

# Coming Productions

## IN THE STUDIO

16 May - 6 June

### QUARTERMAINE'S TERMS

by **Simon Gray**

Simon Gray is at the height of his craft as he looks in on the 1960's staff room of an English school for Foreigners. This sensitive and often humorous play concerns the lives and loves of seven teachers, each of them harbouring a private tragedy: a philandering husband, a parasitic mother, a neurotic child. At the centre is St. John Quartermaine, pleasant, agreeable but a hopeless teacher who is desperately lonely. In the end, it is he who suffers the greatest tragedy. This mix of comedy and petty cruelty is irresistible.

## IN THE THEATRE FOYER

31 May

Admission £3.00

### SHAKESPEARE SLEPT IN ACTON

A talk by **Peter Whelan**, author of *The Bright and Bold Design*, on the trials, tears and rewards of writing plays. The title relates to a serious theory of Peter's and it promises to be a highly entertaining evening.

## IN THE PLAYHOUSE

13 - 20 June

### HEARTBREAK HOUSE

by **Bernard Shaw**

When Hesione Hushabye invites young Ellie Dunn to her country house for the weekend, determined to persuade her not to marry the extremely rich Boss Mangan, the wind blows, and, aided by the inventive Captain Shotover, more than the cradle is rocked! Shaw's great play is full of humour and bursting with ideas that reverberate even in our modern world. Beneath the surface, the sexual tensions, the sense of despair and the dreams of happiness combine to give this play a unique richness.

## IN THE STUDIO

20 June - 4 July

### COME BACK TO THE 5 & DIME, JIMMY DEAN, JIMMY DEAN

by **Ed Graczyk**

The disciples of Jimmy Dean grew up together in Texas and at one of their fan club meetings hear of the terrible tragedy of his death. The play opens as they are reunited for their 20th anniversary in 1975. At last they begin to face up to the realities of their lives, with often hilarious consequences. Ultimately this is a comedy drama about the petty deceptions that we enact, in order to invent a character that we can live with. A very insightful play about women, written by a man.

# The Dresser

by

Ronald Harwood



## Foreword by Ronald Harwood

Because I was Sir Donald Wolfit's dresser for ten years, it may be thought that the actor-manager in my play is a portrait of Wolfit, and that his relationship with his dresser is a dramatised account of our relationship. There may be other reasons for such a supposition: Lear was Wolfit's greatest performance – so it is Sir's; the grand manner both on and off the stage Wolfit employed is also Sir's way; the war did not stop Wolfit from playing Shakespeare in the provincial cities and in London; Sir is on tour in 1941, though playing less important dates; but there the similarities, and others less important, all wholly deliberate on my part, end. Sir is not Donald Wolfit. My biography\* of the actor, with all its imperfections, must serve to reflect my understanding of him as a man and as a theatrical creature.

There is no denying, however, that my memory of what took place night after night in Wolfit's dressing room is part of the inspiration of the play. I witnessed at close quarters a great actor preparing for a dozen or more major classical roles which included Oedipus, Lear, Macbeth and Volpone. I was an observer also of the day-to-day responsibilities which management demanded and later, as Wolfit's business manager, partook of those responsibilities. I was a member of the crew who created the storm in *King Lear* which, however tempestuous, was never loud enough for Wolfit, as it never is for Sir.

These and many other countless memories undeniably fed my imaginings while writing this play.

Sources of another kind were of equal importance. I was fortunate, when young, to meet Sir John Martin-Harvey's stage manager; I held two long conversations with Charles Doran, the actor-manager who gave Wolfit his first job; I shared a dressing room with an old actor, Malcolm Watson, who walked on in Sir Henry Irving's production of *Becket* at the Lyceum; I worked with several old Bensonians – members of Sir Frank Benson's Shakespearean Company – and I knew Robert Atkins who, for many years, ran the seasons at the Open Air Theatre in Regent's Park. A number of the actors Wolfit employed were what used to be called 'Shakespeareans', men and women who had played with Alexander Marsh, Henry Bainton, H.J. Sainsbury and other actor-managers of the front rank.

There was too, in Wolfit's company, a wonderfully robust actor called Frank G. Cariello whose greatest professional disappointment was that Martin-Harvey, after allowing him to play Laertes on tour, re-cast the part for London. Cariello, himself briefly an actor-manager, was a tireless and witty raconteur with a prodigious memory of theatrical times past. The atmosphere engendered by these men, imbibed by me before I was twenty, was much in my mind when writing the play.

The tradition of actor-management made a deep impression on me. I came to

understand that from the early 18th century until the late 1930's the actor-manager was the British theatre. He played from one end of the country to the other, taking his repertoire to the people. Only a handful ever reached London; their stamping ground was the provinces and they toured under awful physical conditions, undertaking long uncomfortable railway journeys on the Sundays, spending hours waiting for their connections in the cold at Crewe. They developed profound resources of strength, essential if they were to survive. They worshipped Shakespeare, believed in the theatre as a cultural and educative force, and saw themselves as public servants. Nowadays we allow ourselves to laugh at them a little and there is no denying that their obsessions and single-mindedness often made them ridiculous; we are inclined to write them off as megalomaniacs and hams; we accept too readily, I think, that their motto was '*le theatre c'est moi!*'. The truth of the matter is that many of them were extraordinary and talented men; their gifts embraced the art of acting; they nursed and kept alive a classical repertoire which is the envy of the world, and created a magnificent tradition which is the foundation of our present-day theatrical inheritance.

I must acknowledge also words written by and about them; Sir John Martin-Harvey's excellent autobiography from which I have quoted in the play, the works of James Agate, the biography of Irving by Laurence Irving and J.C. Trewin's splendid book, *The Theatre Since 1900*.

The play however is called *The Dresser*. No actor-manager ever survived entirely through his own efforts. Publicly he liked to proclaim pride in his individuality while acknowledging in private his debt to all those who devoted their lives to him and to his enterprise. The character of Norman is in no way autobiographical. He, like Sir, is an amalgam of three or four men I met who served leading actors as professional dressers. Norman's relationship with Sir is not mine with Wolfit. No other character in the play is wholly based on a real person. Her Ladyship is quite unlike Rosalind Iden (Lady Wolfit).

I have considered it necessary to make these disclaimers in order to give a truer background to the play. I know to my cost that once a mistaken interpretation attaches to a work of imagination it is difficult, if not impossible, to dispel.

\* Sir Donald Wolfit, C.B.E. His life and work in the unfashionable theatre. (London; Seker & Warburg, 1971)

# The Dresser

by Ronald Harwood

First performance of this production, Saturday 9th May, 1998

## Cast (in order of appearance)

Norman	STEPHEN GRAY
Her Ladyship	MONYENE KANE
Irene	KERRY FARLEY
Madge	GRACE CRADDOCK
Sir	JOHN TURNER
Geoffrey Thornton	JOHN MARTIN
Mr Oxenby, Edmund in <i>King Lear</i>	TIM COLLARD
Albany/Knight in <i>King Lear</i>	BRIAN CREEGAN
Gloucester in <i>King Lear</i>	BRIAN INGRAM
Kent in <i>King Lear</i>	NICK HAWKER

January 1941

A theatre in the English Provinces

ACT I : before curtain-up

INTERVAL OF FIFTEEN MINUTES

ACT II : after curtain-up

Director	PAT GOWMAN
Set Designer	PHIL PINKHAM
Costume Designer	BRYANNE MELVILLE
Lighting Designer	CHRIS NEWALL
Sound Designer	MARTIN BRIDGES
Stage Manager	SYLVIA WALL
Deputy Stage Manager	ANNABELLE WILLIAMS
Assistant Stage Managers	TRISH KNIGHT DIOGO JENNINGS, RICHARD NEWPORT
Properties	HARRIET SIMON
Prompter	GORDON MILLER
Wardrobe	CORINNE NIELD, OSSIE PELED
Lighting Operator	KRIS COLLIER
Sound Operator	DARREN ANDERSON
Make-up and Wigs	GREASEPAINT
Set Construction	JIM CRADDOCK, ROGER BRACE, MARK MORAN

and special thanks to

DO IT ALL, South Ealing; EALING YOUTH ORCHESTRA,  
Gerry Blake, Jim Caithness, Max Coyne, Tina Harris,  
Chris Sydenham, Eric Lister



THE PLAYHOUSE IS EQUIPPED WITH AN INFRARED SOUND TRANSMISSION SYSTEM FOR USE BY PEOPLE WITH HEARING DIFFICULTIES. IT IS NOW POSSIBLE TO USE THIS SYSTEM WITH PERSONAL HEARING AIDS SWITCHED TO THE

T POSITION. To obtain the appropriate receiver please contact the Duty House Manager.



THE PLAYHOUSE IS EQUIPPED WITH A LIFT WITH ACCESS TO THE BAR AND UPPER FOYER LEVELS FOR THOSE WITH MOBILITY PROBLEMS.

1. The taking of food and drink into the auditorium is NOT permitted.
2. The use of cameras; video cameras or tape equipment during the performance is also prohibited.
3. Patrons are requested to turn off portable telephones and beepers in the auditorium, since the activation of these during a performance is offensive to audience and actors alike.

## RUTH LISTER

The part of Madge was originally to have been played by the popular and talented Questors actor, Ruth Lister, who sadly died during the rehearsal period. The cast and crew of this production would like to record their great sense of loss at this tragically early death. Ruth was an exceptionally stimulating actress to work with, dedicated whole-heartedly to whichever production she was appearing in and bringing a lively and sensitive imagination to her role. She was also tremendous fun to have in a production and rehearsals were never dull with Ruth around, but her liveliness and sense of humour were supported by her very caring attitude to both the production and the people she was working with. She was simply a wonderful person to have in a show and we all miss her greatly.

Our sincerest sympathies are extended, of course, to her husband Eric and their family.

The Director and Company would also like to express their gratitude to Grace Craddock who took over the part of Madge at short notice.

## ART EXHIBITIONS

### IN THE FOYER

#### MARGARET CLANCY

18 April – 16 May

Margaret was born and brought up in County Leitrim, Eire and moved to England as a young adult. She worked as a volunteer for the Samaritans for many years. Subsequently she moved to America with her husband for fourteen years, returning to London in 1991.

Margaret lived a full and varied life, being actively involved in meditation, hatha yoga, travelling, the theatre (she was a member of The Questors), languages and music. In addition she was fully engaged by the challenge and pleasure of painting. Her interest in art was evident in the time she spent at the Legassick Studio under the tuition of Cass and Phil where she steadily developed her skills in life drawing, watercolour, pastels and oils.

This exhibition, conceived and brought together by her art teacher, is a celebration of Margaret's life. Margaret died tragically in a car accident in South Africa in February 1997.

*Those of her friends who wish to cherish her memory with one of her works, should contact Rose Marie on 01895 822609.*

### IN THE GRAPEVINE GALLERY

#### JOHN STACEY

18 April – 16 May

John has had many one-man shows at the Questors and has been a member since 1965. John was Head of Design at the Questors for three seasons and has worked in many areas of the theatre. He is especially remembered for his striking, but always appropriate, stage designs. He paints in oils, mainly landscapes, and makes much use of a painting knife.

## Questors Information

### THE GRAPEVINE CLUB

The Questors has a fully licensed bar which is now open to all members. The Bar is open every evening plus lunchtimes on Sundays. Questors members are requested to sign in their guests when entering the bar.

### THE HOTPLATE

Delicious hot and cold food is available in the Upper Foyer between 6.30pm and 8.00pm during the run of Playhouse productions, and coffee, tea and cakes are served during the interval. No hot food will be provided at the Sunday matinées.

#### NOTE

*The Hotplate is not open for Studio productions, but when Studio performances coincide with those in the Playhouse, it will endeavour to serve both audiences.*

### NEW MEMBERS EVENINGS

Why not attend one of our new or prospective members evenings and have a conducted tour of the Theatre complex? Tours start and finish at the Grapevine Bar, 8.00pm every Wednesday.

### THE STUDENT GROUP

The Questors runs a two-year part-time student course in Acting; details can be obtained from the office.

### YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUPS

There are a number of groups for younger members. These cater for all age groups from 5-17. The classes are intended to create awareness of the theatre and provide a stimulating channel for imagination.

### For The Questors Theatre

President	Dame Judi Dench
Artistic Director	Spencer Butler
Artistic Directorate	Anne Gilmour, Brian Ingram
Director of Studies	David Emmet
Chair	John Davey
Vice-Chairman	Anne Gilmour
Company Secretary	Sue Blake
Club Secretary	Christine Garland
Finance Director	Ken Kettle
Accountant	Carol Ruddock
Stage Director	Martin Stoner
Marketing Director	Sonja Garsvo
Theatre Manager	Elaine Orchard
Marketing Officer	Caroline Barcock
Productions Secretary	Kris Collier
Membership Secretary	Alice Pennicott
Programme Editor	Vincent McQueen
Questtopics Editor	John Dobson
Sponsorship	Tim Godfrey, Alan Drake
Box Office Management	Bridgett Strevens
Programme Sales Organiser	Val Blaxland
Front of House Manager	Eric Lister
Press Relations	Sandra Hutchinson
Wardrobe Care	Persil, Comfort and Stergene
	Courtesy of Lever Bros.
	Dry-cleaning by C.D.S.

### Administration

The Questors office is open from 9.30am until 5.30pm every weekday.

If you wish to make contact for details of membership, or hiring the Theatre and rehearsal rooms, telephone the office on: 0181 567 0011.

### Membership

If you wish to become a member please fill in the application form (copies in the Foyer); just send it to the Theatre with the appropriate subscription, or call 0181 567 8736.

### Box Office

For personal callers the box office is open every Wednesday evening 6.45pm to 8.30pm; Monday to Friday 11.00am to 12 noon; during productions 6.45pm to 8.30pm; Sunday matinées 2.00pm to 2.30pm.

Members of The Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain and The International Amateur Theatre Association