




THE
QUESTORS
THEATRE

the Floral Bed

WHAT WE KNOW

We know that in 1607 Shakespeare's elder daughter Susanna married John Hall, a successful physician. They set up home in what is now called Hall's Croft, in Stratford-upon-Avon. They had a daughter, Elizabeth, an only child. Five years later, when Susanna was thirty, she was publicly slandered by a young gentleman, John Lane (or Jack, as I call him), second son of the well-heeled family of Alveston Manor. We know that Susanna brought a charge of defamation against him in the diocesan court at Worcester Cathedral, which is how we have the exact wording of the slander, from the court archive. Jack Lane claimed that Susanna Hall 'had the runinge of the reynes and had been naught with Rafe Smith at John Palmer'.

We know that Rafe Smith was a haberdasher and hatter of Sheep Street, Stratford. He was, more than likely, a friend of the Halls, since his uncle, Hamnet Sadler, was closely associated with Susanna's father. John Palmer was a cousin of Smith's with a house in Stratford. Jack Lane was twenty-three when he defamed Susanna. We know that he also later libelled the vicar of Holy Trinity and was sued for riot and charged with drunkenness by the churchwardens.

We know that Vicar-General Goche presided over the court in Worcester Cathedral and is thought to have been a puritan. Bishop Parry we know to have been a man celebrated for his sermons at James's Court, not a supporter of the puritanical tendency. Doctor Hall certainly was of that tendency. He is on record as calling for firm church discipline, but he was no bigot. He treated Catholics...and he married Susanna who had once been on the list for not receiving the sacrament at Holy Trinity Church. (This could have carried the stigma of leaning towards Rome.)

As for Susanna's character, what little else we know is from the epitaph on her tomb, close to Shakespeare's.

We have a goldmine of information on Hall as a doctor since he left behind a unique case book. As you will find, I have raided it frequently.

But in the end the play was never intended as historical documentary. It was the pain of moral dilemma detectable behind this small handful of facts that drew me to write it.

Peter Whelan

HERE LYETH YE BODY OF SUSANNA
WIFE TO JOHN HALL, GENT YE DAUGH
TER OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, GENT:
SHEE DECEASED YE 11th OF JULY
1649, AGED 66

Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,
Wise to salvation was good Mistris Hall,
Something of Shakespeare was in that, but this
Wholly of him with whom she's now in blisse.

Then passenger, hast here a teare
To weepe with her that wept with all
That wept yet set herself to chere
Them up with comforts cordiall
Her love shall live her mercy spread
When thou hast ner'e a teare to shed.

It just happens that John Hall's father had a house in Acton and Shakespeare may have stayed there. Anyway, Peter Whelan thinks he did.

THE HERBAL BED

By Peter Whelan

First performance of this production Saturday 16th September 2000

Cast

John Hall
Susanna Hall
Elizabeth Hall
Hester Fletcher
Rafe Smith
Jack Lane
Bishop Parry
Barnabus Goche

Robin Ingram
Hilary Burns
Lauren Doyle
Elizabeth Pinnock
Paul Francis
Rawdon DeMoor
Derek Bullock
Tony Rushforth

Music Composed by Don Kincaid

The action takes place in the garden of John Hall's house in Stratford-upon-Avon, and in Worcester Cathedral during the summer of 1613.

Act I A Day in Early June
(Interval - 15 minutes)
Act II Scene 1 Two Days Later
Scene 2 Mid July - Worcester Cathedral
Scene 3 Some Weeks Later

Production

Director
Assistant Director and Fight Arranger
Set Designer
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Sound Designer
Stage Managers

Assistant Stage Managers

Prompt
Wardrobe

Lighting Operator
Sound Operator
Set Construction

Make-up and Hair

Pat Gowman
Peter Kennedy
John Rolfe
Sylvia Wall
Andrew Dixon
Alan N Smith
Adrienne Talbot, Jennifer Reid,
Lizzie Averill
Ruth Simpson, Katy Cousins,
Anne Sawbridge, Alec Atchison
Pam Smith
Sylvia Wall, Sarah Andrews,
Susan Gerlach, Jackie Duke,
Anne Gilmour, Sarah Galton,
Grace Craddock
Chris Bennett, Bernard Brady
Sue Crowson
Jim Craddock, Antony Bridges,
Kate Taratt Cross
Charlotte Connolley, Lindsey Hulme

Thanks to:

Peter Whelan, Dee Cook (Archivist to the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries London), Peter Collins, Roger Brace, Colin Horne, Tessa Curtis, Anna Jablkowska.

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FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS

MY NIGHT WITH REG *By Kevin Elyot*

In The Studio, 30th September - 14th October

An outrageous comedy about 30-somethings Guy, Daniel, Bernie, John, Eric... and the eponymous Reg. Their friendships, their loves, their hopes, fears, desires and losses.

WOMAN IN MIND *By Alan Ayckbourn*

In The Playhouse, 21st - 28th October

One of Alan Ayckbourn's blacker comedies, dealing with the gradual collapse of a woman who, having been starved of affectionate companionship and understanding love by an appallingly boring husband and a priggish son who's ashamed of her, conjures up an ideal family who come to her in her idyllic (also imagined) garden.

TRAINSPOTTING

From the novel by Irvine Welsh, adapted for the stage *by Harry Gibson*

In The Playhouse, 18th - 25th November

This tale of drugs, dole and self-destruction in late 80's Edinburgh spares audiences none of the horror nor outrageous humour that caused such a sensation when first published. IT IS MOST CERTAINLY NOT SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN NOR THE FAINT HEARTED!

AND...

FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE- FOR FUN

by Gilbert and Sullivan, adapted by Ian McMillan and Tano Rea

19th November at 8.00pm

This promises to be a highly entertaining evening with lots of audience participation. The gentlemen in the audience become assorted 'Pirates' and 'Policemen' while the ladies take on the roles of Major General Stanley's Daughters. In the first half of the programme, musical director Ian McMillan will teach (with humour and wit...be prepared for anything!) the audience their musical lines and in the second half they are joined by a cast of professional soloists for a fully costumed and staged performance.

So, if you have always wanted to join in a Gilbert and Sullivan opera, or would just like to renew an acquaintance with an old favourite, why not come along and join in the fun.

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