

## 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, 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 0% 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 emails, 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.

- ▶ What's on
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[www.questors.org.uk](http://www.questors.org.uk)

### THE QUESTORS THEATRE

12 Maittock Lane  
Ealing W5 5BQ

### Box Office:

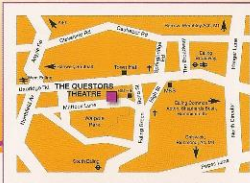
020 8567 5184

### Theatre Office:

020 8567 0011

### Email:

[enquiries@questors.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@questors.org.uk)



**Questors** Ealing's Theatre

# THE ALCHEMIST

by Ben Jonson

The Playhouse

24 – 31 January 2009

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



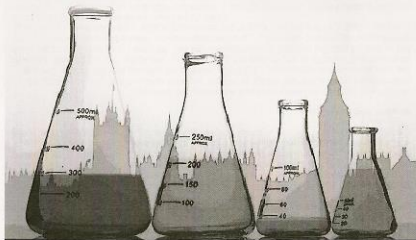
## Questors Grapevine Bar

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 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 2008 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 London 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



## THE ALCHEMIST

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# The Alchemist

## Ben Jonson

The writer generally regarded as the second greatest playwright in the English language was born in London in 1572. His stepfather was a bricklayer, and the boy was probably apprenticed to that trade, before seeing action as a soldier in Flanders, and then becoming an actor. His first surviving play, *Every Man in his Humour*, was presented by The Lord Chamberlain's Men (Shakespeare's company) in 1598, with Shakespeare in the cast, and set him on a successful though controversial writing career. He was imprisoned twice, and narrowly escaped the gallows for killing a fellow actor in a duel. His greatest plays, *Volpone* (1605), *The Silent Woman* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610) and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) consolidated his reputation, and in his later years he formed a profitable, if highly combative, partnership with Inigo Jones, supplying Court Masques to James I, becoming in effect our first Poet Laureate. He is buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

## Con artists

Confidence tricksters are probably the only criminals we choose to dignify with the name of 'artist'. Perhaps this is because, unlike other crooks, they depend for their success upon the complicity of their victims. 'You cannot con an honest man', we say, for a good confidence trick relies on the greed and dishonesty, and therefore connivance, of the 'mark'. Which poses the question: which is worse, the greed of the trickster or the greed of the victim? This moral ambiguity is at the heart of Jonson's play.

And then again, they are not just artists, but performing artists. Like anyone who attempts to put on a show, (including us tonight), their success depends upon convincing people that they are something they are not. And their audience – like you, we hope – fulfil their part of the bargain by suspending, willingly or not so willingly, their disbelief. And when – as will happen with even the best rehearsed performances – things go wrong, they respond with the sort of inspired improvisation that we can only aspire to imitate. However much we may disapprove of their morals, it is hard not to have a sneaking admiration for their skill.

## Alchemy and Commodity

The central metaphor of the play is transformation. The alchemist's dream of turning base metal into gold is itself transformed into the art of turning gullibility into cash, and anything of value into commodity. Be it Mammon's power and iron, Ananias' and Tribulation's moral crusade, Dapper's hopes for supernatural advancement, Druggier's ambitions for his shop and affection for the girl next door, Kastril's pugnacity, or even Surly's cynicism – all are reduced to the 'common matter' of a commodity to be bought and sold.

The most extreme example of this is the play's treatment of sex and of women. Doll's profession obviously makes her a commodity, but Dame Plunk, for all her wealth and respectability, is no less so. A rich widow at nineteen, she has already been married off once to a much older man, to the financial benefit of her bullying brother. Now she is to be married again to either Subtle or Face (who are going to draw lots for her) or else be prostituted to a debauched Spaniard, a fate from which she is saved only by a forced marriage to another man old enough to be her father. By comparison, Doll has a lot more say in her own affairs.

## Capitalism and its Discontents

In the early seventeenth century, capitalism was still in its infancy, and Jonson was one of the first writers to satirise its excesses. Today, when – as you may have noticed – capitalism is going through yet another of its periodic crises, Jonson's prescience seems all the more remarkable. If he were writing today, we might easily suppose that Subtle and Face would be managing hedge funds, short-selling securities and running pyramid schemes. But I am not so sure that they would be in that league. After all, their private arrangements are the reverse of capitalism: what they set up is a co-operative – a 'venture tripartite' with 'all things in common'. Of course, like most idealistic communities, it doesn't last long, but when it does break up none of them get any of the profits. The real capitalist is Lovewit, the property owner, who returns to reap the rewards of their illicit labours, and acquire a fortune and a young wife, without lifting a finger, merely because he happens to own the house.

## The 1960s

Jonson wrote this play in 1610, and it is full of contemporary references to Jacobean London, and to places and characters that would have been very familiar to its first audiences. Which rather begs the question, why set it in the 1960s?

The trouble is that the references that once provoked the delighted laughter of recognition now require long footnotes. Moving it to an era we are more familiar with helps provide that frisson of recognition for a modern audience. At first the 1980s – notorious as the 'decade of greed' – seemed the logical setting, but for some reason it seems to work better in the decade of sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll. Apart from anything else, the music is better. Of course, it remains a Jacobean play in Jacobean language, but seeing it through the prism of the sixties helps, I hope, to point up its comedy and sharpen its satire.

Steve Fitzpatrick

# THE ALCHEMIST

by Ben Jonson

First performance of this production: Saturday 24th January 2009

## THE COMPANY

Subtle, the 'alchemist'	Tristan Marshall
Face, the keeper of the house	Jason Francis
Dol Common, a whore	Lucy Ibbison
Dapper, a lawyer's clerk	Mark Redrup
Abel Druggier, a tobacconist	Robert Heard
Sir Epicure Mammon, a knight	Tony Bromham
Pertinax Surly, a gamester	Simon Rudkin
Ananias, a zealot	Martin Halvey
Mistress Tribulation Wholesome, another zealot	Sarah Morrison
Kastril, a roaring boy	Matthew Sheahan
Dame Pliant, a young widow	Charlotte Smiley
Lovewit, the owner of the house	Nigel Lawrence
Neighbours, police officers, parson	Jed Chambers, Bess Fairfax, Rafid Golby, Geoffrey Morgan

Director	Steve Fitzpartick
Set Designer	Alex Whitcroft
Lighting Designer	Nigel Lewis
Assistant to Lighting Designer	Nick Rose
Lighting Operator	Stephen Wallace
Sound Designers	Steve Fitzpatrick Martin Choules
Sound Operator	Andra Little
Stage Manager	Pam Redrup
Deputy Stage Manager	Russell Fleet
Assistant Stage Managers	Jed Chambers Bess Fairfax Rafid Golby Geoffrey Morgan

Properties	Peter Salvietto
Costume Designer	Jodie Thomas
Hair & Makeup	Lucy Tomlinson
Head of Construction	Clive Whitcroft
Construction / Get-in team	Keith Collyer, Tina Harris, John Howe, Neil Lacey, Gordan Miller and Geoffrey Morgan.
Programme Editor	Penelope MacLachlan
Programme Design and Print	Considerthisuk.com

### Thanks to:

House Service, Ruth Parry, Claudia Kees, Claire Auvoche, Mike Hagan, Julie Crutenden, Culum Kean and Anthony Doran, Alex Marker, Paul Smith and Kingston students. Also a big thank you to everyone who helped on the set at very short notice.

... also a special thanks for the loan of the hookah to:

Karaan Lobanose Restaurant , 71 New Broadway, Ealing, London.  
Tel: 020 8566 4433

## Biographies

### **Tony Bromham – Sir Epicure Mammon**

Tony joined The Questors in the mid-1990s. Roles have included Malvolio (*Twelfth Night*), Rispolozhenky (*A Family Affair*), Pancrazio (*The Veretian Twins*), Vincent Crummies (*Nicholas Nickleby*), Leonato (*Much Ado*), The Old Shepherd (*The Winter's Tale*), and Wiseacre (*The London Cuckoos*).

### **Russell Fleet – Deputy Stage Manager**

Russell has acted in four Questors productions and this year has gone over to the other side of the shows by becoming involved in backstage work. After being Assistant Stage Manager and making curtains, he has moved on to being Deputy Stage Manager, first for *Bedroom Farce* and now for *The Alchemist*.

### **Steve Fitzpatrick – Director**

Recent productions include *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (Sondheim), *Much Ado about Nothing* (Shakespeare), *Dance of Death* (Strindberg), *The Dispute* (Marivaux) and *Steel Magnolias* (Harling). Recent roles as an actor: *Lars in Dinner*, *Lucky in Waiting for Godot* and *Jaques in As You Like It*.

### **Jason Francis – Face**

Jason is a graduate from The Questors student course and has been performing here for a few years now. Past performances include: *Festen*, *Servant to Two Masters*, *Richard III*, *The Dog in the Manger*, *Saturday Sunday Monday and Henry V*. *The Alchemist* has been one of his most challenging experiences.

### **Martin Halvey – Ananias**

This is Martin's third production at The Questors and has enjoyed them immensely. He played the Friar in *Much Ado about Nothing* and Helmut in *Festen*.

### **Robert Heard – Druggier**

This is Robert's first production at The Questors. Elsewhere, he has acted in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Poicles*, as well as *The Fastest Clock in the Universe*, *Wyrd Sisters*, and most recently *The Fix* at the Bridwell Theatre. He has also been to the Edinburgh Fringe with *Get Boy*, *Sweeney Todd* and *The Enchanted Castle*.

### **Lucy Ibbison – Dol Common**

This is Lucy's third appearance for The Questors, having previously enjoyed roles in *Macbeth* and *Servant to Two Masters*. A former professional, Lucy graduated from Webber Douglas many years ago and worked in Rep, TV and pantomime that included *Ayr Summer Theatre*, *Hi-De-Hi*, *The Bill* and *Dick Whittington* at the New End in Hampstead.

### **Nigel Lawrence – Lovewit**

Nigel graduated from the student group in 1987 and has since appeared in over 50 productions, both at The Questors and for other theatre companies. His most recent The Questors appearance was as Joe Gargery in *Great Expectations* in 2007.

### **Nigel Lewis – Lighting Designer**

Nigel was a frequent lighting designer at The Kenneth More and The Queens theatres during the 1990s. Nigel has lit many fringe theatres for plays and operas over the past 25 years, and he is the founder and company director of Ealing Lighting Design Limited.

### **Tristan Marshall – Subtle**

Tristan joined The Questors in 2003. He's acted in *Suddenly Last Summer*, *A Russian in The Woods*, *Oh! What A Lovely War*, *Bloody Poetry* and *Black Comedy*. This is the first time he's ever acted the part of Subtle.

### **Sarah Morrison – Mistress Tribulation Wholesome**

Sarah has most recently appeared at The Questors in the roles of Donna Lucia in *Charley's Aunt* and Dominia in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. She is looking forward to playing a third forthright female in this production of *The Alchemist*.

### **Mark Redrup – Dapper**

Mark has been acting at The Questors since 1990. Recent parts include Gisham in *Time And Time Again* and Poul in *Festen*. Having recently done Shakespeare set in the 50s, he is delighted to be doing Jonson set in the 60s.

### **Pamela Redrup – Stage Manager**

Pam has now been a member of The Questors since November 2006, stage managing, *Lady in the Van*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the way to the Forum*, *Servant to Two Masters*, *Macbeth*, *Nay Fever* and now *The Alchemist*.

### **Simon Rudkin – Pertinax Surlly**

Simon studied in The Questors Student Group (Group 61) graduating in 2008. The two graduating shows from the course were *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (playing various roles) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (playing Bottom). *The Alchemist* is his second show since graduation, having played Nick in *Bedroom Farce* in September 2008.

### **Matt Sheahan – Kastril**

Matt has been a full acting member at The Questors since 2004, and is a versatile character actor. You may have seen him in the following previous productions: various roles in *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Appletree in The Recruiting Officer*, *Dennis Wickstead in Hobbies Copus* and most recently, *Oliver in As You Like It*.

### **Charlotte Smiley – Dame Pliant**

This is Charlotte's first performance at The Questors, having become an acting member of the theatre in August 2008. She recently graduated from the Lee Strasberg Theatre School in New York.

### **Peter Salvietto – Properties**

Peter, a member of The Questors since 2003, has 'proped' shows from *Blithe Spirit* to *Richard III*. Others include *This Happy Breed*, *Shirley Valentine*, *Into The Woods*, *Vincent in Braxton*, *Peter Pan*, *A Servant To Two Masters*, and most recently, *Macbeth*. Greatest challenge: a roast goose for *Oliver!* Christmas, 2005.

### **Josie Thomas – Costume Designer**

Josie studied theatre design at RWMD and graduated last year. She has been busy since, most recently on a production for the CBBC called *Scoop*, and *Beauty and the Beast* for Lyric Hammersmith. Recent Questors productions include *AFTERTHOUGHT*, *Trojan Women*, *The Vest* and *Bloody Poetry*.

### **Alex Whitcroft – Set Designer**

Alex Whitcroft is a photographer and designer and a recent graduate of architecture. A long-term member of The Questors, he has more recently become involved in doing rather than just watching. *The Alchemist* will be his second set design for The Questors, with both being constructed by Clive Whitcroft.

## Further than the Furthest Thing

31 January – 7 February 2009

In the Studio

Secrets on a remote island

## Glegarry Glen Ross

21 – 28 February 2009

In the Playhouse

Sizzling drama of moral bankruptcy in the American dream.



## Questors E-News direct to your Inbox

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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.

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.

