

NEXT WEEK AT THE MINACK THEATRE
Tavistock Repertory Company presents

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum

by Stephen Sondheim

Can Pseudolus, slave to Hero, scheme his way to freedom?
A befuddled father with a shrewish wife, neighbours, strangers and the Roman
army all get involved in this hilarious musical farce set in Ancient Rome.

Evenings - August 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29 at 8pm

Matinées - August 27 and 29 at 2pm

THE MINACK THEATRE

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and other reproduction rights are retained by the Theatre. Commercial
photography is prohibited at all times. Flash photography is hazardous
to the safety of the performers and is not permitted. Other photo-
graphs for private use may be taken, provided no disturbance is
caused to the audience or the actors.

In the interests of safety and comfort members of the audience are
requested:

- Not to walk on the stage at any time and to keep to the paths and
steps when in the Theatre.
- Not to smoke at any times in the areas where the audience is
seated.
- To place all litter and especially cigarette ends in the bins provided.

NEXT SEASON AT THE QUESTORS

The new season, which opens on 27th September, will include:

A WEDDING STORY by Bryony Lavery

A RUSSIAN IN THE WOODS by Peter Whelan

BLITHE SPIRIT by Noel Coward

GOODNIGHT CHILDREN EVERYWHERE by Richard Nelson

THE WITCHES by Roald Dahl, adapted for the stage by David Wood

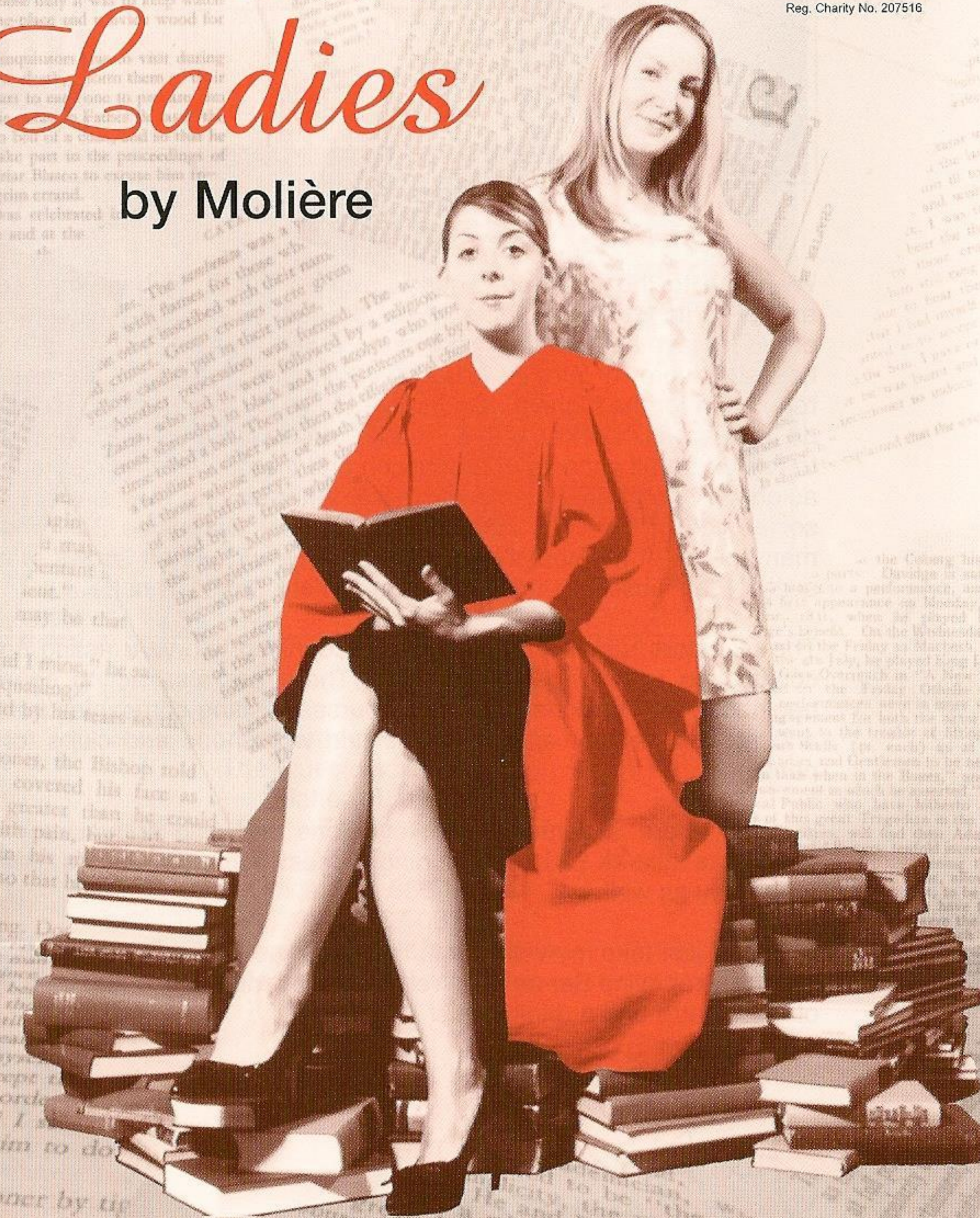
THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA by Bernice Wolfenden

BOUNCERS by John Godber

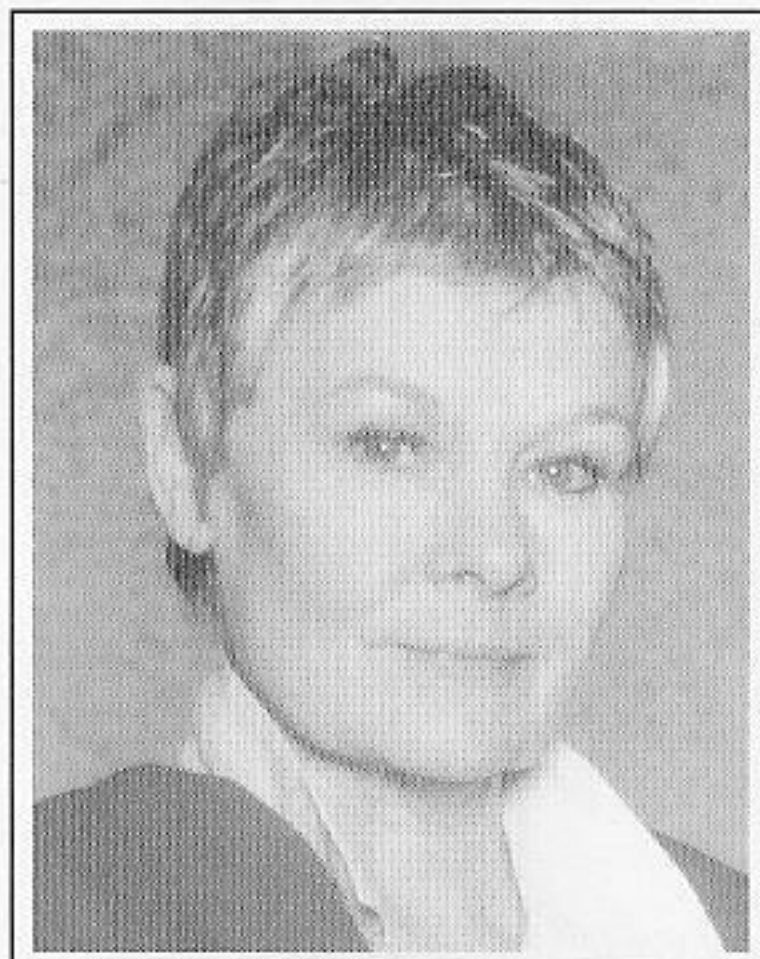
The LEARNED

Ladies

by Molière




THE
QUESTORS
THEATRE
STUDIO
12 MATTOCK LANE
LONDON W5 5BQ
Reg. Charity No. 207516



Welcome to the Questors Theatre, one of London's best kept secrets - except to its 2,500 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 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 at least 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 8.00pm for a free tour of the theatre and a drink on us!

Worth looking into? Definitely!

Dame Judi Dench
President of The Questors Theatre

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.



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The LEARNED Ladies

by Molière

first performance of this production 18th August 2003

CAST

CHRYSALE A well-to-do citizen	Derek Chandler
PHILAMINTE Chrysale's wife	Sarah Andrews
ARMANDE Chrysale & Philaminte's daughter	Emma John
HENRIETTE Chrysale & Philaminte's daughter	Lydia King
ARISTE Chrysale's brother	Ken Ratcliffe
BELISE Chrysale's sister	Sue Wheatley
CLITANDRE Henriette's lover	Iain Stirling
TRISSOTIN A fine wit	Steve Fitzpatrick
VADIUS A scholar	Mark Redrup
MARTINE A kitchenmaid	Claire Bennett
L'EPINE/JULIEN	Nigel Worsley
THE NOTARY	David Wheatley

PRODUCTION

Direction	Brian Ingram Eldi Dundee
Design	John Rolfe
Production	Katy Gallantry Miles Davis Harriet Parsonage Lizzie Averill Brin Parsonage
Lighting	Martin Stoner
Sound	Nigel Worsley Martin Choules
Make-up & Wigs	Emma Lawson Caroline Silk
Costume & Wardrobe	Tim Heywood Jo Matthews Anne Gilmour Grace Craddock Pam Smith Sylvia Wall Jenny Richardson Maria Brusa
Choreographer	Julia Cooke
Martine's Song Composed by	Don Kincaid
Fight Arranger	Peter Kennedy

TOUR

Tour Manager	John Moore
Publicity	Jim Craddock
Front of House Team	Nigel Bamford, Rob Bennett Anne Gilmour, Graham Goodall Julia Ingram, Louise Jacobs Julie Moss, John Rolfe

The LEARNED Ladies

by Molière

What happens in The Learned Ladies?

In the household of Chrysale war rages between the world of the intellect and the emotions. Chrysale's brother, Ariste and his young friend Clitandre are ordinary men, ruled by their emotions. Chrysale's wife Philaminte, her sister in law Belise and her elder daughter Armande are intellectual snobs, devoted to book learning and poetry. Chrysale's younger daughter, Henriette, is caught in the middle. She is in love with Clitandre, but her mother wants her to marry the pretentious poet; Trissotin.

Who was Molière?

Molière was born Jean-Baptiste Poquelin to a wealthy family in 1622. His father made his fortune as an upholsterer and then became a courtier to King Louis XIV. Young Poquelin was given an expensive education and studied law but, encouraged by his grandfather, he became devoted to the theatre becoming an actor and adopting the stage-name of Molière. He went as far as foregoing his father's court position, which was hereditary; instead he asked for his inheritance in cash and formed a new theatre company, the Illustre Theatre, which specialised in commedia dell' arte, a semi-improvised farce style imported from Italy. The commedia dell' arte operated through a series of stock characters; each actor usually specialising in one persona. Molière adopted the character of the clown Sganarelle. The influence of the commedia dell' arte would remain with Molière when he began writing plays. The ghosts of the commedia characters can be seen throughout his work, not least in The Learned Ladies. The essential difference between the old characters and Molière's creations is that he endows the characters in his plays with a far greater psychological depth.

Molière spent the rest of his life as an actor and, of course, a playwright; becoming one of the greatest comic writers of all time. His last play La Malade Imaginaire was performed in 1673. Molière played the main part himself. It is ironic that it was this play deals with corruption in the medical profession. Molière was taken ill during the performance and died later that night.

The Learned Ladies

The Learned Ladies (Les Femmes Savants) received its first performance, before the King, on 11th March 1672. Molière played the part of Chrysale himself and his daughter, Armande, played Henriette. The part of the mother, Philaminte, was taken by Hubert, a male actor who specialised in playing elderly females.

The play is a satire attacking certain practises at court. There were indeed a group of aristocratic ladies who had embraced learning. In Molière's day this was considered most unusual, particularly by other ladies in Louis XIV's court. They were the subject of ridicule as they thought that learning, to the detriment of physical pleasures, was the way to the soul. Given the values of the 21st century it is easy to condemn this play as sexist. But it wasn't women that Molière was attacking so much as the excesses of the upper classes who sought diversion

and fashion. It was not learning that was under attack so much as pedantry. There had been a tradition of pedant clowns in plays throughout the Renaissance and the 17th century deriving from the pedants written about by Aristotle. They usually took the guise of a doctor or lawyer; again stock characters to be found in the casts of the commedia dell' arte. Montaigne had attacked the scholastic method that produced pedantry. This involved extensive memory training in order that pupils and students might learn by heart a vast body of pre-digested, systematically ordered material, taught the young to be vain and proud of their attainments, while failing to teach them judgement, self knowledge and practical moral philosophy. Such minds were utterly bereft of growth, unable to converse freely, and certainly incapable of the talents required to run a state.

The play is peopled with characters, many of whom do not automatically attract our sympathy. Both Philaminte and Trissotin have been described as 'comic monsters'. But the psychological truths Molière gives the characters maintain the foundations of reality. He is able to place recognisable characters in farcical situations as well as providing the audience with examples of humanity that range from the romantic to the grotesque.

After its final performance in 1672 The Learned Ladies did not receive another production until it was revived by The Comedie Francaise in the 1920s.

Learning and morality

'... Most intolerable is the woman who as soon as she has sat down to dinner commends Virgil, pardons the dying Dido, and pits the poets against each other, putting Virgil in the one scale and Homer in the other ... she lays down definitions and discourses on morals. Like a philosopher Let her not know all history; let there be some things in her reading which she does not understand. I hate a woman who is forever consulting and poring over the 'grammar' of Palaemon, who observes all the rules and laws of language, who like an antiquary quotes verses that I never heard of, and corrects her unlettered female friends for slips of speech that no man need trouble about: let husbands at least be permitted to make slips in grammar!'

Juvenal: Satire VI, II

'It is true, as they say, that the body should not pursue its appetites in such a way as to harm the mind; but why should it not also be true that the mind should not pursue its appetites to the point where they harm the body?'

Montaigne: Essais, III

'Molière did not expect his spectators to bring to his plays the furrowed brows of moral philosophers intent on gauging the midpoint of virtue between the various excesses of vice. His aim was to entertain. To do so, while at the same time giving a true and telling portrait of the human condition, he used laughter as the measure of reason and unreason. Through laughter, whole audiences could join together in recognising and mocking departures from the mean.'

Andrew Calder: Molière-The Theory and Practice of Comedy