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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.

In short, there's something for everyone, and with membership costing as little as £27.00 (including at least 8 free shows), it's great value for money as well.

If you're not a member already, now's the time to join. Don't just take my word for it, next time you're in West London call into our friendly Grapevine Bar on any Wednesday evening at 8pm for a free tour of the Theatre and a drink on us!

Here's to the next 75 years!

Judi Dench

Dame Judi Dench
President of The Questors Theatre

The Recruiting Officer

by George Farquhar

THE QUESTORS THEATRE

George Farquhar - A Brief Chronology

1677 Born in Londonderry, son of an impoverished Church of England clergyman.

1689 Presumably still in Londonderry during the Jacobite siege of the city from April to July (and claimed by his mother to have fought in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690)

1694 Entered Trinity College, Dublin as 'sizar' - receiving scant board and tuition in return for menial duties.

1696 Left Trinity College without his degree, and acted (indifferently, by all accounts) at the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin, making his debut as Othello.

1697 Accidentally wounded another actor in a stage duel, and, apparently on the advice of his friend and fellow actor Robert Wilkes, left for London to try his fortune as a playwright.

1698 His first play, the comedy *Love and a Bottle* (published 1699), performed with moderate success at Drury Lane in December, and his anecdotal novella, *Adventures of Covent Garden*, published anonymously in the same month.

1699 First performance of *The Constant Couple*; or, *A Trip to the Jubilee* (published 1700) at Drury Lane in November. Credited with the 'discovery' of Anne Oldfield, who created the role of Sylvia in *The Recruiting Officer*, in the Mitre Tavern.

1700 Contributed to a published collection of *Familiar and Courtly Letters*.

1701 *Sir Harry Wildair*, the unsuccessful sequel to *The Constant Couple*, performed at Drury Lane in April, and published. Contributed to *Letters of Wit, Politicks and Morality*.

1702 His adaptation of Fletcher's *The Wild Goose Chase* as *The Inconstant* (published 1702) performed at Drury Lane without much success, just before the closing of the Theatres for six weeks following the death of William III in March. The satirical comedy *The Twin Rivals* (published 1703) followed in December, also at Drury Lane, and was an even more pronounced failure. His miscellany of occasional verse and letters, *Love and Business*, published, including the epistolary *Discourse upon Comedy*.

1703 Marriage to Margaret Pemell, a widow with three children, whose poverty apparently surprised him. The short farce, *The Stage-Coach* (published 1704) adapted from the French, performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields in December, or January 1704, and became an extremely popular afterpiece.

1704 Commissioned as a Lieutenant of Grenadiers, securing him a small but reliable income of £54 a year. Received almost £100 from a Dublin benefit performance of *The Constant Couple*. Birth of his first daughter, Anne Marguerite.

1705 On recruiting service in Lichfield and Shrewsbury. Birth of his second daughter, Mary.

1706 *The Recruiting Officer* (set in Shrewsbury) performed successfully at Drury Lane in April and published. Well received, but Farquhar was already ill, presumably with tuberculosis, and may have sold his commission to raise money.

1707 *The Beaux' Stratagem* (set in Lichfield) performed at the new theatre in the Haymarket in March, and published. But Farquhar was now gravely ill and he died in a 'back garret' in St. Martin's Lane in April or May, in his thirtieth year. The funeral was paid for by Wilks, to whom Farquhar entrusted the care of his 'two helpless girls'. Posthumous publication of the unauthorized *Love's Catechism* (largely derived from *The Beaux' Stratagem*) and of the heroic poem *Barcellona*.

Chronology compiled by Simon Trussler.

The War Offstage

The action of the play takes place in the rural peace of Shropshire but there was a major war raging on the Continent, rumbles of which can occasionally be heard in the play.

In 1700, six years before the play was written, the King of Spain died without having produced an heir. To the horror of William III of England, he left all the vast possessions of the Spanish Empire to Louis XIV's grandson. Spain, of course, immediately withdrew from the alliance with William and went over to the French side. War was now inevitable between France and Spain on the one hand and the Allies (including England, the Dutch Republic and the Holy Roman Empire) on the other. The fighting, which broke out in 1702 and lasted for 12 years, is known as The War

of the Spanish Succession because the Allies' main object was to stop Louis XIV's grandson from inheriting the Spanish Empire. It was Marlborough's victory at Blenheim in 1704 (from which Plume and Kite have just returned) that ended the threat of French domination. If France had won the battle, Europe would have been at Louis' mercy. The Battle of Blenheim saved the Holy Roman Empire, made the French look ridiculous and forced Louis to realise that sooner or later he would have to stop fighting and leave his neighbours alone.

Marlborough fought many more actions during the war, including three great battles of Ramillies, Oudenarde and Malplaquet, but never won another victory so brilliant or so decisive as Blenheim. The longer the war lasted the harder the French fought: and Marlborough's last victory at Malplaquet was only gained after a bloody series of attacks on strong positions, which cost thousands of lives. The Appletrees and Pearmaines, poachers, butchers and smiths of England died bravely for their country. By the treaty of Utrecht 1713-4 England made important gains-bases which gave England a control of the Mediterranean that lasted over 200 years. Thus England emerged from the war as the strongest naval power in Europe with a flying start in International trade. The most tangible reward given to Marlborough was Blenheim Palace near Oxford which was designed by Sir John Vanbrugh the architect and playwright and built largely at Queen Anne's expense to show the nation's gratitude.

'Pressing'

The Impressment Act 1703 - 1705 empowers three Justices of the Peace to 'Raise and Levy such Able-bodied Men as have not any Calling or Employment, or visible Means for their Maintenance, and Livelihood, to serve as Soldiers. The respective Officer who shall receive such new Raised Men, shall out of the Levy-Money, pay to every Person so raised, Twenty Shillings, and to the Constable, or other Parish Officer employed in the Raising of them the Sum not exceeding Ten Shillings a Man.'

Volunteers were to be paid twice as much, forty shillings, so Kite's attempt to enlist the bumpkins for 23/6 must be regarded as cheating. But volunteering or pressing, after receiving the money, 'and Reading the said Articles of War, every Person so Raised shall be deemed a Listed Soldier to all Intents and Purposes, and shall be subject to the Discipline of War, and in the case of Desertion shall be punished as a Deserter'. The punishment was death. If they did not desert they were paid 4d a day for 'Diet and Small-Beer'.

The Recruiting Officer exploits all this - the two parts of recruiting: volunteering and impressments; the legal bribes and threats; even the hardship of army life, implicit in the tricks needed to lure the men otherwise faced with vagrancy or a fourteen hour working day. Farquhar concealed neither the chicanery of recruitment nor the dangers of war. He makes his Officers sprightly and clever, like Plume and Kite. They resemble stock figures - the wit, the adroit valet, the fop - from other plays of the time. The locals accept them, they huzza for the Queen and declare her 'the best king of 'em all'. No one really challenges Plume's procedures. Farquhar's basic plot is almost a comic documentary.

Farquhar's characters, however, come from contemporary fiction. He supplies a 'breeches' part in which an actress dresses as a man. Sylvia's military disguise might have been borrowed from a number of sources. Kite's masquerade as the conjuror has many dramatic precedents. Brazen, of course can trace his family tree through dense foliage of Restoration fops. Justice Balance comes from a group of crusty Restoration fathers, whose function as 'blocking characters' he maintains.

Farquhar's use of the country as a setting is perhaps the finest stroke of inspiration in the play and may have been prompted by an attempt to compliment the Shrewsbury folk who gave the recruiting playwright their hospitality. Before Farquhar, provincials had always been treated with contempt on the Restoration stage. Sir Willful Witwood and Sir Tunbelly Clumsy come to mind. Farquhar, however, treats Justice Balance with respect and he is charming and sensible. Shrewsbury values become the normative values of the play. Thus Farquhar gave *The Recruiting Officer* a freshness that has captivated critics ever since.

The Recruiting Officer

by George Farquhar

First performance of this production 12 March 2004

Cast *In order of appearance*

Sergeant Kite <i>sergeant to Plume</i>	Anthony Curran
Thomas Appletree <i>a countryman</i>	Matt Sheahan
Costar Pearmain <i>a countryman</i>	James Goodden
Captain Plume <i>a recruiting officer</i>	Robert Seatter
Mr Worthy <i>a gentleman of Shropshire</i>	Simon Thomas
Melinda <i>a lady of fortune</i>	Annabelle Williams
Silvia <i>daughter of Balance</i>	Helen Parkinson
Lucy <i>Melinda's maid</i>	Jananne Rahman
Mr Balance <i>a justice</i>	Howard Benbrook
Servant to Balance	Matt Sheahan
Rose <i>a country wench</i>	Kerri Logan
Bullock <i>a country clown</i>	Andy Ashford
Captain Brazen <i>a recruiting officer</i>	Francis Lloyd
Smith <i>a blacksmith</i>	Derek Chandler
Pluck <i>a butcher</i>	James Goodden
Bridewell <i>a constable</i>	Derek Chandler
Mr Scale <i>a justice</i>	Geoffrey Morgan
Maid to Melinda	Penny Seyfert
Prisoner One <i>a poacher</i>	James Goodden
Poacher's wife	Kerri Logan
Prisoner two <i>a coal miner</i>	Matt Sheahan
Miner's 'wife'	Julia Cooke
Justice Balance's steward	Will O'Connell
Drummer	Jonathan Jones, Andrew Weller
Chopper (Pluck's dog)	Roxie
Maisie (Scale's dog)	herself

The action takes place in various locations in the town of
Shrewsbury in September 1704

There will be one interval

Production

Director	Anne Neville
Stage Manager	Les Fraser
Deputy Stage Manager	Debbie Jones
Set Design	The Questors Design Team
Set Painting	Dennis Dracup, Penny Letham, Marie Esperanca
Props	Peter Salvietto
Lighting Designer	Andrew Dixon
Lighting Operators	Roz Rocher
Sound Designer	Mike Caddy
Sound Operator	Inma del Castillo
Set Construction	Mike Hagan, Karen Tollady, Louis Tonna with assistance from the construction team
Asst. Stage Managers	Marie Esperanca, William O'Connell, Penny Letham, Matthew Simpson, Ruth Parry, Louis Tonna, Sean Thomas, Tom Mcguire, Tom Meagher, Julia Cooke
Make-up and Wigs	Sarah Owen, Nici Huck, Vikki Irvine, Carla Richards
Costumes	Sarah Andrews and members of the Questors Wardrobe Team
Thanks to	Peter Kennedy, Julie Cruttenden, Peter Field, Daniel Tarrant, Colin Horne, Alan Smith, Joel Schrire, Martin Stoner, The Boys Brigade

COMING SOON

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 in 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.

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 XXX, which should make the debate even more relevant.



Make sure you don't miss:

Our Country's Good

by Timberlake Wertenbaker

Presented by the 57th Student group

In the Studio, March 24 - April 3

An inspirational play about a group of convicts in 18th Century Australia, struggling with their new environment, and with trying to put on a performance of *The Recruiting Officer*.

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.