

## 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<sup>†</sup>
- ✓ Opportunities to be actively involved in our productions
- ✓ Opportunity to audition to join our company of actors
- ✓ Exclusive or discounted training courses
- ✓ Access to iQ – the members-only website: [members.questors.org.uk](http://members.questors.org.uk)
- ✓ Access to exclusive news on iQ and email newsletter
- ✓ Receive the regular programme leaflet
- ✓ Membership of The Grapevine Club
- ✓ Special invitations, events and offers not available to the public
- ✓ Ticket reservation facility (conditions apply)
- ✓ Voting rights in the company

*\*Reduced prices exclude certain events. <sup>†</sup>Under 18, excludes certain events, maximum four per event. Must be collected at the performance and accompanied by the member.*

### 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 lighting 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.

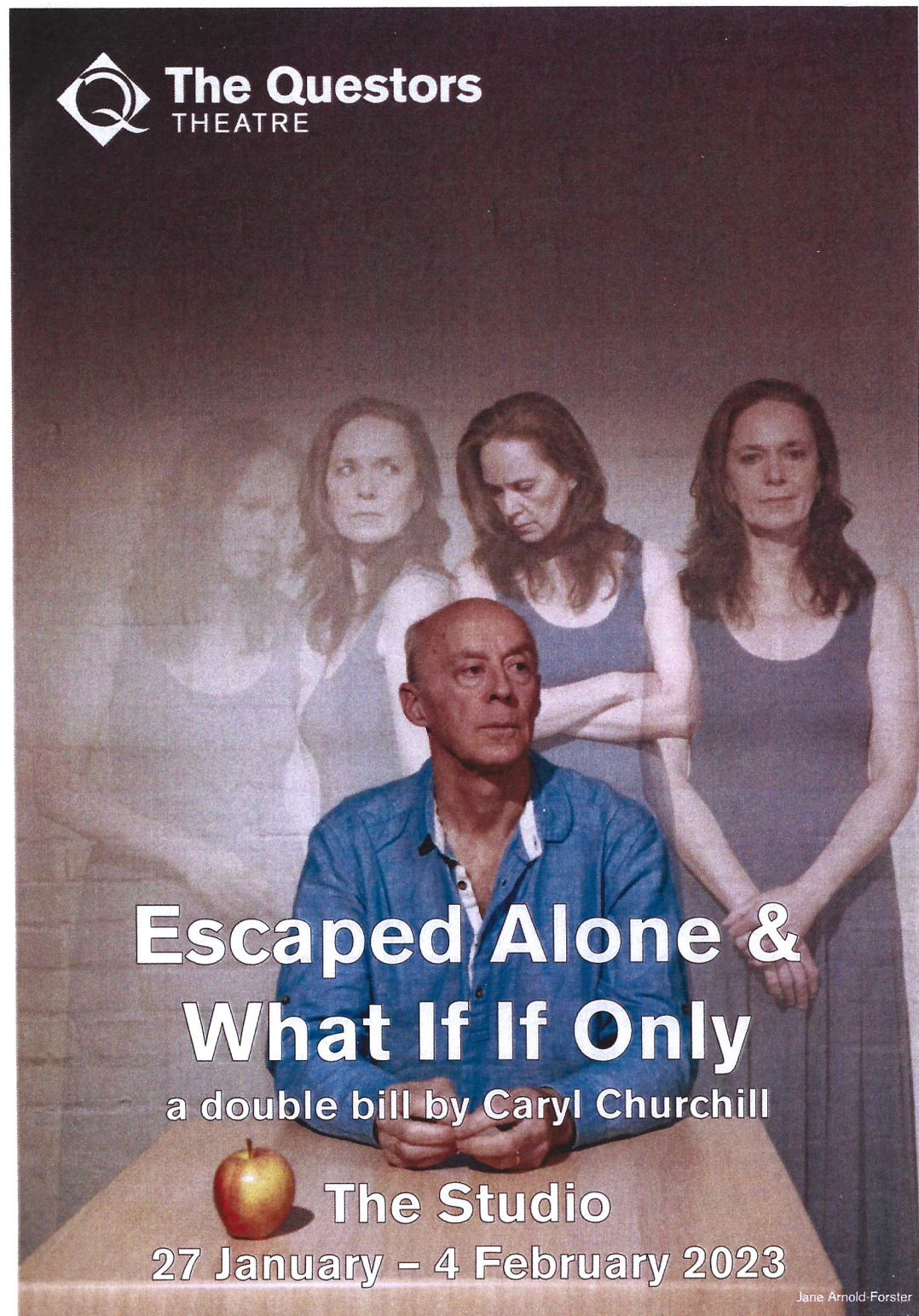
The Questors has a high standard of acting and, to maintain this, everyone wanting to act must first take an audition. These are held every month – call the Theatre Office for details of forthcoming auditions.

### 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](http://questors.org.uk/qyt).

The Questors Theatre  
12 Mattock Lane, Ealing, W5 5BQ  
Registered Charity No. 207516

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## Escaped Alone & What If If Only

a double bill by Caryl Churchill

The Studio  
27 January – 4 February 2023



## Fields at The Questors

Fields at The Questors serves Italian coffee, fine teas, snacks and handmade cakes, and is the perfect spot for a pre-theatre café stop or interval ice-cream.

Place your interval order before the show to beat the crowds.

Open before and during the interval of all Judi Dench Playhouse evening and matinee performances.

Find **Fields** on **Facebook**.



## 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 six 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 2023 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, spirits and soft drinks – all at very reasonable prices.

Opening Hours (subject to change):  
7:00 pm – 11:00 pm (Monday – Saturday)  
Sunday lunchtime: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

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

**Fields and the Grapevine accept payments by card.**



images: Robert Vass

## Escaped Alone & What If If Only

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# ESCAPED ALONE & WHAT IF IF ONLY

Caryl Churchill was born in 1938 in London and grew up in the Lake District and in Montreal. She was educated at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. *Downstairs*, her first play – written while she was still at university – was staged in 1958 and won an award at the Sunday Times National Union of Students Drama Festival. Her subsequent oeuvre includes: *Owners*, *Traps*, *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, *Cloud 9*, *Top Girls*, *Fen*, *A Mouthful of Birds*, *Serious Money*, *Ice Cream*, *Mad Forest*, *The Skriker*, *Blue Heart*, *This is a Chair*, *Far Away*, *A Number*, *Drunk Enough To Say I Love You?*, *Seven Jewish Children*, *Love & Information*, *Here We Go*, and the quartet *Glass*, *Kill*, *Bluebeard* and *Imp*. She has also written for radio and television.

***Escaped Alone*** – its title taken from the *Book of Job*: “...and I, only, am escaped alone to tell thee” – premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in 2016. The set-up is deceptively simple. Three old friends and a neighbour. A summer of afternoons in the backyard. Tea and catastrophe.

Churchill lets two things rub against one another here: an image of idyll and an account of apocalypse. She shows us an English back garden, unkempt and overrun, in which four older women sit soaking up the sun and nattering over tea. They cover all sorts of topics, from the changing face of Britain’s high streets to quantum physics and the restorative power of a haircut, to nature and love and murder.

Churchill’s engagement with ecological issues manifests itself in a diverse array of work across her career, including the early radio drama *Not Not Not Not Not Enough Oxygen* (1971), as well as more established plays, such as *Fen* and *Far Away*; and the libretto for *We Turned On The Light*, one of her several collaborations with the composer Orlando Gough.

On a musical analogy, the play is a quartet for voices, composed of one- or two-line speeches interspersed with extended solos in which three of the characters reveal their inner selves while the fourth, in effect functioning as a choric megaphone for the play’s unconscious, charts visions of impending doom. To quote from Susannah Clapp’s *Observer* review of the original production, this is “fantasy intricately wired into current politics. It is intimate and vast; domestic and wild.” And also, I venture to suggest, great fun.

I invited my friend and former academic colleague Professor Elaine Aston of Lancaster University, a leading authority on Churchill’s work, to make a contribution to this programme, and am delighted that she was happy to do so.

“For more than half a century, Caryl Churchill’s plays have enriched the landscape of British theatre. Feted as one of the most formally innovative and politically trenchant dramatists writing for the contemporary stage, Churchill’s capacity for theatrical invention and political intervention is undiminished.

“In the eighties, she talked of her commitment to feminism and the socialist dream of a ‘decentralized, nonauthoritarian’ society; in the twenty-first century, to borrow the title of her 2000 play, this feels like an increasingly ‘far away’ possibility. Yet she remains fiercely opposed to the nightmarish intensification of neoliberal-capitalist greed, violence, and terror that her theatrical landscapes point to as now occurring on a global scale. *Escaped Alone* is no exception – an elliptical voicing of ‘terrible rage’ at man-made atrocities and apocalyptic reckonings for a world that does not transform, ecologically or socially, but goes on as before.

“Churchill’s shapeshifting, creative genius means that aesthetically there is a world of difference between her all-female, state-of-the-nation play *Top Girls* (1982) and *Escaped Alone* with its cast of septuagenarian women. But politically there is a continuum: both prophesy ‘frightening’ futures in the absence of socially progressive change. The reprise of *Escaped Alone* in this era of pandemic fall-out, energy poverty and ecological damage, might even mean that we feel and see the play’s dystopian future as our present.”

***What If If Only*** also premiered at the Royal Court Theatre, in 2021. Again the set-up seems straightforward. ‘Someone’, sitting alone, perhaps a glass of wine to hand, addresses their absent partner who has died too young.

Here Churchill’s balancing act is between a moving acknowledgement of the heartache of bereavement and a sparkling philosophical enquiry. The play asks what happens when we seek to bargain with time, or time seeks to bargain with us. The character ‘Futures’ is the embodiment of every kind of “what if?” and “if only”; all the potential futures that may or may not include Someone’s lost love. Someone beseeches the universe to bring them back – the universe perhaps answers . . .

The feminist dramatist April de Angelis observes that it is “impossible to imagine the landscape of contemporary drama without Caryl Churchill, the author of more than 30 plays, a handful of adaptations, a clutch of radio plays. And what plays! *Top Girls*, *Cloud Nine*, *Serious Money*, *A Number*, *Far Away*, each a landmark in the history of our theatre culture. She has, as the playwright Marius von Mayerburg has pointed out, ‘changed the language of theatre and very few playwrights do that’. Only the greats deserve that accolade: Shakespeare, Chekhov, Ibsen, Brecht, Beckett, a roll call to which we could easily add Churchill.”

To end on a personal note, this is my first engagement with Churchill’s drama as a director. Exploring two of her plays with these casts has been an absorbing, instructive and wholly pleasurable process. My grateful thanks are due equally to them, and to the creatives and production staff involved in this project. We very much hope that you will enjoy our work.

**George Savona, Director**

# ESCAPED ALONE & WHAT IF IF ONLY

a double bill by Caryl Churchill

*First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: 27 January 2023*

## CAST

### ESCAPED ALONE

Mrs Jarrett	<b>Karla Ptacek</b>
Vi	<b>Alexandra McDevitt</b>
Lena	<b>Christine Fox</b>
Sally	<b>Helen Walker</b>

### WHAT IF IF ONLY

Someone	<b>Tim Pemberton</b>
Future } Futures } Present }	<b>Karen Singer</b>
Child Future	<b>Sophie Chen</b> (27, 29 Jan, 1, 3 Feb) <b>Miren Curley</b> (28, 31 Jan, 2, 4 Feb)

The performance last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes including a 20-minute interval.

The audience is asked kindly to vacate the auditorium during the 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	<b>George Savona</b>
Set Designer	<b>Stephen Souchon</b>
Costume Coordinator	<b>Sarah Andrews</b>
Lighting Designers	<b>Terry Mummery, Andrew Whadcoat</b>
Sound Designer	<b>Russell Fleet</b>
Projections Designer	<b>Terry Mummery</b>
Production Manager	<b>Jane Arnold-Forster</b>
Stage Manager	<b>Tilly Benson-Reid</b>
Assistant Stage Managers	<b>Preeti Bhambri, Shenel Hussein</b>
Rehearsal Support	<b>Carole Swan</b>
Set Dresser	<b>Ian Black</b>
Prompter	<b>Maggie Anderson</b>
Set Constructor	<b>Rob Willin</b>
Set Painters	<b>Bron Blake, Sue Collins, Dennis Dracup</b>
Get-In Assistant	<b>Roger Brace</b>
Photographers	<b>Jane Arnold-Forster, Robert Vass</b>
Videographer	<b>Jane Arnold-Forster</b>
Thanks to	<b>James Connor, Anna Jones, Nicola Maddox, Alex Marker, Harriet Parsonage, Sarah Stoddart, Amanda Waggott, Carole Wood</b>



# Biographies

## **Christine Fox** – *Lena (Escaped Alone)*

Christine has acted for many years in classic and contemporary plays, and participated in theatre devising. Her most recent performance at The Questors was as Woman/Voice in Samuel Beckett's *Rockaby*. She also writes, acting in her own black comedy, *Divided Soul*, at The Canal Café Theatre and has an absurdist double-bill premiering there in June.

## **Alexandra McDevitt** – *Vi (Escaped Alone)*

Alexandra has played a variety of roles at The Questors, exploring many different styles of theatre: The Sphinx in Berkoff's *Greek*, Ruth in Pinter's *The Homecoming* and a member of the ensemble players in the highly acclaimed production of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Alexandra was last seen on the Questors stage as Mrs Dearth in *Dear Brutus*.

## **Tim Pemberton** – *Someone (What If If Only)*

Tim has been acting at The Questors for over 10 years. His most recent roles were John Dryden in *Nell Gwynn*, Luka in *The Bear* (also in Lithuania) and Sparkish in *The Country Wife* (also at the Minack). From February 11 he is playing Reverend Tooker in the rescheduled *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

## **Karla Ptacek** – *Mrs Jarrett (Escaped Alone)*

Karla is delighted that her first production with The Questors is this remarkable Churchill play. It's also her third apocalyptic text this past year, after *The Children* (Hazel) for SLT and *When the Rain Stops Falling* (Gabrielle snr) for SEDOS. She trained with Uta Hagen, holds an MA Directing and is founder of cyberfeminist troupe, *AvatarBodyCollision*.

## **Karen Singer** – *Future, Futures, Present (What If If Only)*

Karen's theatrical appearances include as Virginia Woolf in *A Knife in the Whale* (Endpaper Theatre Company), *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Handmaid's Tale* (Solent People's Theatre), Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* and Rosalind in *As You Like It* (Albion Shakespeare Company), Mrs Cheveley in *An Ideal Husband* and Luciana in *The Comedy of Errors* (Anglo-Irish Theatre Company). For The Questors, she has appeared in *Maryland*, as Mary Stuart in *Mary Stuart* and Liz in *Night of the Soul*.

## **Helen Walker** – *Sally (Escaped Alone)*

Helen started acting and directing at The Questors in the 1980s, when she was artistic director of the studio for some years. She later gained an MA in Theatre Arts from Goldsmiths and was an award nominated director/writer for her own theatre company. Most recently, she played Alice Wade in *Hangmen*.

## **Sarah Andrews** – *Costume Coordinator*

Sarah joined The Questors in 1977 as a member of Student Group 32 and since graduating has appeared in many plays. In addition to acting, she has designed and dressed a countless number of productions, most recently *The Country Wife*, *Sleepers in the Field*, *Krapp's Last Tape & Rockaby*, *King Charles III*, *How to Spot an Alien*, *The Water's Edge*, *Consent* and *India Gate*.

## **Russell Fleet** – *Sound Designer*

Russell trained as an actor in the 1990s and joined The Questors in 2006. He has been involved in over 50 productions as actor, sound designer, stage manager and director. He was recently onstage as The Dark Lord in *King Arthur and the Twelfth Knight* and his last sound design was for *India Gate* last summer.

## **Terry Mummery** – *Lighting / Projections Designer*

Involved with The Questors for many years as a lighting designer, since 2015 Terry has diversified into the projection design aspects of theatrical productions. Recent designs have included *Loveplay*, *Whipping It Up*, *India Gate*, *Peregrine Proteus* and *The Ealing Club*. He often assists fellow lighting designers with installation.

## **George Savona** – *Director*

This is George's third production for The Questors, following a Beckett double-bill (*Krapp's Last Tape & Rockaby*) and *King Charles III*. He trained professionally courtesy of the (then) ABC Television repertory theatre directors' scheme, and has spent much of his working life in university drama/theatre studies departments.

## **Stephen Souchon** – *Set Designer*

Stephen joined The Questors in 2016 and has been actively involved in building sets for a range of productions including *Don't Dress for Dinner*, *The Ladykillers*, *The Country Wife*, *Sleepers in the Field* and *George Orwell's 1984*. Stephen has designed sets for *Season's Greetings*, *Rosmersholm*, *Things I Know to be True*, *The Browning Version* and *Consent*.

## **Andrew Whadcoat** – *Lighting Designer*

Recent lighting designs include *Not About Heroes*, *The Dog & the Scarf*, *Ghost Train*, *Dear Brutus*, *Haunting Julia* and *Peregrine Proteus*. Andrew has also designed for AppEaling Theatre, Idle Discourse, Orange Moon and PlayGCTheatre – both at The Questors and at other venues.



# Rehearsal Photographs

by Robert Vass



With your support we can refurbish the Judi Dench Playhouse and the Studio. Donate £150-£500 to name your own seat at The Questors.

## name a seat

and support independent theatre

For more information and to name your seat, visit: [questors.org.uk/seats](http://questors.org.uk/seats)

## Next at The Questors

**CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF**  
by Tennessee Williams  
11 - 18 February 2023  
The Judi Dench Playhouse

This Pulitzer Prize-winning play follows a Mississippi family in America's deep south as they must finally untangle the web of deceit they've created for themselves. Brick and Maggie reunite with their extended family to celebrate Big Daddy's birthday. But, when faced with the shattering truths of their own marriage, how will they protect their family from falling apart? Sexual tensions, lies, and betrayals boil to the surface in this iconic classic.

**A DOLL'S HOUSE**  
by Tanika Gupta  
after Henrik Ibsen  
24 February - 4 March 2023  
The Studio

India. 1879. Can a wife break free from the shackles of societal expectations? This striking reimagining of Ibsen's classic play is set in Calcutta during British colonialist rule. Niru, a Bengali woman, is married to English bureaucrat Tom. To him, she is a prize possession, a doting wife whose purpose is to serve. But when she takes agency of her own, how will he respond? This razor-sharp contemporary adaptation confronts complex race relations through the lens of colonialism.