

THE QUESTORS THEATRE

is based in West London where it has its own premises including a modern, flexible Playhouse, a Studio theatre, three rehearsal rooms, a workshop, an extensive wardrobe department and, of course, the Grapevine Bar, which is the hub of the theatre.

It has nearly 3,000 members, all of whom get involved in one way or another, either in the 20 plus productions that are staged each year, in the day to day running of the theatre, or as members of the audience.

As well as presenting a wide variety of plays, the Questors runs a two-year course for actors, plays host to visiting companies from home and abroad, mounts regular art exhibitions, runs workshops and clubs for young people and tours productions in this country and abroad.

In short, there is something for everyone at The Questors.

The Questors Theatre

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PLAYHOUSE CREATURES

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Welcome to The Questors Theatre, one of London's best kept secrets - except to its 3,000 members. How do I know about the Questors? I am proud to have been their President for over 16 years. Founded in 1929, it has since grown into the largest community theatre in Europe with a reputation for the highest standards, not only in acting but in direction and design as well. Luckily, with so many members, we have a wealth of talent to call on for all aspects of production and members are encouraged to be as actively involved as they would like. Alternatively, they simply enjoy the social side of the club, including the friendly Grapevine Bar (one of the many perks of membership) and the many and varied shows in our newly refurbished 350 seater Playhouse Theatre and more intimate Studio Theatre.

The Questors runs a professionally recognised two-year acting course in conjunction with Kingston College. There are also acting courses for beginners, free backstage training courses, visiting companies from home and abroad, regular art exhibitions, and workshops and clubs for young people. In short, there is something for everyone and with annual membership costing as little as £23.50 (including up to 10 free shows) it's great value for money as well.

But don't just take my word for it, the next time you're in West London call into The Grapevine Bar on any Wednesday evening at 8pm for a free tour of the theatre and a drink on us!

Worth looking into?

Definitely!

Dame Judi Dench
President of The Questors Theatre



PLAYHOUSE CREATURES

by April De Angelis

In the Autumn of 1660, the first professional English actress performed on the London public stage and two years later a Royal warrant was issued decreeing that ever after women rather than boy actors were to play all female roles.

Playhouse Creatures is about five pioneering professional actresses and shows how new social and artistic freedoms came with distinct drawbacks in the shape of fickle, exploitative aristocratic patrons. An audience and inner circle bent on treating female thespians as whores, with a men only policy on financial "sharing" in the company.

Throughout the Restoration period audiences granted performers none of the reverent hush that we associate today with watching a play. The atmosphere during a performance was relaxed and informal; many spectators treated the playhouse like a kind of club and might chat, argue, or even occasionally fight duels while the players tried to make themselves heard. Pepys for instance was severely irritated when "two taking ladies and Sir Ch. Sidly" talked so much that he "lost the pleasure of the play wholly."

Behind the stage was the scene room where props were kept and where the players rested and waited for their cues. Above this were the dressing rooms, called tiring-rooms, one for the men and one for the women, with small private rooms for the stars. Any member of the public could enter the tiring-rooms and many did, especially men visiting the actresses. Pepys went backstage on several occasions once "to see the inside of the stage and all the tiring-rooms and machines." He was amused by the miscellany of objects in the tiring-rooms, "here a wooden leg, there a ruff, here a hobby-horse, there a crowne." He visited the private rooms of the actors and was struck by the contrast between the fineness of their costumes on stage and their tawdry appearance close to: "how fine they show on the stage by candlelight, and how poor things they are to look now too near-hand."

During the 1660s and 1670s the London theatres retained close links with King and court. Charles himself visited the theatre regularly, taking a special interest in both plays and players. However while Restoration Theatre audiences were never as varied as those of Shakespeare's Globe, for example, they were by no means wholly aristocratic. The diary of Pepys shows that plenty of less wealthy people visited the Theatre, civil-servants, bureaucrats and other professional men with their wives, as well as a selection from the poorer classes, servant's apprentices and journeymen.

Dividing the seating area of the Restoration theatre into four areas, the author of a *Country Gentleman's Vade Mecum* (1699) offers a vivid picture of the various types of theatregoer. Below the upper gallery containing servants came the boxes, -one for the King and Royal family and others for persons of quality...

unless some fools crowd in among 'em: in the Pit were "Judges, Wits and Censurers Squires, Sharpers, Beaus. Bullies and Whores, and here and there an extravagant male and Female Cit". In the middle gallery "the citizens wives and daughters, together with the Abigails, serving men, journey men and apprentices commonly take their places; and now and then some disponding Mistresses and superannuated poets". The average audience comprised about 500 persons (the population of London at this time has been numbered at 527,600)

At the head of each company was the proprietor who gained the position mainly by acquiring a patent allowing him to form a troupe and put on certain plays. He assembled a group of sharing players who took a part of the company's profits after bills and wages were paid. Below the sharers came the players who were merely hirelings with salaries and all the non-acting personnel such as musicians, scene shifters and machinists, prompters, treasurers, tiring-men and women and in later years singers and dancers.

Companies usually contained between twenty and thirty players, who were recruited from a variety of sources. At the beginning Killigrew procured various actors left over from the pre-Commonwealth period, including Charles Hart and Michael Mohun. Some actors were drawn from the professional classes; Thomas Betterton was well educated.

The recruitment of actresses was more problematic because no woman with serious pretensions to respectability would countenance a stage career, and yet the profession demanded more than women of the brothel class. An actress had to be able to read and memorise lines at speed, to sing and dance to some degree and to emulate a lady's behaviour. This left only a narrow middle stratum of society from which actresses could be drawn.

Compared to present-day performers, the Restoration players were poorly paid. Even the sharers did badly at times, when audience numbers were low and theatrical costs increased. In addition there were all too many times of the year when for some reason the theatres were closed. The most difficult time of all came when the Plague and Fire of London closed the theatres for nearly eighteen months, between June 1665 and November 1666.

Playhouse Creatures was published in 1993 and performed originally by the Sphinx Company, it was revived in a different version at The Old Vic in 1997. April De Angelis plays include *Women in Law* (Resisters Theatre Co 1987; *Me* (Breakout TIE, 1988); *The Life and Times of Fanny Hill* (Red Shift 1991). Radio credits include *Visitants* for BBC Radio 4, *The Outlander* for BBC R5. April's Opera works include the dialogue for *Die Fledermaus* for the ENO 1993/94. Television scripts include *Aristophanes* for C4 and *Soft Vengeance*, co-written with David Edgar for the BBC, 1994.

PLAYHOUSE CREATURES

by April De Angelis

First performance of this production 15 June 2002

CAST

Nell Gwyn

Freddy Henry

Doll Common

Hilary Shearing

Rebecca Marshall

Carol Fullilove

Elizabeth Farley

Elizabeth Pinnock

Mary Betterton

Mary Davies

The action takes place at the King's Theatre and its environs
and the Duke's Theatre in London in 1669 or thereabouts.

There will be one interval of 15 minutes

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director

Peter Kennedy

Stage Designer

John Wibberley

Construction

John Wibberley

Lighting Designer

Ellis Pritchard

Sound Designer

Jo Matthews

Props

Renata Nash and Jo Matthews

Original Music Composed by

Tom Armstrong

Costume Design

Sarah Andrews

Wardrobe

Jennie Yates

Stage Management

Melissa Naylor, Heather Stamford,
Julia Russell, Alice Renaud, Renata Nash

Sound Operators

Hélèn Marler, Kelly Donnelly

Publicity Photographs

Godfrey Johnson

Show Photographs

Cathy Kelleher

Hair and Make-up

Bodil Jensen, Kim Wilson

With thanks to:

Alex Marker, David Emmet,
the company of 'The Madness of George III',
Kate Morton, John Webster, Tim Hart,
Georgina Gibbs, Martin Bridges

FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS

THE 55th STUDENT GROUP presents

TIME AND THE CONWAYS by J.B. Priestley

In **The Playhouse**, 13th - 21st July

British journalist, novelist, playwright, and essayist. Priestley's output was vast and varied - he wrote over one hundred novels, plays, and essays, and is best known as the author of the novel *The Good Companions*. *Time and the Conways* is one of several of his works on the subject of time, others being *An Inspector Calls*, *I Have Been Here Before* and *Dangerous Corner*. It is a hugely entertaining and fascinating look at the way time affects a single family, the Conways, told through the device of moving back and forward in time.

And for next season:

SEPTEMBER

ABSENT FRIENDS by Alan Ayckbourn

A well-loved and polished comedy about the usual human messes discussed over tea and sympathy.

OCTOBER

HAMLET by William Shakespeare

NOVEMBER

THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE by Martin McDonagh

Set in a Galway town, this gutsy play portrays ancient, manipulative Mag and her virginal daughter, Maureen, whose mutual loathing may be more durable than any love.

MOLLY SWEENEY by Brian Friel

Suffused with the rich tradition of Irish story telling, this drama weaves three voices into a tapestry of the real and the imagined.

ART EXHIBITION

In the Foyer

8th June - 21st July

ERIC STANDING

MEMBERSHIP FORM

I/We wish to apply for membership of The Questors Theatre.

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

Name(s)

Address

.....

.....

Tel. no.

e-mail

Date of Birth

Membership Type *(please tick one)*

- | | |
|--|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | £39.50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joint | £71.50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concessionary | £23.50 |
| Senior Citizens, UB40s, Leisure Pass holders | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joint Concessionary | £39.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Family | £47.00 |
| One adult and all children under 17 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joint Family | £81.50 |
| Two adults and all children under 17 | |
| <i>(please include names and dates of birth of all children for both types of family membership)</i> | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student | £13.00 |
| All tickets at half price on production of NUS card - no free shows | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associate | £15.00 |
| For those outside a 25-mile radius of The Questors - no free shows | |

Where did you hear about The Questors?.....

- I enclose a cheque/postal order payable to The Questors Ltd. for £.....
- I would like to pay by Credit Card - Mastercard / Visa.

Card No Expiry date /

Cardholder's Name

Address *(if different from above)*

.....

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Signed Date

NEW MEMBERS TICK SHEET

Many members join just to see the shows.

However, if you want to get more involved, please tick the areas you are interested in below. Remember that experience isn't always necessary.

- ☐ **Acting**
You will need to take an audition to join the acting company.
Please fill in a form (available from the office).
- ☐ **Directing**
You will need either a proven track record or hands-on theatre experience for this.
- ☐ **Backstage**
Including stage management, construction, lighting, sound, props, and wardrobe.
- ☐ **Design**
Set and/or costume design
- ☐ **Front of House**
Including stewarding, box office, programme selling, Questors café.
- ☐ **Publicity**
Leaflet distribution, open day etc.
- ☐ **Photography**
Experience and own camera required.
- ☐ **Grapevine Bar**
Bar staff.
- ☐ **Envelope Stuffing**
Daytime - including general office help.
- ☐ **Maintenance**
Any + every odd job.

Details of any relevant experience:

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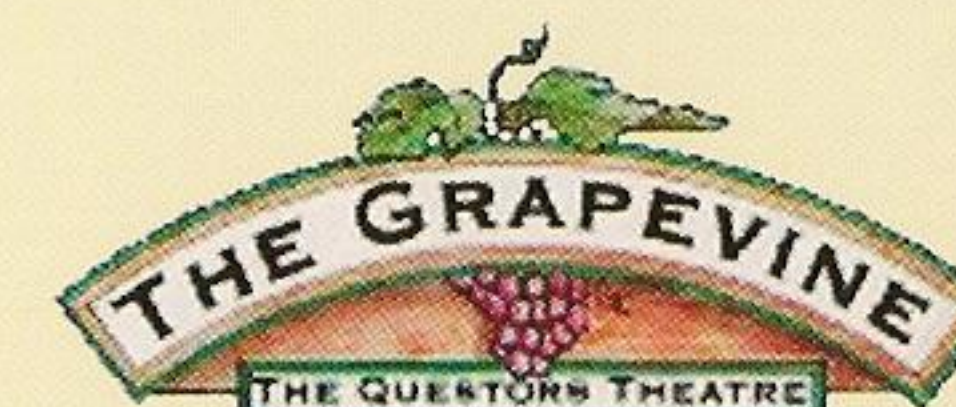
•
Worldwide Flights

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£25 off every booking
over £500 for
Questors Members



WORTH CROSSING EALING FOR!

For your interval or after show drinks visit the friendly and comfortable Grapevine Bar. It's open seven nights a week and Sunday lunchtimes. We pride ourselves on the quality of our cask ales, which usually include Fuller's London Pride, Fuller's Chiswick Bitter and a guest ale. We also provide a range of draft lagers and ciders as well as wines and spirits - all at very reasonable prices.

www.myfavouritepub.com/questors