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Just send us your details, and we'll keep you informed about our forthcoming productions at The Questors.

Pick up a form from the Box Office foyer, or write, phone or email us with your details.

## Join us

If you enjoy theatre, why not join us and become a member of The Questors?

If you enjoy a regular night out at the theatre with friends, why not become a member of The Questors? As a Playgoer member, you'll receive a 20 per cent discount on your ticket to most Questors productions, free tickets for your children to most Questors productions, regular information about our productions, and membership of the Grapevine Bar. Or you could join as a Company member and receive a 50 per cent discount on your ticket, the monthly Club Magazine and opportunities to get involved in our productions, in addition to all the benefits for Playgoer members. And the basic Friend membership gives you membership of the Grapevine plus regular information.

You can get all of this for just £26.00 for Playgoer membership, £52.50 (£34.00 concessions) for Company membership, and £12.00 for Friends, with discounts for payment by Direct Debit. You can find Membership Application forms in the Box Office foyer, or just phone the Theatre Office.

**THE QUESTORS THEATRE**  
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Registered Charity no 207518



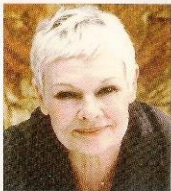
**THE QUESTORS THEATRE, EALING**



# Bloody Poetry



**THE QUESTORS THEATRE, EALING**



**Welcome** to The Questors Theatre,  
one of London's best kept secrets –  
except to its 2,000 members.



How do I know about The Questors?

I am proud to have been its President  
for over 20 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 perks of membership) and the many and varied shows in our 370-seat 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 The Questors Youth Theatre. In short, theatre is something for everyone, and with annual membership from £12.00 to £52.50 depending on your chosen level of commitment, it's great value for money as well.

But don't just take my word for it. The next time you're in Ealing, 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

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Registered Charity no 207516



## Bloody Poetry

by Howard Brenton



## Bloody Poetry

I first read *Bloody Poetry* in 1990. As a 22-year-old the play gripped me immediately. It spoke of youth, idealism, and passion – all of those things that young men are supposed to feel! Seventeen years later, on the cusp of my 40s and finally having the opportunity to direct the play, some sort of stocktaking of a play I have admired for so many years is necessary.

At one point in the play, Shelley reads part of Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' to the others, and Byron pounces on it as a poem of defeat 'aching with a middle-aged regret for the loss of youth's fire'. I wonder if Howard Brenton, looking back on his 1983 play, sees it as one of defeat for his protagonists.

Charting the loves and losses of the characters, one gets an impression of what it must have been like to try and live their Utopian philosophies in the teeth of a society that saw them at best as an exotic amusement and at worst as a threat to its very security. Imagine that: poets so dangerous that the British government found it necessary to condemn them and organise itself against them. Exiled, followed across Europe by newspaper reporters, spied on by thrill-seekers, tourists and government spies, Byron and 'the Shelley managerie' must have found life very difficult despite their positions of privilege as a Lord and the son of a baronet, respectively.

And one must consider that it was easier for men to behave this way than women: society was on their side. Women couldn't sue for divorce, they were expected to run the household, balance the books and childbirth was a dangerous thing in the 19th century. As the play shows, it is Mary, Claire, Harriet and their children that bear the brunt of running around Europe after these capricious poets. In military terms, in Shelley and Byron's war against society, they were collateral damage.

Another irony of the play is that while advocating that all of society should be free, that the 'Men of England' should rise up against their masters, take control and let no one dictate to them, their position of privilege was supported by a succession of servants, maids, gardeners, boatmen, admirers and even physician/biographers like John William Polidori.

Brenton's characterisation of Polidori is intriguing, if not strictly historically accurate. It is also very modern, allowing our 21st century audience a view into the 19th century world by speaking directly to them. Polidori develops from devoted, if suffering, acolyte to spite-driven tabloid journalist, snapping up gossip of the poets and disseminating it back home. This gives *Bloody Poetry* a real thrill, bringing the play bang into the present. For literary magazines, read *Hoar* magazine!

To my mind, Byron, Shelley, Mary and Claire were the first modern 'celebrities' in the way they were reported upon, their conduct discussed, their clothes and looks copied – like rock stars, actors or, dare I say it, reality stars! And Polidori... the first paparazzo (appropriate, as his father was Italian!).

So what could they do, surrounded by opprobrium? As Shelley says, 'Act, as if I were free. Write, as if I were free.' But at what cost? As the play shows, to attempt to live this lifestyle in the 19th century resulted in ignominy, exile and death.

So to sum up, *Bloody Poetry* is still a play of commitment and passion in the face of opposition, of defiance and single-mindedness. However, it is also play of sadness at the cost of what must be sacrificed for such 'freedom's'.

### Howard Brenton

'I think the theatre's a real bear pit. It's not the place for reasoned discussion. It is the place for really savage insights.'

Howard Brenton has written or co-written more than forty plays, including *Christie in Love*, *Magnificence*, *Sore Throats*, *The Romans in Britain*, *Weapons of Happiness*, *Pravda* (with David Hare), *Greenland*, *Berlin Berlin*, *Paul* and *In Extremis*. He is currently working on a four-part television drama about contemporary China for BBC2 and a new play for the National Theatre.

### Reading more

I have been grateful to a number of biographers for giving the necessary historical and poetical background to the play. It has been amazing to read the sheer detail of writing that surrounds these characters and their lives. And it has been instructive to note where history and Brenton's play diverge! I would recommend these to anyone seeking further information:

*Shelley: The Pursuit* by Richard Holmes; *Mary Shelley* by Miranda Seymour; *The Godwins and The Shelleys* by William St Clair; *Byron: Life and Legend* by Fiona MacCarthy; *A Single Summer with L.B.* by Derek Marlowe.

### Poems quoted in the play

Percy Bysshe Shelley: 'Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni', 'England in 1819', 'To the Men of England', 'Ode to Heaven', 'On Death', *The Revolt of Islam* (Cantos II, X), *Queen Mab*, 'Julian and Maddalo', 'The Mask of Anarchy', 'The Fugitives', *Prometheus Unbound*, 'To Constantia, Singing'.

William Wordsworth: 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood'.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: *Christabel*.

### Music in Bloody Poetry

For those of you expecting to hear some pleasant 19th-century classical or folk music between scenes, tonight's soundtrack may be a bit of a surprise. We've tried to give a selection of music and sounds that are emotionally appropriate to the show and yet also touch base with today. The music used in tonight's show includes:

'Shine On You Crazy Diamond', Pink Floyd; 'Rebel Rebel', David Bowie; 'Fruit Tree', Nick Drake; 'Roads', Portishead; 'Lust For Life', Iggy Pop; 'Gorecki', Lamb; 'Spanish Castles In Space', The Orb; 'Love Will Tear Us Apart', Susanna and the Magical Orchestra; 'Dead Queens', Espers; 'Terrific Speech', Mogwai; 'Sunrise', Pulp

John McSpadyen

# Bloody Poetry

by Howard Brenton

First performance 27 January 2007

## Cast (in order of appearance)

Percy Bysshe Shelley	John Barron
Claire Clairmont	Sarah Hannah
Mary Shelley	Izabella Urbanowicz
George, The Lord Byron	Tristan Marshall
Dr William Polidori	Dieter Thomas
Harriet Westbrook, later her Ghost	Ann-Marie Walsh
<i>with</i> Danny Bailey, Catherine Collinson, Holly Dempsey and Russell Fleet	

## Production Team

Director	John McSpadyen
Set Designer	Hilda Wilson
Costume Design	Josie Thomas
Lighting Design	Tim Hayward
Sound Design	Mark Pummell
Stage Manager	Clare Watson
Deputy Stage Manager	Michelle Weaver
Lighting Operator	Katy Gallantry
Follow Spot	Chris Edwards
Lighting Riggers	Richard Bunn, Andy Torble, Francois Langton
Sound Operators	Mark Pummell, Alun Jones
Properties	Harriet Parsonage
Hair and Make Up	Donnica Tribe, Diane Valtisiaris
Wardrobe	Sue Peckitt, Elisabeth Thomas, Letizia Tiley
Assistant Stage Managers	Katy Baggs, Sophie Belloui, Amanda Bryant, Zoë Hammond
Rehearsal Prompt	Wendi Kelly
Get in/ Construction Team	Mike Hagan, Chris Edwards, Ruth Parry, James Bromfield

### Thanks to:

House Services, for the early get-in; Sarah Andrews and Raymond Childe, for their invaluable costume advice; Barrie Addenbrooke

## Act 1

*Switzerland, Summer 1816*

Scene 1	The coach
Scene 2	The shore of Lake Geneva
Scene 3	The countryside near the Villa Diodati
Scene 4	The Villa Diodati
Scene 5	The Villa Diodati, later
Scene 6	A beach, a boat

*There will be a 20 minute interval between Act 1 and Act 2*

## Act 2

*England, Winter 1816-17*

Scene 1	The Serpentine, Hyde Park, London
Scene 2	The garden, Bysshe's house, Bath

*England, Spring 1818*

Scene 3	The beach, Dover
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*Italy, 1818-1819*

Scene 4	The garden of the Casa Bertini, Bagna di Lucca
Scene 5	By the Grand Canal, Venice
Scene 6	The Palazzo Mocenigo, Venice
Scene 7	A gondola. Later, a madhouse
Scene 8	Hotel room, Venice
Scene 9	Hotel room, Venice

*Italy/England, Summer 1822*

Scene 10	The Gulf of Spezia
Scene 11	A dinner party, London
Scene 12	Shelley's boat, The Don Juan
Scene 13	A beach, Via Reggio

**John Barron** *Percy Bysshe Shelley*

John Barron joined The Questors in 2003. Since then he has been in several plays including *Derek* in *Once a Catholic*, *Yasha* in *The Cherry Orchard*, *Mesrin* in *The Dispute* and *Orin* in *Little Shop of Horrors*, as well as plays with other companies.

**Sarah Hannah** *Claire Clairmont*

This is Sarah's second appearance for The Questors following *Vincent* in *Brixton*. After graduating from drama school Sarah has worked at a variety of fringe theatres as well as the National Theatre and several films.

**Izabella Urbanowicz** *Mary Shelley*

Izabella joined The Questors as a Youth Group member in 1997. Since graduating from the Student Group in 2004, she has appeared in *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Enchanted Knight*, *Travesties*, *This Happy Breed*, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, *Coda4maKbet*, *The London Cuckolds* and most recently *Vincent* in *Brixton*.

**Tristan Marshall** *George, The Lord Byron*

Tristan joined the Questors in 2003 and has appeared in *Suddenly Last Summer*, *A Russian in The Woods* and *Oh! What A Lovely War*.

**Dieter Thomas** *Dr William Polidori*

Most recently at The Questors Dieter has appeared in as *Kristrian* in *Coda4maKbet*, *Dan* in *New Boy* and *Marco* in *Dolly West's Kitchen* (also directed by John McSpadyen). Dieter has also performed in musicals in Richmond and Parkshot and also directed.

**Ann-Marie Walsh** *Harriet Westbrook, later her Ghost*

Ann-Marie graduated from the Student Group in July 2006 and *Bloody Poetry* is her first production as a member of the acting company. Theatre credits as a student include *Saturday*, *Sunday*, *Monday*, *Henry V* and *Plaza Sulte*.

**Danny Bailey** *Servant/Madman/Dinner Guest*

Danny has been a member of The Questors since 2003, participating in numerous productions including *Oliver!*, *Guards! Guards!* and recently the spectacular *Peter Pan*.

**Catherine Collinson** *Servant/Madwoman/Dinner Guest*

Catherine joined The Questors in 2004 working as an ASM on *Road* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Since completing *Acting for All* in 2005, she appeared in the parade cast of *Far Away* and with other companies.

**Holly Dempsey** *Servant/Madwoman/Dinner Guest*

Holly is currently a member of the Introductory Group, and *Bloody Poetry* is the first production that she has worked on at The Questors.

**Russell Fleet** *Servant/Madman/Dinner Guest*

Russell returns to acting after a 10-year absence. He has appeared in fringe venues in South East London, and he can be seen in the forthcoming production of *Much Ado About Nothing* here at The Questors.

**John McSpadyen** *Director*

John has been involved in amateur theatre for over twenty years. His previous productions for The Questors include *Trainspotting*, *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*,

*Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, *Road*, and *Dolly West's Kitchen*. He also directs for other companies and fringe venues.

**Clare Watson** *Stage Manager*

Having stage managed John McSpadyen's last show, *Dolly West's Kitchen*, Clare's Questors career has also included stage managing *The Shape of Things* and last season's Minack production *The London Cuckolds*. She also used her professional skills chaperoning on *Oliver!* and *Peter Pan*. She recently became chairman of the Stage Management Department.

**Hilda Wilson** *Set Design*

Hilda's previous designs for The Questors include *Dolly West's Kitchen*, *Little Shop of Horrors* and *As You Like It*. She has also designed for other companies and national tours, and as a set designer in the events industry.

**Josie Thomas** *Costume Design*

Josie joined the Wardrobe Department at The Questors in September and has previously assisted on *Dog in a Manager* and *Peter Pan*.

**Tim Hayward** *Lighting Design*

Tim Hayward joined The Questors thirty years ago as a stage manager. As Workshop Manager, he initiated the building of the current construction shop. Recently he has been lighting designer on *Blasted*, *As You Like It* and *Dolly West's Kitchen* at The Questors, as well as for other companies and venues.

**Mark Pummell** *Sound Design*

Mark joined The Questors in 2005 and has been involved in a variety of different productions, which include sound design for *The Night Shift* and *After the Dance*. He also more recently operated sound on *The London Cuckolds* at The Questors and on tour to the Minack Theatre, Cornwall.

## Next month in the Playhouse

# The Lady in the Van

by Alan Bennett

When a broken-down old camper van grinds to a halt outside Alan Bennett's elegant town-house in Camden, little does the playwright suspect that it will roll into his own garden, where its bag-lady occupant will stay for 15 years. Find out what unfolds as you enjoy Alan Bennett's vivid observations of urban life in this wonderfully funny and witty dramatisation of a truly eccentric life.

17-24 February

More to enjoy at The Questors

## A Dog's Life: the Voice of K9

Go behind the cameras and spend an engaging and entertaining evening with John Leeson, the voice of *Doctor Who's* K9, as he recalls his life as an actor.

Sunday 4 February at 8.00pm

## More Adventures in Time and Space

Two plays by Sebastian Baczkiewicz

*Noah's Point* begins when £50 notes rain down on a small English town, and tells the tale of a strange child who creates a very unusual path to fame. In *A Labyrinth of Iron*, a mysterious Venetian woman claims a fantastic story of poverty, intrigue and immortality. Come along to enjoy The Questors Youth Theatre's production of these two intriguing dramas.

3-10 March

## Much Ado About Nothing

by William Shakespeare

Two contrasting pairs of lovers, a succession of overheard conversations, and the most incompetent policemen in literature combine to foil the villain and bring a happy ending to all. A sparkling romantic comedy that is both uproarious and touching, this is Shakespeare at his most accessible and delightful.

8-17 March

## Getting the most from your membership

Many members join just to see shows, but there is so much more on offer to Company Members. So why not get involved?

Front-of-House is a great place to start. No previous experience is needed for selling programmes, stewarding or serving in the Café; and training is provided 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 – and you can volunteer for just one night or several.

Backstage staff – including stage managers, prop makers, set builders, 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 space to be a designer. But even without experience, you can help out on shows, and you're sure to get some hands-on experience. The same goes for lighting and sound – the Playhouse and Studio are both well-equipped and excellent places to learn.

You can direct if you have some experience or training, but if not then we offer various learning opportunities. The Questors have a high standard of acting, and to maintain this, everyone wanting to act must first take an audition. These are held every month – so if you have some training or experience of acting, call the Theatre Office for details of the forthcoming auditions.

There are many other activities you can join in to help out. If you're free during daytimes, you can help with our monthly mailing or delivering leaflets, and if you're handy with maintenance then there are always little jobs to be done.

Only Company members can take part in our activities, so please contact the Theatre Office if you would like to get involved or receive further information about Company membership.

