



Questors, Ealing's Theatre

**OTHERWISE ENGAGED**  
by Simon Gray

The Playhouse

26 September – 3 October 2009

[questors.org.uk](http://questors.org.uk)

## Qafé

Have you tried the new Quostors café experience yet?

Opening times:

Monday – Saturday term time 9am – 7.30pm

And outside term time 11.30am – 7.30pm

On show nights through until the end of the first interval

Serving specialist teas and coffees, hot chocolate and soft drinks

Selection of paninis and sandwiches cut to order

Pre-theatre hot meal menu available on show nights up to 7pm

Take your membership card with you to receive discounts on hot meals and drinks!

## Grapevine Bar

The Grapevine is our friendly club bar open to members of the Quostors Theatre and their guests, as well as serving audience members on show nights.

The club is open seven nights a week and Sunday lunchtimes 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 2010 edition of The Good Beer Guide, and we are 2009 CAMRA West Middlesex Club of the Year. A choice of at least three real ales is usually available, including Fuller's London Pride. We also provide a range of draught lagers and ciders, as well as wines and spirits – all at very reasonable prices.

Opening hours:

7pm – 11pm (10.30pm close on Sundays)

Sunday lunchtime 12.00 – 2.30pm.

## Grapevine Autumn Beer Fest 15-17 October 2009



# Otherwise Engaged

By Simon Gray

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## Otherwise Engaged

Simon Gray was born on October 21 1936, in Hayling Island, Hampshire. He was educated at Westminster, where he excelled at cricket and football. He read English at Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, and at Trinity College, Cambridge where he then taught for five years, before moving to Queen Mary College, London. He once said: "Teaching is my bloody life".

His first play, *Wise Child*, a story of two criminals on the run, was written in 1967 and produced in the West End with Alec Guinness in the lead. His big breakthrough, however, came with *Butley* in 1971, which was directed by Harold Pinter and which starred Alan Bates as the curmudgeonly bi-sexual English lecturer. In *Butley*, Gray wrote about the world he knew best: the back-biting, incestuous world of academia. With this play, he had clearly found his voice and his subsequent plays seldom stray far from that world. "Most of one's friends tend to be publishers, schoolteachers or actors", he said. Certainly Gray seems to be happiest – and funniest – when dealing with characters drawn from those classes.

*Otherwise Engaged* opened at the Queen's Theatre in 1975. Alan Bates was again the leading man and Harold Pinter also directed. A very strong cast included Julian Glover, Nigel Hawthorne, Benjamin Whitrow and (making his West End debut) Ian Charleson. When Bates left the cast, Michael Gambon took over. The play was hugely successful both in the UK and on Broadway, where the part of Simon Hench was played by Tom Courtenay.

Gray went on to write some 40 plays, television plays and screenplays, as well as five novels. Of his plays, the best known are *Quatermain's Terms* (1981), *Close of Play* (1979), *The Common Pursuit* (1988), *Hidden Laughter* (1990) and *Japes* (2001). Not all his plays were successful, however. *The Rear Column* (1981) closed after a run of only four weeks. Perhaps because the play was outside Gray's usual comfort zone – it is set in Victorian Africa and chronicles the tribulations of a small group of English officers awaiting the return of Stanley from his expedition to discover the source of the Nile – the play was a commercial flop. Personally, I think it is one of Gray's most remarkable plays and is well deserving of revival. The subject matter of the play is alluded to by Davina in *Otherwise Engaged* when she tells Simon about the book she is working on.

It is a little sad that Gray achieved his greatest fame for the biggest disaster of his career, when Stephen Fry walked out of the production of his play *Cell Mates* in 1995. The play limped on for a few performances with Simon Ward gallantly taking over from the missing Fry, but Fry's exit was sufficient to destroy the play's chance of success. For several days the press speculated about Fry's whereabouts, until he suddenly returned from Bruges. The public sympathised with Fry's notoriously frail mental health, but for Gray this was an act of betrayal and cowardice. Gray's account of the affair was recorded in a book, *Fat Chance*, recording ruefully that

"When the history of the stage is written, *Cell Mates* will become the most famous play I ever wrote".

Gray started smoking when he was seven, and for much of his life smoked 65 cigarettes a day. He also drank prodigious quantities of alcohol, particularly champagne and whisky. He stopped drinking in 1997 after he was admitted into intensive care. However, although there can be no doubt that the booze and the cigarettes would eventually kill him, he claimed to have few regrets about his indulgences. "I had wonderful times drinking" he once said, "and I wrote a lot of my plays when I was pretty well drunk".

In the last years of his life, Gray published a number of collections of autobiography, including *The Smoking Diaries*, *The Last Cigarette* and *Coda*. Written in an apparently artless stream of consciousness, they range from childhood memories of cricket and football and distant parents, to trenchant critical observations of poets and other writers, including a wonderfully funny debunking of Auden. Most of all, however, the diaries are a rueful observation on the process of dying. He did not live to see the death of his old friend and collaborator, Harold Pinter, but he knew that Pinter was dying, just as he knew that he was himself dying. It is typical of Gray, however, that this darkest of subject matters should produce some of his best – and funniest – writing.

Simon Gray died (inevitably of lung cancer) on August 6, 2008. Since his death a dramatised version of *The Smoking Diaries* has been performed to great acclaim in Chichester and London, and the BBC devoted a whole evening to his television work, including the showing of *An Unnatural Pursuit* in which Alan Bates played a thinly disguised version of the author (and Richard Wilson an equally thinly disguised version of Harold Pinter). It is, however, for his plays that Gray's reputation surely rests. I am hopeful that there will be a number of revivals over the coming years.

Francis Lloyd

# OTHERWISE ENGAGED

by Simon Gray

*First performance of this production: 26 September 2009*

## THE CAST

Simon	<b>Simon Roberts</b>
Dave	<b>Andy McGuinness</b>
Stephen	<b>Robert Baker-Glenn</b>
Jeff	<b>Roger Beaumont</b>
Davina	<b>Hannah Whiteoak</b>
Wood	<b>Tim Jelley</b>
Beth	<b>Jananne Rahman</b>

Setting: Simon Hench's lounge in North London. Spring 1975

There will be an interval of 15 minutes

Director	<b>Francis Lloyd</b>
Designer	<b>Richard Andrzejewski</b>
Sound Designer	<b>Matthew Wilson</b>
Lighting Designer	<b>Nigel Lewis</b>
Lighting and Sound Operator	<b>Matthew Wilson</b>
Costumes	<b>Astrid Sarkissian</b>
Stage Managers	<b>Pam Redrup &amp; Matthew Wilson</b>
Deputy Stage Manager	<b>Claudia Kees</b>
Properties	<b>Harriet Parsonage</b>
Head of Construction	<b>Matthew Addison</b>
Constructors	<b>Mike Hagan Gordon Miller John Feather Henry Broom</b>
Assistant Stage Manager	<b>Sarah Clopet</b>
Photography	<b>Bonzena Graciová</b>

### Thanks to:

Michelle Weaver, Clive Whitcroft, House Services, Samantha Anthony, Gemma Batchelor, Tina Harris, Greasepaint, Chambers of Patrick Upwood QC, 15 New Bridge St.

Please turn off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms.  
The use of cameras, video cameras and recording equipment is strictly prohibited.

## BIOGRAPHIES

### **Matthew Addison (Construction)**

*Otherwise Engaged* is Matthew's first show for The Questors as he has recently moved to London from Manchester. He is an experienced production carpenter and lighting designer. He has designed for and lit some of the North West's largest theatres. He currently has productions of *Bouncers* and *Shakers* running at the Royal Northern College of Music.

### **Robert Baker-Glenn (Stephen)**

Robert has appeared at The Questors for several years, most recently in *Hay Fever* and before that Ionesco's *The Chairs*. He has worked with the director in Rattigan's *After the Dance* and Toby Lloyd's *Pictures on the Air* at last year's Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

### **Roger Beaumont (Jeff)**

For The Questors Roger has directed *Design For Living*, *Closer* (2003), *Duet for One*, *Streetcar Named Desire* (2004), *Waiting For Godot* (2007), *Festen* (2008), and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (2009). And he has acted in *Russian in the Woods* (2003), *Mouth to Mouth* (2006) and *Great Expectations* (2008).

### **Tim Jelley (Wood)**

Tim joined The Questors in 2006 and this is his third venture, having performed as Stephen in *French Paste* in the Studio, and as Lars in *Festen*.

### **Nigel Lewis (Lighting Designer)**

Nigel Lewis has been lighting the stage for more than 20 years. He has recently worked at the Edinburgh Fringe and now starts a new season of London shows. Nigel is Company Director of LX Designs Limited and Co-Head of lighting at The Questors Theatre.

### **Francis Lloyd (Director)**

Francis first appeared at The Questors as Bohun in *You Never Can Tell*. Acting parts since have included John in *Oleanna*, Henry in *The Revengers' Comedies*, Wicksteed in *Habeas Corpus* and Henry Carr in *Travesties*. He has directed *After the Dance*, *French Paste*, *Charley's Aunt* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

### **Andy McGuinness (Dave)**

Andrew's previous productions at The Questors include *The Happiest Days of Your Life*; *Saturday*, *Sunday*, *Monday*; *Five Card Trick* (which he also wrote); *Arsenic and Old Lace* and *A Servant to Two Masters*, which also played in Venice at Ca Rezzonico.

### **Jananne Rahman (Beth)**

A member of the Questors since 1996, Jananne most recently appeared as Masha in *The Seagull* (2008). Previous appearances include *Festen*, *Great Expectations*,

*Company*, *The Lady in the Van*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Oh What a Lovely War!*, *The Recruiting Officer* and *Nicholas Nickleby*.

### **Pam Redrup (Stage Manager)**

Pam has stage managed numerous shows and enjoys working with everyone at The Questors because it's a great community to be part of, and working on *Otherwise Engaged* is no exception. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you all to come and join in the fun - see you backstage sometime.

### **Simon Roberts (Simon)**

Simon joined The Questors in 1989. Recent appearances include Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot* (2007), Pip in *Great Expectations* (2007) and Christian in *Festen* (2008). He directed Jim Cartwright's *Two* in the Studio last year and is looking forward to directing Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party*, also in the Studio, early in 2010.

### **Astrid Sarkissian (Costumes)**

Astrid has just graduated from Central Saint Martin's. She has a lifelong interest and involvement in the arts, in particular between colours, shapes and patterns. She creates a new atmosphere built from extracts of already existing truth, a reality collage, a piece of the world assembled and sewn together.

### **Hannah Whiteoak (Davina)**

Hannah began life at The Questors as part of Student Group 60. Since her student days she has played Miss Cooper in *Separate Tables*, Clare Zachanassian in *The Visit* and most recently Ophelia in the exciting *Hamlet - Unseen*. She has enjoyed the challenge of Davina, which is quite the opposite from her previous roles.

### **Matthew Wilson (Stage Manager)**

Matthew's interest in theatre started at school when he became involved with the annual productions and gained a Saturday job at the local theatrical suppliers. As a new member of The Questors this is Matthew's first production but he is looking forward to many more.

## Next at The Questors

### **The Marvellous Land of Oz**

2 – 10 October 2009

In The Studio

Find out what happened to the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and Glinda after Dorothy went back to Kansas. This is a show for adults but children are definitely welcome. It promises to be a magical evening!

### **Misery**

23 – 31 October 2009

In The Studio

A taut thriller edged with black humour, adapted from the Stephen King novel. He killed a woman to save his career. Now he must resurrect her to save his life.



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## Join Us

If you enjoy theatre, why not join us and benefit from membership:

- ✓ Half-price personal tickets for Questors productions\*
- ✓ Discounted Guest tickets when you bring your friends to Questors productions\*
- ✓ Children FREE tickets\*\*
- ✓ Opportunities to be actively involved in our productions
- ✓ Allowed to audition to join our company of actors
- ✓ Exclusive or discounted training courses
- ✓ Colour magazine 3 times a year
- ✓ Regular Members' Newsletter
- ✓ Regular programme card
- ✓ Vote at general meetings
- ✓ Membership of Grapevine Bar

\* Reduced prices exclude certain events. \*\* Under 16, excludes certain events. Maximum 4 per event, must be collected at the performance and to accompany by member.

Introductory offer – as a welcome for 1<sup>st</sup> time members, you can either try us out for six months at half-price, or get your first 15 months membership for the price of 12 months.

## Getting the most from your membership

Volunteer help is always needed Front-of-House. No previous experience is needed for selling programmes and stewarding, and training is provided if you'd like to work in Box Office with our computerised system. To meet members in a social setting, volunteer to help behind the Grapevine bar. Backstage staff, including stage-managers, prop makers, set builders, sound and light designers and operators, painters, wardrobe and costume and set designers are always welcomed; whatever your skills we'll find a place for you. We also have courses for those wishing to direct.

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, call the Theatre Office for details of forthcoming auditions.

## QYT Youth Theatre

Our Youth Theatre – QYT – runs weekly drama classes for all ages from 6 to 16 years old. Younger groups meet on Saturday mornings and older ages meet on weekday teatime. There's often a waiting list for membership, so put your name down now! Details are online at [questors.org.uk/qyt](http://questors.org.uk/qyt)

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