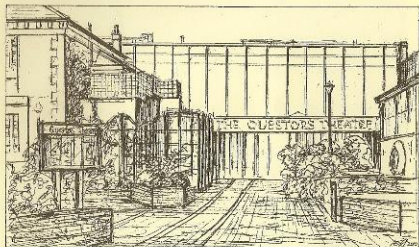




Questors, Ealing's Theatre



# THREE SISTERS

by Anton Pavlovich Chekhov

English version by Alfred Emmet

The Playhouse

5 – 12 June 2010

## Qafé

Have you tried the Questors Qafé experience yet?

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

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

### Opening times:

Tuesday to Friday

10:30 am to 7:00 pm or end of the interval for Playhouse productions

Saturday

9:00 am to 7:00 pm or end of the interval for Playhouse productions

Sunday

1:00 pm to 6:00 pm

## The Grapevine Bar

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

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

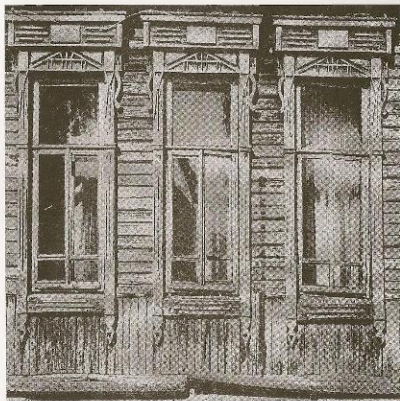
We are the proud holders of a Cask Marque award for the quality of our real ales, we appear in the 2010 edition of The Good Beer Guide and we are 2010 CAMRA West Middlesex Club of the Year. A choice of at least three real ales is usually available, including Fuller's London Pride. We also provide a range of draught lagers and ciders, as well as wines and spirits – all at very reasonable prices.

### Opening times:

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

Sunday lunchtime midday to 2:30 pm

Please note that neither the Qafé nor the Grapevine are able to accept credit or debit cards.



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## Three Sisters

Chekhov wrote *Three Sisters* in 1900, and it was first performed by the Moscow Art Theatre, directed by Stanislavsky, in 1901. It is the third of the four major plays that established his theatrical immortality, coming after *The Seagull* and *Uncle Vanya*, and preceding *The Cherry Orchard*. He described it as "a drama".

But it is a drama very unlike the sort of drama that was conventional at the time, and indeed remains so today. It has no clearly identifiable plot line, no obvious protagonist, no building of suspense, no dramatic climax, no resolution. It is not a play that has any strong message, or which debates any major moral issues. It does not seem that the author is speaking to us through any one character. It is plainly not a tragedy, though there are elements of tragedy in it. It is plainly not a comedy, though there is certainly some humour, which I hope our production will bring out. It certainly would not call it a melodrama, though one can find elements of that in it too.

So what is *Three Sisters*? I will not try to define it. It exists. It is one of the greatest plays ever written. That is enough. What is it about? I do believe we can answer that question, but the answer I shall give often leaves people very unsatisfied. It is about life; it is about people; it is about the lives of the characters in the play – who they are, what they make of themselves, their loves, hopes, dreams, foibles, squabbles and their different paths into the future. Is that too obvious? Maybe. Is that too simplistic? Most certainly not. It is unendingly rich, varied, complex and satisfying, because it is an inexhaustible theme.

The extraordinary thing about the characters in *Three Sisters* is that when we look at who they are, and what they go through, we can immediately recognise them in our own lives. We can say 'I know someone like that', or 'I have been through that', or 'That could so easily have happened to me'. Not of course if we look at them remotely, in the world they inhabit, which is distant from our own. But only enter imaginatively into their minds and hearts, think what they think and feel what they feel, and they are ever so close to us in our own world. Life may have changed on the outside, but it is the same on the inside as it was 100 years ago, and doubtless as it will be 200 years from now. Human nature, human relationships and human emotions do not evolve that fast.

And we can relate to these characters in spite of all their faults. Most of them are fairly self-centred; they have their quirks, they can behave badly, they can be rude, they can hurt each other. But we know that we too can behave like that sometimes. They can be self-indulgent, they can be silly, they can be ridiculous, and when they are we can laugh at them; but we are also laughing at ourselves. They are needy; they go through pain and loss and we can feel it with them, because we know what it is like. But they can also be loving, joyful and passionate, and we share these feelings too: they are our reward in life.

Look also at what happens to the characters. Major events occur: marriages, affairs, partings, financial ruin, a duel, a death. And yet they seem so slight, as indeed in the context of life as a whole they are. But Chekhov shows us how these big events are the result of tiny, almost random, incidents that may seem ever so insignificant at the time. In these little moments the characters behave intuitively and spontaneously; but what happens in an instant may have huge consequences some years later and lead to despair and unhappiness. Do we not recognise how true to life this is? I think Chekhov would have loved chaos theory.

And so often it is the choices that the characters make that lead to their futures. Like so many people we know, ourselves included, they make wrong choices, but we can see how easily they do that, because we understand why they do. To take but one obvious example: do we not all know someone who has married the wrong person? But we know why they did, and it was probably inevitable. We might well have done the same ourselves. They know what they want, but so often they lack the drive or ambition to achieve it. Isn't that a bit close to home? Alfred Emmet, the translator of this version, always used to say that *Three Sisters* was about "people making a mess of their lives".

But *Three Sisters* is emphatically not a pessimistic play. It is true of course that nearly all the characters remain unfulfilled and are in varying degrees unhappy. But they never wallow in it. They are constantly on the search for happiness, a quest which they never abandon. The only time they ever look back is when they are able to do so without pain or regret. When they are miserable, they only ever look to the future, dreaming about and searching for a better life to come. Chekhov was by all accounts an incurable optimist in his own life, and a great lover of humanity, and he puts these qualities into his plays. Over and over again in *Three Sisters* you will hear the characters talking about a better future, especially when they are at their lowest ebb.

Some commentators have suggested that *Three Sisters* is really about the changing world in which the characters live, the breakdown of the old class system and a prediction of the socialist world to come. That was certainly how the communist authorities portrayed it after 1917. I would not deny that there is something of that in it. The world in Russia was changing at that time, the social order was breaking down, and revolution was in the air. But Chekhov was writing what at the time was a modern-day play, with characters living in the real world that he and his audience knew, so of course the play has a flavour of that world. I don't believe that the social message was Chekhov's prime purpose or theme. Had he wanted to write a political play he could easily have done so. But I don't think he would have populated it with the characters we see here. As I said at the beginning, they are what *Three Sisters* is about, and they are much more important than their background. They are us.

David Emmet

# THREE SISTERS

by Anton Pavlovich Chekhov

English version by Alfred Emmet

First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: 5 June 2010

## CAST

Andrey (*Andrey Sergeevich Prozorov*)  
Olga (*Olga Sergeevna*), his eldest sister  
Masha (*Marya Sergeevna*), his middle sister  
Irina (*Irina Sergeevna*), his youngest sister  
Kulyigin (*Fyodor Ilyich*), Masha's husband  
Natasha (*Natalya Ivanovna*), Andrey's fiancée, later wife  
Chebutykin (*Ivan Romanich*), army doctor  
Vershinin (*Aleksandr Ignatyevich*), lieutenant-colonel  
Tusenbach (*Baron Nikolai Lvovich*), lieutenant  
Solyony (*Vasily Vasilyich*), captain  
Fedotik (*Alexey Petrovich*), second lieutenant  
Rodé (*Vladimir Karlovich*), second lieutenant  
Anfisa, the family's nanny  
Ferapont (*Ferapont Spiridonich*), porter at the town hall  
Maid  
Orderly  
Musician

Michael Roebuck  
Emma Hounsell  
Kathryn Redwood  
Sarah Mannion  
Martin Halvey  
Eleanor Misselbrook  
Bill Boyd  
Julian Casey  
Wesley Lloyd  
Scott Drummond  
André Le Brocqy  
Szczepan Grebosz  
Anne Sawbridge  
Ken Ratcliffe  
Eleanor Cox  
Gianluca Arcidiacono  
Hannah Nepilová

A provincial town in Russia, early 1900s, the Prozorov household

**Act 1:** Sunday 5th May, noon

**Act 2:** February, two years later, 8.15pm

**Interval** of 15 minutes

**Act 3:** June, a year later, 3am

**Act 4:** Autumn, the same year, noon

The performance lasts approximately three hours, including interval.

## PRODUCTION

Director	David Emmet
Set Designers	Kim Alwyn, Aimee Sajjan-Servaes
Lighting Designer	Francois Langton
Sound Designer	Joel Schrire
Stage Manager	Michelle Weaver
Deputy Stage Manager	Stephanie Moore
Assistant Stage Managers	Hunter Gibson, Paul Michel, Will O'Connell, Ursula Russell, Kate Townsend
Properties	Jemma Auvache
Prompter	Debbie Abel
Wardrobe	Sarah Andrews, Jennie Yates
Wardrobe Assistants	Elaine Bates, Mary Davies, Helen Karasiewicz
Lighting Operators	Paul Robinson, Sarah Clopet
Sound Operator	Mark Lucek, Sarah Clopet
Table Designer	Mike Hagan
Table Constructor	Richard Williams
Hair and Make-up	Camilla Collins
Photographer	Richard Mead
Thanks to	James Gadston, Chris Jervis, Barry Jones, Claudia Kees, Ellis McNorthey-Gibbs

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

## Biographies

### **Gianluca Arcidiacono** – Orderly

Brought up in Australia, where he has appeared in several productions, including *Popcorn, Guys and Dolls* and *Chicago*. He joined Acting for All at The Questors in 2008 and is currently in the first year Student Group. He played First Merchant in *The Comedy of Errors* and an SS Corporal in the visiting production of *Bent*. After graduating from the Student Group, he hopes to go to drama school.

### **Bill Boyd** – Chebutykin

Joined The Questors ten years ago and this is his fourth leading role with the company, the others being *Pete* in *The Birthday Party*, *Scullery in Road* and, last year, *Bill* in *Further Than the Furthest Thing*.

### **Julian Casey** – Verzhin

Joined The Questors four years ago, after wide experience at Leeds University and in Stockton, appearing in plays such as *The Tempest*, *The Crucible*, *Macbeth* and *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*. Here he has been in *Mouth to Mouth*, *Comedians*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Knives in Hens*, *Two* and, earlier this season, played Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. This is the third occasion that he has found himself playing opposite Kathryn Redwood.

### **Eleanor Cox** – Maid

Was a member of the National Youth Theatre and acted also with the Orange Tree Youth Theatre and at Bristol University. She came to The Questors in September 2009 to join the Student Group and played in the shortened version of *I'll Leave It To You* performed at The Questors' 80th Birthday Party. She hopes to go on in due course to drama school.

### **Scott Drummond** – Solyony

Took a degree in drama in Australia, where he has acted and directed extensively. Acting credits include *Antigone*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Lysistrata* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. He also won a directing award for *Spring Awakening* and two other productions. He is also a professionally performed playwright. He joined The Questors two years ago and previously appeared in *Glengarry Glen Ross*.

### **Szczepan Grebosz** – Rodé

Performed with a youth theatre in Gdansk, Poland, before moving to England, where he has taken several training courses and appeared in short films. He joined The Questors in September 2009 as a member of the Student Group and is currently in the first year of the course. He also worked backstage on *Abigail's Party*. This spring he took part in a workshop performance at the Grotowski Institute in Poland.

### **Martin Halvey** – Kulyigin

Is appearing in his fifth production at The Questors, having joined in 2008 and enjoyed appearing in *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Festen*, *The Alchemist* and, earlier this year, *The Comedy of Errors*.

### **Emma Hounsell** – Olga

Trained at Manchester Metropolitan University and Webber Douglas Academy, but put her professional career on hold and joined The Questors in 2006. Here she has appeared as *Thelma* in *After Magritte*, in *Widows* (part of the *Polish Shorts* evening) and a few months ago as the Courtesan in *The Comedy of Errors*. She has also appeared in a short film, *Southside*, which won an award at Cannes.

### **André Le Brocqy** – Fedotik

Has quite a lot of film acting experience in the UK and the USA, and also acted in plays at school and took an acting course at Columbia University in New York. He joined The Questors Student Group in September 2009 and is currently auditioning for drama schools. He appeared as an attendant in *The Comedy of Errors*. Next summer he will take an intensive acting course at the Lee Strasberg Institute.

### **Wesley Lloyd** – Tusenbach

Before coming to The Questors in 2007, he was a member of On Stage Theatre Company and performed in several productions. He was a member of Student Group 62, graduating last summer after playing *Henry VI* in *Henry VI* and *Joseph Poorgrass* in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. He has since appeared as an acting member in *The Marvellous Land of Oz* and *A Christmas Carol*. He has also done quite a lot of backstage work at The Questors, most recently as DSM on *Kvetch*.

### **Sarah Mannion** – Irina

Joined The Questors almost two years ago, and is delighted to be making her debut with the company. She appeared in a large number of musicals and light operas while at Durham University, and has since played *Elizabeth* in *The Libertine* and *Lily* and *Flo* in *Alfie* for KDC Theatre Company. During the day she works in the production office at the Monier Chocolate Factory Theatre in Southwark.

### **Eleanor Misselbrook** – Natasha

Trained at Bretton Hall (now part of Leeds University) with a BA in Acting. Joined The Questors in 2008, and played her first role in *Charley's Aunt*, also touring to the Minack Theatre. This is her second appearance with the company. She enjoys being part of a large-scale play and hopes to continue acting with The Questors for many years to come.

### **Hannah Nepilová** – Musician

Was a member of the National Youth Theatre and studied music at Oxford University, where she also acted with OUDS and in college productions, playing *Smeraldina* in *A Servant to Two Masters*, *Estelle* in *Huis Clos*, *Beline* in *The Hypochondriac*, *Nora* in *A Doll's House* and *Grandma Josephine* in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. She became an acting member of The Questors only two months ago and this is the first production in which she has appeared.

### **Ken Ratcliffe** – Ferapont

Trained at Bristol Old Vic and joined The Questors in 1963. He has since played well over 100 roles. When asked to nominate which ones should be mentioned here he chose *The Wizard* in *The Wizard of Oz*, *Mr Brownlow* in *Oliver!*, several plays by Samuel Beckett and *Pinter's The Homecoming* (not the recent production) and *No Man's Land*. He also appears in *PlayBack's* reminiscence road shows, and can often be seen on front of house duty and tending the front garden.

#### **Kathryn Redwood – Masha**

Trained at Birmingham School of Acting and acted professionally in *As You Like It* (Open Air), *Hippolytus* (in Athens), *Spoonface Steinberg* (Nottingham) and in an independent feature film and two commercials. She joined The Questors in 2006 and this is her third production here, the previous being *Mouth to Mouth* and earlier this season *The Taming of the Shrew* (as Kate). In all three she has found herself playing opposite Julian Casey, but points out that this time he is not her husband.

#### **Michael Roebuck – Andrey**

Currently a film and theatre student at the University of Reading, he became an acting member of The Questors last summer and this is his first part here. His previous experience is as Les in *East*, Terry in *Pornography*, Rudge in *The History Boys* and Wayne in *Popcorn*.

#### **Anne Sawbridge – Anisa**

Trained at The Questors in Student Group 38 and has since appeared in many productions, the most recent ones being *After the Dance*, *The Lady in the Van*, *The London Cuckolds*, *Miss Farnival in Black Comedy* and *Polina in The Seagull*. She is also to be found doing front of house duty and is a member of the Project 11 steering group.

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## TALKBACK – Tuesday 8 June

Come meet the Director and Cast for an informal discussion in The Playhouse as soon as possible after the Tuesday performance.

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## The Next Questors Productions

#### **THE LIBERTINE**

by Stephen Jeffreys

17 – 24 July 2010

#### **The Playhouse**

Student Group 63 presents the story of the Earl of Rochester, the most notorious rake of his age.

#### **THE ROVER**

by Aphra Behn

6 – 10 September 2010

#### **The Minack Theatre, Cornwall**

The recent Questors production tours to the open-air Minack Theatre. Tickets from: [www.minack.com](http://www.minack.com)

## 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 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 three times a year
- ✓ Regular Members' Newsletter
- ✓ Regular programme card
- ✓ Vote at general meetings
- ✓ Membership of The Grapevine Club

\*Reduced prices exclude certain events. †Under 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](http://questors.org.uk/qyt).

Cover Image: Elaine Hagan

Programme: Nigel Bamford & John MacCarrick

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