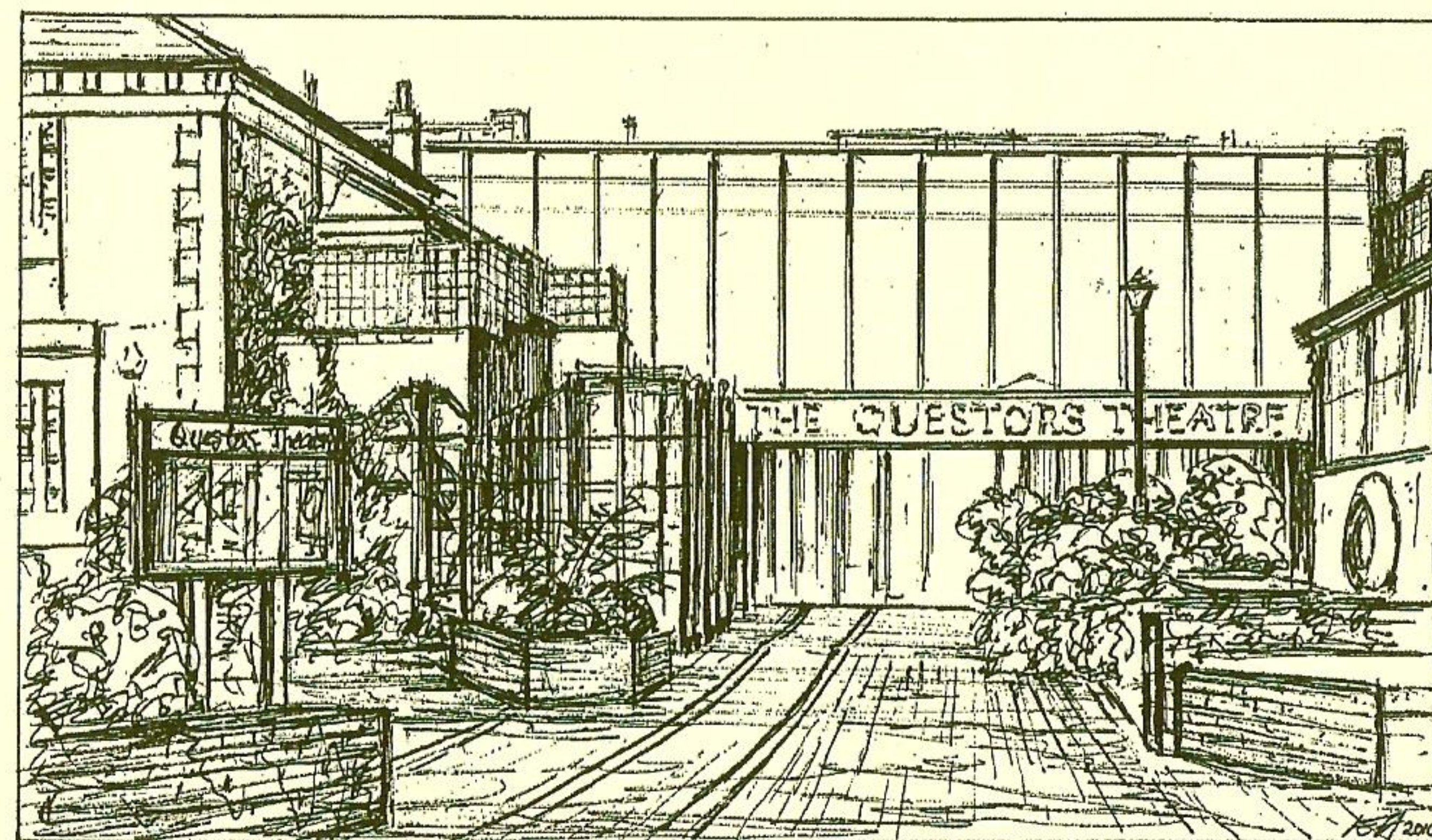




Questors, Ealing's Theatre



THE FLINT STREET NATIVITY

by Tim Firth

The Studio

2 – 17 December 2011

Qafé

Pop in for lunch or an afternoon snack – serving specialist teas and coffees, hot chocolate and soft drinks, with a selection of sandwiches cut to order.

Opening Hours:

Tuesday to Friday	11:30 am – 7:30 pm
Saturday	9:00 am – 5:00 pm
Sunday	2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

For Playhouse productions:

Hot meal menu up to 7:00 pm followed by drinks, ice creams and snacks through the first interval.

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 2012 edition of The Good Beer Guide and we are 2011 CAMRA Greater London 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

Grapevine Malt Whisky Tasting – Friday 2 December

See questors.org.uk/grapevine for more details

**Neither the Qafé nor the Grapevine
is able to accept credit or debit cards.**



Image: Richard Mead

THE FLINT STREET NATIVITY

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2 – 17 December 2011

The Flint Street Nativity

The Flint Street Nativity was written by Tim Firth initially as a television play in 1999, featuring a host of familiar actors including Stephen Tompkinson, Jane Horrocks and Dervla Kirwan. Firth later adapted it for the stage and added music in the form of popular Christmas carols, which he arranged for piano himself and for which he wrote alternative lyrics. It was first performed at the Liverpool Playhouse in 2006 to great critical acclaim.

Although the original script sets the play in Liverpool, Firth specifies that each company's production of *The Flint Street Nativity* should be set in their local area. He lists a number of references that potentially need to be tweaked in order to create the impression that Flint Street Junior is a school the audience may have unwittingly passed on their way to the theatre. Consequently, in our production, Morecambe, a 'nearby resort of limited ambition' becomes Southend, and The Empire, a 'local commercial large-scale theatre house' becomes the West End – being in London makes it hard to single out one theatre amongst the plethora of venues. The location of the infamous playground incident in which a boy's leg bone came out through his bum was changed from Maghull to Little Ealing, the name of a local primary school and a name which, when I was young, conjured up intriguing images of a place of Lilliputian dimensions like an inhabited fully-functioning model village.

One of the references that remained as it was in the original script is the rather apt name of the stick insect, Peter Crouch, his namesake being the long-limbed premiership footballer. There was no need to find a local alternative in this case as he was brought up in Ealing. Our costume designer taught him at North Ealing Primary School, after which he started at Drayton Manor High School around the same time as I was doing my A Levels there.

Some of the language of the play had to be altered slightly to make it sound less northern, so colloquialisms such as 'summat' and 'aye' were replaced with their southern equivalents. The words that caused us the most trouble were the insults. The children in the original production mostly use 'nugget', which we had never heard used in London. Much time was spent trying to discover which derogatory terms are preferred by local seven-year-olds these days. I am led to believe that names involving various bodily functions are just as popular now as they were when I was seven, however the word 'gay' currently seems to trump the rest. This is generally used in contexts where sexual orientation is completely irrelevant, for instance, to describe an inferior pair of trainers or television programme.

The racist term that Angel (from a Pakistani family that is continually feuding with its Indian neighbours) uses when mimicking her father caused

the most controversy amongst cast members. None of us had heard the word 'coon' spoken in West London, particularly when referring to Asians and we felt uncomfortable using it. Most people who have grown up in an ethnically diverse area, are extremely careful to avoid racist remarks in public. However, we realised that some people within the privacy of their own home are less cautious about the language they use and that children often pick up words without really understanding what they mean or how offensive they are. Lacking a more suitable alternative, we decided to stick with 'coon', even though it may not be completely accurate, as it allowed us to retain the shock value that I am sure Tim Firth intended.

Creating the illusion that our full-grown actors are actually the size of young children involved constructing a scaled-up set. We learned that the average seven-year-old is approximately two-thirds the height of an adult, therefore all furniture and props had to be one and a half times bigger than they would be in real life. Getting the actors to behave like children was also a tricky job. I decided not to adopt a style in which they were mimicking seven-year-olds, as I imagine this might be irritating to watch and could detract from the moments of poignancy. Thinking back to my days in first school, I remembered that my friends did not seem childish to me at the time. As I wanted the audience to be immersed in the world of children, the scenes needed to be played at the same level of maturity. So instead of subjecting people to a lot of cringe-worthy juvenile clichés, I let Tim Firth's insightful dialogue do the work and just made sure the characters are played with complete truth.

Like many of us, Tim Firth's first stage experience came in the school nativity play. He was denied the role of Joseph and as a result missed out on the opportunity to hold the hand of the girl playing Mary, who fancied his best friend. Shortly afterwards, as an act of retribution, he wrote his first play, casting himself as a prince, Mary as the princess and his friend as the back end of a dragon. On the day I first saw the wonderful costumes for our production, I was immediately taken back to those exciting days when my classmates and I donned our dressing gowns, tea towels and tinsel. Like Jenny Bennett, I knew not only my lines but also those of each of my fellow actors. This fact was evident to every member of the audience as I clearly mouthed all the words while the other actors were speaking. I only found this out a few years ago and have been paranoid ever since that perhaps I'm still unconsciously doing it. Finally, the day came when I secured the prized role of Mary only to discover to my great disappointment that in this particular version of the nativity story, she had been relegated to a minor character and I only had three lines in the whole play. Try telling a disillusioned 11-year-old that there are no small parts only small actors. She won't believe you but, let's face it, neither do the grown-ups!

Victoria Sandford, Director

THE FLINT STREET NATIVITY

by Tim Firth

First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: 2 December 2011

CAST

Innkeeper	Robert Vass
Star	Russell Fleet
Ass	Mark Hill
Narrator	Will O'Connell
Wise Frankincense	Dan Martin
Herod/Joseph	John Barron
Mary	Emma Hounsell
Gabriel	Holly Gillanders
Wise Gold	Nina Flitman
Angel	Marcelle Davis
Shepherd	Nina Lubicz-Nawrocka

No stick insects were harmed during the production of this play.

The performance lasts approximately 1 hours and 50 minutes
including a 15-minute interval.

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	Victoria Sandford
Set Designer	Peter Collins
Costume Designer	Jenny Richardson
Lighting Designer	Richard Mead
Sound Designer	Matthew J. Wilson
Technical Director	Ben Sandford
Stage Manager	Clare Watson
Deputy Stage Manager Performance	Thomas Gorrie-Stone
Deputy Stage Manager Rehearsal	Ottillie Kark
Assistant Stage Managers	Sarah Clopet, Stephen Jack, Andrew Morris, Abigail Ribbans, Tatsiana Shaliuta, Sarah Vass
Properties	Cecily Johnson, Alexander Michael
Prompter	Bridgett Strevens
Lighting Crew	Toby Burbidge, Jenny Dyson, Francois Langton
Wardrobe Assistants	Jo Perse, Pam Smith
Constructors	Stephen Jack, Kye Martin, Jean Morris, Paul Wilson
Mrs Horrock's Chair by	Zyg Staniaszec
Get-In Crew	James Gadsdon, Tina Harris, Tim Scott
Pianist	Benjamin Cox
Photographers	Peter Collins, Luke Das
Stick Insect Wrangler	Charlotte Devereux

Thanks to: **Sarah Andrews, Lewis Brown, Mike Hagan, Alice Johnson,
Geoffrey Morgan, Peter Salvietto, Maggie Turner, Carallon Ltd,
Clifton Preparatory School, Drama Studio London, NATS,
Oldfield Primary School, The Questors Office Staff,
Tea Towels supplied by Alec Atchison**

Biographies

John Barron – Herod/Joseph

John's first appearance on stage was at the age of three in his preschool nativity. He played the tiger, much to his teacher's surprise. More recently he has appeared at The Questors in *Dogs Barking*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Festen*, amongst others. He will also be appearing in the Shakespeare season

Marcelle Davis – Angel

Marcelle is new to the adult world of acting, having performed in various productions as a teenager and at university. She is currently in Year 2 of Acting for All and was seen in the chorus as a villager and a knife in last year's Christmas production, *Beauty and the Beast*.

Russell Fleet – Star

Russell has been a Questors member since 2006. Roles include: Pirelli (*Sweeney Todd*), Harold Gorringer (*Black Comedy*) and Hysterium (*A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*). Russell was also deputy stage manager on *The Alchemist* and *Bedroom Farce*, gentlemen's costumer for *Rock 'n' Roll* and curtain maker for *After Magritte*.

Nina Flitman – Wise Gold

The Flint Street Nativity is Nina's second production at The Questors after she appeared as Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* in Summer 2011. Later in the season she will be playing Montana in *Othello*. She has also worked professionally for the Really Useful Theatre Company and the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre Company.

Holly Gillanders – Gabriel

This is Holly's first venture with The Questors and she is thrilled to be involved in such a fun production. Previous acting roles include Rosalind (*As You Like It*), Irina (*Three Sisters*) and Ange (*Abigail's Party*) at the Lace Market Theatre, Nottingham. She would like to reassure you that she was more Jenny Bennet than Ashley at school ... but she never did get to play Mary!

Mark Hill – Ass

Mark has been acting at The Questors since 2008. His most recent appearances were as Gluttony/The Knight/Lorraine in *Doctor Faustus* and

Herr Mann in *A Flea in Her Ear*. Previously he played Ray/Splodge in *Dogs Barking* and Uncle Henry/Gatekeeper in *The Wizard of Oz*, plus roles in *Rock 'n' Roll*, the Polish short *Widows* and *The Railway Children*.

Emma Hounsell – Mary

Emma trained at the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art. She joined The Questors in 2006 and since then has appeared in *After Magritte*, the Polish short *Widows*, *A Comedy of Errors*, *Three Sisters* and *Dublin Carol*. Emma played the Angel Gabriel in her school nativity play.

Nina Lubicz-Nawrocka – Shepherd

Nina has been performing at The Questors since 2004. After completing The Questors two-year acting course, she went on to appear in several productions. Nina co-wrote, co-produced and co-directed a comedy called *The Troy Tender Show* (a spoof chat show) that premiered at The Questors before being performed at The Canal Cafe Theatre.

Dan Martin – Wise Frankincense

Dan has worked on several productions at The Questors after directing and acting for many years at university and in Hampshire. His first show here was *A Christmas Carol* (ensemble) which was followed by *Sweeney Todd* (Toby). Dan has also appeared in *Much Ado About Nothing* (Benedick), *The Talented Mr Ripley* (Tom Ripley) and *Titus Andronicus* (Lucius).

Will O'Connell – Narrator

Since completing the Student Course in 2006, roles have included Canterbury (*Henry V*), Granddad (*Saturday, Sunday, Monday*), Catesby and Tyrell (*Richard III*), Mr Szczepansky (*The Railway Children*), Flute (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Trevor (*Bedroom Farce*), Lawrence (*Abigail's Party* – Goodman Productions), Kevin (*Ladies' Day*), Blunt (*The Rover*) and Adam (*The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (abridged)).

Robert Vass – Innkeeper

Robert was most recently seen as Phillie in *Suburban Motel*. Last Christmas he appeared as the clock, Cogsworth, in *Beauty and the Beast*. A fan of Stephen Sondheim, he has also played Beadle Bamford in *Sweeney Todd*, the Baker in *Into the Woods* and Harry in *Company*.

Victoria Sandford – Director

Victoria was in The Questors Student Group 51 and has since appeared in numerous productions, including *The Talented Mr Ripley* (Marge/Sophia) and *Beauty and the Beast* (Babette). This is the first show she has directed for The Questors company. Last year, she directed *Much Ado About Nothing* with Unmasked Productions. She was lighting designer for *The Winterling* and set designer for *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Meet The Company – Tuesday 6 December

Come and meet the director, cast and crew for an informal discussion in The Studio as soon as possible after the first Tuesday performance.

Peter Collins – Set Designer

Peter has been an active member at The Questors for over 20 years. He began designing sets in 2003; notable designs include *Henry V*, *The Trojan Women*, *Further Than The Furthest Thing* and *The Comedy of Errors*. His most recent design was *Beauty and the Beast* in 2010. He has also been involved in production photography.

Richard Mead – Lighting Designer

At The Questors Richard has done the lighting design for shows such as *The Glass Menagerie*, *King Lear*, *The Snow Queen*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Far From the Madding Crowd* and *The Accrington Pals*, as well as video design for *Broken Glass* and *Voyager & Lovers*. He also does show photography and is the current Chairman of the theatre.

Jenny Richardson – Costume Designer

Joining The Questors in 1980, Jenny's first task was to make a six-foot telescope with eyelashes. It's been downhill ever since! Having enjoyed set design for many years, most recently with Bron Blake, (*Doctor Faustus*, *Abigail's Party*, *Broken Glass*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*) a change of direction has been great fun.

Matthew J. Wilson – Sound Designer

Matthew has been a member of The Questors since he moved to London three years ago. Once described as 'having a face for radio', he resides firmly backstage and out of the limelight. Recent credits include *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)*, *Entertaining Strangers* and *Beauty and the Beast*.

Next Questors Productions

ANNIE

book by Thomas Meehan,
music by Charles Strouse,
lyrics by Martin Charnin

10 – 31 December 2011

The Playhouse

The heart-warming rags-to-riches story of Little Orphan Annie's adventures in the Great Depression of the 1930s.

THE WINSLOW BOY

by Terence Rattigan

13 – 28 January 2012

The Studio

Set against the strict codes of conduct and manners of the age, *The Winslow Boy* is based on the true story of a father's fight to clear his schoolboy son's name after the boy is accused of theft.

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
- ✓ Access to *iQ* – the members-only website members.questors.org.uk
- ✓ A full-colour members' magazine three times a year
- ✓ Access to exclusive news on *iQ* and email newsletter
- ✓ Monthly programme card
- ✓ Membership of The Grapevine Club
- ✓ Voting rights in the company

*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, get your first 12 months' membership for the price of six.

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.

The 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.

Cover Image: Elaine Hagan

The Questors Theatre

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