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Welcome to the opening of the Questors Theatre's 75th Anniversary Season.

It was in 1929 that 17 individuals started the Questors, now it is the largest Community Theatre in Europe, with a reputation for the highest standards, and I am proud to have been its President for more than 18 years.

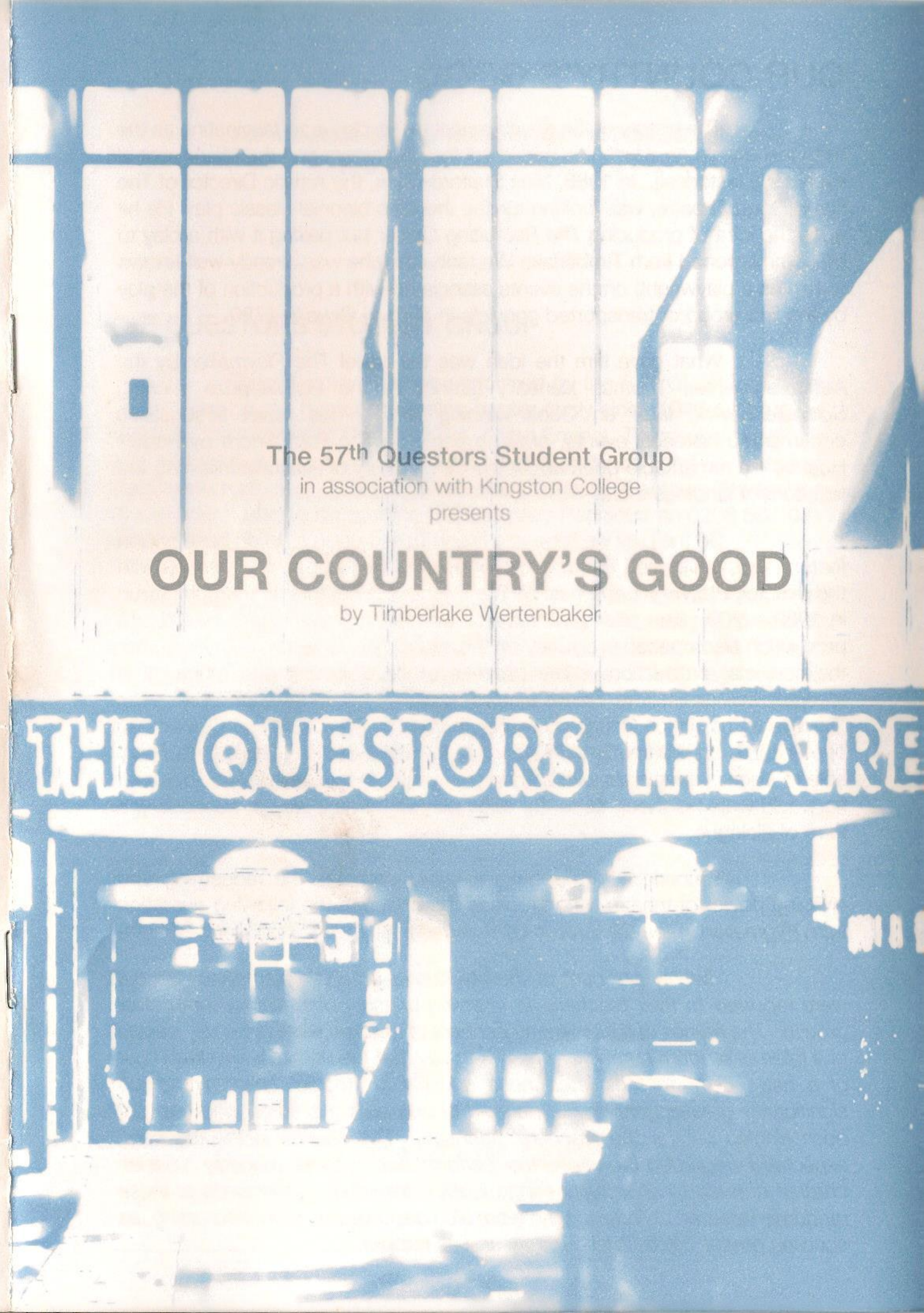
Over the course of the next twelve months, we will celebrate all that is best about The Questors with Classic Drama, New Writing, Comedy, a Musical and many special celebratory events. Luckily, with so many members, we have a wealth of talent to call on for all aspects of production and members are encouraged 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 our more intimate Studio Theatre.

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Dame Judi Dench
President of The Questors Theatre



The 57th Questors Student Group
in association with Kingston College
presents

OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD

by Timberlake Wertenbaker



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The history of the development of the play is as fascinating as the historical events on which it is based (all the characters and the play's central events are historical). In 1988, Max Stafford-Clark, the Artistic Director of The Royal Court Theatre, was looking for the theatre's biennial classic play. He hit upon the idea of producing *The Recruiting Officer* but pairing it with a play to be commissioned from Timberlake Wertenbaker (she was already well-known to him as a playwright) on the events associated with a production of the play by the first group of transported convicts in Sydney Cove in 1789.

What gave him the idea was the novel *The Playmaker* by the Australian writer, Thomas Keneally (author of the Booker-prize winning *Schindler's Ark*, later an Oscar-winning film). This novel fictionalises documented historical events, drawing partly on *The Fatal Shore* by Robert Hughes – a remarkable book about the early history of Australia following the first convict landings there.

So the play we have is a fiction based upon a fiction based upon facts. It was developed through research, workshops and improvisation with the director, playwright and cast at The Royal Court before its triumphant run in 1989 – 200 years after the historical events on which it was based. (A production also opened in Sydney on the exact day, June 4th, 200 years after the convicts' production.) The process of development and rehearsal is recorded in Max Stafford-Clark's highly readable book, *Letters to George*. The 'George' of the title is George Farquhar, author of *The Recruiting Officer*. As The Royal Court is primarily a theatre of new writing, Stafford-Clark was usually able to discuss rehearsals with a living playwright. In this case he decided that he would write his thoughts to the dead playwright as a way of conducting a form of dialogue.

Timberlake Wertenbaker's play celebrates the redeeming and civilising power of theatre. She prefaces the play with the following quotation from *Pygmalion in the Classroom* by R. Rosenthal and L. Jacobsen:

'Twenty per cent of the children in a certain elementary school were reported to their teachers as showing unusual potential for intellectual growth. The names of these twenty per cent of children were drawn by means of a table of random numbers, which is to say that the names were drawn out of a hat. Eight months later these unusual or 'magic' children showed significantly greater gains in IQ than did the remaining children who had not been singled out for the teachers' attention. The change in the teachers' expectation regarded the intellectual performance of these allegedly 'special' children had led to an actual change in the intellectual performance of these randomly selected children... who were also described as more interesting, as showing greater intellectual curiosity and as happier.'

The relevance of this interesting piece of educational research to the central debate of the play and its eventual outcome will, we trust, be clear.

John Davey

THE QUESTORS STUDENT GROUP

Tonight's play is being performed by the 57th Questors Student Group. The course has been running continuously since 1946, when it was begun by the founder of The Questors, Alfred Emmet. The course is split into two consecutive years (Foundation and Performance) and is based on Stanislavski methods. Its aim is to develop the talent of actors. Anyone over 18 can apply; entry is by audition. Phone Alice Pennicott on 0208 567 0011 for details.

In recent years the course has been run in conjunction with Kingston College, with whom the Theatre has had a very productive relationship. College students taking BTEC National courses in Technical Theatre and Production work regularly at the Theatre. The College also runs courses in Acting, Performance, Dance, Music Practice and Music Technology, including three-year BA degree courses in Acting and in Music Technology. For details of these, contact John Davey on 0208 268 3061.

STAFF

The staff for these courses are:

Director of Studies:	David Emmet
Tutors:	David Emmet (1 st Year Acting)
	John Davey (2 nd Year Acting)
	Rachel Power (Introductory Group)
	Catherine Baxter (Speech)
	Nicholas Jonne (Movement)

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OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD
by Timberlake Wertenbaker
First performance Wednesday March 24 2004

Cast

In order of speaking

Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark
John Wisehammer
John Arscott
Mary Brenham
The Aborigine
Captain Arthur Phillip, RN
(Governor-in-Chief, New South Wales)
Captain Watkin Tench, RM
Captain David Collins, RM
(Advocate General)
Midshipman Harry Brewer, RN
(Provost Marshal)
Meg Long
Robert Sideway
Dabby Bryant
Liz Morden
Major Robbie Ross, RM
Reverend Johnson
Lieutenant Will Dawes, RM
Captain Jemmy Campbell, RM
Duckling Smith
Ketch Freeman
Caesar

David Bell
Adam Winczewski
Tayo Rotibi
Izabella Urbanowicz
Tayo Rotibi
James Kyle
Orpheus Papafilippou
Christian Ani
Paul Wesoly
Alison Carroll
Orpheus Papafilippou
Alison Carroll
Nina Lubicz-Nawrocka
Marc Golland
Paul Wesoly
Adam Winczewski
Tayo Rotibi
Mary Roberts*
Marc Golland
Christian Ani

* Member of the First Year Student Group

*The play is set initially on the voyage to, and thereafter in Australia in 1788 and 1789
There will be one interval of 15 minutes*

Production

Director	John Davey
Designer	Elaine Hagan
Costume Design assisted by	Lynsey Flockhart Syvia Wall
Lighting Design	Tim Edwards
Sound Design	Martin Bridges
Stage Manager	Marguerite Minster
DSMs	James Lewis, Tom Williams
Crew	Alec Atchison, Eric Lister, Yvonne Ossei, Alexandra White
Make-up by Greasepaint	Melissa Evans, James Adams
Construction	Mike Hagan, Karen Tollady
Lighting operators	Tom McGuire, Troy Rowe
Sound operator	Mark Burton
Prompter	Sue Oliver
Thanks to	Adrian Asher, Elisabeth Bisinotto, Amy Cruickshank, Sandra Flockhart, Jenny Richardson, Peter Salvietto, Louis Tonna

COMING SOON

Road by Jim Cartwright

In the **Playhouse**, 17 - 24 April

In the course of one wild night, your drunken guide, Scullery, conducts a tour of his derelict Lancashire street. Moving from street corner to living room, from bedroom to kitchen, we flash through the lives of its inhabitants as they piece together the fragments of their lives that glint like freshly cut glass on a beer soaked bar table. Lives that encompass unemployment, depression and hopelessness, staved off with drink, sex and violence. A surreal vision of the contemporary urban landscape...uncomfortable and magical, funny and bitter, it is an *Under Milk Wood* for Thatcher's children.

Once a Catholic by Mary O'Malley

In the **Studio**, 28 April - 8 May

Once a Catholic is set in the Convent of Our Lady of Fatima, a grammar school for girls, and in and around the streets of Willesden and Harlesden, London, in the late fifties.

The play centres on the adventures and misadventures of Mary Mooney, Mary McGinty and Mary Gallagher as they experience life in the fifth form under the tutelage of Mother Peter, Mother Basil and Mother Thomas Aquinas.

"A marvellous, irreverent, affectionate and warmly comic play about the confusions and contradictions and general awfulness of being a Catholic schoolgirl".

(*Sheridan Morley, Punch*)

The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare

In the **Playhouse**, 21 - 29 May

"Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?...If you prick us, do we not bleed?...If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?"

Is Shakespeare's play an argument against anti-Semitism? A light romantic comedy? A liberal vision of tolerance and multiculturalism? A joke at the expense of a 16th Century Jew? These are questions that have provoked much debate, and much fascination, over the years, and the play remains controversial, 400 years after it was written. For this production, the director, Peter Field has brought the action forward to the 1930's, which should make the debate even more interesting.

The Questors Theatre, in conjunction with 4th Wall, presents

Into the Woods The spectacular musical by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine

Once upon a time...

...there was a cast of fairytale characters, all destined to go into the woods to achieve their happy endings. But what happens after "happily ever after?" This is the musical that attempts to find out. Cinderella's prince is a hopeless philanderer. The witch is not wicked but overprotective of her daughter. And a slightly psychotic Little Red Riding Hood proudly wears the grey skin of the wolf she cut up. The score is one of Sondheim's most popular, with the comic and manic "Into the Woods," "Agony" and "On the Steps of the Palace" contrasting with the dramatic and wondering "Children Will Listen," "No One Is Alone" and "Giants in the Sky."

Get the most out of your membership

Many members join just to see shows, but there is so much else you can do, why not get involved?

Front of house is a great place to start. For programme selling, stewarding or serving in the Café you don't need any experience, but training can be given for anyone who fancies working in Box Office. If you want to meet people and have a good time, then the best place to be is behind the Grapevine Bar - you can volunteer for just one night or many.

If you have some experience then Questors is a wonderful place to be a designer, but even if you don't you can help out on shows and you're sure to get some hands-on experience. The same goes for lighting and sound - the theatre is well-equipped and a good place to learn. Backstage staff, including stage managers, prop makers painters and wardrobe staff, are always welcomed and whatever your skills we'll find a place for you.

You can direct if you have some experience or training, but if not then you can always look out for our training opportunities. The Questors has a high standard of acting and to maintain this anyone wanting to act will need to take an audition.

These are held every month - please ring the office for a form.

There are numerous other things you can do to help out. If you're free in the daytimes you can help out with envelope stuffing or delivering leaflets, and if you're a bit of a handy-man or woman then there are always little jobs to be done.

If you'd like more information, please ring the admin office on 020 8567 0011

ART EXHIBITIONS

in the **Grapevine**

13 - 27 March

Pamela Lloyd-Jones

A selection of paintings by her students from the Art Group at Ealing Cricket Club.

in the **Upper Foyer**

13 - 27 March

Suzanna Rust

An Exhibition of her watercolours inspired by the landscapes of England, France and Greece. Suzanna lives in Ealing and was trained at Leicester College of Art, graduating in printmaking.

She has illustrated many children's books and runs Art Workshops for people with learning disabilities.

She has also had solo exhibitions in London at the Hellenic Centre and the Guild Church of St. Katherine Cree.



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