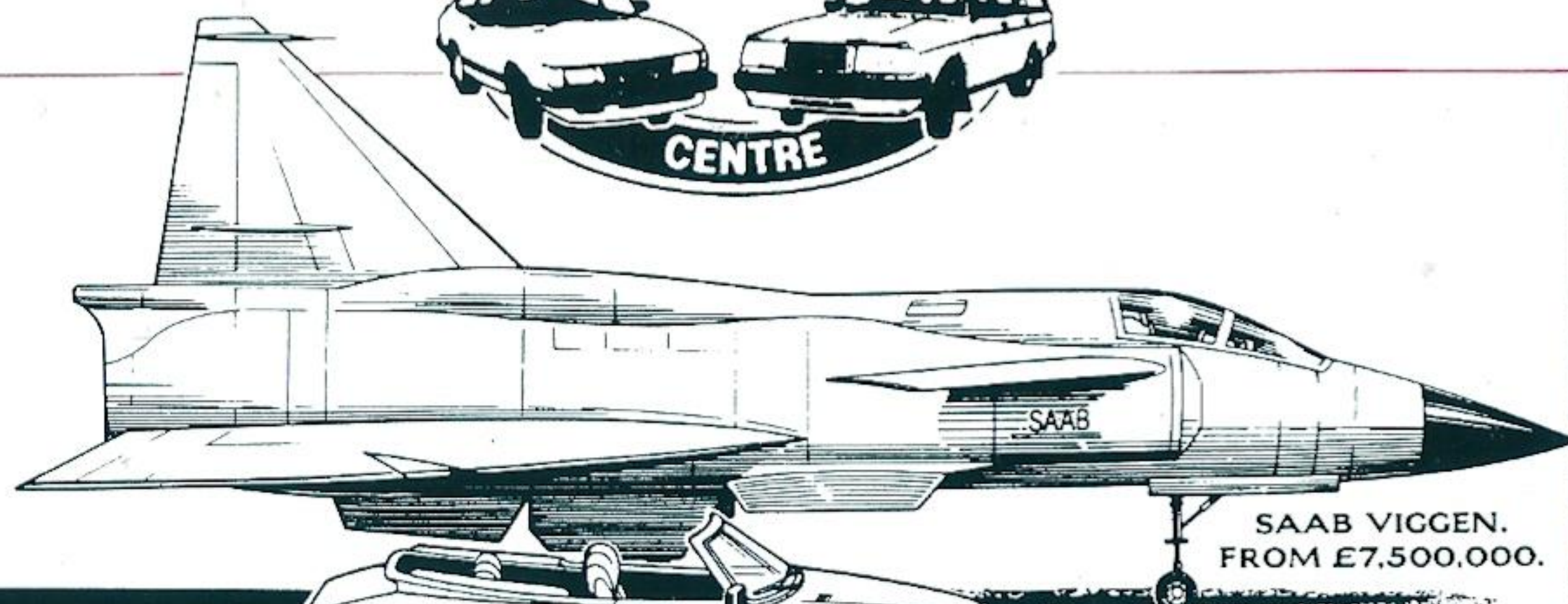


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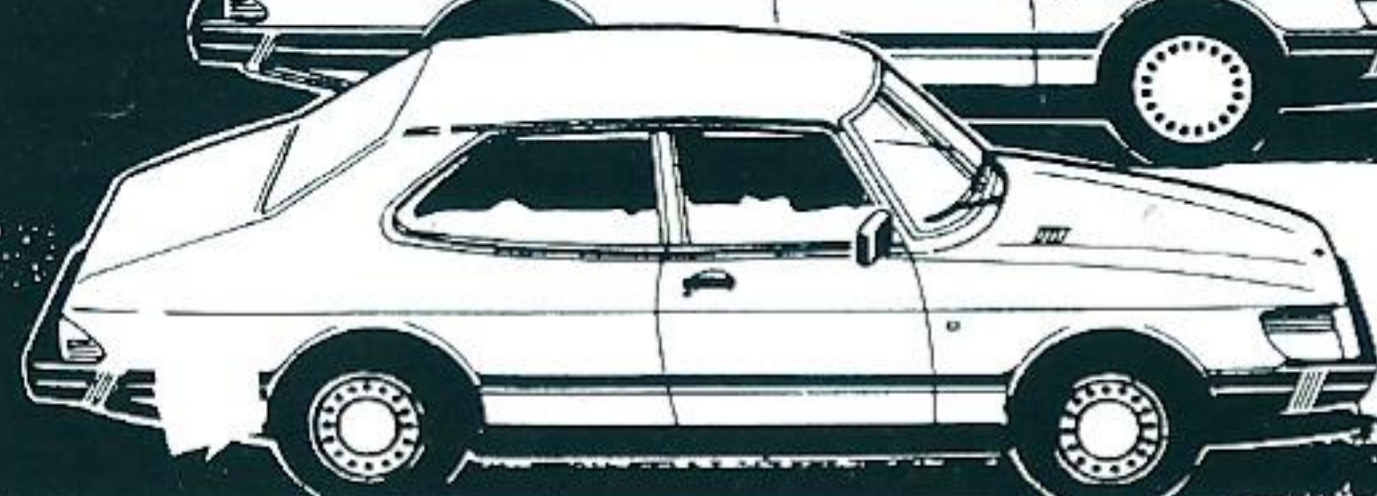
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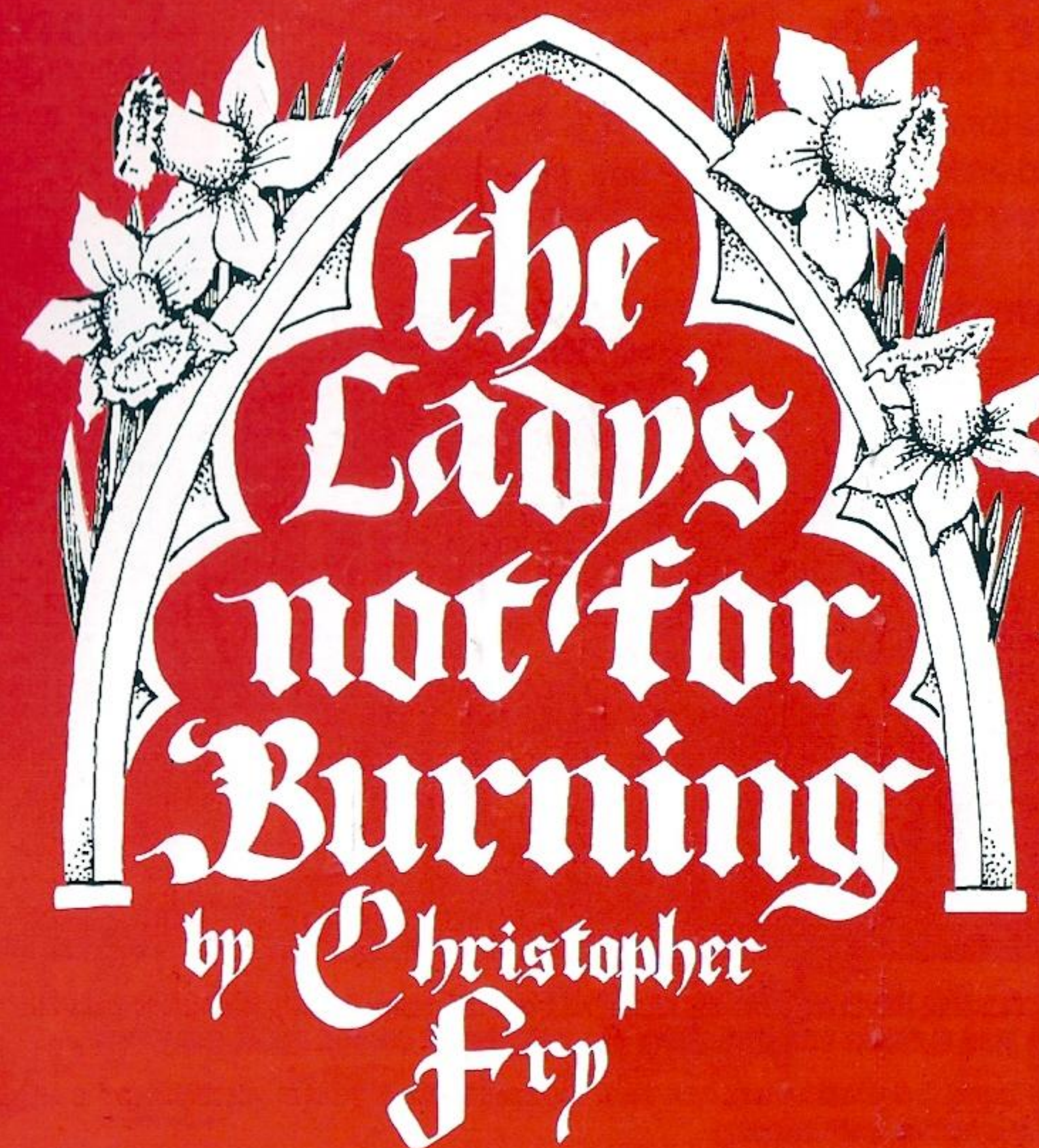
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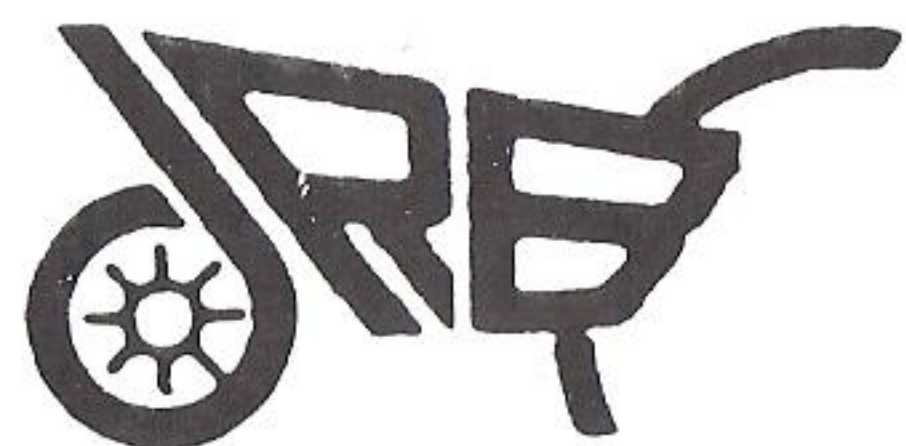
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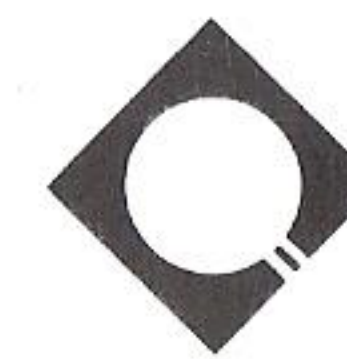
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President: Judi Dench, OBE,

Vice-Presidents: Sir Brian Batsford, Alfred Emmet, OBE, Roger Rees, Michael Williams

Theatre Manager: Elaine Orchard

The Questors presents



by Christopher Fry

Directed by Phillip Clayton-Gore

Designed by John Rolfe

Costumes by Brian Moorhouse

Lighting by Frank Wood

Sound by Ian Howlett

This production is sponsored by

**BARRALETS
OF EALING**





"In the past I wanted to be hung. It was worthwhile being hung to be a hero, seeing that life was not really worth living."

A convict who confessed falsely to a murder February 1947

This curious quotation was the star that governed the genesis of Christopher Fry's comedy of "...climate, of damp and dry, of spirit and matter, playing April with each other. . ." His hero, Thomas Mendip, arrives in the sleepy Cotswolds market-town of Cool Clary, tired of the anonymous horror of war, utterly disillusioned with life and determined to be hanged. The events of the play bring him a reason to live, and a loving heart to share a long and (possibly) happy-ever-after.

Perhaps it was simply because this was a tale of redemption, told with poetry and humour, that the play proved so popular on its first appearance. Its triumphant transfer to the Globe merely accentuated the comedy's worth, and increased its audiences' evident delight at this imaginative excursion into magic, metaphor and gentle mirth, so welcome after the impersonal austerity of the Second World War.

Fry (who is 80 this year) once described his play as "first cousin to an artificial comedy", but added:

"I could see no reason, though writing such a comedy, why I should not treat the world as I see it, a world in which we are all poised on the edge of eternity, a world which has deeps and shadows of mystery, in which God is anything but a sleeping partner."

The action of the play seems to follow a sequence that echoes (sometimes distinctly, sometimes obscurely) the Alchemical process that transforms base matter into gold. Secret and startling images appear at singularly appropriate moments: a shooting-star, a peacock, a garden or roses blooming down the centuries. Corruption and generation continually alternate in the athanor, til the quicksilver maid and the sulphurous soldier are united. But the Great Work is fraught with difficulty and illusion. . .

**"Twilight, double, treble, in and out!
If I try to find my way I bark my brain
On shadows sharp as rocks. . ."**

Fry's visionary command of language and his impeccable punctuation (a boon to any actor) are at their most salient in this, his most perfect work.

The very names of the characters are cryptic clues to their natures, in a play full of strange saints and sinners, spinning with the music of the Spheres; a treasure chest crammed with glittering imagery and the sparkle of laughter. For in this comedy, even the most outrageous and dangerous of human fancies are tempered by the author's wry humour. And he tells a great and beautiful truth when he makes his hero say:

"...Laughter is surely the surest touch of genius in creation."



Characters in order of appearance:

RICHARD, an orphaned clerk
THOMAS MENDIP, a discharged soldier
ALIZON ELIOT
NICHOLAS DEVIZE
MARGARET DEVIZE, his mother
HUMPHREY DEVIZE, her elder son
HEBBLE TYSON, the Mayor
JENNET JOURDEMAYNE
The CHAPLAIN
EDWARD TAPPERCOOM, a Justice
MATTHEW SKIPPS, a rag-and-bone man

JOHN DOBSON
PIERS WHIBLEY
BRONWEN JAMES
DEREK STODDART
JENNIFER TUDOR
JOHN CAREY
KEITH PARRY
SARAH MORRISON
GLYN BACKSHALL
ROGER LEWIS
GEOFF WEBB

The Scene is a room in the house of the Mayor, in the small market-town of Cool Clary.

The Time is April 1400, either more or less or exactly.

ACT ONE: Afternoon ACT TWO: Dusk ACT THREE: Night.

There will be two intervals of fifteen minutes each.

Director:
Designer:
Costumes:
Lighting:
Sound:

PHILLIP CLAYTON-GORE
JOHN ROLFE
BRIAN MOORHOUSE
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The Lady's Not For Burning is deservedly the best known and best loved of Fry's plays, and has been called the perfect English comedy in verse. Fry has not skimped on the poetry or the humour. Metaphors bloom like crowding daffodils, and wryly gentle laughter patters plentifully from the April skies. This lovely play comes to The Questors for the first time, as a breath of Spring to enliven the Autumn evenings.

Christopher Fry's delightful "comedy of climate", his first major success, was originally presented at the Arts Theatre in 1948. At the time, Fry was resident writer there, and he dedicated the play to Alec Clunes (who played Thomas). The following year, the comedy transferred to the Globe Theatre, with a glittering cast that included John Gielgud, Pamela Brown, Richard Burton and Claire Bloom. *The New Statesman* described the play as "a sea of dazzling verbal invention"; *Punch* claimed it had "as many ripe images as would last most modern dramatists a lifetime". The comedy is, perhaps, the finest flower of English Post-War Theatre; it has the delicacy and fragility of a glass rose but the brilliant permanence of a diamond in its underlying philosophical truths.



CHRISTOPHER FRY was born in Bristol in 1907. After a brief period spent as a schoolmaster he joined Bath Repertory Company as an actor, but returned to his scholastic career for three years at a preparatory school in Limpsfield. He returned to the stage and was, for two years, director of a repertory company in Tunbridge Wells. In 1936 he toured in Ivor Novello's *Howdoo Princess?* and subsequently toured all over the country as a lecturer. His first play *The Boy with a Cart* was produced in 1938 and between 1939-1940 wrote several plays for BBC Children's Hour and was director at the Oxford Playhouse.

During the war he was with the Pioneer Corps and in 1944 returned to the Oxford Playhouse where he remained as director until 1946. He also directed *The Circle of Chalk* and *The School for Scandal* at the Arts Theatre London between the August and September of 1945. Directed *The Lady's Not For Burning* at Guildford in 1971. He now lives near Chichester in West Sussex.

The Plays: *The Boy with a Cart* 1938; *The Tower* 1939; *A Phoenix Too Frequent* 1946 (Produced at Questors in 1956 and 1967); *The Lady's Not For Burning*, *Thor with Angels* (produced at Questors in 1965), *The Firstborn* 1948; *Venus Observed* (Produced at Questors in 1979), *Ring Round the Moon* (From Anouilh) 1950; *A Sleep of Prisoners* 1951; *The Dark is Light Enough* 1954; *Curtmantle* 1962; *A Yard of Sun* 1970.

Translations: *The Lark* (Anouilh); *Tiger at the Gates*, *Duel of Angels* and *Judith* (Giraudoux); *Peer Gynt* (Ibsen); *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Rostand).

Him film screenplays include *The Beggar's Opera*; *A Queen is Crowned*; *Ben Hur* for William Wyler which starred Charlton Heston; *Barrabas* starring Anthony Quinn and *The Bible* (In the Beginning) for Dino de Laurentis.

His television plays since 1974 include *The Brontes of Haworth*, *The Best of Enemies*, *Sister Dora* and *Can You Find Me*.

Awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 1962.

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Esther Wright was born in Alexandra and moved to London in 1945. She trained at The Hammersmith School of Art and at Ealing College.

She has had many exhibitions in London and is a member of the Royal Portrait Sculptors. Her commissions include 'Mother & Child' for St Catherine's Church, London.

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Michael Vadon
Eric Lister
Doug King
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Caroline Bleakley
Jack Wood
Michael Langridge
Iain Reid
Geoffrey Sellman
Ken Parker
Douglas Thomas
Dorothy Dent
Barralets of Ealing

ADMINISTRATION

The Questors office is open from 10.00 am until 5.00 pm every weekday, if you wish to make contact for details on membership, or hiring the Theatre and rehearsal rooms, telephone the office on 01 567-0011.

MEMBERSHIP

If you wish to become a member you can use the form on the page opposite; just send it to the Theatre with the appropriate subscription.

BOX OFFICE

For personal callers the box office is open in evenings only from 6.45 pm to 8.45 pm on days of performance and five days prior to each Playhouse Production.

THE STUDENT GROUP

The Questors run a two year part time student course; details can be obtained from the office.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUPS

There are a number of groups for younger members. These cater for most age groups. The classes are intended to create awareness of the theatre and provide a stimulating channel for imagination.

NEW MEMBERS EVENINGS

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THE GRAPEVINE CLUB

The Questors has a fully licensed Bar which all members of the Theatre can join. The Bar is open every evening plus lunchtimes at weekends.

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THE QUESTORS THEATRE

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