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Welcome

The Questors Theatre's 75th Anniversary begins. It was in 1937 that the founders started the Questors, now it is the largest theatre company in Europe, with a reputation for producing great theatre and you can be proud to have been its President for more than 25 years.

Over the course of the next twelve months, we will celebrate all that we have done at The Questors with Classic Drama, New Writing, Comedy, a selection of our own special celebratory events. Luckily, with so many members, we have a wealth of talent to call on for all aspects of our work. Our members are encouraged to be as actively involved as they should be. Alternatively, they simply enjoy the social side of the theatre. For example, we have the Grapevine Bar (one of the many perks of membership) where we show and varied shows in our 350-seat Professional Studio Theatre.

In short, there's something for everyone, and with membership costing so little as £27 a year (and £10 for a student), it's great value for money all round.

If you're not a member already, then it's time to join. Don't just take my word for it, meet the staff at their 100-year-old and into our friendly Grapevine Bar on any Wednesday evenings to catch a free tour of the Theatre and a drink on us.

Here's to the next 75 years!

Dame Judi Dench
President of The Questors Theatre

The Questors Youth Theatre presents

A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare

THE QUESTORS THEATRE

FOREWORD:

Is it really twelve years ago that I directed *Gregory's Girl*? I know I'd turned 60 (I got a cake and candles at one of the rehearsals). My daughter Megan was a Youth Group member and that gave me the excuse, ancient as I was, for getting involved and daring to try to keep up with the energies of the young. My own first taste of full production was in my early teens and it was an experience I wanted others to have. Being fully engaged in the real thing does wonders for your learning curve. Big thanks to all those who've carried it on... and especially to Alex Marker for the chance for us all to get together!

Peter Whelan

(Playwright *A Russian in the Woods*, *The Accrington Pals*, *The Bright and Bold Design* etc., and director of our first ever youth show)

It was September 1975 that I first started teaching the Sunday morning Group. JDW 4 it was in those days. Then sometimes JDW5 or JDW3, according to how many groups there were. Then we merged the Under 14 Club into the JDW, and it became JDW8, or JDW 7. Then YDW. Now YG12.

Oh well. Whatever the name, it's the same thing. And I've been doing it for nearly 30 years now. And I guess that means I love it. Most of the closest friends I have today, I first met when they were students in that Sunday morning group. Two from the very first group I ever took I am still in contact with. They were 17 then. Now they are 46. Any day now, I will get the son or daughter of someone who was once in my group...

David Emmet

(Longest serving tutor 1975 to present, ex youth coordinator 1984-1994 and director of *Emie's Incredible Illusions* and *The Chrysalids* 2003)

The Questors Youth Theatre is the best club that I have ever been to. I have been coming to the classes for nine years and have also been in two productions. I have made lots of new friends through the Questors and I hope to continue for many more years.

Cecily Johnson

(Longest serving current youth theatre member, joined in 1995)

The Questors Youth Theatre as it is now known was formed in 1954 primarily as a drama group for those not yet old enough to audition for theatre's student course. This has gradually expanded over the years to encompass all age groups from 5 to 17 years of age, with the younger primary age groups taking place on Saturday mornings and the older high school groups taking place on week day evenings and Sunday morning. The groups have always focused on improvisation and personal development skills rather than teaching children 'how to act'.

By 2000, changes in the law, a decline in the number of group leaders, offset by a huge waiting list of about 150 children (partially caused by the success of youth shows such as *Godspell* which was the 3rd highest grossing show of the 1997/8 season) we took the decision to professionalise the groups.

Since then we have not looked back, the Youth Theatre has proved to be the fastest growing area of our theatre, becoming the fifth biggest source of income for the Questors. Somewhere in the region of 350 young people attend the Questors every week, taught by a group of dedicated workshop leaders in twenty-one individual drama groups. Over this period the Youth Theatre has augmented the classes and the yearly summer showcase with a diverse range of activities including special skills workshops (scene painting, musical theatre, stage fighting etc), site specific performance projects and last year our first ever short film course.

Fifty years old, there's a lot more life in the young things yet, here's to the next fifty!

Alex Marker

(Joined the Youth Theatre in 1988, Group Leader 1997 to present, QYT Coordinator 2000 to present)

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

First produced in 1595, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has had a long and interesting stage history. It is thought to have first been performed at a noble wedding, possibly that of William Stanley, Earl of Derby, and Elizabeth Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford, which took place in the presence of Queen Elizabeth, at her palace at Greenwich. In the cast there were reportedly children from both noble houses recruited to play the fairies, and Queen Elizabeth herself - Spenser's *Faerie Queen* - present as guest of honour to hear Oberon's tribute to her as the "fair vestal throned by the west", immune to Cupid's darts. Dr. Samuel Johnson speculated that Shakespeare wrote the character of Bottom to poke fun at a rival theatre manager. There is also a tradition that Shakespeare himself played Theseus. And Samuel Pepys saw the play in 1662, though he didn't think much of it:

"To the King's Theatre, where we saw "Midsummer Night's Dream," which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life. I saw, I confess, some good dancing and some handsome women, which was all my pleasure." Samuel Pepys, Diary, Sept. 29, 1662

A Midsummer Night's Dream disappeared from the English stage along with everything else when all the theatres were closed by the Puritans, surviving only in comic sketches cobbled together from the scenes with Bottom and his cronies for underground performance. When it reappeared after the Restoration it had been turned into an opera, *The Faerie Queen* with music by Henry Purcell. The lavish first production of Purcell's opera - complete with such scenic effects as a dance of six monkeys and "A Grand Dance of 24 Chinese" - set the pattern for the next century, when *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was mutilated, rewritten and recycled into light entertainment that relied on lavish spectacle to obscure whatever remained of Shakespeare's text.

Nonetheless, in spite of its difficulties, the play is still popular now, with famous modern productions by Peter Brook and the Canadian director, Robert Lepage. Of course now it has been turned into a number of films, the latest only a few years ago, bringing Shakespeare's most accessible play to wider audiences and is a favourite with schools and youth theatres.

Nick Murza

(Director *A Midsummer Night's Dream*)

The Questors Youth Theatre presents
A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare

First performance of this production 10th February 2004

CAST

Titania & Hippolyta	Claire Hurley
Oberon & Theseus	Joe Wood
Hermia	Hannah Nicholl
Lysander	Henry Lewis
Demetrius	Eamon Ali
Helena	Alice Marshall
Puck	Anoosh Chakelian
Bottom	Theo Garman
Quince	Tiffany Sanders
Snout	Natasha Dowd
Snug	Kathryn Pirrie
Starveling	Hannah Webster
Flute	Niall Tatchley
Aegea	Ruth Williamson
Philostrate	Joseph Hughes
<i>Speaking Fairies:</i>	
Moth	Jade Kearney
Peaseblossom	Georgia Smith
Mustardseed	Jessie Gutch
Cobweb	Rhiannon Rees
<i>Other fairies & attendants:</i>	
	Miranda Jack
	Sophie Shawdon
	Zosia Carr
	Joe Dowd
	Jeaniq Amihyia
	Maddy Browne
	Lauren Murphy

PRODUCTION

Director	Nick Murza
Assistant Director	Rachel Norton
Designer and Production Manager	Alex Marker
Lighting Designer	Mark White
Sound Designer	Mark Lucek
Costumes	Sarah Andrews
Assisted by	Lynda Castle, Jessica Cave, Julia Cooke, Natasha Ford, Anne Gilmour, Ambreen Nawaz, Liz Stasi, Jennie Yates
Design Assistants	Heidi Korb, Donatella Lazzari
Stage Management	Lois Flatt, Janeth Kempston, Rachel Lumsden, Lauren Naylor, Julia Russell, Rikki Singh
Construction	Edward Bilson*, Perri Blakelock, Colin Horne, Rachel Knightley, Ruth Parry, Ellis Pritchard, Tom White
Lighting Operator	Bernard Brady
Sound Operators	Ian Kings, Anthony Enrione
Hair and Make up	Georgiana Creanga, Jenny Ward, Vicky Wren
With thanks to:	Rona Christie, Martin Choules, Tina Harris, Barbara Marker, Laura Marker, Brin Parsonage, Jenny Richardson, and all the good fairies who supplied us with interesting objects for our set

*Member of the Youth Theatre

The Questors Youth Theatre was conceived as the 'Young Questors' in November 1954 to coincide with the theatre's Silver Jubilee celebrations.

PREVIOUS YOUTH PRODUCTIONS

- 1991 *Gregory's Girl*, by Bill Forsyth (*the first ever youth Production*)
1993 *The Gut Girls*, by Sarah Daniels
1997 *Godspell*, by John-Michael Tebelak and Stephen Schwartz
1998 *Runaways*, by Elizabeth Swados
2000 *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, by Bertolt Brecht
2001 *Helen Of Troy*, by Euripides (*adapted by Adonis Galleus, Cathy Stevens and Toni Brown*)
2003 Double Bill: *Ernie's Incredible Illucinations*, by Alan Ayckbourn/
The Chrysalids, (*adapted from John Wyndham's book by David Harrower*)

Summer Site Specific performances:

- August 2002 *Julie and Romeo* (August 2002) performed at Gunnersbury House Park and Gardens
August 2003 *Parva Vale* (August 2003) performed at St Mary's Church Perivale

DETAILS OF THIS SUMMER'S PROJECTS COMING SOON

Many other Questors shows over the last 50 years have featured youth theatre members.

Some of the more recent productions include...

Children's Shows:

- Pinocchio* (1996), *The Twits* (1999), *Fireman Sam* (1998),
Granville the Ugly Duckling (2000), *The Princess and the Pea* (2003/4).

Christmas Family Shows:

- The Wind in the Willows* (2000), *The Snow Queen* (2001), *Tom's Midnight Garden* (2002), *The Witches* (2004).

Other Questors Shows:

- Little Women* (1997), *Grimm Tales* (1997), *Dreams of Anne Frank* (1998),
A Little Hotel on the Side (2001).

LIFE AFTER THE QUESTORS YOUTH THEATRE

Yes there is life after the Questors. Various youth theatre members have gone on to carve out a career in the world of theatre and show business. Some of the more noted names include: Michael Rosen (poet, children's author, broadcaster and playwright), Konnie Huq (Blue Peter Presenter), Declan Donnellan (Artistic Director of Cheek by Jowl, associate director of the Royal National Theatre and Playwright), and Sebastian Baczkiewicz (Playwright).

COMING SOON

Duet for One by Tom Kempinski

in **The Studio**, 19 - 28 February

Stephanie was an eminent violinist until struck down by multiple sclerosis and confined to a wheelchair. On the advice of her husband she comes to see Dr. Feldmann, to help her adjust to her changing circumstances. She seems to be coping well, but under Dr. Feldmann's quiet, probing questions, however, a different picture emerges. Alone and desperate, she finally has no choice but to confront and conquer her self despair or die trying.

The Recruiting Officer by Georges Farquhar

in **The Playhouse**, 12 - 20 March

A story of bravado, deception, love, lust and army recruitment. In one of his finest plays, Farquhar deftly combines the conventions of Restoration comedy with a sympathetic and relatively realistic treatment of a country-town society. Captain Plume, back from the triumphant Battle of Blenheim, returns to Shrewsbury to recruit men for his regiment and women for his bed, and a series of comic situations follows. The play gently debunks national heroes, showing them as vulnerable and not entirely honourable. There is also humour aplenty, romantic adventures and an intricate plot in which trickery and subterfuge abound.

The Questors Student Group presents:

Our Country's Good by Timberlake Wertenbaker

in **The Studio**, 24 March - 3 April

At the Sydney Cove penal colony 1789, a young lieutenant directs rehearsals of the Restoration comedy *The Recruiting Officer*. With only two copies of the text, a cast of convicts, opposition from sadistic officers, and a leading lady about to be hanged, the production is in trouble from the start.

Based on an historical incident and on Thomas Kenneally's novel "The Playmaker", Timberlake Wertenbaker's inspirational play shows us the redemptive, transcendental power of theatre with great elegance and passion.

ART EXHIBITIONS

In the **Grapevine**
January 31 - February 28

Double Vision

Malcolm Banthorpe - photography
Yu-lan Liu - mixed media

More information at www.grafics.demon.co.uk/double_vision