



Enquiries: 020 8567 0011
 Box Office: 020 8567 5184
 Fax: 020 8567 8736
 e-mail: enquiries@questors.org.uk
 Web site: www.questors.org.uk

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 17 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.

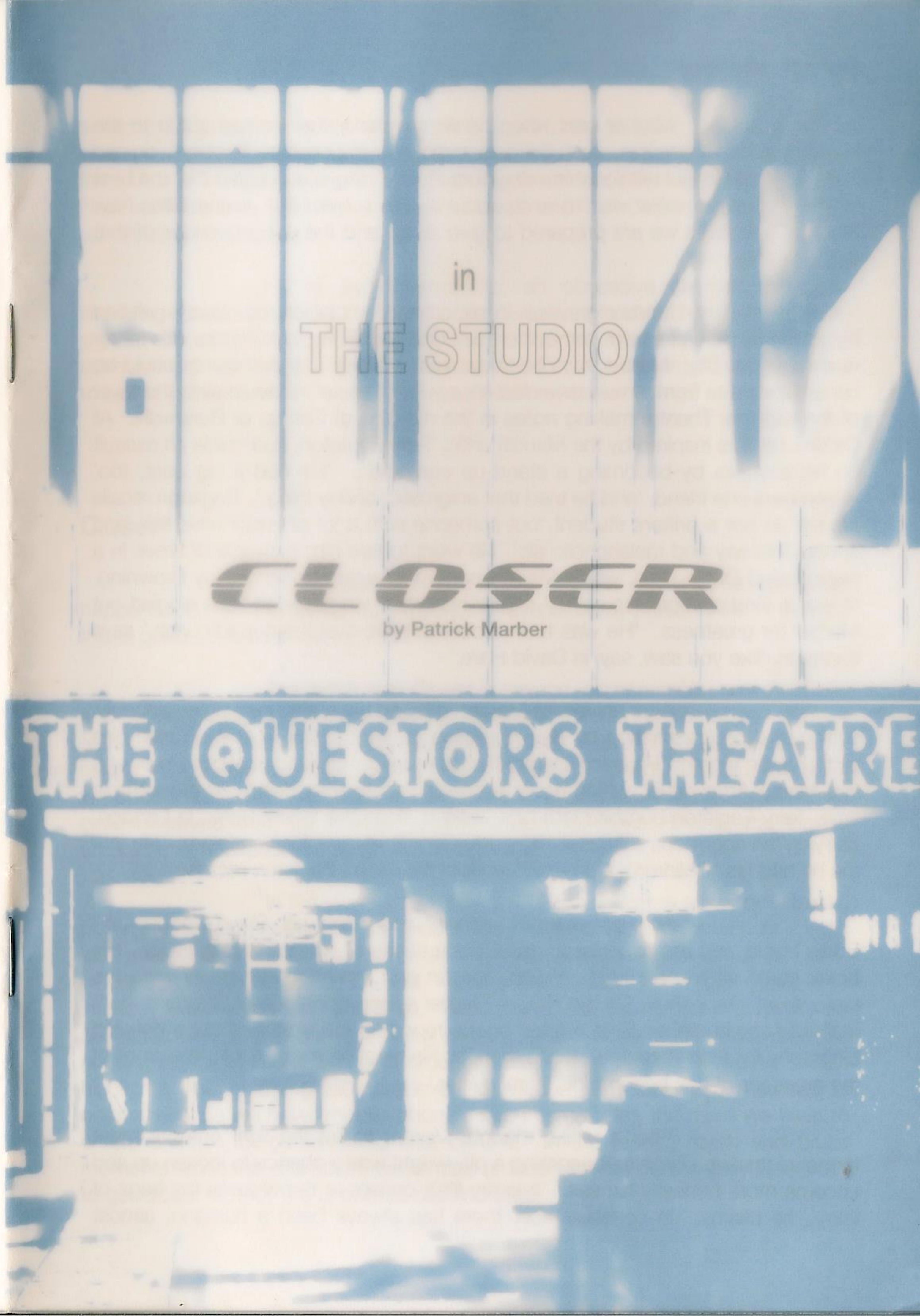
The Questors runs a professionally recognised two-year acting course in conjunction with Kingston College. There are also acting courses for beginners, free backstage training courses, visiting companies from home and abroad, regular art exhibitions, and workshops and clubs for young people. In short, there is something for everyone and with annual membership costing as little as £23.50 (including up to 8 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!

Judi Dench

Dame Judi Dench
 President of The Questors Theatre



in
THE STUDIO

CLOSER

by Patrick Marber

THE QUESTORS THEATRE

Patrick Marber

Marber said when he wrote *Closer* that he had come to the conclusion that 'there is no such thing as an honest relationship. The best you can hope for is an honest relationship with yourself.' He long ago decided that the best way to pursue the latter was to write about it. His subject has always been how much of ourselves we are prepared to give away, and the consequences of that self-exposure.

Marber grew up in suburban Wimbledon, but always wished he could say he came from somewhere like Camden Town or Islington. His father worked in the City. Marber says he knew from an early age that words could be his escape route from a mundane existence. In his teens he would sit in the foyer of the National Theatre making notes in the margins of Camus or Bukowski. At Oxford, he was inspired by the Marxist critic, Terry Eagleton, and made an assault on his shyness by becoming a stand-up comedian. 'He had a big coat, too' remembers one friend, 'and he tried that enigmatic, brainy thing.' Eagleton recalls Marber as not a brilliant student 'but someone with a lot of imaginative flair, and always this wry and melancholic air.' He went to see him a couple of times in a revue called Dross Bros, which Marber performed with his friend, Guy Browning. 'It was a kind of toothless satire,' recalls his tutor. He wouldn't have singled out Marber for greatness. 'He was too modest to have that theatrical flourish,' says Eagleton, 'like you saw, say, in David Hare.'

After university, Marber followed his ambitions single-mindedly, writing and procrastinating by day, gambling at night. Having split up with one girlfriend, he went to Paris for six months, found a garret, and wrote the bulk of a sub-Martin Amis novel, which never even saw an agent's desk. At around this time, Terry Eagleton bumped into him walking along the South Bank, in London, carrying 'an enormous suitcase', like a clown or a refugee, looking forlorn. 'He told me he had his "Children's Comedy" work in the case', Eagleton recalls.

As a comedian, Marber shared billing with Steve Coogan and Eddie Izzard and the experience gave him a sense of where his talents lay. His break came when he joined up with Coogan and Armando Iannucci to write the radio news spoof show *On the Hour*. Marber seized upon one of Coogan's half-realised caricatures, an East Anglian sports reporter, and sketched out a detailed biography for Alan Partridge. Since then, as his creation might put it, 'the smell of the greasepaint has become his literal oyster.'

After a while, though, Marber found the light entertainment format restrictive. For him, becoming a playwright was a chance to loosen up and become more honestly himself. 'It is my life's project to throw away my bags of irony', he claims. In consequence, there has always been a humane, almost

sentimental, undertow in his writing. The opportunity to work through what he characterises as his own 'ten-year depression' was provided by Richard Eyre, a fan of Alan Partridge, who gave Marber a unique amount of time and space at the National Theatre to develop first *Dealer's Choice* and then *Closer*, which he ended up directing himself.

He is, by all accounts, an obsessive rewriter, ruthlessly shedding favourite lines for the sake of the whole. He is as hard, or as clear-sighted about the shape of his life, too. Courted by Hollywood since the extraordinary success of *Closer* he has decided to wait his moment and continue to learn his stagecraft. 'Delete,' he says, 'is still my favourite key.'

Closer

'In the summer of 1996,' Marber explains, 'a bit of life happened to me. Romantic stuff, a series of events in my personal life. I thought, this is good stuff, I can use it.'

The result was *Closer*, a savage, compressed comedy of sex and betrayal, which provided a series of epigrams for modern romance - 'Kind is dull, kind will kill you. Anyone can be fucking KIND' - and left its audience with a lasting image of love. 'Ever seen a human heart?' it asked. 'It looks like a fist wrapped in blood.' When *Closer* transferred to Broadway, the New York Times critic observed that 'Mr Marber is a dramatist to make Racine, the classic chronicler of fatal passion, seem like an optimist.'

In the years after it opened, *Closer* became a modern classic, picking up a batch of awards whilst continuing to shock audiences with its candid look at lust and infidelity. Set in the 90's, its attitudes are very much of that time, where sex was a means to an end. Letting one's guard down and giving in to intimacy was the scariest thing of all. Through the four characters, we see the old absolutes of love and marriage being ditched for the allure of sex. The play has not lost any of its power by being brought into the 21st century, however. It also highlights one of the great paradoxes of modern life, the more methods of communication we have (mobile phones, fax, internet etc), the more we have to create a mask for ourselves to hide behind. In the tender, harsh and brutal moments when the characters come face to face with the person they would like to get closer to, they are unable to communicate.

CLOSER

by Patrick Marber
First performance of this production 7th June 2003

CAST

ALICE	- a girl from the town	Aoife Hyslop
DAN	- a man from the suburbs	Henry Everett
LARRY	- a man from the city	Bob Thomson
ANNA	- a woman from the country	Michelle Frost

There will be one interval of 15 minutes

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director	Roger Beaumont
Set Designer	Alex Marker
Lighting and Sound Designer	Alan N. Smith
Costume Design	Sarah Andrews Sarah Galton
Stage Management	Perri Blakelock Justine Forrest Louise Jacobs Fiona Lague Brin Parsonage Julia Russell Mike Smith
Construction	Louise Jacobs Barry Jones Richard Williams
Make-up	Emily van Delden
Photographic guidance	Martin Sapsed
Choreography	Julie Fletcher
Sound Operators	Anthony Enrione Heather Stamford
Lighting Operators	Perri Blakelock Martina Callinan

Thanks to:-

Adrian Asher, Rachel Banks Izen,
Gunnersbury House Museum -
Education Dept. for loan of the Victorian dress
Mike Hagan, Colin Horne,
Damien Lazell, John McSpadyen,
Chris Newall, Daniel Parsonage,
Cancer Research UK,
Chris Tomlins, Nigel Worsley,
Jaysigns, Gail Willis,
Jaytex Technology Ltd., Cherrypie.

COMING SOON

Mary Queen of Scots

Got Her Head Chopped Off by Liz Lochhead

in **The Playhouse**, 21 - 28 June

This is a ferociously iconoclastic re-examination of Mary's life from one of Scotland's best contemporary playwrights. We are led at break-neck speed through Mary's last years and forced to examine the parallels with modern Scottish life. The language is rich and varied, incorporating Elizabethan English and contemporary Scots, and the characters are full-bodied, subtle, humorous and virile.

When first performed in 1987, *Mary Queen of Scots* won a prestigious "Scotsman Fringe First" award at the Edinburgh Festival. Not to be missed.

The Questors Student Group Presents

You Can't Take it With You by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman

in **The Playhouse**, 12 - 19 July

Alice Sycamore, the only normal person from a zany family, falls in love with her boss, Tony Kirby, and has to introduce his family to her own. The Kirby's are a wealthy, stuffy family of great self-importance, while the Sycamore's are a collection of good-hearted lunatics. When the two families come together, lifestyle and philosophy collide head-on. The Kirbys, predictably, are appalled at the wild unorthodoxy of the Vanderhofs, which presently results in the arrest of the family—and of the Kirbys themselves.

A rehearsed reading of

Ladybird by Cheryl Robson

in **The Studio**, Sunday 15 June at 6.30pm

FREE

The sins of the father are visited on his daughters but ultimately, the enemies of their enemy are their 'friends'. A pitch-dark, claustrophobic, neurotically modern tale of class war and sexual politics fought out in an empty, oversized house in Knightsbridge.

OPEN DAY

WILL BE ON SATURDAY 13 SEPTEMBER

To launch our 75th anniversary year - make a note in your diary.

Some of the highlights of the next season include: **The Learned Ladies** by Molière, **A Wedding Story** by Bryony Lavery, **A Russian in the Woods** by Peter Whelan and **The Witches** by Roald Dahl.

ART EXHIBITIONS

We are very pleased to welcome two artists who will be exhibiting their work here:

in **THE GRAPEVINE BAR**

from 21 June - 27 June

Christine Stafford

in **THE UPPER FOYER**

until 14 June

John Flemons

MONTYS
NEPALESE CUISINE

TANDOORI RESTAURANT

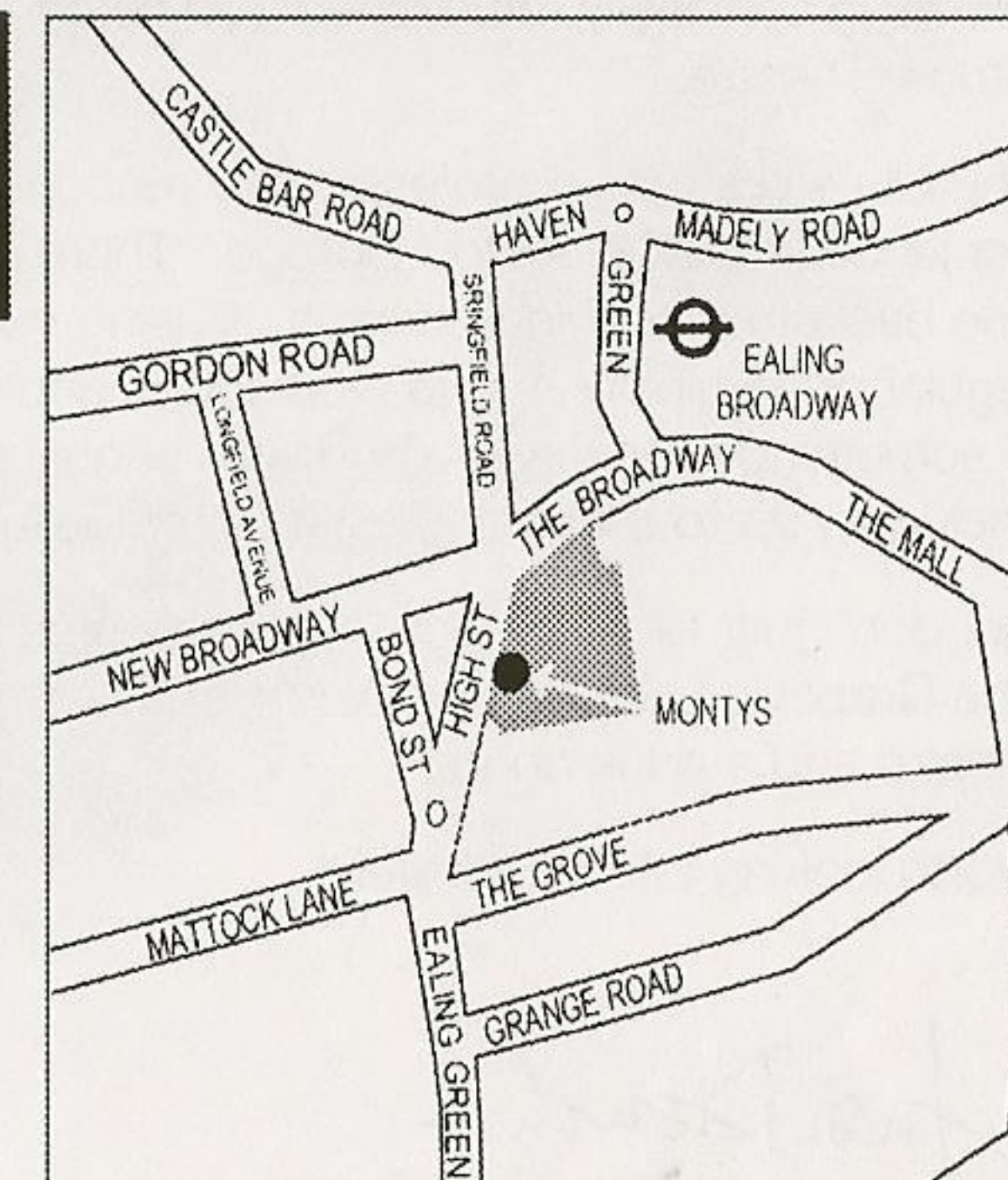
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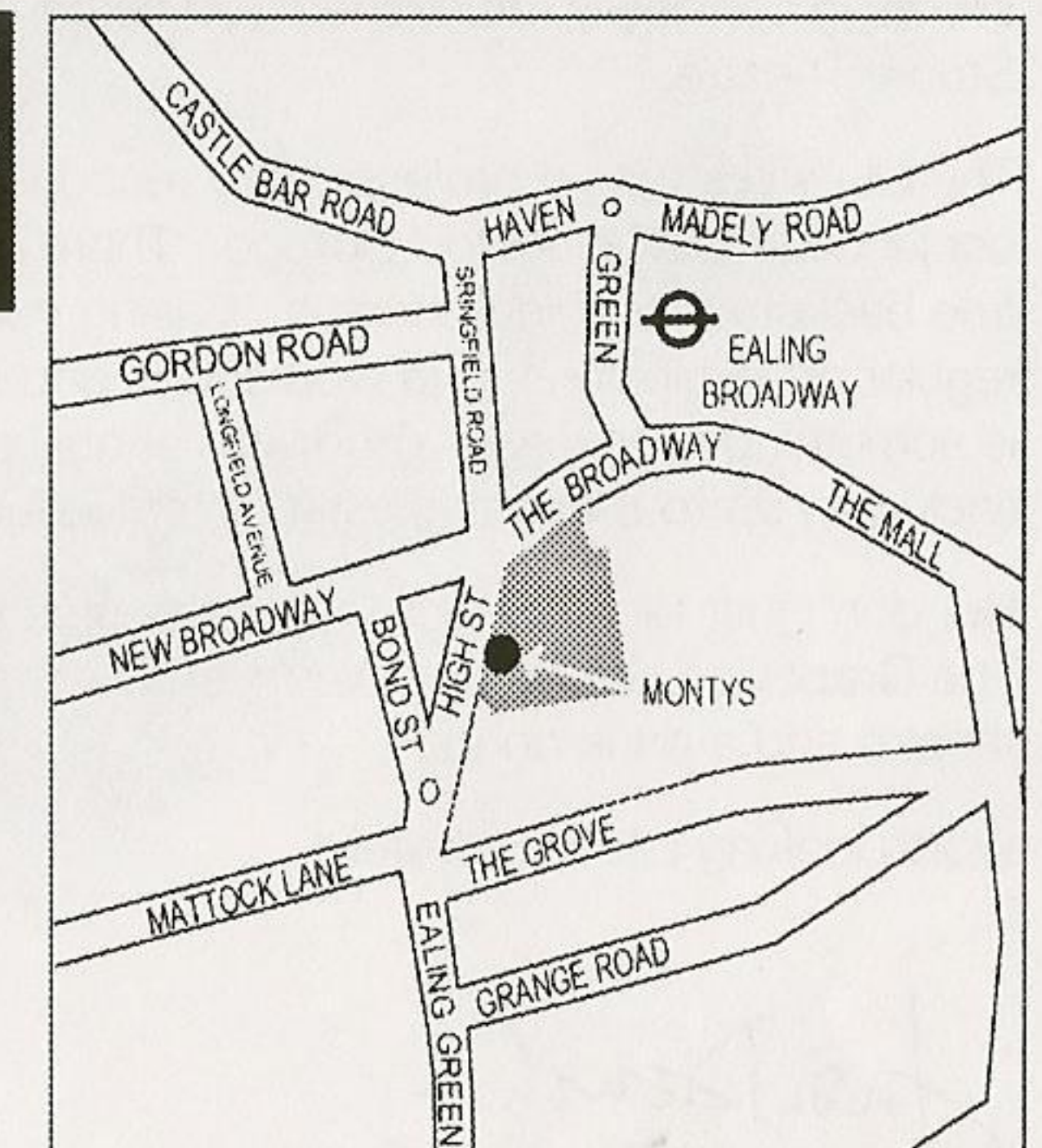
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