

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

Questors

Theatre

Habeas Corpus





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!

Judi Dench

Dame Judi Dench
President of The Questors Theatre



Habeas Corpus

A farce by Alan Bennett

Habeas Corpus by Alan Bennett

In *Habeas Corpus*, his third play, written in 1973, Bennett set out to write a farce 'without the paraphernalia' which normally accompanies farce. He admits that he didn't resist the falling trousers gag but points out that they fall off instantaneously 'as if by divine intervention'. It's one of the few pieces he's written that isn't naturalistic and, as such, is one of his favourites. He wrote it without considering how it could be staged and his characters inhabit a strange version of Brighton that, if one takes the text too literally, shifts in time and space and is devoid of the logical motivations that underpin most drama. The Broadway production attempted to bring some reality to the set and failed because, as Bennett himself states, 'There is just enough text to carry the performers on and off, provided they don't dawdle. If they have to negotiate doors or stairs or potted plants or get anywhere except into the wings, then they will be left stranded halfway across the stage, with no line left with which to haul themselves off'.

For years, seventies plays were too close to be termed 'period pieces' and too far away to be contemporary drama. It is true that *Habeas Corpus* has more of a flavour of the sixties about it and, indeed, some things would be 'realer' if it were put back ten years. In fact, there are different, but just as many, illogicalities when one sets it in either decade; the fact is that disbelief must be suspended to allow the gags to mount up.

Nowadays, references to 'the permissive society' (the term used in the sixties to denote the increasingly tolerant and liberal attitudes to sex), to Kenneth Clark's television series *Civilisation* (which traced the thread of human achievement from the fall of Rome to the birth of evolutionary theory) and to the old time movie stars, Jayne Mansfield and Dame Anna Neagle might leave some of our younger members somewhat mystified. However, as a period piece, we can undo our corsets a little and have a good old laugh at the bawdy, strictly un-PC, seaside postcard humour.

Although it is a comedy (and an extremely funny one), it is tinged with the bathos that Bennett is famous for. The Wicksteeds and their unfortunate acquaintances are almost all dropping apart in some way. Muriel says, 'We're all of us pretty well headed for the sere and yellow. It's time's hurrying footsteps all round these days, isn't it?' Further to this, the characters are almost all selfish, obsessed and, as in the best comedy, cruel to each other. Wicksteed himself is a monster: he has a complete lack of regard for his wife, his son, his patients and abuses his '... position as their trusty old physician' with impunity. Sir Percy, president of the B.M.A., is not much better, Muriel's desperate search for love is frightening to see ... Only Amelia Swabb, the fairy godmother/domestic help can 'take the wider view'. Why the Wicksteeds put up with her recalcitrance is a mystery but it's fortunate Bennett decided they do: she's a choice creation and one he evidently had enormous fun with (he played the part himself, replacing Patricia Hayes in the original cast at the Lyric Theatre). Whilst acknowledging these darker elements lurking beneath the surface, we haven't tried to find an overt message beyond the indisputable fact that we're all getting older and, as Bennett once said, 'I think most people look back and feel their lives should have been much more full of sex'.

Alan Bennett quoted:

'If I was to listen to a Cockney woman chatting ... and I can't say I ever have, I would be listening conscious of my intentions (*to write about her*), which would not have the same effect as what I absorbed in Leeds as a child.'

'I could never characterise a policeman or violent characters. I write about people who express themselves through words rather than action. I could never write that Arthur Daley thing.'

'I always think you become the characters about whom you are writing. I tend to act each one out. Anyone watching me write would think I was quite crazy.'

'I never have the experience one is supposed to have where the characters take over their creator's life. In my plays the characters never seem to take over. In fact, I often find it very difficult for them to go anywhere or do anything.'

'When I was asked by Ian McKellen how I viewed the subject (*of homosexuality*), I told him it was a bit like asking a man who has just crawled through the Sahara Desert whether he prefers Malvern Water or Perrier.'

'No, I'm not happy but I'm not unhappy about it.'
(*The Old Country*)

Habeas Corpus

by Alan Bennett

First performance 30 September 2005

Cast

Arthur Wicksteed	Francis Lloyd
Muriel Wicksteed	Caroline Bleakley
Dennis Wicksteed	Matt Sheahan
Constance Wicksteed	Kate Langston
Mrs Swabb	Anne Neville
Canon Throbbing	James Goodden
Lady Rumpers	Sue Solomon
Felicity Rumpers	Xanthe Fuller
Mr Shanks	Chris Ifould
Sir Percy Shorter	Anthony Curran
Mr Purdue	David Emmet

*The play takes place in 'Brighton's plush,
silk stocking district of Hove' in 1973.*

Running time: 2 hours
Interval: 15 mins

Production Team

Director	Richard Gallagher
Set Designer & Scenic Artist Assisted by	Alison Gregory Martin Acton
Lighting Designers	Joel and Sally Milton
Lighting Operator	Charlie Lucas
Sound	Colin Horne
Costume	Jennie Yates
Stage Manager	Alec Atchison
Deputy Stage Manager	Eric Lister
Assistant Stage Managers	Jane Arnold-Forster, Ben Davies, Rachel Griffiths, Grant Smith
Properties	Harriet Parsonage
Prompter	Pam Smith
Make up and hair	Kiran Mutto, Marie Nolan, Rebecca Taylor
Set Construction	Martin Acton, Mike Hagan, Tina Harris, Colin Horne
Poster Design	Keith Malkin
Photography	Ian Cole, David Mosby
With many thanks to	Martin Acton, Duncan Alldridge, Roger Brace, Moragh Gee, Freddy Henry, Roger Kelly, Don Kincaid, Alex Marker, Tom McGuire, Jonathan Rose, Arthur Schrire, Chris Sydenham, Chris Tomlins, Louis Tonna, The House Services Team
With special thanks to	Kirby's Flying Ballet



Picture Credit Ian Cole

Xanthe Fuller as Felicity Rumpers and
Francis Lloyd as Arthur Wicksteed

COMING SOON

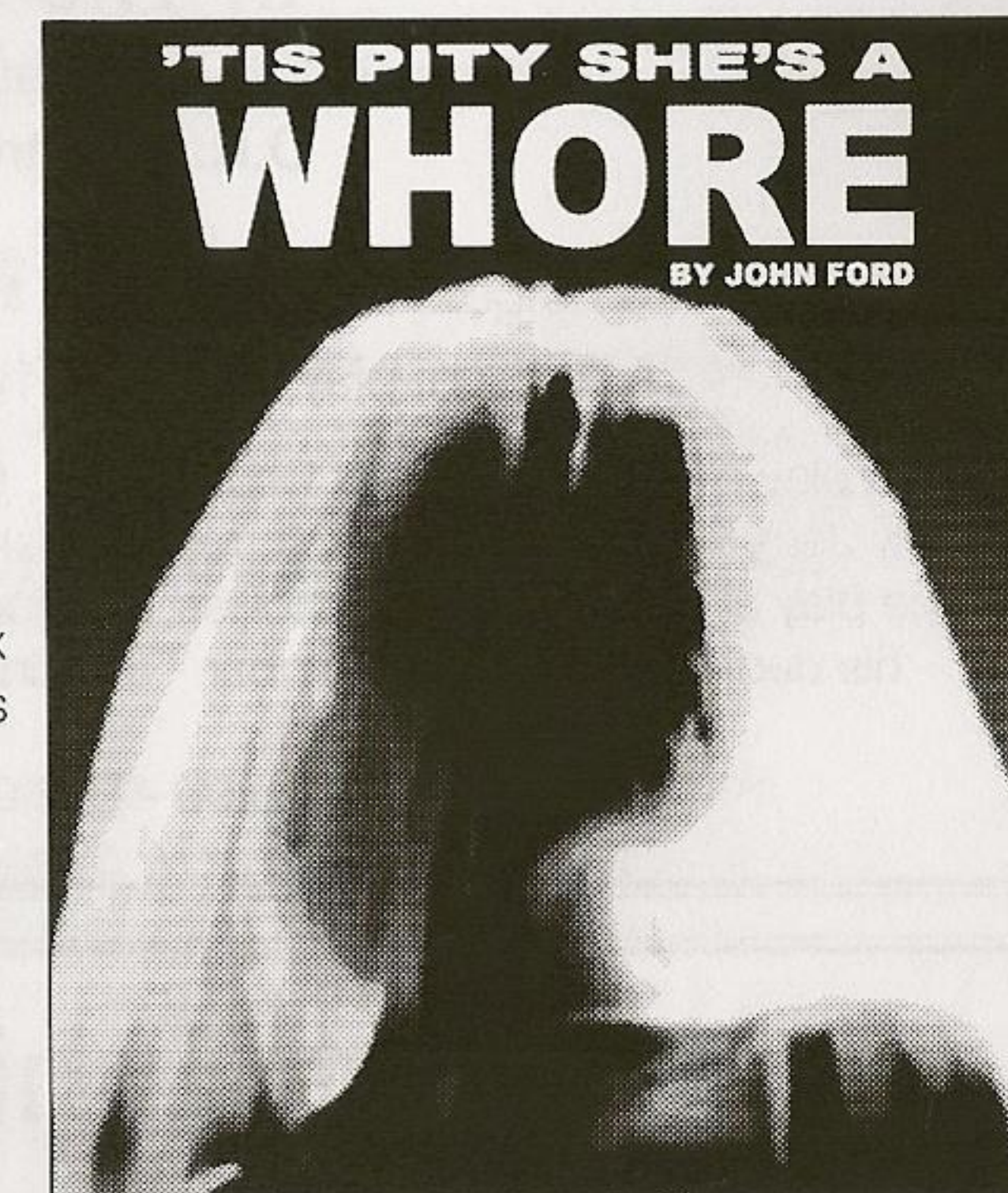
In The Playhouse

October 28, 29 at 7.45pm, 30 at 2.30pm,
November 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 at 7.45pm

The Questors Theatre presents 'Tis Pity She's A Whore

by John Ford

The 1993 film version of the Jacobean tragedy *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* was marketed as a 'sex and horror flick'. It's easy to see why, dealing as it does with themes of incest, lust, intrigue, corruption, deceit, violence, torture and murder. This production, set in a post-war Mafia world, puts this into a recognisable context, the better to explore the issues raised in this challenging piece of English theatre.



In The Studio

November 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 at
7.45pm 6 at 2.30pm

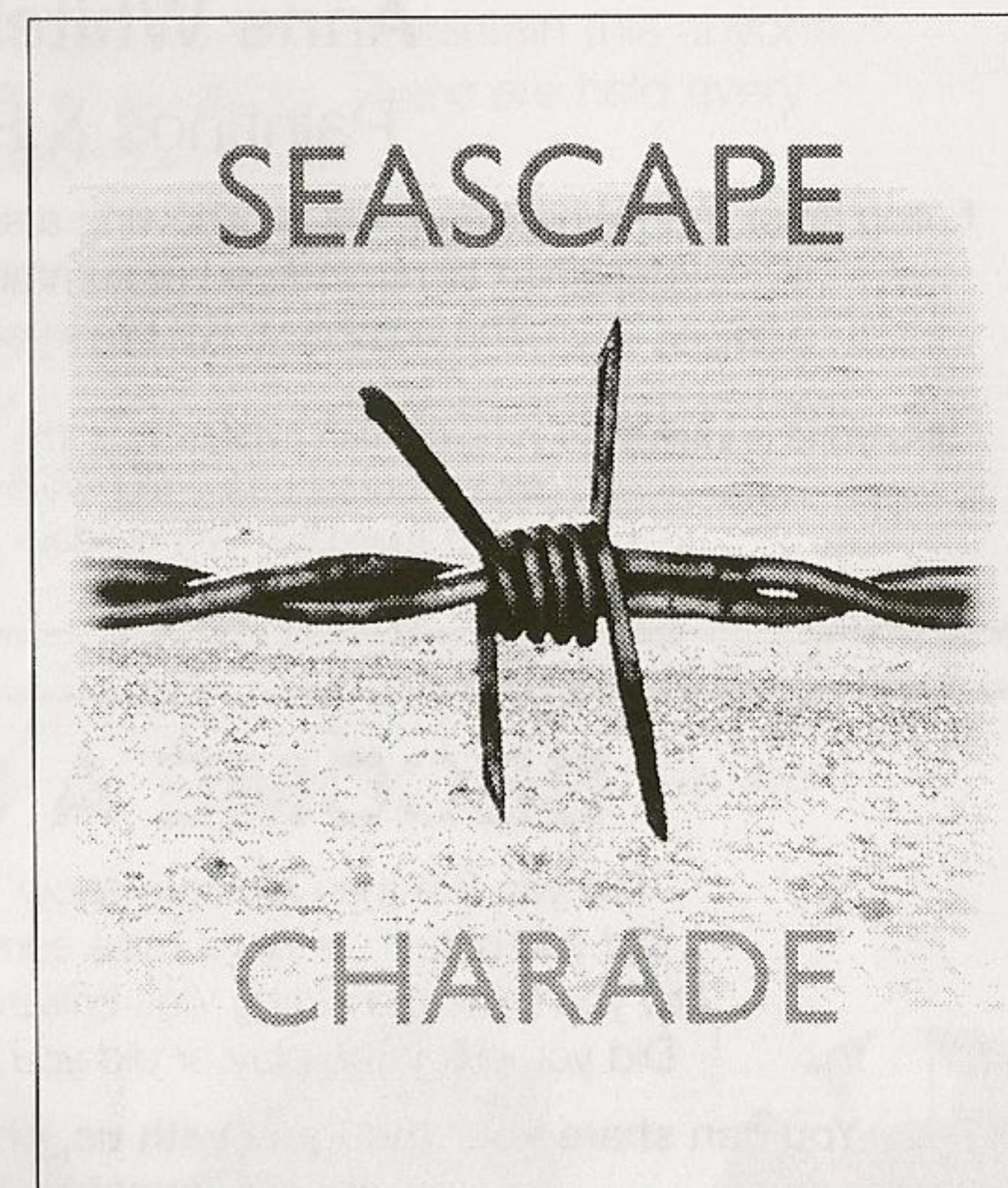
The Questors Theatre presents Seascape and Charade

A double bill by Tony Rushforth

Seascape: The action focuses on two contrasting, romantic brief encounters. This moving and lyrical play is set against the unusual and dramatic wartime backdrop of the internment camp in Port Eren in the Isle of Man.

Charade: A vigorous and entertaining comedy set in West Yorkshire. A quartet of family stars from the local operatic society are dressed in their costumes from *Hello Dolly* to do a photo call and interview with a local irascible reporter.

In spite of the celebratory bonhomie, the characters have their own secret agenda and struggle to keep up appearances. Rather Priestley meets Alan Ayckbourn!



In The Studio

October 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 at 8pm, October 8 at 3pm

O.K. Theatre Presents

Dino

A musical play by Tony Philips and Alexis Saunders

This play explores the life of Dean Martin, touching upon his manic partnership with Zany Jerry Lewis, the Rat Pack, his friendship with Sinatra and of course - the ladies! The play also highlights the movies, the songs, his relaxed casual attitude to life and his dedicated calling to the bar - the kind of bar that dispenses drinks not law.

Tickets £10.00 - Box Office 020 7240 1958

Art Exhibitions

in the Grapevine Bar

24 September to 8 October 2005

Anne Whitehead

Paintings & Prints

Ealing artist, Ann Whitehead, will be showing a selection of small paintings and prints designed to remind you of summer scenes and places.

The emphasis will be on colour and light

If anyone is interested in holding an exhibition at The Questors and would like further details, please contact Jane Mason on 020 8567 0011 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays.

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?

You can share your thoughts with us, or read what others have said,
at www.questors.org.uk

Just log on - type your comments - and click the SEND button.
It couldn't be easier.

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.

