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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, so you can come and enjoy a quiet evening in the Grapevine throughout the year.

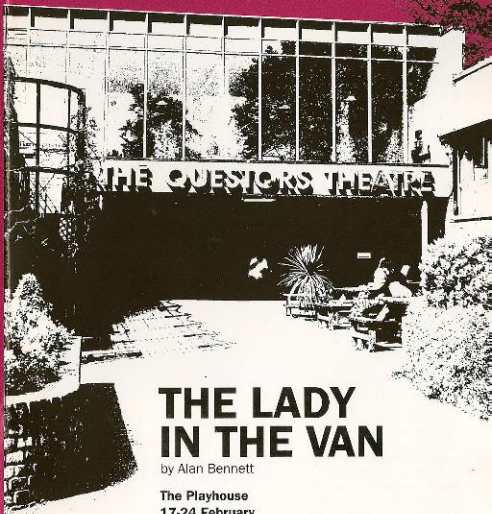
Or you could join as a Company Member and receive a 50 per cent discount on your ticket and opportunities to get involved in our productions, in addition to all the benefits for Playgoer Members.

You can get all of this for just £26.00 for Playgoer membership and £52.50 (£34.00 concessions) for Company membership, 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 LADY IN THE VAN

by Alan Bennett

The Playhouse
17-24 February



THE QUESTORS THEATRE



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



THE LADY IN THE VAN

by Alan Bennett

THE LADY IN THE VAN

Two women: Two Vehicles

It's a pretty extraordinary concept to most of us: that a respectable, intellectual, private, mild-mannered English gentleman would tolerate not only a bag-lady, but her clapped-out camper van in his tiny Camden garden; and for fifteen years? Why would – and how could – that ever happen?

Here, unfolding before you, is that tale from start to finish, plainly told as befits the writer. From the glint in the eye of the Lady as she measures up his garden, to the departure of the van courtesy of the council many years later, there is plenty of drama to keep us in the thrall of the Lady's spell.

There are the neighbours, embryonic 'Islington media types', anxious about a possible fall in the value of their property; there's the panoply of health professionals for whom the 'client' is supreme and the unwillingly designated 'carer' a bit of a nuisance; the seedy old acquaintance who can turn any opportunity into a buck.

There's Bennett's timid mother, going downhill in parallel to the noisy Miss Shepherd. There are louts for whom the yellow peril and its occupant are a magnet. Most prominently, there's a second Alan Bennett to give us the alternative view of the situations, his innermost thoughts and wishful-thinking reactions. Does it work, theatrically, to eliminate the sub-text and spell it all out? You have to decide that for yourself. I think it was a genius of an idea which gives the plot a whole new dynamic rarely explored on stage.

Our production of the play should answer the 'how' question for you and opens the door as

to the 'why'. Burrowing deeper, with the help of *Writing Home* and *Untold Stories*, we can learn more of Bennett the upstart, a very clever man finding himself at Oxford with not only the supremely brainy, but the moneyed, the gentry, the titled, the 'glittering prizes' set; a gateway into a lifestyle his parents yearned for but somehow never got the hang of. He eased himself into it and still sits there comfortably, whilst reserving the right to heap scepticism on it when it suits. Miss Shepherd, for all her solipsistic ways and cringe-worthy laudatorial arrangements, was the easy conversationalist and educated woman his mother never could be. Was he happier talking about religion and politics with Miss Shepherd, or with his mother about clean underwear? A difficult call, with his mother logical, sensible, mock, polite and grounded, but slightly boring, and Miss Shepherd mad, rude, domineering, fanciful, yet at times bordering on mysterious, enigmatic and fascinating.

We are all glitter-balls, with a multi-faceted surface angled differently to each person we encounter. Miss Shepherd, with all her shortcomings, provided Bennett with another facet of human experience. Despite his grand literary life, he's always acutely aware of his humble roots, and she brought another element into his life, a frisson of Bloomsbury woman falling off the cliff of sanity.

At the end of this bizarre tale, Alan Bennett comments to the effect that we are not to assume that his life during these twenty years was consumed by, lived for and revolved around the batty woman; that no, honestly, he really did 'have a life', totally

independent of this uninvited, 'temporary' ladder. Of course that is true. Despite running the gamut of demands, lectures and rudeness as he attempted to journey to his own front door, his working life, as northern England's dour but chirpy playwright and wit, blossomed during this period.

Whilst Miss Shepherd and his mother were both suffering failing health and 'delusions', he was writing plays and TV dramas fast and furious, amongst them; *A Woman of No Importance* in 1982, *A Private Function* in 1984; *A Visit from Miss Prothero* in 1987. Also in 1987 he perfected the art of the single actress show in his collection *Talking Heads: A Chip in the Sugar, Bed Among the Lentils, A Lady of Letters, Her Big Chance, Soldering On and A Cream Cracker Under the Settee*. Here are English ladies at their odd, weird and eccentric best, with gentle shades of Mam and Miss Shepherd shining through.

However reticent Bennett is to accept saintly status, to be lauded as caring or kind, he can't actually deny that he performed a great charitable act in having a bag lady in his garden, which neither you nor I would even contemplate. 'We might', says the character of Pauline, the neighbour, but we know she's saying it to get Brownie points. Let's take a leaf from Alan 2's book and be honest. She and her husband wouldn't and didn't, and neither would we.

Bennett will go down in history as a brilliant and wonderful man. He earned that tag previously, prior to this strange episode in his life, through this story it is accentuated. Early on in the play, The Lady mistakes him for St John. I think St Alan of Camden has a nice ring to it. Oh, by the way: Alan Bennett wishes us luck with the show. Not Not one of our characters and not one (or both) of our actors. The real Alan Bennett. Honestly!

Jo Matthews

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THE LADY IN THE VAN

by Alan Bennett

First performance of this production: 16 February 2007

Cast

(in order of appearance)

Alan Bennett 1	Anthony Green
Alan Bennett 2	Stuart Sessions
Miss Shepherd	Anne Neville
Mam, Alan Bennett's mother	Anne Sawbridge
Rufus, a neighbour	Anthony Curran
Pauline, a neighbour	Jonanne Rahman
Miss Ferris, a social worker	Sheri Desboux
Angry Men	Michael Smith
Interviewer	Sarah French
Louts	Neil Lacey Alex Lee
Underwood	Geoff Morgan
Mam's doctor	Sarah French
Miss Shepherd's doctor	Michael Smith
Ambulance Man	Jim O'Connor
Priest	Michael Smith
Leo Fairchild	Jim O'Connor
Undertakers, council workmen	Curtis Ashley Neil Lacey Alex Lee Duncan Walduck

The play is set in the front garden of Alan Bennett's house in Camden, north London and the environs; and in Yorkshire from 1969 - 1989.

The play runs for 2 hours 20 minutes including a fifteen-minute interval

Production Team

Directors	Sarah Galton and Jo Matthews
Designer	John Wibberley, assisted by Bron Blake
Lighting design	Chris Nowall
Original music composed by	Yaron Hollander
Stage Managers	Pam Cullen and Martin Choules
Vehicle team led by	Zyg Staniaszek
assisted by	Alun Jones, Chris Edwards, Duncan Walduck, John Wibberley
Construction	Bron Blake, John Stacey, John Wibberley
Set painting and dressing	Bron Blake, Jenny Richardson, Sylvia Well
Sound co-ordinator	Martin Choules assisted by Nigel Worsley
Lighting operator	Jason Blackburn
Properties	Claire Auxache
Rehearsal prompt	Gordon Miller
Production co-ordinator	Adrienne Talbot assisted by Jennifer Reid
Assistant Stage Managers	Curtis Ashley, Neil Lacey, Alex Lee, Duncan Walduck
Wardrobe	Anne Gilmour
Photography	Ian Cole
Make-up & wigs	Abi Morris, Julie Voloshko
Rehearsal vehicles	Gordon Miller
Get-in Crew	Srewell, Edward Bilson, Henry Broom, Martin Choules, Tina Harris, John Horwood, Doug King, Pam Cullen, Jo Matthews, Adrienne Talbot, Jennifer Reid, John Stacey, Zyg Staniaszek, John Wibberley, Lighting Riggers: Tim Edwards, Tim Heywood, Alan N Smith

Acknowledgements:

Threen House for loan of the wheelchair.
Stoke-on-Trent Repertory Theatre for staging advice; Kirby's Flying Ballets for technical advice.

Adrienne Talbot *Production Co-ordinator*

A member since 1964, stage managing many shows, most recently *The Beauty Queen of Leenarie* and *This Happy Breed*; Adrienne has been chairman of the stage management committee, head of training and sits on the Board of Trustees.

Anne Gilmour *Wardrobe*

Gods, *The Booby* and *Brentford* are a few of the shows Anne has costumed since joining in 1983. She has also ventured via ASM into props, lighting and sound and done her stint in administration.

Anne Neville *Miss Shepherd*

Anne joined The Questors in 1982. Plays include *Mother Courage*, *The Seagull*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Ghosts*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Three Tall Women*, *Molly Sweeney*, *Happy Days*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Habeas Corpus* and *Dolly West's Kitchen*. Anne is also a regular Questors director.

Anne Sawbridge *Mam*

Anne has been an acting member for over twenty years. Recent parts include Miss Potter in *After the Dance* and Engine in *The London Cuckolds*, touring to the Minack Theatre.

Anthony Curran *Rufus*

Anthony is a graduate of Student Group 47 and has been seen most recently as Jim in *The Weir*. This is his third Bennett, having been Moie in *The Wind in the Willows* and Sir Percy Shorter in *Habeas Corpus*.

Anthony Green *Alan Bennett 1*

Anthony has been acting at The Questors since 1998. His productions here include *Arcadia*, *The Wild Duck*, *Absolute Hell*, *Suddenly Last Summer* and *The Dispute*.

Bron Blake *Designer*

A member since the 1970s, Bron has prompted, stage managed and operated lights and sound. She returned four years ago and moved into set design, most recently joint-designing *The London Cuckolds* and *Witness* in Brixton with Jenny Richardson.

Claire Auvache *Properties*

Claire joined The Questors a year ago. She has been properties manager on *After the Dance*, *Dance of Death* and *An Enemy of the People*. She has also worked outside The Questors as a stage manager.

Chris Edwards *Vehicle Team*

Chris has been with the Questors for five years. He was heavily involved in flying on Peter Pan, his third Christmas show. A Kingston BTEC Technical student, he will probably follow his brother into theatre lighting.

Chris Nowall *Lighting Designer*

Chris has lit shows at the Questors since 1997. Previous designs for the Playhouse include *The Dresser*, *The Wild Duck*, *The Madness of George III*, *Shirley Valentine*, *The Clandestine Marriage*, *For Away* and *Enemy of the People*.

Duncan Walduck *ASM*

Duncan has been a member of the Questors for seven years. Recent crewing includes *Peter Pan*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Kerry Dance*. He was a company member in *Oliver!* and has appeared with other companies in the Playhouse.

Geoffrey Morgan *Underwood*

Geoffrey's first appearance at The Questors was as a magistrate in *The Recruiting Officer* (supported by Maisie), then as Lord Chancellor in *Early Morning* and Bennett in *Travesties*. He also works backstage and sings with visiting companies.

Gordon Miller *Construction & Prompt*

Gordon has been a member for over twenty years. Starting as a constructor, he has done most things backstage, and recently particularly enjoyed working on *Dog in the Manger* as rehearsal prompt.

Jananna Rahman *Pauline*

Jananna has been a member for eleven years, most recently appearing in *Little Shop of Horrors*. Previous productions include *Oh What A Lovely War*, *The Recruiting Officer* and *Nicholas Nickleby*.

Jim O'Connor *Amulance Man & Leo Fairchild*

Since becoming an acting member in the early '90s, Jim has appeared in a variety of productions including five children's shows, *The Madness of George III*, and most recently *An Enemy of the People*.

John Wibberley *Designer*

John's set designs at The Questors include *The Wind in the Willows*, *Transitions*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Shirley Valentine*, *Into the Woods*, *The Clandestine Marriage*, *Oliver!* and *Peter Pan*. His next project involves the refurbishment of The Questors foyers.

Jo Matthews *Co-Director*

Jo trained at Manchester Polytechnic School of Theatre. Previous Questors shows as director include *The Memory of Water*, *A Wedding Story* and *Shirley Valentine*.

Martin Choules *Stage Manager*

Martin has been stage-managing since 2004. He has overseen *Once a Catholic*, *Shirley Valentine*, *Isle of the Departed*, *Love of the Nightingale*, *R.U.R.*, *Guards! Guards!* and *An Enemy of the People*. He has also designed the sound for *New Boy* and *The Goat Boy*.

Michael Smith *Angry Man & Miss Shepherd's Doctor*

Michael trained with The Questors Student Group and has appeared in numerous plays including *A View from the Bridge*, *The Isle of the Departed* and *An Enemy of the People*. Michael has also conducted, composed and arranged for the theatre.

Pam Cullen *Stage Manager*

Pam is a new member working on her first show, although she has stage managed before in Devon. She also studied drama in Lancashire, and toured in Germany with *A Midsummer's Night Dream*.

Sarah French *Interviewer & Mam's Doctor*

This is Sarah's first show with The Questors. However, she has performed in the Studio with a visiting company in which she played the lead in *Jekyll & Hyde*.

Sarah Galton *Co-director*

Sarah directed Tom Stoppard's *Travesties*, *James Saunders's Who was Hillary Manchonchie?* and last season's production of *The London Cuckolds* which toured to the Minack Theatre. On occasion, she can also be seen treading the boards.

Sheri Desboux *Miss Ferris*

Sheri performed with the Student Group in *The Beau Defeated* and *Charles Dickens's Hard Times*. Since then she has appeared in *Mort*, *Men at Arms*, *Pygmalion*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. She also enjoys working with the Questors Youth Theatre.

Stuart Sessions *Alan Bennett 2*

Stuart recently joined as an acting member. His first role, aged 13, was as Pauline in *A Winter's Tale* and he was last seen at The Questors as Peter Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*.

Yaron Hollander *Original Music Composer*

This is the first Questors show for which Yaron has composed. His previous credits include original scores for plays by Jim Cartwright and Brian Clark. He plays cello and piano.

Zyg Staniaszek *Vehicles*

In the eighteen months Zyg has been a member he directed *Guards! Guards!* and *Texas Verdes*, and stage managed *Peter Pan*. Previously, he ran his own company within the Polish YMCA, producing eleven shows.

The Questors present

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.

8-10, 13-17 March at 7.45pm,
11 March at 2.30pm

In the Playhouse

*Tickets: £13.50
(£12.00 concessions, £6.50 students)*

The Questors Student Group present

The Visit

by Friedrich Durrenmatt, adapted by Maurice Valency

The wealthiest woman in the world brings her bizarre retinue of assistants back to her hometown, an impoverished little village, promising the residents vast riches... on one outrageous condition. Durrenmatt's macabre comedy gives us one of the most tantalizing characters in 20th-century drama.

24, 27-31 March at 7.45pm,
25 March at 2.30pm

In the Studio

*Tickets: £10.50
(£9.50 concessions, £5.00 students)*

The Questors present

French Paste

by Richard Gallagher

1987: storms over England, Thatcher in for a third time and Tom and Stephen are "living in black and white in Brixton". Tom dreams of a place where he can live in glorious Technicolor: a place where there isn't any trouble, a place somewhere over the rainbow..."This play is so funny...it's some time before you realise it has something serious to say about human relationships" Manchester Evening News

7, 10-14 April at 7.45pm,
8 April at 2.30pm

In the Studio

*Tickets: £10.50
(£9.50 concessions, £5.00 students)*



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.