

THE QUESTORS THEATRE

Its easy to join...

- Come to the main office during office hours.
- Join us in the Grapevine Bar at The Questors Theatre on any Wednesday at 8pm for a free guided tour and a drink on us.
- Pick up a membership form from the foyer.
- Call **020 8567 0011** during office hours.
- Find out more at www.questors.org.uk.

Questors membership gives you...

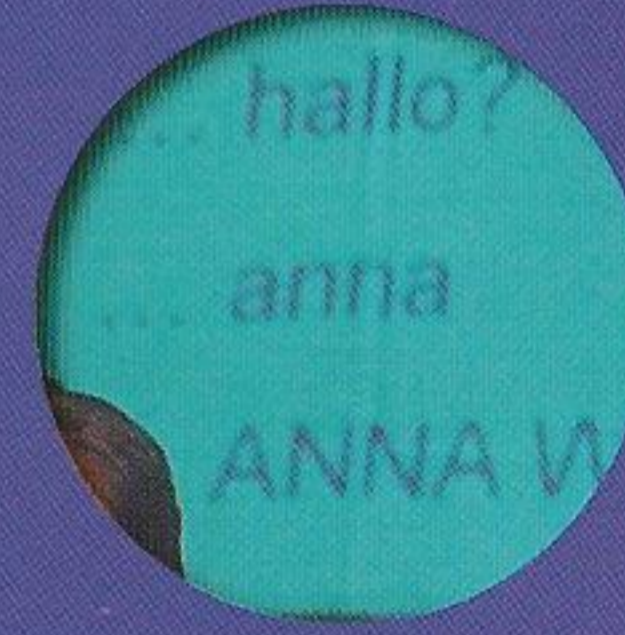
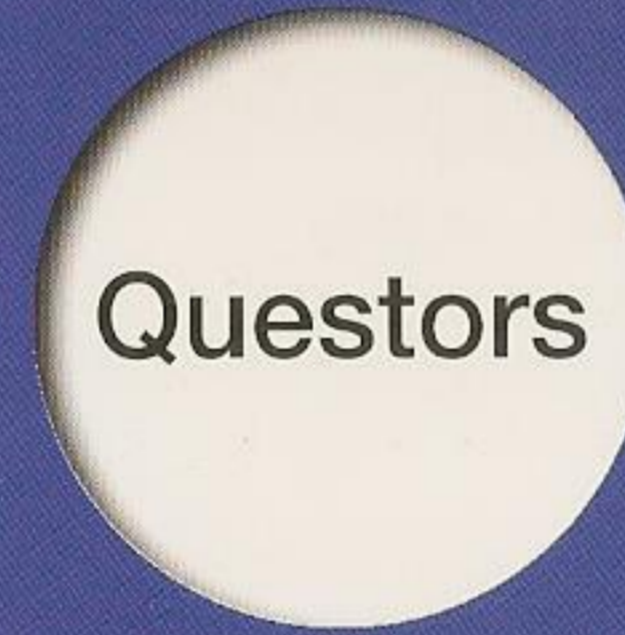
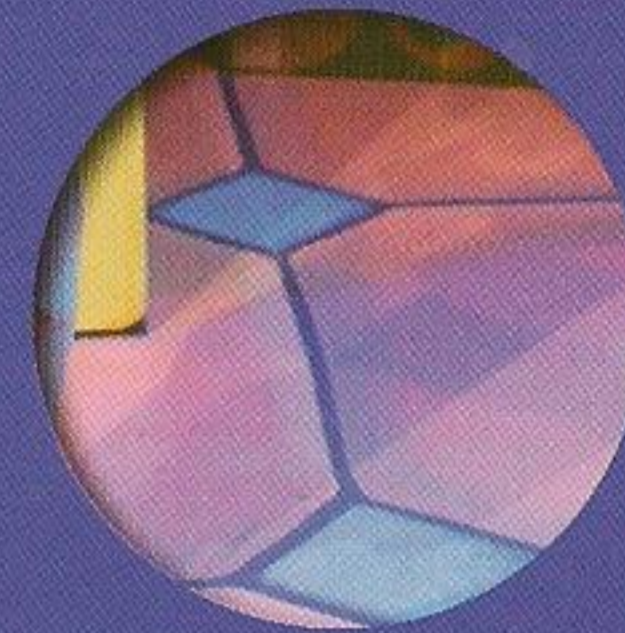
- Free tickets to at least 8 productions a year.
- Access to over 20 productions a year - classic, contemporary, international and new plays, from just £6.50 a ticket.
- Membership of the Grapevine Bar
- Questopics, our club magazine.
- The chance to act, direct, or get involved backstage.
- Discounts at: Holmes Place, Butlers restaurant, Ealing Dance Centre, Monty's Tandoori, Près de Lós exclusive lingerie.

Three ways to book tickets:

- Ring our Box Office on 020 8567 5184
Open Mon - Fri, 11.00am-12 noon, Show nights and Wednesdays 6.45pm - 8.30pm, Sunday Matinee 2.00pm - 2.30pm.
- Fill in a booking form (inside Questopics) and return to the Box Office.
- Book online at www.questors.org.uk.

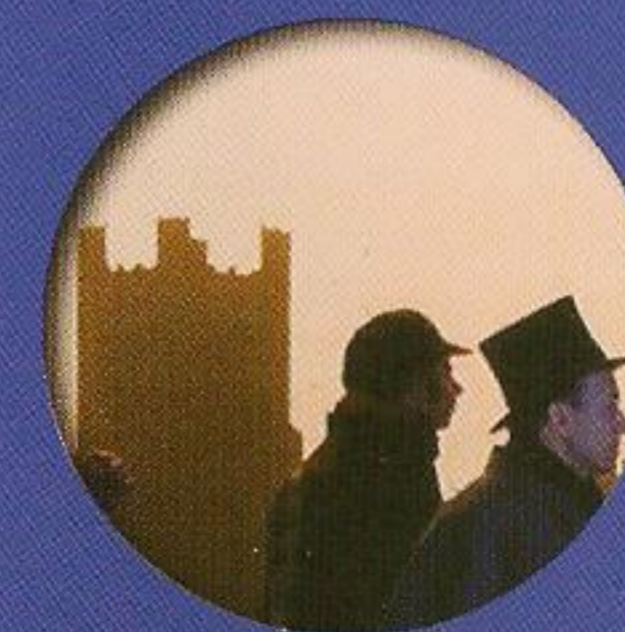
Box Office: 020 8567 5184
Admin: 020 8567 0011
Fax: 020 8567 8736
Email: enquiries@questors.org.uk
Website: www.questors.org.uk

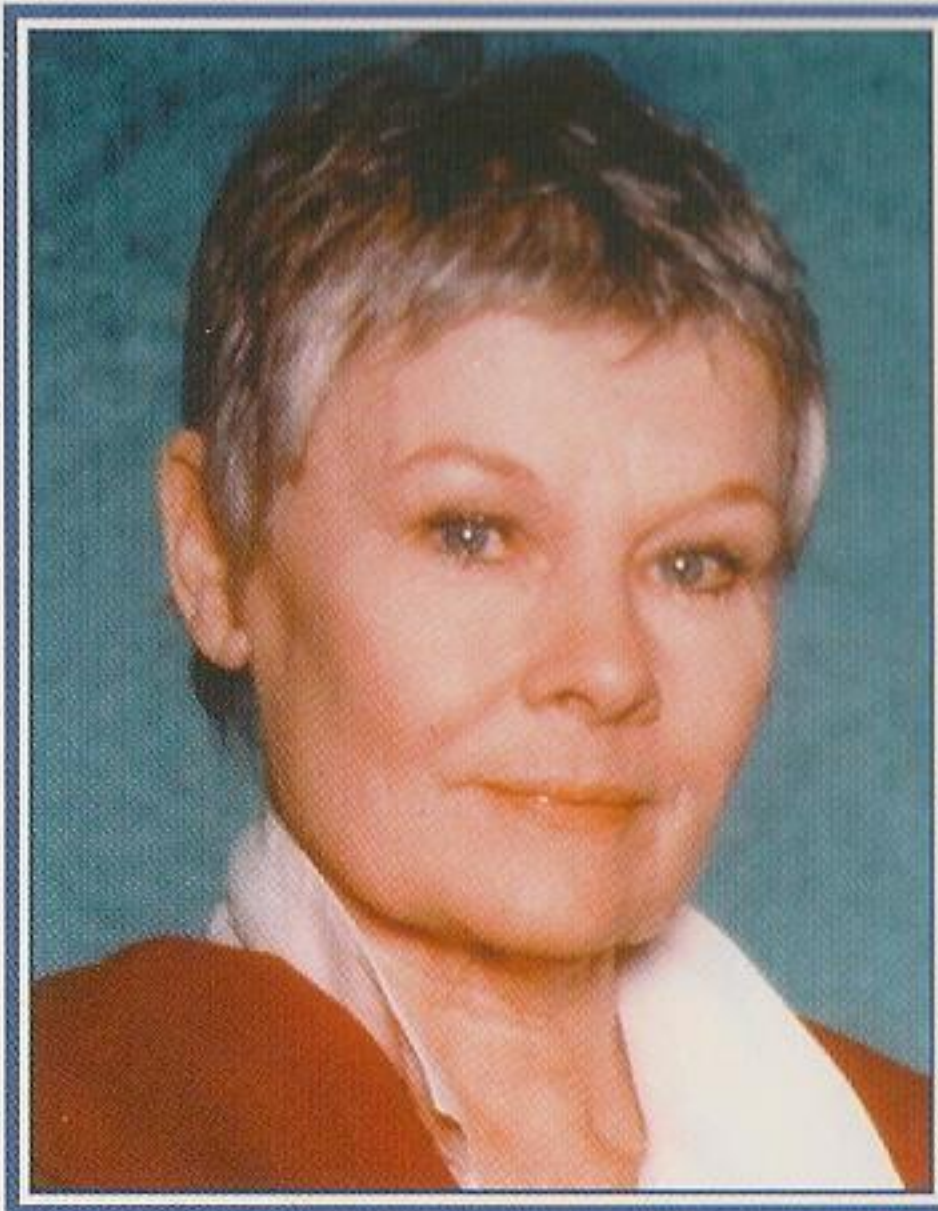
The Questors Theatre
Mattock Lane
Ealing
W5 5BQ



The Merchant of Venice

by William Shakespeare





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 18 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 our more intimate Studio Theatre.

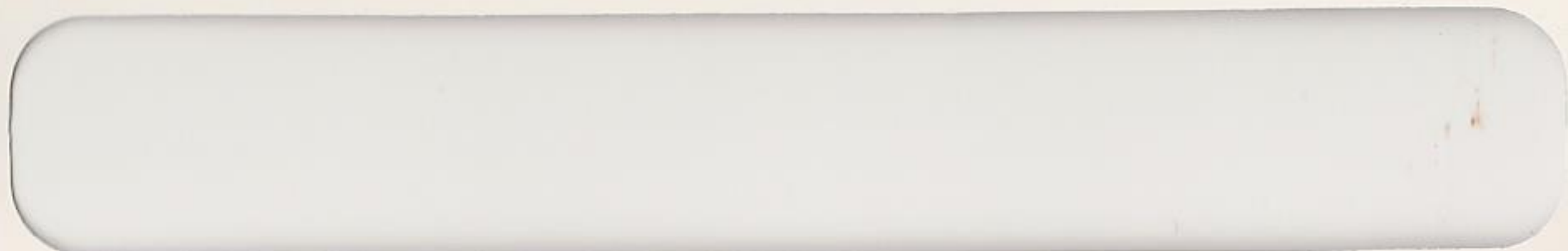
The Questors runs a professionally recognised two-year acting course in conjunction with Kingston College. There are also acting courses for beginners, free backstage training courses, visiting companies from home and abroad, regular art exhibitions, and workshops and clubs for young people. In short, there is something for everyone and with annual membership costing as little as £27.00 (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 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



The Merchant of Venice

by William Shakespeare

THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM

If comedy means laughter, *The Merchant of Venice* is a comedy - there are plenty of laughs. Critics have placed it amongst Shakespeare's comedies. Not surprisingly. Central to the action there is a light-hearted love story, including the fairy-tale "game of three" choice of "caskets", leading to two marriages between beautiful, wealthy and lively young people and a happy ending in a glorious setting - and marriage number three for luck. The temporary complication underlying this fairy-tale is cleared up to general satisfaction after a day in court - nobody dead, not a drop of blood shed. Portia is remembered (especially by many a young woman seeking an audition speech) for her magnificent if fruitless appeal to Shylock the Jew for mercy towards Antonio, the beleaguered Merchant. Shylock also provides a superb audition piece or two for young men. Lorenzo's balcony wooing of Jessica awakens romantic echoes of *Romeo and Juliet*. The lovers' row over lost rings in the last act recalls the enchantment of the *Midsummer Night's forest*.

Yet many audiences have left theatres after a performance of *The Merchant of Venice* with the smile frozen on their lips. They have an uneasy sense that All does not End Well in the world of Belmont, that Measure does not quite match Measure. There is a problem.

So where is the mismatch?

Here are some suggestions from themes raised in the play:

Love given. Love bought. Money borrowed. Money lent. Usury. Capitalism. Injustice. Mercy. Legal system. Venal court. Letter of the Law. Spirit of the Law. Bonds undertaken. Promises broken. Emotional blackmail. Friendship. Repressive parenting. Filial ingratitude. Theft. Generosity. Deception. Dissembling. Love. Hatred. Indifference. Racial abuse. Christian values. Inhumanity. Loyalty. Vows. Infidelity. Christian values. Cynicism. Prejudice. Religious oppression. Kindness. Cruelty.

And from the text:

Puns. Jokes. Wit. Ambiguities. Antitheses. Contradictions. Repetitions. Oppositions. Blank verse. Prose. Juxtapositions. Comparisons. Similes. Metaphors. Irony.

In addition, symbols - ships at sea, money, rings, flesh, blood, music, Belmont, Venice - develop complex meanings throughout the play.

The plot provides another layer of parallel situations and events.

Characterisation gives rich contrasts and similarities. "Which is the Merchant and which the Jew?" We see "real people" before us, living out (or ignoring) their moral dilemmas in exactly the sort of way we all have to. They do not have the benefit of foresight, as we do not. They ride the tides or hit the rocks of their lives head-on as we all have to, our "fortunes at sea." They engage our hearts as their drama unfolds before us, leaving us, as we do for ourselves, to sort out the significance of what has happened after the event.

We are exposed to all this duality in the brief hours of the performance. Feelings are stirred and thoughts started which are denied a comfortable catharsis of tears or the easy reconciliation of laughter. What is right? What is wrong? Where does our sympathy lie? Where should it lie? The values we see enacted are not presented as absolute. Everything seems relative, just as it often seems in our own lives.

The Merchant of Venice starts so many resonances for our hearts and heads that the sheer difficulty of pinning down any one meaning, reaching any one neat conclusion, leaves us with a sense of "problem". Morality play, love story, fairy tale, courtroom drama, romantic comedy, tragedy - not rolled into one, but operating simultaneously on our eyes and our ears, our heads and our hearts. We see, we hear, we think, we laugh and we cry.

"Problem Play", perhaps, but worth the solving.

THE PROBLEM OF THE MONEY

How much does Bassanio borrow?

"A ducat (literally, a piece coined by a duke or doge) is a Venetian gold piece, Ducatus Venetorum. Coryat estimated in 1608 that it was worth 4s 8d and Cotgrave in 1632 that 'they hold a rate much about 5 or 6 shillings sterling the piece'. By any calculation of values, therefore, three thousand ducats was a very large (a prodigal) sum. The six to eight hundred pounds sterling to which it amounted must be multiplied by at least twenty-five to reach a comparable sum today (i.e. about £20,000)." *

*(W. Moelwyn Merchant ed., Penguin New Shakespeare *The Merchant of Venice*, published in 1967.)

For a roughly comparable value for today (2004), multiply again by perhaps thirty:

Answer: £20,000 x 30 = £600,000.

The Merchant of Venice

by William Shakespeare

First performance of this production 21st May 2004

Cast *in order of appearance*

In Venice

ANTONIO, <i>a merchant</i>	Paul Francis
SALERIO, <i>a friend of Bassanio</i>	Andrew Michael Jones
SOLANIO, <i>a friend of Bassanio</i>	Jonathan Rose
BASSANIO	Iain Stirling
LORENZO	Douglas Murray
GRATIANO, <i>a friend of Bassanio</i>	David Palmer
SHYLOCK, <i>a Jew</i>	Keith Parry
LAUNCELOT GOBBO	Ciarán Corsar
JESSICA, <i>Shylock's daughter</i>	Aoife Hyslop
TUBAL, <i>Shylock's friend</i>	Tony Bromham
DUKE	Tony Bromham
OLD GOBBO	Reg Woodley

In Belmont

PORTIA	Elizabeth Fowler
NERISSA	Kate Langston
BALTHAZAR	Reg Woodley
PRINCE OF MOROCCO	Robin Ingram
PRINCE OF ARRAGON	Raymond Childe
OTHER PARTS played by:	Adeel Ahmed, Celine Boulhaya, Dorrit Pollard Davey, Falko, Tom Futerill, Robert Hall, Jack Marchant, William O'Connell, Liz O'Keeffe, Annalie Ranger, Matthew Wade

Production

Director	Peter Field
Assistant Director	Alison Pollard
Set Designer	Wanda Duszynska
Costume Designer	Raymond Childe
Lighting Designer	Tim Edwards
Sound Designer	Joel Schrire
Original Music	Mark Rose
Singers	Tina Harris, Nick Murza
Pianist	Brett Wellcome
Stage Manager	Sylvia Wall
Deputy Stage Managers	Tina Harris, Bron Beckford
Assistant Stage Managers	Jenny Richardson, Lois Flatt, Rachel Griffiths, Nikki Sowah, Geoffrey Morgan, Michelle Weaver, Tom McGuire
Lighting Operator	Sally Milton
Sound Operators	Catherine Hopkins, Inma del Castillo
Constructors	Anthony Bridges, Colin Horne, Tina Harris
Assistant Costume Designer	Kevin McGovern
Wardrobe Supervisor	Nichola Thomas
Wardrobe	Sue Peckitt, Fran Parry, Natalie Egleton, Jean Derby, Sarah Andrews, Jenny Yates, Helen Taylor
Hair and Makeup	Hayden Bloomfield, Ashlene Millard, Lianne Thorp
Prompters	Bridgett Strevens, Jean Masters
Thanks to:	Blue Dragon Laundry-Hillingdon, Chris Sydenham, Roger Brace, Doug King, Peter Collins, Gordon Miller, Sue Collins, AD Light, Andrew Dixon, Christopher Tomlins, Damien Lazell, Terry Mummery, Richard Mead, Mark White, Mike Hagan, Karen Tollady

Performance finishes at approx. 10.30pm, 5.15pm (matinée)

COMING SOON

An Evening with **Oliver Ford Davies**

In the **Playhouse**

Sunday 23rd May at 7.45pm

The highly respected actor and Vice President of The Questors, Oliver Ford Davies, will talk about his recent experiences as author and actor with King Lear at the Almeida and King Cromwell at the Orange Tree.

The Questors Theatre and 4th Wall, present

Into the Woods

The spectacular musical by

Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine

In the **Playhouse**

17 - 26 June

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." The Questors Theatre, 75 years old, and 4th Wall, one of West London's brightest new theatre groups, joined by the voice of Dame Judi Dench, invite you on a magical, musical roller-coaster of comedy, fantasy and self-discovery, to go home...

...happily ever after!

The Questors Student Group present

Summerfolk

by Maxim Gorky, in a version by Nick Dear

In the **Playhouse**

10 - 17 July

A satirical comedy about a group of self-centred middle class social climbers behaving badly towards each other. As they question the value of their work, their art and their leisure, they're shocked by the responses their disputes reveal. Relationships break under the strain, and scandals of business and infidelity are laid bare.

To help celebrate The Questors' 75th Anniversary, this production will feature student group members from previous years.

Also at the Questors

FEMALE PARTS

A season celebrating the non-masculine in everything

All in the **Studio**

A 'Sylvia Plath' Double Bill

£5.00

May 26, 27, 28, 29 at 7.45pm

The Evolution of Esther by David Hovatter

Using ritual, music and projection, this devised piece is a scathingly sad and honest portrayal of a young woman's mental deterioration.

Three Women by Sylvia Plath

A series of monologues examining birth, life and death from three different perspectives. The themes are profoundly intense but also uplifting and life-affirming.

Ringback by Ron Hart

June 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 at 7.45pm, 13 at 2.30pm

Members free, guests £8.50

A brilliantly funny story of Vee, Bee, Dee and Jay, four women trying to survive life, love and relationships in the turmoil of contemporary existence. It is a wonderfully compassionate and entertaining new comedy, based on the original Lunch Girls which Ron Hart first produced at the National Theatre in 1983. It has since been produced in ten languages all over the world and has been re-written and revised especially for the Questors.

Female Parts by Dario Fo and Franca Rame

June 11, 12, 18, 19

Approx 10.00pm, after Ringback

£3

Sexual politics and fairytales get a workout in four staged monologues dealing with the ups, downs, frustrations, joys, anger and tragedies of life from a female perspective. Naturally political but always entertaining and filled with tears and laughter, these short pieces centre on motherhood and deal humorously with the trials of being a wife and of relationships with men. A selection of the monologues will be presented separately on different nights during the run of Ringback.

Page Verses Stage

Poetry performance evening

13 June at 7.45pm

£5

Poets Rosemary Norman, Susan Hamlyn, Siriol Troup and Daphne Gloag will read from their own writing, reflecting on their experiences of contemporary life as women.

75th ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

75
years
1929 - 2004

The Questors Theatre is 75 years old this year, and we have many more events planned to help celebrate the event. Here's just a selection of what's in store:

Behind the Scenes at The Museum

An exhibition at the Gunnersbury House Museum containing a selection of our archive material - photographs, programmes, props, costumes, set models and more - from the 75 years of our history.

The exhibition runs until 14 August.

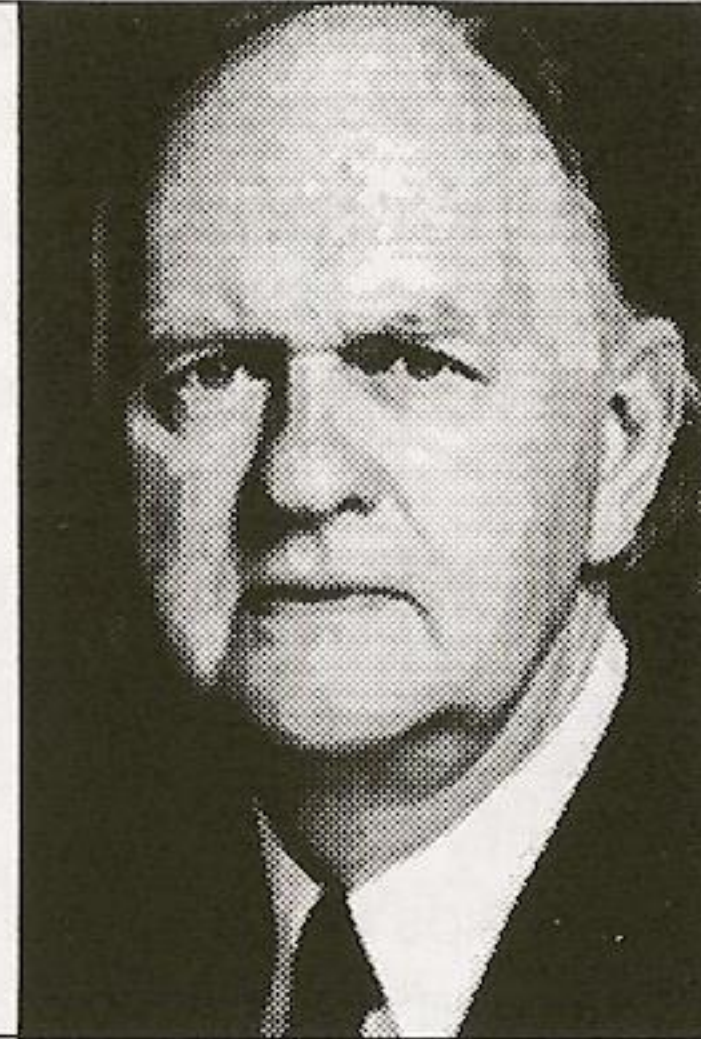
Opening times 1pm to 5pm weekdays and 1pm to 6pm weekends and bank holidays.
Admission free

An Evening with **Oliver Ford Davies**

In the **Playhouse**

Sunday 23rd May at 7.45pm

Oliver Ford Davies first joined The Questors in his teens. He says "I wanted to act but they needed bricklayers at the time so I helped to build what is now the Stanislavsky Room." As well as bricklaying, he went on to write, direct and teach, though he is now best known as an actor, and, of course, as our Vice President. He will be talking about his recent experiences acting in King Lear at the Almeida, and King Cromwell at the Orange Tree. He has also written a book, *Playing Lear* based on his experiences.



LANDMARK PRODUCTIONS

During the autumn, we will have a series of significant plays from the 75 years of The Questors existence. These will be:

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams

1949

In the **Playhouse**, 18 - 25 September

Blasted by Sarah Kane

1995

In the **Studio**, 23 - 30 October

Saved by Edward Bond

1965

In the **Studio**, 20 - 27 November

BECOME A CRITIC!

Did you like the Questors show you have just seen?
Did you hate it, or did it raise some interesting issues?
Did you think the acting was brilliant or the set surprising?
Did you enjoy the play or did you find it hard to follow?

**Share your thoughts with us at www.questors.org.uk/feedback
or read what others have said.**

Get the most from 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, and 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.

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. If you have some experience then The 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.

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 call the main office for details.

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 about active membership, you can ring the office on 020 8567 0011, Mon - Fri, 9.30 - 5.30, email us on active@questors.org.uk, or come along to the lower foyer at 8.00pm on the first Thursday of every month for an active members get together.

