's Hebrew Association Poetry Centre in New York on 14th May, but the end had still not been written on the day before the performance. It was finished only minutes before curtain time, the final scene being still typed as the audience assembled.

By lucky chance that first reading was recorded and the record was published. The closing scenes are sketchy compared with the first B.B.C. broadcast (23rd January, 1954), in which several passages were cut, or with the fuller published version. Dylan Thomas was still writing more material for a repeat performance a fortnight later and certainly made more revisions for further readings given in New York the following October. The B.B.C. had already commissioned the play for the Third Programme and Thomas was having discussions with Douglas Cleverdon, the B.B.C. producer. But even then the play was not, in Dylan Thomas' view, really completed. Daniel Jones, a close friend, records that the author had intended to add a great deal to the evening sequence and that some of this material was written, chiefly fragments of ballads to be sung by some of the main characters.

But 'completed' or not, the play stands for posterity as a unique work, whether viewed as poetry, as radio or as theatre. It is such an expression of joy that it is difficult to realise that much of it was written in considerable agony and, finally, in the knowledge of imminent death.

Dylan Thomas died in New York at the age of 39 on 9th November, 1953. The play was not broadcast in his lifetime.

A.E.

(With acknowledgements to Constantine Fitzgibbon, author of *The Life of Dylan Thomas*, and to Dr Daniel Jones, who wrote the prefaces to the published play.)



# THE QUESTORS SECOND YEAR STUDENT GROUP

present

## UNDER MILK WOOD

by DYLAN THOMAS

with music by Daniel Jones

### CAST

*Members of Second Year Student Group*

PATRICE BACON. *First Drowned, Evans the Death, Mr. Ogmores, Ocky Milkman, Sinbad Sailors, Lord Cut Glass*

ANNA BOOTH. . . . . *Myfanwy Price, Third Neighbour and Third Woman, Mrs. Utah Watkins, Mrs. Beynon, Woman in Shop, A Mother*

BERNADETTE D'ALTON . . . *Mrs. Ogmores Pritchard, Mrs. Organ Morgan, Mrs. Sarah, Mrs. Floyd*

TINA KIRK *First Neighbour, Another Mother and Fifth Woman, Mae Rose Cottage, Mrs. Pugh, Woman in Shop*

DAVID MORGAN. . . *Fourth Drowned, Preacher, Organ Morgan, Nogood Boyo, Rev. Eli Jenkins, First Fisherman*

NORA NIKOGHOSSIAN . . *Rosie Probert, Blodwen Bowen, Mrs. Willy Nilly, Mrs. Dai Bread One*

PATSY NUTTALL. *Mother and First Woman, Gossamer Beynon, Polly Garter, Mrs. Rose Cottage*

KEITH PARRY . . . . . *Second Drowned, Jack Black, Mr. Waldo, P.C. Attila Rees, Butcher Beynon, Second Fisherman*

JUDITH ROSSER. . . . . *Fourth Neighbour and Fourth Woman, Bessie Bighead, Mary Ann Sailors, Mrs. Cherry Owen, Woman in Shop*

PETER STANFORD *Fifth Drowned, Mr. Pritchard, Cherry Owen, Willy Nilly, Dai Bread*

JACKIE WHITTLE . *Second Neighbour and Second Woman, Lily Smalls, Mrs. Dai Bread Two, Mrs. Twenty-three Woman in Shop*

MARTIN WOODRUFF . . . *Third Drowned, Mog Edwards, Utah Watkins, Mr. Pugh, A Drinker*

*Captain Cat . . . . . PETER FIELD*

*Children .ALEXANDER BARBER, EUGENE BLAVO, MARTIN HANCOCK, PATRICIA HUGHES, SARA LEPPER, HELENA McCONNELL, SARAH McLAUGHLIN, SAMANTHA SEXTON, RACHAEL SHAW, ANIKA UDELL, MARTIN WEBSTER*

*Peter Field is a past member of the Student Group and the children are all members of the Under 14 Groups.*

The action of the play takes place in Llareggub, a small fishing village.

*The play directed by ALFRED EMMET*

*Designed by JOHN ROLFE*

*Lighting design by ROGER BRACE*

*The play will be presented in two parts with an interval of 15 minutes.*



*Joint Stage Managers* . Candy Clotworthy and Crusty Grierson  
*Assistant Stage Managers* . . . . .Caroline Scotcher, Linda Quiney  
 Stella Jackson, Phil Page,  
 Stephanie James, Lucy Lacaille,  
 Helen Sniadek  
*Wardrobe* . . . . . Grace Lacaille  
*Assisted by* . . . . . Lindsay Udell, Edith Ricketts, Celia Lacaille  
*Properties* . . . . . Sasha Mannin, Sally Morris  
*Construction* . . . . . Richard Lewis  
*Lighting* . . . . . Roger Brace  
*Assisted by* . . . . . Alison Colston-Lake, Nick Safford  
*Sound* . . . . . Alan B. Smith

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## DISCUSSION

The open discussion on this play and its production will be held on TUESDAY, 22nd JULY, at 7.45 p.m. in the Bernard Shaw Room.

It will be led by

### RAPHAEL JAGO

Raphael Jago was the first professional director of the Middlesborough Little Theatre when its notable new theatre was opened in 1958. This was followed by periods as director or director of productions of theatres in York, Scarborough, Ipswich and Harrogate as well as with Joan Littlewood at Theatre Workshop. He has been Principal of The Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art since 1966 and is thus particularly well qualified to lead the discussion on this student production. Mr Jago will be supported by various Welsh members and Dylan Thomas enthusiasts.

*All are Welcome*

*Admission is free*

NOTE THE DATE

TUESDAY, 22nd JULY at 7.45 p.m.  
 in the Bernard Shaw Room

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## THE STUDENT GROUP

The Questors Student Training Course for Actors has been running continuously since 1947. For the first year of the 2 Year Course, between 20 and 24 students are enrolled, selected usually from about 60 applicants. The minimum age is now 18 (at one time the Course was more of a teen-agers' one) and the average age is usually around 23 or 24. For 36 weeks the Group works at an intensity of 5 hours a week and a high standard of attendance is insisted upon. For the Second Year Group 12 students are normally accepted, so a further process of selection operates. The intensity of work in the second year increases to 7½ hours a week, plus a great many extra hours of rehearsal as the Group prepares, firstly for its production of short plays in the Studio Theatre in the spring, and then for this final production at the end of the Course. For *Under Milk Wood*, for instance, the Group has worked for more than 80 hours additionally to their 7½ a week.

It will be seen that the Course demands a very high standard of commitment and enthusiasm and a great sense of loyalty to the Group. Without that, the student will not make the grade, but with it will learn how to make a valuable and rewarding contribution to the life of the theatre. More than one third of the present acting members of The Questors had their initial training in our Student Group.

The Training Course is run under the auspices of the Ealing Education Committee. A new Second Year Group is now being formed from among those who have just completed their first year, and applications are being invited for the new First Year Course to start in September.

For further information apply to the Theatre Manager.

### STUDENT GROUP STAFF (1979/80)

<i>Director of Studies and Acting Tutor</i>	Alfred Emmet
<i>Deputy Director of Studies and Acting Tutor</i>	James Chinn
<i>Movement Tutor</i>	Irene Bradshaw
<i>Speech Tutor</i>	Gordon Luck

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## COMING IN THE STUDIO

20-27th July

### MEASURE FOR MEASURE

by William Shakespeare

The production planned and worked on by the late David Gower. The first two performances (20th and 21st July) will be given in aid of Cancer Research.

Shakespeare's fascinating exploration of justice and mercy in relation to ordinary mortals.

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## QUESTORS ON TOUR . . . . .

Questors travels to the far flung outposts of the British Isles . . . well, to Cornwall and to Edinburgh.

*The Ghost Sonata* by August Strindberg travels to the Edinburgh Festival where it plays from 18th – 30th August.

It is accompanied by

*The Gentle Art of Seduction*

— an entertainment about how to get your wicked way with her (or him!).

You have an opportunity to see both these shows:

*The Ghost Sonata* in the Main Theatre  
12th-14th August at 7.45pm

*The Gentle Art of Seduction*  
12th-14th August at 10pm in the Studio

## AND IN CORNWALL . . . . .

**MACBETH** by William Shakespeare.

The production recently seen in the Main Theatre travels to the Minack Theatre, Porthcurno, Cornwall to play from 21st-25th July.

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## BEGINNING NEXT SEASON IN THE MAIN THEATRE

13 – 20 September

A TASTE OF HONEY by Shelagh Delaney

11 – 18 October

PYGMALION by George Bernard Shaw

15 – 22 November

THE WHITE DEVIL by John Webster

6 – 13 December

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE by Arthur Miller

31 December – 10 January

THE CHRISTMAS SHOW (title to be announced!)

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