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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 see; 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 £27.00 for Playgoer membership and £55.00 (£38.00 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.

## Stay in touch

Sign up for our weekly or monthly e-mails, full of the latest news, at [www.questors.org.uk](http://www.questors.org.uk) or send us your name and address and we'll post you our bi-monthly season card.

Find out all about our forthcoming productions – along with a lot of other information about The Questors – on our web site.

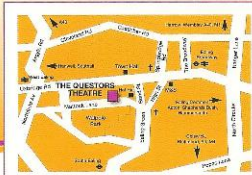
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**Questors** Ealing's Theatre



## DINNER

By Moira Buffini

**In the Studio**  
25 – 29 March 2008

**www.questors.org.uk**



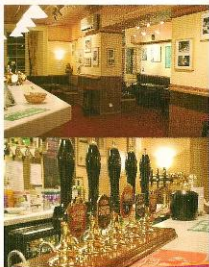
## Questors Grapevine Bar

The Grapevine is our friendly club bar open to the members of The Questors Theatre and their guests, as well as serving audience members on show nights. The club is open seven nights a week and Sunday unchimes and is managed and staffed entirely by volunteers. We are the proud holders of a Cask Marque award for the quality of our real ales, we appear in the 2005 edition of The Good Beer Guide, and we have been named as West Middlesex CAMRA Club of the Year 2007. Real ales recently on tap include Fuller's Lancon Pride, Twickenham Sundancer and Fuller's Old Winter Ale. We also provide a range of draught lagers and ciders, as well as wines and spirits – all at very reasonable prices.

### Opening hours:

7.00-11.00pm (10.30pm close on Sundays)

also Sunday lunchtime 12.00-2.30pm



*Mrs Lars Jansson  
cordially welcomes you to*

**DINNER**

(By Moira Buffini)

*to celebrate the publication of her husband's book  
'Beyond Belief'*

# Laughter in the darkness: the seriously funny Moira Buffini

It's something even Moira Buffini finds difficult to explain. Her plays have dark themes and are never far from tragedy. Yet her writing is bitingly funny. "It's strange," she told an interviewer for *The Independent* after the play premiered at the National Theatre in 2002, "Every time I try to write about something really serious, it goes funny on me. Post-September 11 I felt I needed to write about a world out of joint. So I deliberately made the characters in *Dinner* intelligent, educated, liberal, selfish, miserable people, with a spiritual and moral vacuum at their heart. "It's a tragedy, really. There's blood on the carpet. But I got away with it because it's so bloody funny."

The playwright describes herself as a compulsive writer, and says that with *Dinner*, the script came together quickly. "I've never had an experience like it," she says. "It literally fell out of me onto the paper."

When she was waiting for *Dinner* to transfer to the West End, Buffini said she firmly believed that audiences were hungry for plays with meaning, and did not want to feel ripped off at the end of the evening in the theatre. Her principal characters usually find themselves in the midst of tragedy, facing an uncertain future. It is something Buffini is familiar with from her own family background. Her father died in a car crash when she was four years old. Her mother Susan, an Irish nurse, was pregnant at the time. Despite the

obvious hardship, she managed to bring up her young family alone.

"Her adamant refusal to accept being treated like the weeping widow, her determination, her complete assumption that we would do all right, even though there was only one parent, was amazing," Buffini told *The Guardian* in a revealing interview last year. It is clear this childhood tragedy, and her mother's conviction that the family would survive, had a profound impact on the young Buffini, and it continues to influence her writing. "It's funny how a thing like that affects you," she explains. "Nothing is sure in this world, and the future isn't rosy. That's what I explore in my work – that uncertainty."

Moira Buffini became hooked on theatre while growing up in Manchester. The artistic director of the city's renowned Royal Exchange theatre was a patient at the hospital where her mother worked as a nurse. He left free tickets for the ward staff, and the young Moira began her love affair with the stage. She was mesmerised by the whole experience. "We saw Shakespeare, Beckett, British, European, world theatre, Greek Tragedy, Molière," says Buffini. "It was unbelievable."

Leaving school, she was in no doubt where her future lay. She studied English and Drama at Goldsmiths' College, and trained as an actor at the Welsh College of Music and Drama. She acted professionally for five years,

and one of her first jobs was teaching drama to women in Holloway Prison. But in the end it was a burning desire to write that determined the course of her career. A series of acclaimed productions, and a string of awards, established Buffini as a rising star of a new wave of British dramatists in the 1990s.

Buffini's plays are notable for their strong female characters, perhaps another echo from her childhood. *Jordan*, a monologue written with Anna Reynolds, won a Writers' Guild award for the best Fringe play of 1992. Her performance on stage also won her a Time Out acting award. Her second play, *Blavatsky's Tower*, also appeared on the Fringe. She wrote *Gabriel* for the Soho Theatre in 1997, winning both the LWT Plays on Stage award and the Meyer Whitworth award. Her 1999 play *Silence* was commissioned by the National Theatre Studio, and was produced by Birmingham Rep and Plymouth's Theatre Royal. It won the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for the best English-language play by a woman. In 2001, *Loveplay* was produced by the RSC.

Then in 2002, *Dinner* was staged in the National Theatre Loft. Despite its dark themes, it was nominated for an Olivier Award for the year's best comedy. But despite the glowing reviews, some critics questioned the ending. Buffini re-worked the final act before the play transferred to Wyndham's Theatre in the West End in 2003. The two

endings are quite different, and the revised version is really bleak. Some prefer the original ending, which is the one we are performing this evening. The script published by Faber & Faber features the revised version, should you wish to compare the two endings.

After *Dinner*, the demands of motherhood led Buffini to turn her own plays on hold for a while. She went back to screenplays and stage adaptations. London's Almeida Theatre produced *Dying For It*, adapted from *The Suicide*, a satirical comedy by Nikolai Erdman. At the end of last year she took the 1950s children's book *Marianne Dreams* and turned it into a Christmas production for the Almeida.

With her own children now at school, Buffini is once again writing her own plays. *A Vampire Story* was commissioned by the National Theatre as part of a project that encourages young adults to perform works by contemporary playwrights. She has also been working on a number of screenplays for film and television, some still in development.

Having survived the sleep-deprivation phase of parenthood, Moira Buffini says she has got her brain back. There is clearly a lot more to come from this highly original writer.

*Dinner* remains her best-known work, and typifies her approach to her craft. As she says herself: "I'm only funny when I'm being serious."

# DINNER

By Moira Buffini

*First performance of this production: 25 March 2008*

## *Menu*

Aperitif

The Starter

*Primordial Soup*

The Main

*Apocalypse of Lobster*

The Dessert

*Frozen Waste*

The Cheeseboard

Coffee

## *The Diners*

<b>Paige</b>	the hostess	Louise Kavanagh
<b>Lars</b>	a writer	Steve Fitzpatrick
<b>Wynne</b>	an artist	Lisa Day
<b>Hal</b>	a scientist	Jeremy Mills
<b>Slan</b>	a sexpot	Biffy James
<b>Mike</b>	an invited guest	Robert Wixey

**The Waiter**

John Beadle

## PRODUCTION TEAM

<b>Director</b>	Richard Halberstadt
<b>Assistant Director</b>	Andrew Davies
<b>Stage Manager</b>	Arthur England
<b>Properties Manager</b>	Care Auvache
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	Ben Sanford
<b>Fights Arranger</b>	Nicholas Jonne Wilson
<b>Assistant stage managers</b>	Lucy Waring, Marta Wolnowska
<b>Prompt</b>	Julie Hadwin
<b>Makeup and Hair</b>	Italy Brooks Natalie Wickens
<b>Greasepaint</b>	Greasepaint
<b>Programme notes</b>	Peter Gould
<b>Programme editor</b>	Pene ope Mac achlan
<b>Programme design and print</b>	Considerthisuk.com

Dining table made by Zyg Staniaszek

### Thanks to

Ian Briggs  
Pam Cullen  
Chris Edwards  
David Emmet  
Mike Hagan  
Tim Haywood  
Neil Lacey  
Alan Smith  
Michelle Waldock  
Nerran Wilkinson

**Running time:** 2 hours 15 minutes, including a 15 minute interval.

## Biographies

### Claire Auvache (Props)

This will be Claire's 7th show at The Questors Theatre as Properties Manager, including *After the Dance*, *Dance of Death* and *The Lady in the Van*. She has also recently worked professionally outside Questors Theatre as ASM and Stage manager.

### John Beadle (The Waiter)

John is a 2007 graduate of The Questors' 'Acting for All' programme. This is his first role with the Company and after a 12 year break. He has previously acted and directed with the Phoenix Drama Group in Guildford, the Brickhouse in Manchester and the Glaxo Group in London.

### Andrew Davies (Assistant Director)

Andrew worked on *There'll Always be a Brentford* (Stage Manager) Company (ASM) Much Aco about Nothing (ASM; London Cuckolds; Front of House at the Minack) *After the Dance* (ASM) *Oliver* (ASM) previously with Falmouth Amateur Operatic & Drama Society - shows *Mo and My Girl* (Charles) *Murdered to Death* (Pierre/Peter).

### Lisa Day (Wynne)

Lisa joined as a newly-wed (to fellow Questor Robert Gordon Clark) in 1985 - they've been vying for centre stage ever since. After completing Student Group 41, her first role was Isabella (*Measure for Measure*). Subsequent characters ranged from *The Snow Queen* to *Mrs Twill*, culminating in *Blanche DuBois* (A Streetcar Named Desire). Lisa is also active in the reminiscence theatre group: *Playback*.

### Arthur England (Stage Manager)

Arthur joined in 2007 on his return from working with 'Stage One' in Cyprus. Deputy Stage Manager for *both Dog in the Manger* and *Much Aco About Nothing*. This is his first role as Stage Manager with The Questors.

### Steve Fitzpatrick (Lars)

Recent roles include *Lucy* (*Waiting for Godot*), *Jaques* (*As You Like It*), *Richard* (*Tit Pity She's a Whore*), several parts in *Road*, *Antonio* (*Twelfth Night*), *Dr. Warren* (*The Madness of George III*) and *The Duke of Cornwall* (*King Lear*). He also directs, most recently *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

### Richard Halberstadt (Director)

Joined 1960. Student Group (1960s). Has acted, directed, worked in lights, sound, stage management. Favourite shows: *My Poll and my Partner Joe* (1966) *Explosives*, *Charlie* (Slawomir Mrozek) (1969) *Acting*, *Vladislav* (Mrozek) (1978), *The Hostage* (Frendan Doherty) (1980) & *Cinderella* (1980) *Directing*, *After the Dance* (2006) *Stage Manager*, *Great Expectations* (2007) *Sound*.

### Biffy James (Siar)

Biffy joined The Questors at the end of 2007 and this is her first show with the company. She has previously studied and acted in New York and in Melbourne, Australia.

### Louise Kavanagh (Paige)

Since joining The Questors in 2004, Louise has appeared as *Sylvia* (*This Happy Breed*), *Albee* (*Dance of Death*), *Geraldine* (*French Paste*), *Chorus* (*Trojan Women*), *Queen Elizabeth* (Richard III). She also acts regularly with Beaconsfield Theatre Group & Chiltern Shakespeare Company.

### Jeremy Mills (Ho)

This is Jeremy's first show with The Questors, having become a member last year. He has however performed in numerous plays and musicals in South Bucks where he lives, recently having appeared as *Brack* (*Herida Gabler*), and *Higgins* (*My Fair Lady*) and *Richard Wiley* (*Out of Order*).

### Ben Sandford (Lighting)

This is Ben's first season and second production with The Questors. Prior to moving to the UK, Ben was actively involved in the Toronto amateur theatre circuit. Previous lighting designs include: *After Magritte* / *Black Comedy* (Questors), *Problem Child* / *Criminal Genius* (Amateur Theatre), *The Mae* (Toronto Irish Players), and the All Canadian Jazz Festival.

### Robert Wixey (Mike)

Robert joined The Questors in February this year and this is his first show here. He moved to London from Wales two years ago, where he was a member of the Dylan Thomas Theatre Company.



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## Festen

26 April - 3 May 2008

In the Playhouse

Described by BBC London as 'powerful, poignant and overwhelming'.

## Art Exhibitions

Our regular art exhibitions offer a wonderful opportunity for local artists to display their work.

Please take time to have a look when visiting the theatre.

For details on upcoming exhibitions or on exhibiting your work, please contact Jane Mason in the Questors Office on 020 8567 0011.



## Questors E-News direct to your Inbox

Get all the latest news and offers for our shows by joining our e-mail lists.

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## 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.

Rocketstage staff – including stage managers, prop makers, set builders, painters and wardrobe staff – are always welcomed, and whatever your skill 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 has 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 daylight hours, 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 request further information about Company membership.