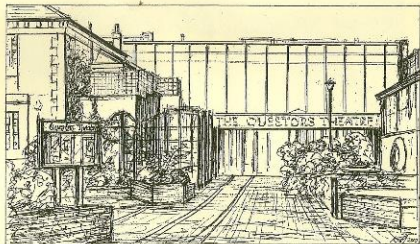




Questors, Ealing's Theatre



# **HOBSON'S CHOICE**

by Harold Brighouse

The Playhouse

22 – 29 January 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.

Tuesday to Friday: 11:30 am – 7:30 pm  
Saturday: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm  
Sunday: midday – 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 2011 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 Hours:

7:00 pm – 11:00 pm (10:30 pm close on Sundays)  
Sunday lunchtime: midday – 2:30 pm

See [questors.org.uk/grapevine](http://questors.org.uk/grapevine) for more details

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



## HOBSON'S CHOICE

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# Hobson's Choice

## Harold Brighouse

Harold Brighouse was born in Eccles, Salford, in 1882, the eldest child of John Southworth Brighouse, a manager in a cotton-spinning firm, and Charlotte Amelia née Harrison, a headmistress. He went to a local school before winning a scholarship to Manchester Grammar School. He left school aged 17 to start work as a textile buyer in a shipping merchant's office. In 1902 he went to live in London but returned to Manchester in 1908 to become a full-time writer. His first play was *Lonesome Like*, but the first to be produced was *The Doorway* in 1909. Most of his plays were set in his native Lancashire and three of the best of these (*The Northerners*, *Zack* and *The Game*) were published together as *Three Lancashire Plays* in 1920. *Hobson's Choice*, by far his most successful play, was first produced in 1915 in New York. The British premiere was in 1916 at the Apollo Theatre, London, where it ran for 246 performances.

Brighouse also wrote novels, including *Hepplestalls* concerning a Lancashire mill-owning family in the 19th century, and many reviews and other pieces for the *Manchester Guardian*. He was a member of the Dramatists' Club and in 1930-31 was chairman of the Society of Authors' Dramatic Committee. After 1931 he wrote no more full-length plays. His autobiography *What I Have Had* was published in 1953. He died in 1958.

## A Male Cinderella

Although Brighouse's other plays have been revived from time-to-time (*The Northerners* recently receiving a successful production at Earls Court's Finborough Theatre) his reputation today rests firmly on *Hobson's Choice*. It must be one of the best-loved plays in the language. Perhaps its appeal lies in its combination of the traditional and the radical. Writing during the First World War, Brighouse chose to set his play back in the 1880s of his early childhood. But there is nothing conservative about the politics of the play. Hobson, the old domineering patriarch, is a figure of the past; the future is his feisty daughter, Maggie, and the aspirant boot-hand, Willie. The play is radical in its feminism and in its attack on the class structure of late Victorian England. If that sounds a bit heavy, it is also a wonderful love story, with a male Cinderella as its central character.

## Performance History

The play has been filmed several times, most famously by David Lean in 1953. This had a wonderful cast, led by Charles Laughton as Hobson, Brenda de Banzie as Maggie and John Mills as Willie Mossop. Among the smaller parts were John Laurie as Dr. McFarlane and, in what must have been her first film, Prunella Scales as Vickey. The film also boasted a terrific score by Malcolm Arnold. In 1964, John Dexter directed a notable revival at the National Theatre with Sir Ralph Richardson as Hobson, Frank Finlay as Willie Mossop and Joan Plowright as Maggie. In 1989, the ballet *Hobson's Choice*, choreographed by David Bintley and with music by Paul Reade, opened at Sadler's Wells. It has remained a popular staple of the repertoire ever since.

## Well, By Gum!

Rehearsing *Hobson's Choice* is a reminder of what a really fine play it is. It offers tremendous parts for actors – not just the three central roles – and it tells a simple and eternal story of love, determination and hope. Can one do better when asked to comment on the play than repeat Willie's recurrent expression of wonder: "Well, by gum!"?

## Thomas Hobson's Choice

The expression **Hobson's Choice** means a choice where there is no real alternative, as in the celebrated "any colour so long as it's black" which Henry Ford is said to have used to sell the Model T Ford. The phrase originates from Thomas Hobson (1544-1631), a livery stable owner in Cambridge who offered customers the choice of either taking the horse in the stall nearest the door or taking none at all. He had an extensive stable of some 40 horses and therefore there appeared to be a wide choice when in fact there was only the choice of the nearest horse or none. This was to prevent the best horses always being chosen, which had previously caused those horses to become over used.

## The Grapevine Presents

We are pleased to announce that during the run of Brighouse's play, the Grapevine Bar is serving a draught ale from The City of Cambridge Brewery suitably named 'Hobson's Choice' after the original Thomas Hobson. In 1997 it was Champion Beer at the Cambridge Beer Festival, a finalist in 1998 at the Great British Beer Festival at Olympia and won a bronze award in 1999 at the Beauty of Hops English Ale Awards. Hobson's Choice is a light golden bitter with a pronounced hop aroma, contributing to the refreshing bitter aftertaste, and with an ABV of 4.1%.

# HOBSON'S CHOICE

by Harold Brighouse

*First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: 22 January 2011*

## CAST

in order of speaking

Alice Hobson	<b>Sherralyn Croft</b>
Maggie Hobson	<b>Kerri Logan</b>
Vickey Hobson	<b>Liz Jardine Smith</b>
Albert Prosser	<b>Neill Cahill</b>
Henry Horatio Hobson	<b>Anthony Curran</b>
Mrs. Hepworth	<b>Anne Sawbridge</b>
Timothy Wadlow (Tubby)	<b>John Hines</b>
William Mossop	<b>Iain Stirling</b>
Jim Heeler	<b>Andrew Hill</b>
Ada Figgins	<b>Claire Reid</b>
Fred Beenstock	<b>Dylan Fryer</b>
Dr. MacFarlane	<b>Paul Francis</b>

The performance lasts approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes,  
including a 15 minute interval.

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

## PRODUCTION

Director	<b>Francis Lloyd</b>
Set Designer	<b>Alison Gregory</b>
Costume Designer	<b>Sarah Andrews</b>
Lighting Designer	<b>Andrew Dixon</b>
Sound Designer / Operator	<b>Nigel Worsley</b>
Stage Manager	<b>Steven Cowan</b>
Deputy Stage Manager	<b>Phillippa Egan</b>
Assistant Stage Managers	<b>Sarah Clopet, Graham Dennis, James Gadsdon, Nichola Gaughan, Kevin Sebastianpillai, Meena Toor</b>
Properties Manager	<b>Harriet Parsonage</b>
Prompter	<b>Bridgett Stevens</b>
Voice Coach	<b>Richard Gallagher</b>
Lighting Assistants	<b>Sarah Clopet, John Green, Mel Pereira</b>
Construction Managers	<b>Alex Whitcroft, Clive Whitcroft</b>
Set Constructors	<b>Claire Dell, Barry Jones, Sarah Turner</b>
Scenic Artists	<b>Sarah Clopet, Donna Noel, Alexandra Da Silva Jorge</b>
Wardrobe Assistants	<b>Mary Davies, Helen Karasiowicz, Hannah Whiteoak, Jennie Yates</b>
Hair and Make-Up	<b>Juliet Vaughan Turner</b>
Photographer / Video	<b>Peter Gould</b>
Special thanks to:	<b>Matthew Addison, Henry Broom, James Collins, Richard Gallagher, Mike Hagan, Tina Harris, Philip Lindley, Jennifer Martin, Gordon Miller, Paul Robinson</b>

## Biographies

### **Neill Cahill** – *Albert Prosser*

Neill is a criminal defence lawyer who has been acting for over 20 years. Mainly appearing in amateur dramatics, he also has West End performances in the Royal Opera House, Prince Edward Theatre and Bloomsbury Theatre under his belt. Neill was a soloist in the National Youth Music Theatre's 21st Anniversary Show and has toured with several shows in the past including to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

### **Sherralyn Croft** – *Alice Hobson*

Sherralyn started acting at a young age and since then has studied drama at college and university. She has performed with Frantic Assembly in *The Service Charge* at The Lyric Theatre Hammersmith. She has also performed at many theatres including The Beck, The Union Theatre and Battersea Arts. This is Sherralyn's fourth Questors production, the others being *The Accrington Pals*, *The Libertine* and *Ladies' Day*.

### **Anthony Curran** – *Henry Horatio Hobson*

Anthony Curran has been an acting member since 1992 and is a graduate of Student Group 47. He has acted in plays as diverse as *The Wind in the Willows* and *Waiting For Godot*. This is his first play since returning from Venice having toured *A Servant to Two Masters* there in 2009.

### **Philippa Egan** – *Deputy Stage Manager*

Pip became involved with The Questors four years ago working on the PlayBack production of *There Will Always Be A Brentford*. In 2010 she did the props for *The House of Bernarda Alba* and was an Assistant Stage Manager for *The Rover* at The Questors, then on tour to the Minack Theatre in Cornwall and the Postojna Drama Festival in Slovenia.

### **Paul Francis** – *Dr. MacFarlane*

Paul has been a Questors member for about twelve years. Past roles have included Kent in *King Lear*, Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*, Judge Brack in *Hedda Gabler*, Badger in *The Wind in the Willows*. A star turn was singing the plant (Audrey 2) in *Little Shop of Horrors* and playing Sweeney Todd in *Sweeney Todd*.

### **Dylan Fryer** – *Fred Beenstock*

Dylan is a postman working in Chiswick. Over the past decade he has performed in many plays at the Madder Market Theatre, Norwich. Roles have included the leads in *Loot* by Joe Orton and *Not Now Darling* by John Chapman and Ray Cooney, as well as Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This is Dylan's first role for Questors.

### **Andrew Hill** – *Jim Heeler*

Andrew has appeared in theatres up and down the country and abroad. He has also appeared on film and TV. This is his third outing with The Questors after *Insignificance* in 2007 and *The Homecoming* last year.

### **John Hines** – *Timothy Wadlow (Tubby)*

John has been involved in many Questors productions since his first performance in 1955. He has appeared with the company in Japan, Israel and at the Edinburgh Fringe. John is a member of The Questors PlayBack Reminiscence Roadshow team. He was last seen in *Sweeney Todd*.

### **Liz Jardine Smith** – *Vickey Hobson*

Liz joined The Questors in September 2010 and appeared as Linda in *Ladies' Day*. She has previously appeared in *Paul McCartney is Dead* for the Broken Glass Theatre Company at the Camden People's Theatre and the Rag Factory, and in *Pleasance Lane* at the Pleasance Theatre (London). Other acting experience includes an open class at the Pleasance Theatre in July 2010 and various school productions.

### **Francis Lloyd** – *Director*

At The Questors Francis has directed *After the Dance*, *French Paste*, *Charley's Aunt*, *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Otherwise Engaged*. Acting roles include John in *Oleanna*, Henry Bell in *The Revengers' Comedies*, Henry Carr in *Travesties*, Wickstead in *Habeas Corpus*, Mr. Mantolini in *Nicholas Nickleby* and Mr. Wopple in *Great Expectations*.

### **Kerri Logan** – *Maggie Hobson*

Kerri joined The Questors in 2002 from her native Northern Ireland, where she performed regularly at the renowned Lyric Theatre, Belfast, as well as the Courtyard Theatre and Grand Opera House. She has appeared in over a dozen Questors productions, including *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Dolly West's Kitchen*, *After the Dance*, *Company*, *Two*, *Misery* and, this season, *Ladies' Day*. She is delighted to be playing the wonderful part of Maggie Hobson, and to be back in the Playhouse (and with Francis!) for the first time in some years!

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## TALKBACK – Tuesday 25 January

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

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### Claire Reid – *Ada Figgins*

Claire joined The Questors last summer and performed as Eugenie in *A Flea In Her Ear* and is now happy to be playing the small but relevant part of Ada Figgins in her second Questors production. Claire works for the BBC and is a freelance TV presenter in her spare time ... not that there is much lately as she's currently planning her wedding!

### Anne Sawbridge – *Mrs. Hepworth*

Anne trained some 25 years ago in Questors Student Group 38 and has played many parts since then, most recently Polina in *The Seagull*, Miss Fumival in *Black Comedy* and Anfisa in *Three Sisters*. She is also a member of the Front of House Team and has mentored new members as part of the Project 11 Group.

### Iain Stirling – *William Mossop*

Iain joined The Questors in 2001. Previous appearances include Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*, Trofimov in *The Cherry Orchard* and Peter in *Company*. He is very grateful to Juliet for helping him learn his lines and to Richard for helping him get his tongue around the Salford accent.

### Clive Whitcroft – *Construction Manager*

Clive is part of the often unseen backbone of The Questors Theatre. He has designed and/or built twelve sets for various productions, including *The Accrington Pals* and *Ladies' Day*, since building Charley's Aunt for Francis and Alison in 2008. Clive and his son, Alex, have risen to the challenge of making the scene changes from street to cellar level in *Hobson's Choice* work smoothly. Sometimes Clive has requests from the cast to keep his stage furniture for their own homes, such is the quality of his workmanship.

## Next Questors Productions

### THE TALENTED MR RIPLEY

by Phyllis Nagy  
adapted from Patricia Highsmith  
28 January – 5 February 2011

#### The Studio

The cult thriller about the enigmatic conman.

### TOO FAST

by Douglas Maxwell  
10 – 12 February 2011  
The Studio

The Questors Youth Theatre presents this ensemble comedy as part of the National Theatre's Connections project.

## 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
- ✓ The full-colour *Questors Live* magazine three times a year
- ✓ The monthly *QNews* members' newsletter
- ✓ Monthly programme card
- ✓ Membership of The Grapevine Club
- ✓ Access to iQ – the members-only website <http://members.questors.org.uk>
- ✓ 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, 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 loatime. 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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