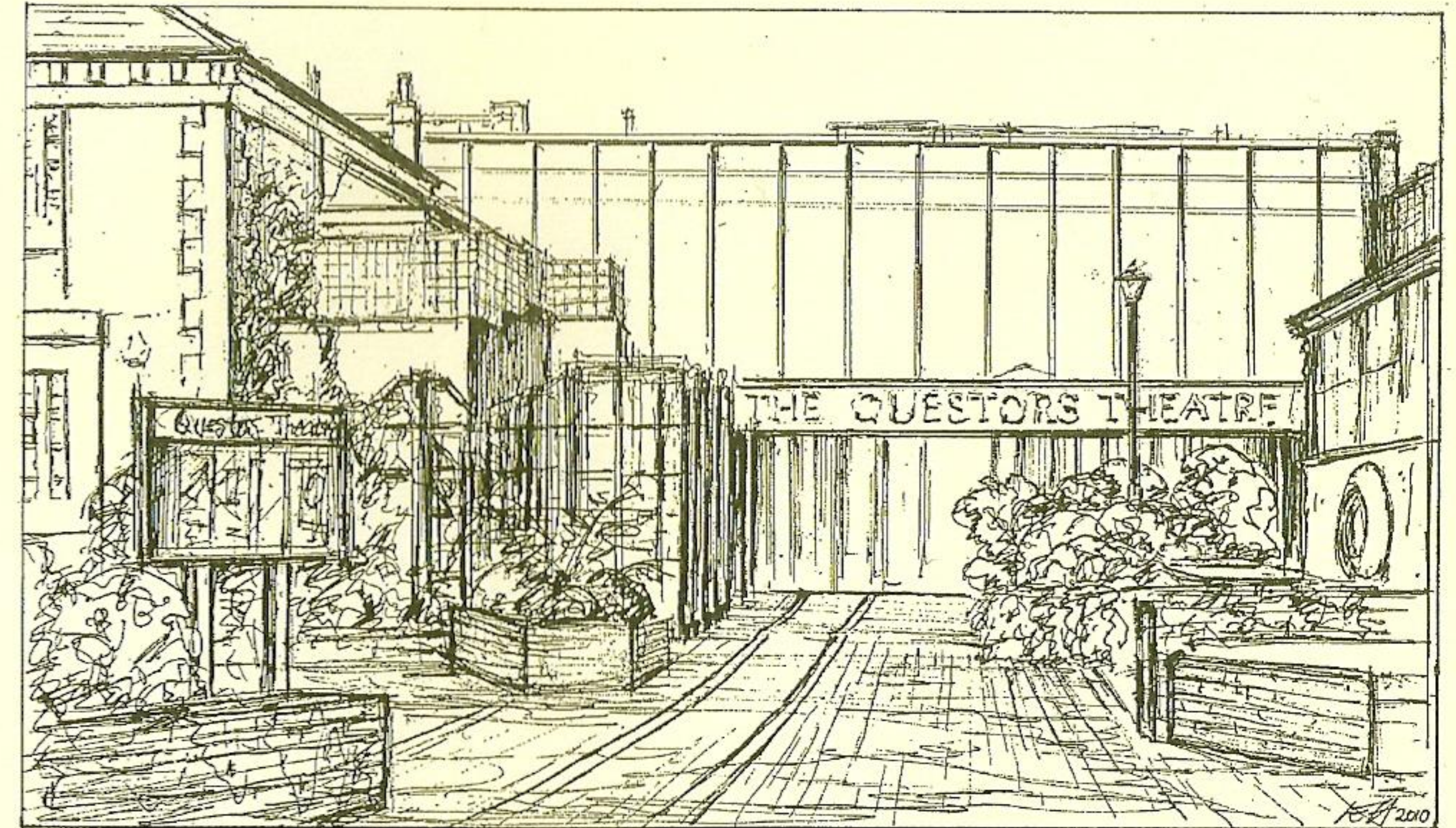




Questors, Ealing's Theatre



ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR

by Alan Ayckbourn

The Studio

7 – 22 December 2012

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	2:30 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 2013 edition of The Good Beer Guide and we are **CAMRA National Club of the Year 2012**. 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 for more details

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



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ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR

by Alan Ayckbourn

The Studio

7 – 22 December 2012

Spoiler Alert - this introduction discusses some of the plot points in play; if you've never seen the play read this later!

Absurd Person Singular ...

... or 'the one with all the kitchens' as it seems to be known. So where does the title come from? An errant thought Alan had in a lift one day, by all accounts. Alan noted the title down some years ahead of the play being written and decided to use it for this play long before he started writing it. So in truth the title has absolutely nothing to do with the play itself!

This year the play reaches 40 years old, but was initially conceived in a somewhat different form to that in which you will see it today. The basic structure of the play was set out ahead of writing and is very much as it is seen here – three Christmas parties over three years, but initially these were set in three living rooms with four couples in total. Early on in the writing process, Alan began to run into problems. He felt that these parties were 'boring affairs, very tedious', and made a change to the design that gives the play the shape you now see – by leaving the party going on in the lounge, but relocating the play into the kitchen and confining one couple (Dick and Lottie Potter) unseen in the lounge. With this change in place, the writing took off from there.

Absurd Person Singular represented Alan's first foray into the tragicomedy – something that would become a staple of his work. This is strongly shown in the second Act where Eva attempts to commit suicide. The key to the success of this Act however is that the comedy isn't at Eva's expense – in fact it comes from the fact that the rest of the characters are ignorant of her plight. To quote Alan: "Dramatically, Eva's suicide scene is one my first experiments in the use of dramatic counterpoint, i.e. using a deeply serious action against a background of comic events (or is it the other way around?), both serving to strengthen the other but hopefully neither selling the other short. Jane is just as serious about cleaning her oven as Eva is to commit suicide. It's all a question of priorities".

While *Absurd Person Singular* may not be regarded as the most famous of Alan's plays, in sheer terms of length of run it can be argued to be his most successful. It opened in London in the summer of 1973 (after having premiered in Scarborough a year earlier) and ran for 27 months and 973 performances – a record no other Ayckbourn production has beaten. Indeed, the play ran for a sufficient length of time that four more Ayckbourn plays had made it to the West End before *Absurd Person Singular* closed, making it possible (for a brief period) to see five different Ayckbourn plays in the West End.

This success led to a transfer to Broadway, but this transfer wasn't without problems - the American producers wanted to change the title of the play, transpose the second and third acts, have more jokes added to the final act and have the set collapse at the end! While Alan fought any attempts to change the play, he was presented with a 'laugh count' to show that the second act contained more humour than the final act. All this showed was that the play was working exactly as it was supposed to! Despite these issues, the play sold more than 500,000 tickets and ran for 592 performances over 18 months; no other Ayckbourn play has been so successful.

The play was adapted for radio in 1977, but (due to the nature of Act 2) it isn't really a radio play. Alan allowed an 'inner monologue' to be written for Eva to help tell the story, but didn't do this himself allowing the BBC to do it instead. His views on the end product aren't on record but it is interesting to note that the play was never broadcast again. A television adaptation was broadcast in 1985 starring the likes of Michael Gambon, Geoffrey Palmer, Prunella Scales and Maureen Lipman and is generally thought of as one of the better Ayckbourn adaptations, staying very true to the script with very few cuts.

The play continues to be popular, holding the record for the most revivals of any Ayckbourn play in the West End (three times) and has just been revived in Scarborough and performed at the Chichester Festival Theatre as part of the play's 40th anniversary.

Simon Rudkin, Director

Source: Simon Murgatroyd – Alan Ayckbourn's Archivist.

ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR

by Alan Ayckbourn

First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre 7 December 2012

CAST

in order of speaking

Sidney Hopcroft **Jolyon Houghton**

Jane Hopcroft **Hannah Webster**

Ronald Brewster-Wright **Anthony Curran**

Marion Brewster-Wright **Gemma Galley**

Eva Jackson **Alice Marshall**

Geoffrey Jackson **Anthony Steele**

George played by both **Anthony Curran** and **Anthony Steele**

Act 1: Christmas Eve
(music: Slade – *Cuz I Luv U*)

Act 2: A year later
(music: Roxy Music – *In Every Dream Home a Heartache*)

Act 3: Another year later
(music: Leroy Anderson – *A Christmas Festival*)

The performance lasts approximately 2 hours and 55 minutes,
including two 20-minute intervals.

PRODUCTION

Director	Simon Rudkin
Set Designer	Ella-Marie Fowler
Lighting Designer	Tim Hayward
Sound Designer	Martin Choules
Stage Manager	Sarah Vass
Deputy Stage Manager	Frances Sherwin
Assistant Stage Managers	Aram Armaghanian, Tom Clifford, Andrew Morris, Sanee Patel, Huw Richards
Wardrobe	Anne Gilmour, Sue Peckitt
Lighting & Sound Operators	Daniel Cawtheray, Tobias Gehring, John Green
Lighting Assistant	Alan N Smith
Construction	Keith Butler, Ella-Marie Fowler, Steve Jack, Alex Marker, Andrew Morris, Rachel Morris, Kingston College technical theatre students
Special Effects	Tim Hayward, Nigel Worsley
Photographer	Robert Vass
Thanks to	Fergal and Lorcan Jeffreys, Lydia King

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

Anthony Curran – Ronald Brewster-Wright

Anthony Curran is a graduate of Student Group 47 and has since appeared in roles as diverse as Estragon in *Waiting for Godot* and Arlecchino in *A Servant to Two Masters*. He recently featured in the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony.

Gemma Galley – Marion Brewster-Wright

At The Questors, Gemma has appeared in *Sweeney Todd*, *RENT* and *Othello*. She has also played the title role in the Australian premiere of Germaine Greer's *Lysistrata* and the female lead in Hollywood Film Festival finalist *Shorn*. Gemma is an award winning film-maker and professionally performed playwright. She trained at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

Jolyon Houghton – Sidney Hopcroft

After a few years in the Questors Youth Theatre, Jolyon joined Student Group 62, performing in *Henry VI Part III* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*. He then studied Acting for Collaborative and Devised Theatre at Central School of Speech and Drama, before returning to take part in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

Alice Marshall – Eva Jackson

Alice studied Drama & English at Bristol University. Theatre includes *The Wonderful World of Dissocia* (Wickham Theatre), *Veronika Decides to Die* (Lord Stanley Theatre Collection) and *The Comedy of Errors* (Bristol Spotlights). Television includes *Skins* (Channel 4), *Very Important People* (Channel 4) and *The Warm Up Guy* (E4).

Anthony Steele – Geoffrey Jackson

Tony will be eternally grateful to The Questors for giving him the opportunity to play Ricky Roma in *Glengarry Glen Ross*; a play he considers the finest ever written and the reason he began acting in the first place. Previous plays also include: *A Russian in the Woods*, *The Winslow Boy*, *Dealer's Choice* and *The Homecoming*. When not pursuing acting roles, Tony is a rap battle fanatic.

Hannah Webster – Jane Hopcroft

This is Hannah's first Questors production since completing Student Group 65, where she played the Housekeeper in *Doña Rosita the Spinster* and Salty in *Teechers*. Other previous productions include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Medea* and *The House of Bernarda Alba*.

Meet The Company – Wednesday 19 December

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

Martin Choules – Sound Designer

Martin has recently worked with Simon on both *Suburban Motel* and *The Errors of Comedy* sketch show (which also performed on the Camden Fringe). He has also worked with Hannah Webster and her Student Group on *Teechers*, and briefly on one of the recent 24-Hour Plays.

Ella-Marie Fowler – Set Designer

Ella-Marie graduated in Design for Performance from Wimbledon College of Art in June 2011. She designed the Questors summer student shows, *Doña Rosita the Spinster & Yerma* in July this year. Her most recent work includes *A Modern Town* at Pleasance Islington and Pleasance Courtyard, Edinburgh Fringe 2012.

Tim Hayward – Lighting Designer

Tim's recent shows at The Questors include: *The Winslow Boy*, *The Tempest*, *Doña Rosita the Spinster & Yerma* and *After October*. Next May, The Questors stages *Engaged* by W S Gilbert. The flavour will be Victorian and Tim looks forward to matching it with lighting in the style of the period.

Simon Rudkin – Director

This is Simon's second full-length show as a director, having worked on *Dealer's Choice* earlier in the year. Simon joined The Questors in 2006 as part of Student Group 61 and since has acted in several shows including *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Rover* (which toured to the Minack and Slovenia). Simon also founded The Errors of Comedy – the Questors resident sketch group.

Sarah Vass – Stage Manager

Sarah was a member of another group for many years, gaining acting and stage management experience. She joined The Questors in 2011 and worked backstage on *Titus Andronicus*, *Ladies Down Under* and *The Flint Street Nativity* before stage managing *Dealer's Choice* earlier this year. Since then she has been an ASM on *Night of the Soul*.

Alternative Christmas Entertainment

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

adapted from Frank Capra's film
by Anthony E Palermo

8 – 30 December 2012

The Playhouse

A heart-warming Christmas classic – a wonderful story that will appeal to young and old alike.

THE MONSTER UNDER THE BED

by Kevin Dyer

24 – 29 December 2012

The Studio

Daytime performances of this entertaining and engaging play for children.

Suitable for 6+

The Plays of Alan Ayckbourn

1959: *The Square Cat; Love After All.* **1960:** *Dad's Tale.* **1961:** *Standing Room Only.* **1962:** *Christmas V Mastermind.* **1963:** *Mr Whatnot.* **1965:** *Relatively Speaking.* **1967:** *The Sparrow.* **1969:** *How The Other Half Loves.* **1970:** *Family Circles.* **1971:** *Time And Time Again.* **1972:** *Absurd Person Singular.* **1973:** *The Norman Conquests (Living Together, Table Manners, Round And Round The Garden).* **1974:** *Absent Friends; Confusions.* **1975:** *Jeeves; Bedroom Farce.* **1976:** *Just Between Ourselves.* **1977:** *Ten Times Table.* **1978:** *Joking Apart.* **1979:** *Sisterly Feelings; Taking Steps.* **1980:** *Suburban Strains; Season's Greetings.* **1981:** *Way Upstream; Making Tracks.* **1982:** *Intimate Exchanges.* **1983:** *It Could Be Any One Of Us.* **1984:** *A Chorus Of Disapproval.* **1985:** *Woman In Mind.* **1987:** *A Small Family Business; Henceforward...* **1988:** *Man Of The Moment; Mr A's Amazing Maze Plays.* **1989:** *The Revengers' Comedies; Invisible Friends.* **1990:** *Body Language; This Is Where We Came In; Callisto 5.* **1991:** *Wildest Dreams; My Very Own Story; Time Of My Life.* **1992:** *Dreams From A Summer House.* **1994:** *Communicating Doors; Haunting Julia; The Musical Jigsaw Play.* **1995:** *A Word From Our Sponsor.* **1996:** *By Jeeves; The Champion Of Paribanou.* **1997:** *Things We Do For Love.* **1998:** *Comic Potential; The Boy Who Fell Into A Book.* **1999:** *House & Garden (House, Garden); Callisto#7.* **2000:** *Virtual Reality; Whenever.* **2001:** *Damsels In Distress (GamePlan, FlatSpin, RolePlay).* **2002:** *Snake In The Grass; The Jollies.* **2003:** *Sugar Daddies; Orvin – Champion Of Champions; My Sister Sadie.* **2004:** *Drowning On Dry Land; Private Fears In Public Places; Miss Yesterday.* **2005:** *Improbable Fiction.* **2006:** *If I Were You.* **2008:** *Life & Beth; Awaking Beauty.* **2009:** *My Wonderful Day.* **2010:** *Life Of Riley.* **2011:** *Neighbourhood Watch.* **2012:** *Surprises.* **2013:** Title to be announced.

www.alanayckbourn.net

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
Box Office: 020 8567 5184
Email: enquiries@questors.org.uk

Programme: Nigel Bamford and Anne Gilmour

12 Mattock Lane, Ealing, W5 5BQ
Theatre Office: 020 8567 0011
Registered Charity No. 207516