



Questors, Ealing's Theatre

The Homecoming

By Harold Pinter

The Playhouse

23 – 30 January 2010

questors.org.uk

Café

Have you tried the new Questors café experience yet?

Opening times Monday – Saturday

Term time 9am – 7.30pm

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 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:

7pm – 11pm (10.30pm close on Sundays)

Sunday lunchtime 12.00 – 2.30pm



The Homecoming

By Harold Pinter

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Harold Pinter and His Playwriting

Harold Pinter's first full length play, *The Birthday Party*, opened at the Lyric Hammersmith in 1958. Eight days later it closed after universal panning by critics and public. Pinter then wrote an article in *Encore*, complaining that the play hadn't had a fair crack of the whip and hadn't been seen at its best. Stephen Joseph, Director of Scarborough's Studio Theatre and a former teacher of Pinter's from Central School, read the article and got in touch saying: "I've read your whinge. Why don't you do it again with a scratch company?" Pinter took up the invitation and cast the play from the rather meagre pool of actors, one Alan Ayckbourn taking the role of Stanley. Ayckbourn recalls: "We read the play and thought he was barking mad. It made absolutely no sense whatever ... I remember asking Pinter about my character. Where does he come from? Where is he going to? What can you tell me about him that will give me more understanding? And Harold just said 'Mind your own f***ing business.'"

Pinter's plays are ambiguous by reputation, characters' backgrounds and motivations often remaining obliquely stated or unstated, which maybe begs the question: is the playwright any the wiser? Pinter's acceptance speech for the 2005 Nobel Prize might shed some light on this.

"Most of the plays are engendered by a line, a word or an image. The given word is often shortly followed by the image ... The first line of *The Homecoming* is 'What have you done with the scissors?' ... I had no further information ... someone was obviously looking for a pair of scissors and was demanding their whereabouts of someone else he suspected had probably stolen them. But I somehow knew that the person addressed didn't give a damn about the scissors or about the questioner either, for that matter. I always start a play by calling the characters A, B and C. In the play that became *The Homecoming* I saw a man enter a stark room and ask his question of a younger man sitting on an ugly sofa reading a racing paper. I somehow suspected that A was a father and that B was his son, but I had no proof. This was however confirmed a short time later when B (later to become Lenny) says to A (later to become Max), 'Dad, do you mind if I change the subject?' ... So since B calls A 'Dad' it seemed to me reasonable to assume that they were father and son A was also clearly the cook and his cooking did not seem to

be held in high regard. Did this mean that there was no mother? I didn't know. But, as I told myself at the time, our beginnings never know our ends."

There's a sense of the playwright feeling his way to the core of his characters but happily abandoning the quest before quite getting there, which might give rise to the trademark ambiguity for which the plays are rightly appreciated. True to this spirit, when actors rehearsing this production have asked whether this or that might be true of their characters, the response of the director (whose first acting role at school was, incidentally, in *The Birthday Party*) has often been a Pinteresque: "Don't know. Maybe."

The rehearsal room has also been pervaded by a growing and somewhat perplexing air of hilarity as the production has progressed. It is a common misapprehension that Pinter should be watched with a frown, through thick rimmed spectacles. Ian McShane, who played Max in the 2008 Broadway revival of *The Homecoming* (the cast of which reportedly had the same jocular problems as this one), recalls Pinter telling him on the set of *The Caretaker*: "By the way, before you do it, there's a couple of good jokes in there, don't take it seriously and go and have a good time." He goes on to quote Pinter, with regard to over ponderous stagings of his work: "I once went to see a French production [of *The Homecoming*]. It was the most boring evening of my life. Three hours it took!"

Audience members will be relieved to learn – the lure of the Grapevine Bar notwithstanding – that they're in no danger of missing their last trains home tonight.

Wally Sewell
Assistant Director

The Next Questors Productions

Abigail's Party

by Mike Leigh

30 January – 13 February 2010

The Studio

Iconic comedy of suburban lives and manners.

The Comedy of Errors

by William Shakespeare

13 – 20 February 2010

The Playhouse

One of Shakespeare's most light-hearted comedies.

THE HOMECOMING

By Harold Pinter

First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: 23 January 2010.

This production is supported in the memory of Marguerite Minster.

CAST

in order of appearance

Lenny, <i>a man in his early thirties</i>	Andrew McGuinness
Max, <i>a man of seventy</i>	Robin Ingram
Sam, <i>a man of sixty-three</i>	Andrew Hill
Joey, <i>a man in his middle twenties</i>	Anthony Steele
Teddy, <i>a man in his middle thirties</i>	Anthony Lewis
Ruth, <i>a woman in her early thirties</i>	Alex McDevitt

The action of the play takes place in an old house in North London.

The performance lasts approximately 2 hours and 10 minutes 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	Zyg Staniaszek
Set Designer	Zyg Staniaszek
Costume Designer	Nichola Thomas
Lighting Designer	Ben Sandford
Sound	Colin Horne
Assistant Director	Wally Sewell
Assistant Lighting Designer	Victoria Butler
Stage Manager	Michelle Weaver
Deputy Stage Managers	Hannah Webster, Eric Lister
Assistant Stage Managers	Maria Brusa, Ursula Russell, Antonio Scaramuzzino
Wardrobe	Bridgett Strevens
Properties	Harriet Parsonage
Prompter	Bridgett Strevens
Lighting Operator	Anthony Doran
Lighting Riggers	Francois Langton, Richard Mead
Constructors	Richard Williams, Colin Horne, Heather Noble, Donna Noel, Zyg Staniaszek
Hair and Makeup	Ursula Russell, Charlotte Yeomens
Photographer	Richard Mead
Thanks to	Danny Bailey, Mike Hagan, Tina Harris, Amy Mancini, Emilia Staniaszek, Zosia Staniaszek, Emily-Jane Thomas, Caz Thomson, Sylvia Wall, Connor Ward, Jack Watson, Charlotte Williams, House Services

Biographies

Andrew Hill – Sam

This is Andrew's second Questors play, the first being *Insignificance* last year. It's also his second Pinter play after appearing in *The Birthday Party* in Strasburg. Andrew has appeared in theatre up and down the country and abroad and recently made a film, *Vehemence*, due out next year.

Robin Ingram – Max

Robin has appeared in numerous productions at The Questors over the years. Recent roles include Levene in *Glengarry Glen Ross* in the Playhouse and the Ghost of Hamlet's Father in *Hamlet Unseen* in the Studio. In 2008 he appeared in *Macbeth* and *Waiting for Godot*.

Anthony Lewis – Teddy

This is Anthony's first production for The Questors, having performed in many productions in New Zealand and the UK. His favourite roles include Hamlet, Torvald in *A Doll's House*, Otto in *Design for Living* and Aleister Crowley in *Babalon*. Anthony currently works as a Tour Guide at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre.

Alex McDevitt – Ruth

A member of Questors Student Group 60, Alex has appeared on The Questors stage as the Wicked Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*, Player Queen in *Hamlet Unseen*, Rosie Palm in *Nightwatch*, Mrs Railton-Bell in *Separate Tables* and Clara Zachansian in *The Visit*. This is her first foray into Pinterland.

Andrew McGuinness – Lenny

Andrew's previous Questors credits include *The Happiest Days of Your Life*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *A Servant to Two Masters* (also at Ca. Rezzonico, Venice), *Otherwise Engaged* and *Five Card Trick* (which he also wrote). Previous dabblings with Pinter include Albert Stokes in *A Night Out* (Watermans Arts Centre).

Anthony Steele – Joey

This is Anthony's fifth play at The Questors. Previous parts include Florizel in *The Winter's Tale*, Emil in *A Russian in the Woods*, Stanley Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Ricky Roma in *Glengarry Glen Ross*. He has studied at The Oxford School of Drama and The Questors Theatre.

Zyg Staniaszek – Director/Set Designer

In the four years he has been at The Questors, Zyg has directed *Guards! Guards!*, *Tejas Verdes*, *Polish Shorts* and *The Wizard of Oz*. He has acted in *Peter Pan*, *Arsenic and Old Lace* and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. Zyg is currently co-Artistic Director of The Questors. He occasionally does a bit of set construction.

Colin Horne – Sound

Work at The Questors since 1976 includes: Company Treasurer '77 – '79; Production Manager – *Nicholas Nickleby*; Stage Manager – *Lark Rise*, *Dead Funny*, *Translations*. Sound Designs include *Kennedy's Children*, *Equus*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *King Lear*, *This Happy Breed*, *Vincent in Brixton*, *Henry V*, *Richard III*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* and many other productions. Set Construction for *Broken Glass*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Great Expectations*, *Translations*, *Dead Funny*, *The Boy Friend*, *Cabaret*, *Happy End*, *Cinderella*, *Sisters* and far too many others. Also original Sound Design for all the Coarse Acting Shows at The Questors, Edinburgh Fringe, Scottish Television and The Shaftsbury Theatre.

Ben Sandford – Lighting Designer

Ben's previous design credits at The Questors include *The Taming of the Shrew* (set), *The Marvellous Land of Oz* (set and lighting), *Glengarry Glen Ross* (lighting), *The Lesson/The Chairs* (set and lighting), *Dinner* (lighting), and *After Magnific/Black Comedy* (lighting).

Wally Sewell – Assistant Director

Wally writes plays, many of which he has directed in rehearsed readings at the Actors' and Writers' London Play Reading Forum. He has also directed shorts at the Hydra New Writing Forum at The Questors. A long time 'armchair director' at The Questors, perhaps this is a suitable production with which to get involved – given the prominence of a certain armchair!

Nichola Thomas – Costume Designer

Nichola joined The Questors seven years ago and has worked in costume and wardrobe throughout most of that time, helping on various shows including *A Russian in the Woods*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Plaza Suite*, *This Happy Breed*, *Seascape/Charade*, *Dance of Death*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Separate Tables*, *Two*, *The Seagull*, *Hay Fever* and *Broken Glass*.



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Marguerite Minster

Marguerite joined The Questors in 1981 and was a member until her early death in 2008 at the age of 60. She had only recently retired from her work as a technical translator in German (having been a teacher earlier) and was looking forward to her retirement. She was thinking about living in Italy and had been learning Italian for some time. For her sixtieth birthday, many of her Questors friends (and others) travelled to Lucca, in Tuscany, to spend the weekend with her and to attend a magnificent meal in her honour.



For many years she was one of Questors most effective stage managers, as well as an occasional translator of plays. She had the remarkable gift of managing people with no fuss and a talent for organisation. She cared deeply about the people she worked with and the shows she worked on, being endlessly supportive of crews, casts, designers and directors. She could be direct, but never sharp, and her presence in any situation guaranteed a level of calm and mutual respect. Stage management can be the most stressful of occupations, but she brought to it an equilibrium and an intelligent concern which insulated all

her co-workers from the stress. Typically self-deprecating, she always said that all she knew was how to get other people to do the things she knew nothing about herself. Many of the large number of friends she made at The Questors knew her better than that and experienced the great pleasure of working with someone of her quality and of socialising with her away from the theatre. She initiated and organised a group of Questors members who undertook a number of ambitious walks – for example to the source of the Thames, or circling London. These were undertaken on occasional Sundays, in sections, and were delightful social occasions rather than solemn hikes. She was also a keen choral singer and a great supporter of a local choir in Hounslow, where she lived.

Her friends and family wanted to remember her at The Questors and have done so by sponsoring this production of *The Homecoming* in her memory. If quality of friendship is a measure of a person's life, then Marguerite's life was a huge success. Her friends and family continue to miss her deeply.

John Davey

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 include certain events. ** Under 16. Excludes certain events. Maximum 4 per event, must be subsidised at the performance and be accompanied by member.

Introductory offer – as a welcome for 1st 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 evenings. 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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