

Questors, Ealing's Theatre

ABIGAIL'S PARTY
by Mike Leigh

The Studio

30 January – 13 February 2010

questors.org.uk

Qafé

Have you tried the new Questors café experience yet?

Opening times Monday – Saturday:

Term time 9:00 am – 7:30 pm

Outside term time 11:30 am – 7:30 pm

On show nights, through until the end of the first interval

Serving specialist teas and coffees, hot chocolate and soft drinks, with a selection of paninis and sandwiches cut to order.

Pre-theatre hot meal menu available on show nights up to 7:00 pm.

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

The Grapevine Bar

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

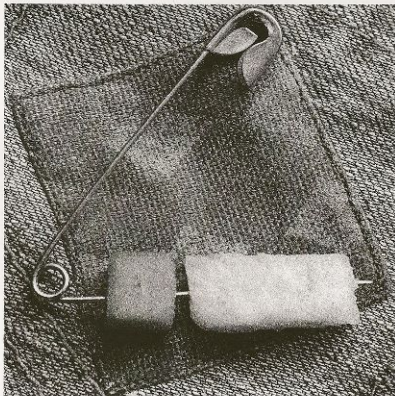
The club is open seven nights a week and Sunday lunchtimes and is managed and staffed entirely by volunteers.

We are the proud holders of a Cask Marque award for the quality of our real ales, we appear in the 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:

7:00 pm – 11:00 pm (10:30 pm close on Sundays)

Sunday lunchtime midday – 2:30 pm



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Abigail's Party

Abigail's Party is many things: a byword for cheesy '70s retro-chic; a members' only bar in London's Soho; a wine & tapas restaurant in Vancouver; a drinking game in which aficionados of the film of Mike Leigh's 1977 play match Beverly and her party guests drink for drink, much in the same way as strong-livered *Withnail & I* fans imbibe their way through Bruce Robinson's cult movie. Like *Withnail*, *Abigail's Party* has acquired something of a cult status, being eminently quotable ('A little cheesy pineapple one?'; 'I've got very beautiful lips'; 'Beaujolaïs? I'll just pop it in the fridge') and containing a memorable performance by the original Beverly, Alison Steadman: that voice, that dress, that walk! Hmm ... The fact that, on its second repeat in August 1979 (having originally been broadcast in 1977), it was watched by 16 million viewers has no doubt contributed to the legend that is *Abigail's Party*.

Interesting to note, then, Mike Leigh's own comments on the film: '...it's a work of deep embarrassment and pain. There is no piece of work for which I have been responsible as a director by which I'm embarrassed, apart from *Abigail's Party* ... as a piece of craft, it's simply appalling ... it is appallingly lit, it is sloppily shot ... it's bland and slick in the worst sense ... I actually can't watch it.' Of the actors' performances, including that of Steadman, his then wife, he was more complimentary ('rock solid') and while Steadman's performance in the key role of Beverly is a powerful one, it is not – as has been claimed – untouchable. Dissenters of both the original theatre production at Hampstead Theatre and of the TV version (most famously, Kenneth Williams and Dennis Potter) claimed that Leigh and his actors were jeering at the lower middle classes. That some of the performances, Steadman's particularly, veer towards parody I think is a contributory factor to this viewpoint. Our production, hopefully, attempts to be loyal to the subtleties of the original text rather than reproduce what has come to be seen as the 'Steadman version'.

Abigail's Party is a play full of conflict: within marriage; between the sexes; between social expectations and the failure to live up to them; and between generations – between, in other words, Beverly's slow car-crash of a party and the riotously fun one that Abigail is having down the road. Perhaps it also engenders conflicting emotions within us as silent witnesses of this suburban comedy of bad manners. Do we, like the introverted Susan (mother of the rebellious Abigail), want to throw up or do we detect serious heartache not far below the surface? Extremely funny though the play is, there's tragedy too – lonely, mismatched characters grappling unsuccessfully with a social situation: people in the wrong place at the wrong time; people who might even reflect something of ourselves.

Devotees of both the film and the play will undoubtedly notice a few cuts and (mainly musical) changes. However, we sincerely hope that our production will offer delights for trainspotters and newcomers alike.

Simon Roberts

Rehearsal Photographs – by Richard Mead



Simon Higginson



Jananne Rahman



Lisa Day



Juliet Vaughan Turner



Myles Brown

The Next Questors Productions

The Comedy of Errors
by William Shakespeare
13 – 20 February 2010
The Playhouse

One of Shakespeare's most light-hearted comedies.

Kvetch
by Steven Berkoff
26 February – 6 March 2010
The Studio

Darkly comic drama about suburban anxieties.

ABIGAIL'S PARTY

By Mike Leigh

First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: 30 January 2010

CAST

in order of appearance

Beverly	Jananne Rahman
Laurence	Simon Higginson
Angela	Juliet Vaughan Turner
Tony	Myles Brown
Susan	Lisa Day

The action of the play takes place in Spring 1977.

The performance lasts approximately two hours
including one interval of 15 minutes.

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

PRODUCTION

Director	Simon Roberts
Set Designers	Jenny Richardson, Bron Blake
Costume Designer	Josie Thomas
Lighting Designer	Chris Newall
Sound Designer	Paul Wilson
Assistant Directors	Michael Hayes, Andrew Davies
Stage Manager	Jane Arnold-Forster
Deputy Stage Managers	Heather Noble, Kate Townsend
Assistant Stage Managers	Henry Broom, Kelly Brown, Liz Cooper, Szczepan Grebosz, Andrew Morris, Donna Noel, Tony Smith
Properties	Jemma Auvache, Hunter Gibson
Lighting Operator	Mel Pereira
Prompter	Debbie Abel
Constructor	Matthew Addison
Hair	Juliet Vaughan Turner
Get In Crew	Tina Harris
Production Photographer	David Mosby
Rehearsal Photographers	Matthew Addison, Richard Mead
Thanks to	Alec Atcheson, Mr & Mrs Brown, Peter Collins, Louisa Dales, Morag Davies, Sasha Duszynska-Lewis, Russell Fleet, Anne Gilmour, Isabella Griffin, Jane Herring at the Nottingham Lace Factory, Lucy Ibbison, Chris Jervis, Francois Langton, Georgina Ledwith, Holly Newson, Alan Smith, Chris Tomlins, Mr & Mrs Townsend, Sylvia Wall, Clive Whitcroft, Nigel Worsley, Greasepaint

Biographies

Myles Brown – Tony

Having joined in 2008, this will be Myles' third appearance in a production at The Questors, following roles as Medvedenko in *The Seagull* (Dec 2008) and James Ling in *Glengarry Glen Ross* (Feb 2009).

Lisa Day – Susan

2010 marks Lisa's 25th year at The Questors Theatre, starting with Student Group 41, and roles have ranged from the sublime (Blanche Dubois: *A Streetcar Named Desire*) to the ridiculous (Mrs Twit), via the scary (The Snow Queen) and the classical (Isabella: *Measure for Measure*). She has recently found a taste for comedy since playing Wynne in *Dinner* and minor roles in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Simon Higginson – Laurence

Simon joined The Questors in 1984 and made his debut in *Princess Ivona*. Since then, he's appeared mainly in comic roles including Brinsley in the 1985 production of *Black Comedy*, which toured Japan, a couple of Ayckbourns, a brace of Restorations and *Noises Off* in 1996. He most recently appeared in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*.

Jananne Rahman – Beverly

Jananne has appeared in numerous productions since making her debut at The Questors in 2003. These include two Dickens adaptations (*Nicholas Nickleby*, *Great Expectations*); musicals (*Company*); dramas (*Festen*, *The Seagull*); and most recently as Beth in *Otherwise Engaged*. She hopes Beverly's dancing won't make the audience as sick as it evidently makes Sue.

Juliet Vaughan Turner – Angela

Juliet graduated from Drama School in 2004 and has since been in many weird and wonderful things. Her most recent Questors productions were Peggy in *The London Cuckolds*, which also went to Minack, Gwendolen in *The Importance of Being Earnest* and, most recently, Grumia in *The Taming of the Shrew*. She does not like celery but does like cheese and pineapple.

Simon Roberts – Director

Simon joined The Questors in 1989. Recent appearances include Simon Hench in *Otherwise Engaged* (2009); Christian in *Festen* (2008); Pip in *Great Expectations* (2007); and Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot* (2007). He has directed shows at the Latchmere Theatre, Battersea and the Barons Court Theatre. He directed Jim Cartwright's *Two* in the Studio in 2008.

Michael Hayes – Assistant Director

Michael was selected to assistant direct *Abigail's Party* as part of The Questors Theatre's New Stage Directors' Training Program, and highly recommends this course and this experience. Michael has also appeared as the Cowardly Lion in *The Wizard of Oz*; Brassett in *Charley's Aunt*; King John in *Cinderella*; and Larry in *Company*.

Andrew Davies – Assistant Director

For *The Questors*: *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (DSM), *Two* (DSM), *Dinner* (Asst. Director), *Company* (Sound Op.) and *There'll Always Be A Brentford* (SM). Elsewhere: *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (SM, White Bear), *Parade* (LX Op., Bridewell), *Open Yarmouth* (SM, Etcetera), *Cloud Nine* (SM, Union), *In Bed With Messalina* (SM, Courtyard), *The Wild Party* (Associate LD, Bridewell), *Rent* (LX Op., Bridewell).

Chris Newall – Lighting Designer

Chris has lit over 20 Questors productions and assisted on many others. His recent lighting designs include *Further than the Furthest Thing* and *Richard III* in the Studio and *The Lady in the Van*, *Arabian Nights* and *Macbeth* in the Playhouse. A fan of Mike Leigh, he is delighted to be lighting *Abigail's Party*.

Josie Thomas – Costume Designer

Josie trained at RWCMD. Recently she has worked for the BBC on *Scoop* and *Chucklevision*, for the Lyric and Hampstead Theatres and had oodles of fun making costumes for the upcoming Ridley Scott epic *Robin Hood*. Questors design credits include *The Alchemist*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Trojan Women* and *Bloody Poetry*.

Jane Arnold-Forster – Stage Manager

Jane has been Stage Managing at The Questors since 2006, when she stage-managed *The Weir*. Her most recent productions include *Festen*, *Two*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and *Broken Glass*.

Heather Noble – Deputy Stage Manager

Heather cut her theatrical teeth as a Technical Director and Stage Manager at Cambridge's ADC Theatre during her student days. She also performed in its annual dance show. Since joining The Questors in October, Heather has crewed *Broken Glass*, built set for *A Christmas Carol* and is looking forward to continuing her involvement throughout 2010.

Jemma Auvache – Properties

Having started with the Acting For All Course, I gradually moved backstage into the world of props. *Abigail's Party* is now my seventh play as Property Manager. I love finding and making the odd props including a futuristic vacuum cleaner for *A Brave New World*, but making cheesy pineapple ones and little sandwiches has been great fun.

Hunter Gibson – Properties

Hunter joined The Questors in early 2009 and has ASM'd on *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Broken Glass*, *Taming Of The Shrew* and now Assistant Props Manager on *Abigail's Party*. He will DSM an upcoming Summer production.

Matthew Addison – Constructor / Rehearsal Photographer

Abigail's Party is Matthew's fourth Questors show this season, and he is starting to become something of a regular in the workshop. He has recently joined Clare Watson as a Production Director on the Questors Team of Managers and is considering treading the boards again for a break! Matthew is also an experienced lighting designer.

Music

Pre-Show

- I Don't Want To Talk About It* (Rod Stewart)
- Chanson d'Amour* (Manhattan Transfer)
- All You Get From Love Is A Love Song* (The Carpenters)
- Knowing Me, Knowing You* (Abba)
- Home At Last* (Steely Dan)
- Welcome To My World* (Elvis Presley)

Act 1

- Don't Go Breaking My Heart* (Elton John with Kiki Dee)
- California Dreamin'* (José Feliciano)
- Light My Fire* (José Feliciano)

Interval

- Feel The Need In Me* (The Detroit Emeralds)
- You Make Loving Fun* (Fleetwood Mac)

Act 2

- Don't* (Elvis Presley)
- As Time Goes By* (Sam 'The Man' Taylor & his Orchestra)
- Ride of the Valkyries* (Richard Wagner)
- White Riot* (The Clash)

Post-Show

- Waiting For The End Of The World* (Elvis Costello)



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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 friends to Questors productions*
- ✓ Children's FREE tickets¹
- ✓ Opportunities to be actively involved in our productions
- ✓ Allowed to audition to join our company of actors
- ✓ Exclusive or discounted training courses
- ✓ Colour magazine three times a year
- ✓ Regular Members' Newsletter
- ✓ Regular programme card
- ✓ Vote at general meetings
- ✓ Membership of The Grapevine Club

*Reduced prices exclude certain events. ¹Under 18 only, maximum four per event. Must be collected at the performance and accompanied by an adult member.

Introductory offer – as a welcome for first time members, *either* try us out for six months at half price, or get your first 15 months' membership for the price of 12.

Getting the most from your membership

We have a wide range of opportunities for you to become actively involved front-of-house or backstage. Volunteer help is always needed for selling programmes or stewarding, and training is provided if you'd like to work in Box Office with our computerized 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.

Questors Youth Theatre – QYT

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

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