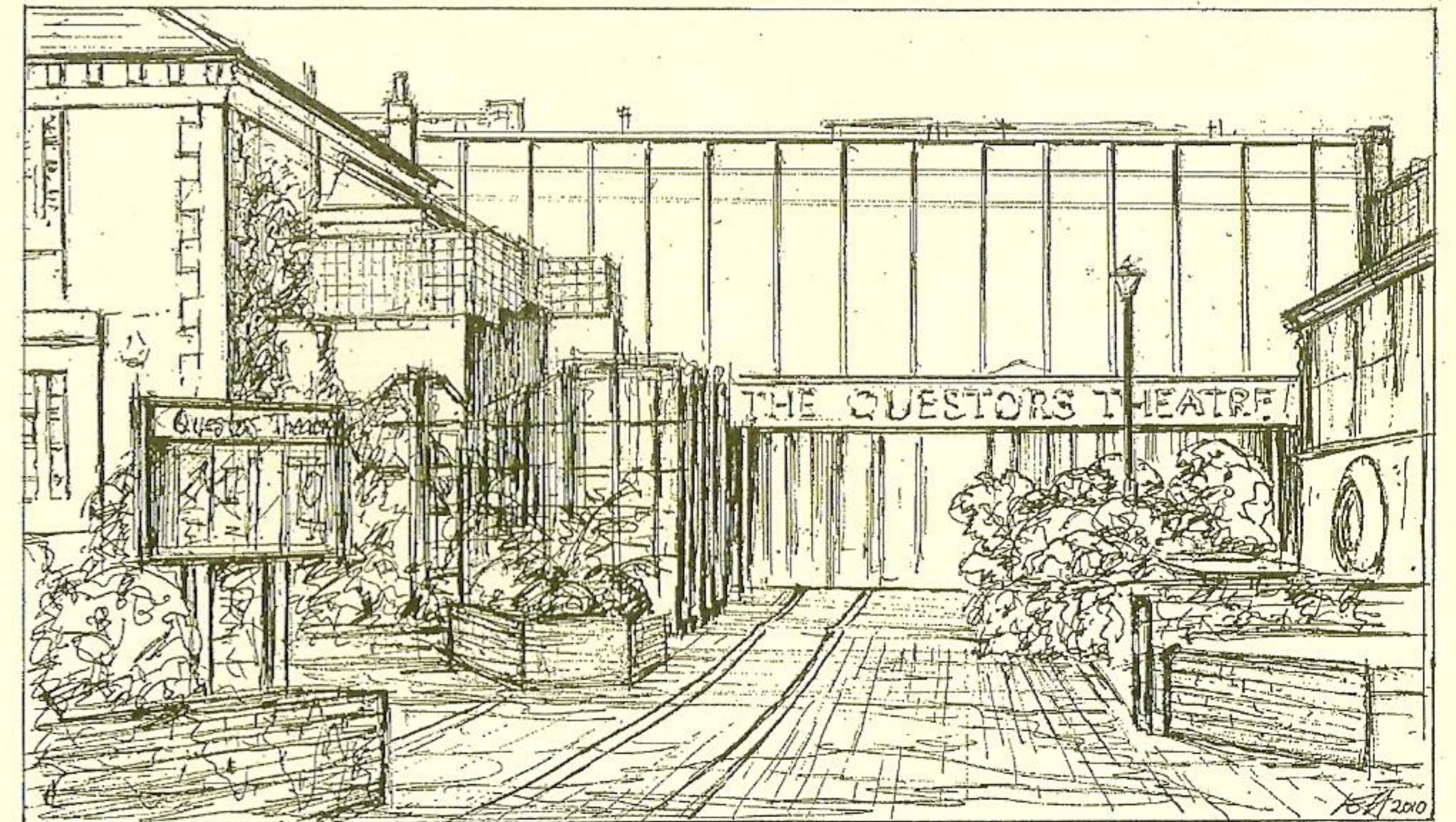




Questors, Ealing's Theatre



EDUCATING RITA

by Willy Russell

The Studio

13 – 28 December 2013

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 – 7:00 pm*

Saturday 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

**last orders for food at 6:30 pm*

For Playhouse productions:

Hot meal menu up to 6:30 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 2014 edition of The Good Beer Guide and we are **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 for more details

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



Image © Jason Doty / iStockphoto.com

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‘ONLY CONNECT...’

E.M. Forster, from the title page of *Howards End*

‘We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable, and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet... The boy, Leonard Bast, stood at the extreme verge of gentility. He was not in the abyss, but he could see it...’

Howards End, chapter vi, E.M. Forster

As an untrained reader, the irony of this is ‘unthinkable’ to Rita. She misses Forster’s acknowledgement of literature’s limitations, but also of its power to help people connect. Making connections – between one idea and another, between oneself and other people – is shown in *Howards End*, as in Rita’s own story, to be the only way out of the abyss.

An important difference between the two is that in *Howards End* a woman could not choose to exit the abyss unescorted. Married or unmarried, Machiavellian operator or malleable innocent, the woman at best influenced the choice the patriarch made for her; at worst her life was directed and mapped and her education shaped for her role. Remaining unmarried to Leonard Bast in *Howards End*, Jackie is even more a prisoner of his pride and refusal to improve their situation than she would be if they were legally married. She has no choice. Like Rita’s husband Denny, Bast reacts angrily to proffered ways out, so that, even when others do connect and try to help him improve his situation, he will not accept chances to change their lot.

In 1980, Rita is no longer a prisoner. Enrolling on an Open University course in English literature, she takes a game-changing opportunity. An unmarried, childless, relatively poor, unattached woman now has the potential to operate independently in society, even if society still does not much like it: if she chooses to have a partner, it will be a genuine partnership, of equals. Her career will also be suited to who she has discovered she really is. Education will help her find herself and, as such, a fulfilling life. She is no longer limited by fear. Rita’s choice is the antithesis not only of Denny’s and Leonard’s, but of Frank’s choice too.

A disillusioned ex-poet, ex-husband and self-proclaimed ‘appalling teacher’, Frank chooses to remain in a relationship both he and his girlfriend, Julia, have outgrown. He retreats further into alcoholism. In his early fifties, he has persuaded himself of what Rita must battle at twenty-six: the idea that it’s too late to be anything else. Rita defies those expectations and finds fulfilment by doing so. The real mark of her success is not her exam result – ‘a good pass’ – but the fact that at the end of the play she is able to say of her future, ‘I don’t know’. She has options, and she is free to pick any of them. She’ll make a choice, for herself, based not only on broader cultural knowledge but on well-informed free will. No matter what we choose to believe she’ll do, this open future is Rita’s happy ending; it’s not impossible Frank will follow her example.

While the problems of class and gender inequality still flourish, England has continued to change since the time when a student in a tutorial could offer a lecturer a cigarette – at least without an alarm going off – or a lecturer could interpret a student’s husband burning her books as a reason to ask if she wants to abandon the course ‘because when art and literature begin to take the place of life ...’ Even with its 2003 updates, based on the Liverpool Playhouse production, staging *Educating Rita* in the present would be to blunt Rita’s situation. At a time when university education has bounced so far the other way as to become almost an expectation, it’s worth remembering how much worse the alternative was.

Dramatist, novelist, songwriter and former ladies’ hairdresser Willy Russell has won three Laurence Olivier Awards, one Tony Award and been nominated an Oscar, a Golden Globe and three BAFTAs. The Willy Russell Centre for Children and Adults Who Stammer (opened by Russell in Liverpool in 1990) took his name because his writing puts forward the philosophy that every individual is capable of change, whatever their obstacles.

Rachel Knightley, Director

Meet The Company – Thursday 19 December

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

EDUCATING RITA

by Willy Russell

First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: 13 December 2013

CAST

Frank **Jeff Baynham**

Rita **Emma Armstrong Hawkins**

The action takes place in a first-floor room in a university in the north of England during the course of just over an academic year.

The performance lasts approximately 2 hour and 15 minutes including a 15-minute interval.

Please turn off all mobile phones and similar electronic devices.
The use of cameras, video cameras and recording equipment is strictly prohibited.
Thank you.

PRODUCTION

Director	Rachel Knightley
Set Designer	Alex Marker
Costume Designer	Sue Peckitt
Lighting & Sound	Francois Langton
Stage Managers	Jane Arnold-Forster, Harriet Parsonage
Deputy Stage Manager	Sinead Lawler
Assistant Stage Managers	Henry Broom, Hassan Govia-Khan, Tony Smith, Gerald Wayne
Properties	Harriet Parsonage
Prompter	Wesley Lloyd
Voice Coach	Emma Vane
Lighting Assistant	Chris Newall
Wardrobe Assistant	Jean Derby
Religious Painting	Elaine Hagan
Scenic Artists	Bron Blake, Elaine Hagan, Holly Henshaw
Constructors	Toby Burbidge, Colin Horne
Get-In Crew	Jeff Baynham, Henry Broom, Cameron Moore, Tony Smith
Front of House	Alec Atchison
Photographer	Richard Mead
Thanks to	Nigel Bamford, Steve Cowan, Richard Gallagher, Mike Hagan, David Hovatter, Robin Ingram, Jane Mason, Geoff Moore and Kall Kwik, Andy Naughton, Elizabeth Sexton, Michelle Weaver, Paul Wilson, The Grapevine, Oxfam, Two's Company

Biographies

Emma Armstrong Hawkins – Rita

Emma trained as a musician, graduating from the Royal Academy of Music in London in 2010 and has since been working in Artist Management at IMG Artists. As a member of Questors Student Group 66 she played Cassandra in *Trojan Barbie* and Christopher in *On The Razzle*. Having graduated from the student course in July 2013, *Educating Rita* is Emma's first Questors production.

Jane Arnold-Forster – Stage Manager

Jane joined The Questors in 2005. Between 2005 and 2010 she stage managed many productions including *The Weir*, *Broken Glass*, *Great Expectations* and *Present Laughter*. Since 2010 she has worked as a professional Production Manager in venues ranging from the Finborough to the Soho and Hampstead theatres.

Jeff Baynham – Frank

Jeff started acting at Swansea University and has appeared for many companies since then. His work at The Questors started in 2011 when he played Lucifer in *Doctor Faustus*. This was followed by the title role in *Titus Andronicus* (2012), Don in the two-hander *Business* (2012) and Count Bellière and Melville in *Mary Stuart* (2013). In 2012, he also appeared as King Duncan in *Macbeth* for the Chiltern Shakespeare Company, followed by Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* for the same company in 2013.

Rachel Knightley – Director

Rachel Knightley is a graduate of the Questors Youth Theatre, Student Group 56 and the directors' course. Her directors' showcase was *Risk Everything* from *Suburban Motel* and she directed *Calendar Girls* in the Playhouse last year. For Questors Youth Theatre she wrote and directed *Aftermath* and co-wrote and co-directed *Parva Vale*.

Alex Marker – Set Designer

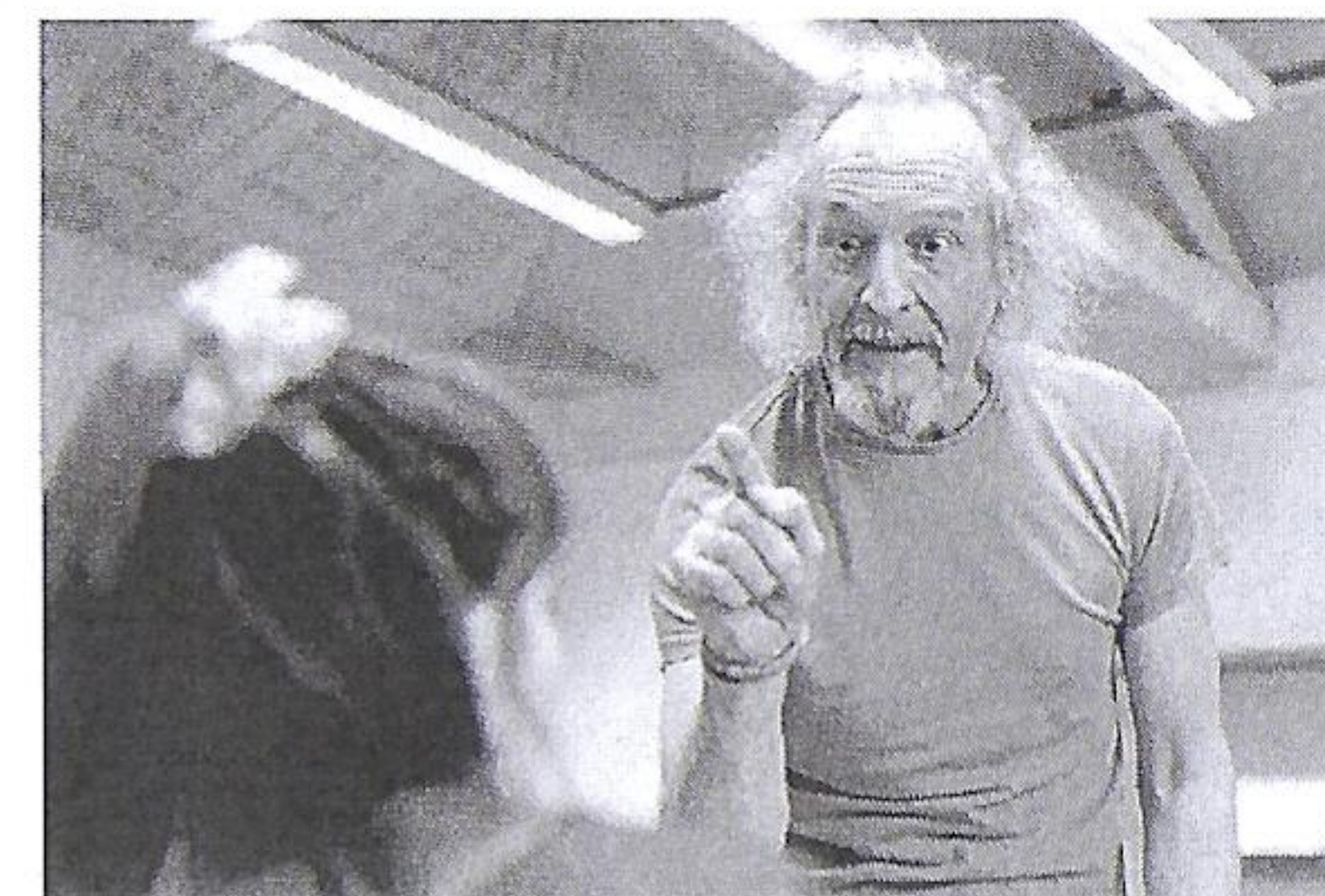
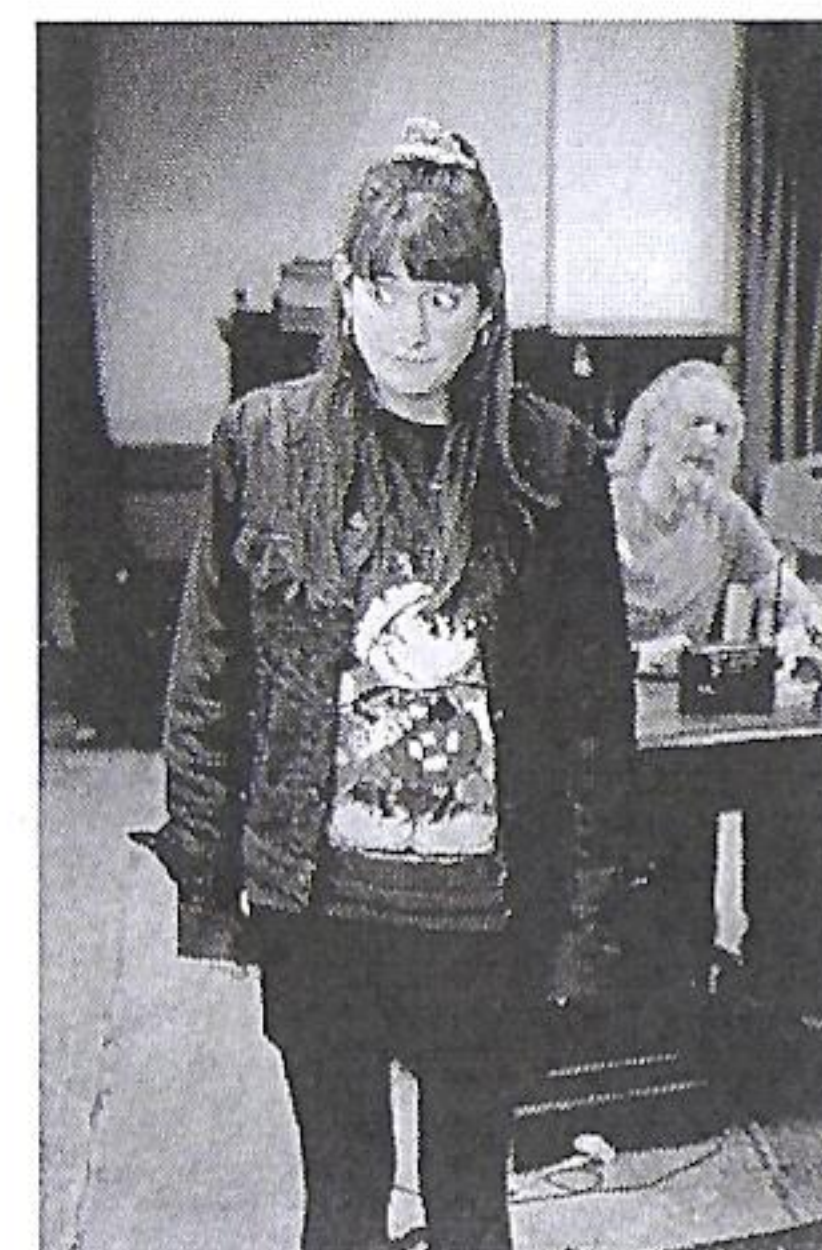
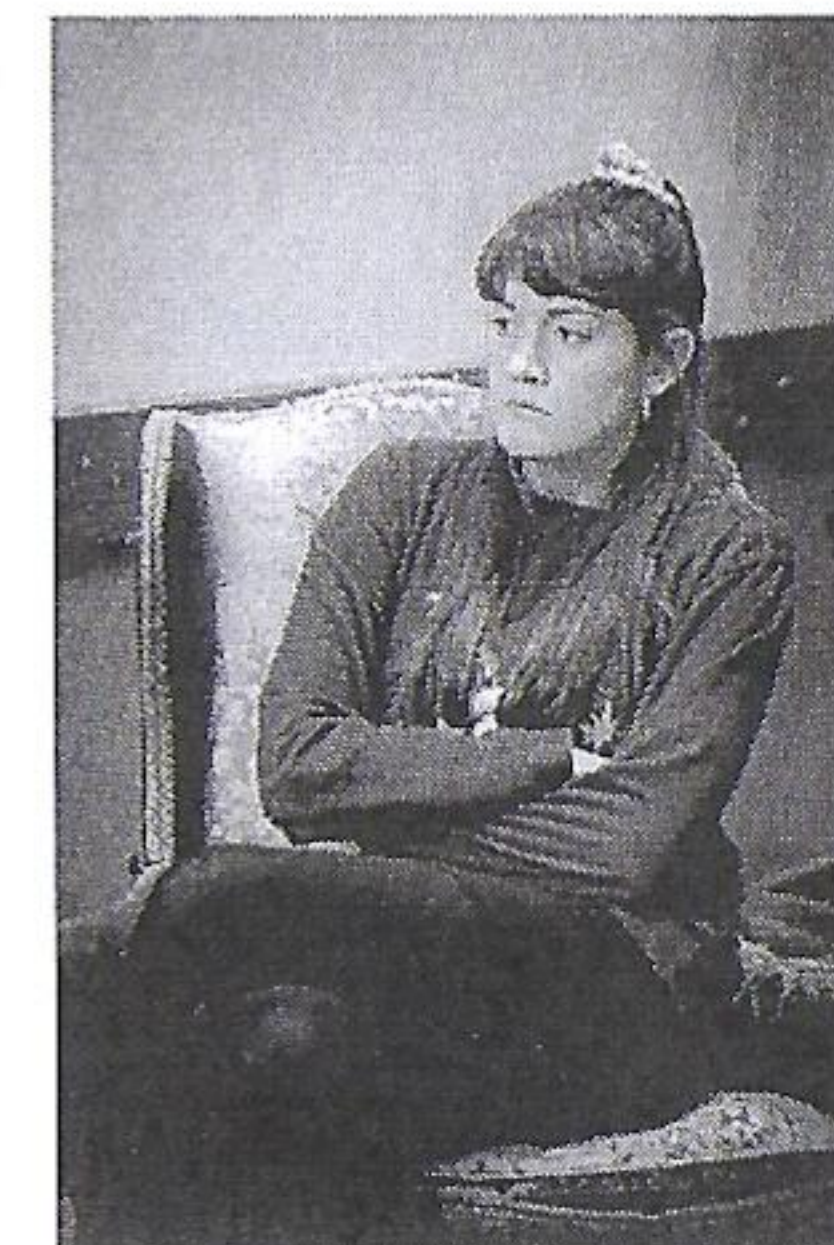
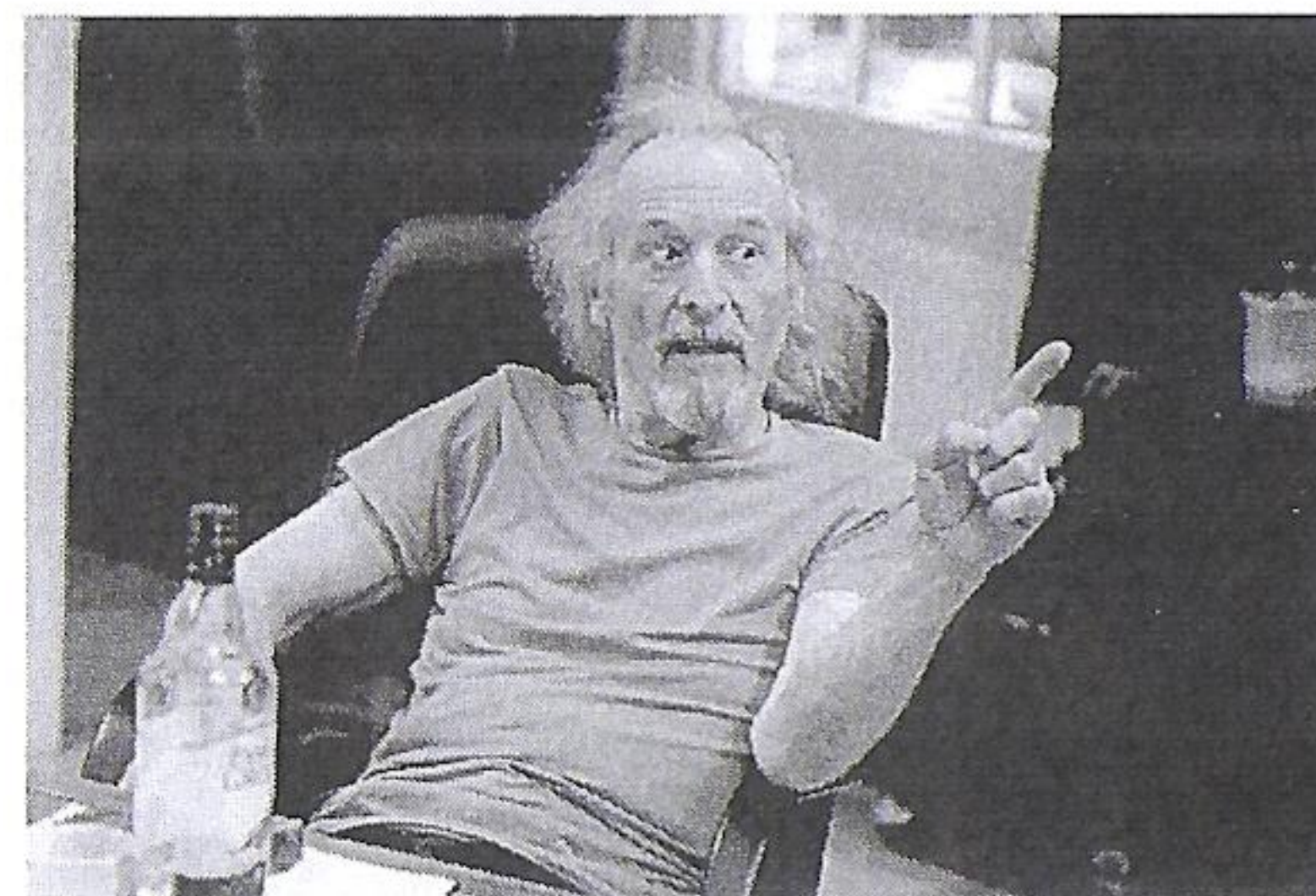
Alex has been an active Questors member for 25 years. This season he has designed, built and painted sets, played drums and percussion for *Around the World in 80 Days*, acted in the *24-Hour Plays*, and was or is a reader for the Questors Halloween and Christmas Ghost Story events. He is Director of the Youth Theatre and Head of Design at The Questors. Alex is also a tutor for the University of West London and Kingston College technical theatre courses run in association with The Questors.

Sue Peckitt – Costume Designer

Sue has been a member of the wardrobe team for many years and has often worked on Christmas shows. She is delighted to be doing *Rita* this year as there is not a sequin in sight!

Educating Rita in Rehearsals

by Richard Mead



Willy Russell

Willy Russell was born in Whiston, Liverpool, and left school with no qualifications. He initially worked as a ladies' hairdresser and ran his own salon, before trying his hand at other occupations, including playwright. His first successful play came in 1974 and was about the Beatles: *John, Paul, George, Ringo ... and Bert*. It was commissioned by Liverpool's Everyman Theatre, but soon transferred to London's Lyric Theatre – a production that featured Anthony Sher, Trevor Eve and Bernard Hill amongst its cast, and Barbara Dickson providing the musical accompaniment. It was named Best Musical of the Year by the Evening Standard.

Educating Rita came about in 1980 as the result of a commission from the Royal Shakespeare Company and premiered at London's Warehouse (now Donmar Warehouse) in June of that year, with a cast comprising Julie Walters and Mark Kingston. Julie Walters went on to star with Michael Caine in the 1983 feature film, directed by Lewis Gilbert. The film won many awards and was nominated for three Oscars.

In 1983, Willy Russell's musical *Blood Brothers* opened in Liverpool before transferring to London's Phoenix Theatre. It was revived by Bill Kenwright in 1988 and ran continuously for 24 years until it closed in November 2012.

Another of Willy Russell's famous works is *Shirley Valentine*, commissioned and premiered by The Everyman Theatre in 1986. Two years later, a different production, starring Pauline Collins and directed by Simon Callow, opened at London's Vaudeville Theatre. Pauline Collins went on to star in the 1989 feature film version, again directed by Lewis Gilbert.

Alternative Christmas Entertainment

ALADDIN AND HIS WONDERFUL LAMP

by Richard Gallagher

14 December 2013 – 4 January 2014

The Playhouse

This Christmas, take a magical journey with us to the distant Chinese province of 'Ee-Ling' as we stage a fun-filled panto for the whole family.

CHRISTMAS GHOST STORIES

23, 27 & 28 December 2013

The Playhouse

Our Christmas Ghost Stories have become a favourite event of our Christmas calendar. Over three nights, actors narrate delightful tales of terror, with different stories and readers on different nights.

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 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.

The Questors Youth Theatre – QYT

Our Youth Theatre, QYT, runs weekly drama classes for all ages from 6 to 18. 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
12 Mattock Lane, Ealing, W5 5BQ
Theatre Office: 020 8567 0011
Registered Charity No. 207516