

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
- ✓ 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
- ✓ 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. †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.

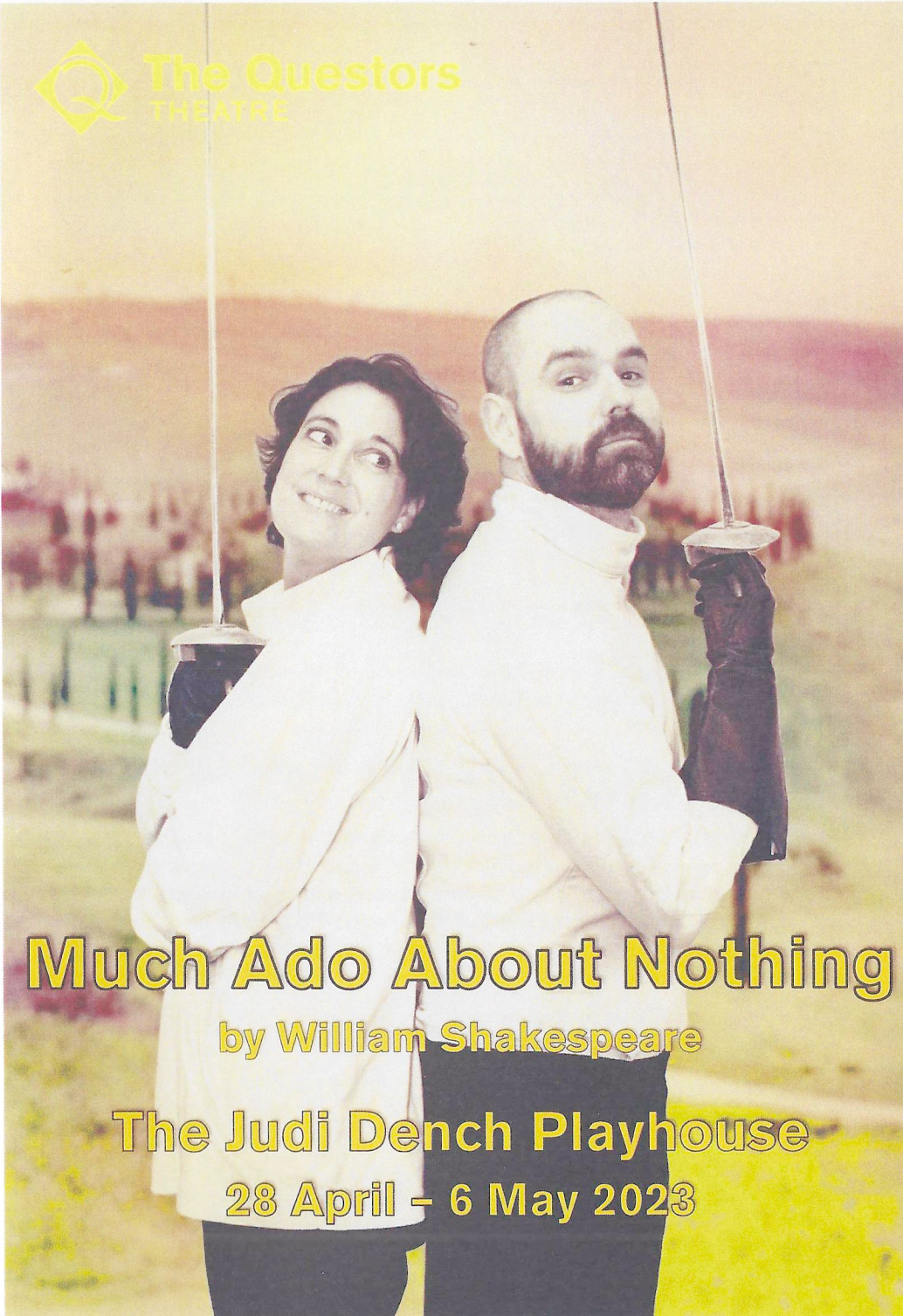
The Questors has a high standard of acting and, to maintain this, everyone wanting to act must first take an audition. These are held every month – call the Theatre Office for details of forthcoming auditions.

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.

The Questors Theatre
12 Mattock Lane, Ealing, W5 5BQ
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The Questors
THEATRE

Much Ado About Nothing
by William Shakespeare

The Judi Dench Playhouse
28 April – 6 May 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 for more details.

Fields and the Grapevine accept payments by card.



image: Evelina Plonyte

Much Ado About Nothing

by William Shakespeare

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28 April – 6 May 2023

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

There is a kind of merry war betwixt Signor Benedick and Lady Beatrice

I've always wanted to direct *Much Ado About Nothing*. One of Shakespeare's most sparkling and best loved comedies, it has been ceaselessly reinvented over the centuries but never fails to surprise and delight.

Its backdrop is war – as the men return from battle and the women wait – but then another sort of battle kicks off: the battle of the sexes, 'the merry war'. Sex and love, head and heart, youth and age, everyone is trying to make sense of the relationship game. It feels as fresh and vital as if it were written yesterday.

And in Beatrice, we have surely the Bard's best comic heroine. Feisty and witty, but also vulnerable and intuitive, who wouldn't love to grab the chance of playing this independent woman who won't accept a husband for husband's sake? The duelling lovers of Beatrice and Benedick have been played at the RSC alone by Peggy Ashcroft and John Gielgud in 1950; Geraldine McEwan and Christopher Plummer in 1961; our own Questors President Judi Dench and Donald Sinden in 1976; Sinead Cusack and Derek Jacobi in 1982; and Meera Syal and Paul Bhattacharjee in 2012.

Indeed Jane Austen makes use of a similar device in her most popular novel, *Pride and Prejudice*. Benedick and Beatrice admit to pride: *They say I will bear myself proudly*, says Benedick, while Beatrice reflects ruefully *Stand I condemned for pride and scorn so much?* Elizabeth and Darcy are similarly guilty. Both Shakespeare and Austen realised that there is a greater erotic charge as well as amusement in a comedy of mutual resistance. They are followed by a line of contemporary rom-com lovers, who all begin hating each other, and end up ... in love.

Much Ado also felt the right choice of play for a celebratory return to theatre post pandemic. It's party time at this villa in Sicily and party time at The Questors too. We've set the play this time round in 1923 – at that lull between the two world wars, when the Charleston was the newest dance craze, when the air was febrile with gossip about who was in love with who, and life must be seized for all its worth.

We've also trimmed the play, lost some of its now-opaque jokes, and paced it to just over two hours.

Will it serve for any model to build mischief on?

So what's the background to *Much Ado*, and where did Shakespeare find his plot? The play was written in late 1598, and is thought to have first been performed at The Curtain theatre in Shoreditch, used by Shakespeare's company before it took up residence at The Globe in 1599.

Its sources are murky. Italian writer Matteo Bandello gave Shakespeare the Hero-Claudio sub plot and Messina setting. Other aspects of the story come from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. But there is no obvious source for the Benedick and Beatrice plot. Perhaps it is Shakespeare's own! It is interesting that Nothing was a slang word for vagina in Elizabethan times and, given the play's concern with female chastity, it is an appropriate title.

So here's a lightning guide to the plot! Soldiers Benedick, Claudio and Don Pedro arrive at Leonato's house in Messina. Past lovers Beatrice and Benedick bicker with each other while youthful Claudio falls in love with Leonato's daughter, Hero.

Also in the arrival party is Don John, Don Pedro's evil half-brother, who sees immediate potential for villainy in the villa set up, and decides to ruin Claudio's love interest in Hero by tricking him into believing she is unfaithful. The malevolent plot works so well that Claudio renounces Hero at their wedding, and leaves her in a dead faint on the church floor.

Meanwhile, more benignly, Don Pedro and others plot to bring Benedick and Beatrice together – in spite of themselves – by a series of elaborate ruses.

How does it turn out? Skip this paragraph if you want to be held in suspense. At one point, this comedy almost turns to tragedy – as Hero feigns death much as Juliet does in *Romeo and Juliet*. But no, Hero's innocence is proven – by an unlikely group of local police under the incompetent control of one Mr Dogberry, highly prone to a malapropism or six! – and Claudio repents. He agrees to marry Leonato's niece and she turns out to be Hero after all! The trick to make Benedick and Beatrice fall in love succeeds and he proposes to her at the end of the play.

Let's have a dance ere we are married

Much Ado ends with that classic symbol of harmony, a dance; in our case, a reprise of the carefree Charleston.

And two marriages close the play – though Beatrice and Benedick keep us on playfully comic tenterhooks to the very end. Which marriage will last? Who knows? But we leave the playhouse feeling that everyone has looked into their hearts and learnt something new about themselves.

Outside the giddy dance is Don Pedro, uncoupled at the last: *Prince, tho art sad* observes Benedick. Don Pedro gives a rueful smile but Shakespeare gives him no verbal rejoinder – maybe marriage is not for everyone, maybe there are other ways of finding happiness, maybe this has been much ado about nothing after all.

Anne Neville, Director

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

by William Shakespeare

First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: 28 April 2023

CAST

in order of appearance

Leonato, Governor of Messina	Robert Staines
Beatrice, niece of Leonato	Kate Langston
Hero, daughter of Leonato	Fionna Gough
Ursula, waiting woman to Hero	Sally Parker
Margaret, waiting woman to Hero	Nicola Littlewood
Balthasar, follower of Don Pedro	Julian Smith
Don Pedro, General of the Army	Robert Seatter
Claudio, Army Officer	Adam Keenan
Benedick, Army Officer	Richard Graylin
Don John, brother of Don Pedro	Pip Nixon
Borachio, follower of Don John	Josh Perry
Conrad, follower of Don John	Shay Kennedy
Antonio, brother to Leonato	Steve Fitzpatrick
Dogberry, Constable of the Watch	Anthony Curran
Verges, 2nd in command to Dogberry	Gareth Bevan
1st Watchman	Dorothy Lawson
George Seacole, a watchman	Steve Fitzpatrick
Hugh Oakcake, a watchman	Alan Waldock
Friar Francis / Sexton	Francis Lloyd
Watchdog	Benji

The play is set in Messina, Sicily, in 1923

The play lasts approximately 2 hours and 25 minutes including a 15-minute interval between Act 3 and Act 4

PRODUCTION

Director	Anne Neville
Set Designer	Alex Marker
Costume Designer	Nichola Thomas
Lighting Designer	John Green
Sound Designer	Emerson Bramwell
Stage Manager	Bernie Brady
Deputy Stage Manager	Sarah Clopet
Assistant Stage Managers	Jennifer Kerr, Louisa Minas, Hasti Rezvan, Francis Sherwin, Michael Smith, Laurie Swan, Doug Willis
Properties	Harriet Parsonage
Prompters	Annie Harries, Bridgett Strevens
Dressmaker to Miss Parker	Karen Latimer
Hair and Make-Up	Peter Wang
Lighting Assistants	Alasdair Graebner, Carole Swan
Set Constructors	Roger Brace, Stephen Souchon
Set Painters	Ian Black, Katarzyna Kryński, Lynn Martinez
Get-In Assistants	Mike Chislett, Tilly Reid, Lloyd Wallis
Photographer	Evelina Plonytė
Videographer	Robert Vass
Thanks to	The Wednesday Sewing Group

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

Biographies

Gareth Bevan – *Verges*

Gareth has been a member of several theatre and musical theatre groups for nearly the past 50 years and an acting member of The Questors for 30 of them. He has acted and directed in over 250 productions and was last seen here as Hugh in *Apologia* and playing the guitar in *The Ealing Club*.

Anthony Curran – *Dogberry*

Anthony Curran is a graduate of Student Group 47 and has appeared in roles as diverse as Estragon in *Waiting for Godot* to Arlecchino in *The Venetian Twins*. His more recent appearances include Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Sid Armfield in *Hangmen*.

Steve Fitzpatrick – *Antonio / George Seacole*

Steve's performances include Charlie in *Hangmen*, Sir Jabez in *Diana of Dobson's*, Balthasar in *The Lying Kind*, Jeff in *Jeffrey Bernard is Unwell*, Lucky in *Waiting for Godot* and Jacques in *As You Like It*. He also directs – over 25 shows with The Questors including our last production of *Much Ado*.

Fionna Gough – *Hero*

Fionna is a professional actor whose previous Questors credits include Mia in *That Face*, Hannah in *Days of Significance*, Rdeca in *First Love is the Revolution*, Julia in *The Ghost Train* and Zara in *Consent*. This is Fionna's first Shakespearean performance and she hopes to do The Bard justice!

Richard Graylin – *Benedick*

Much Ado is Richard's tenth Questors show as an actor, having appeared in *The Ghost Train*, *The 39 Steps*, *Don't Dress for Dinner*, *Mrs Warren's Profession*, *The Pride*, *An Ideal Husband*, *Macbeth*, *The Crucible* and *Pygmalion*. He also directed *Death and the Maiden* last year in the Studio.

Adam Keenan – *Claudio*

Adam made his Questors debut as Arthur Clennam in *Little Dorrit* earlier this year. He has performed in student productions at Lancaster, Oregon State, and Cambridge. Credits include Rudge in *The History Boys*, Robin in *The Children* and Second Goat in the school Nativity.

Shay Kennedy – *Conrad*

This is Shay's third Questors performance, having previously taken part in the Welcome to Stepford plays and the Questors Comedy Variety Show. He's long had a passion for theatre and has previously been involved in projects at Leeds University, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and the National Youth Theatre.

Kate Langston – *Beatrice*

Kate joined The Questors in 2003 and has since played Nerissa in *The Merchant of Venice*, Gwendolen in *Travesties*, Connie in *Habeas Corpus*, Helen in *After the Dance*, Mrs Darling in *Peter Pan* and Amanda in *Private Lives*.

Dorothy Lawson – *1st Watchman*

Dotti became a Questors member in the mid-1980s and an acting member in 2013. She has appeared in four pantos and, most recently, in *Nell Gwynn* and *Peregrine Proteus*. Dotti has worked backstage, is a member of the Reminiscence Roadshow team, and appears as FOH and in the Grapevine.

Nicola Littlewood – *Margaret*

Nicola became an acting member and was an acting ASM in *Twelfth Night* in 2016. She played Ramia in *Galatea*, Lady Caroline in *Dear Brutus* and Miss Prism in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. She was also in *Four Stars* (Questors Power Plays), the Overnight Plays and a Welcome to Stepford play.

Francis Lloyd – *Friar Francis / Sexton*

Francis first appeared here as Bohun in *You Never Can Tell*. Appearances since include *Uncle Vanya* (as Vanya), *Habeas Corpus*, *Travesties*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Oleanna*, *Private Lives*, *The Ghost Train* and *Hangmen*. He also directs – recently *The Browning Version* and *Six Bad Poets*.

Pip Nixon – *Don John*

Pip did his MA in European Theatre at Leicester University where he was involved in amateur theatre including such productions as *Hamlet*, *The Seagull*, *Closer*, *The Winslow Boy* and *All My Sons*. More recently, Pip has mostly been directing and this is his first appearance at The Questors.

Sally Parker – *Ursula*

Sally has been a member of The Questors since 2021. This will be her third full performance here, as well as taking part in the Overnight Plays and the Festival of New Theatre. She is extremely excited to be working with the cast of *Much Ado About Nothing* and hopes everyone enjoys it as much as the cast.

Josh Perry – *Borachio*

Josh has been a member of The Questors since 2017 and went on to graduate with Student Group 72, with which he appeared in *Future Conditional* and *Charley's Aunt*. Other Questors credits include *Days of Significance*, *Bull*, *Dear Brutus*, *Loveplay* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Robert Seatter – *Don Pedro*

A longstanding Questors member, Robert has played leading roles in *Plenty*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the *Much Ado* that went to the Edinburgh Fringe and the Bridewell Theatre. He was last seen in *Private Lives*, involving dancing, fighting and a lot of lines... Don Pedro is an easier proposition!

Julian Smith – Balthasar

Julian's acting credits at The Questors include Feste in *Twelfth Night*, Edward Kynaston in *Nell Gwynne*, Clov in *End Game* and Winston Smith in *George Orwell's 1984*. He runs touring theatre company Teatro Unfortunato and has an unhealthy obsession with ukuleles and peanut butter sandwiches.

Robert Staines – Leonato

In the early nineties Robert was persuaded to apply to The Questors by his wife and the late Ruth Lister who were work colleagues. He was accepted and sang his way into *A Little Night Music*. Most recent productions since then include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Antigone* and *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Alan Waldoock – Hugh Oakcake

Alan was last seen at The Questors as Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night* in 2016. Before that, he was in *Uncle Vanya*, *An Ideal Husband*, *Shadowlands*, *House & Garden*, *Engaged*, *After October*, *The Winslow Boy*, *A Flea in Her Ear* and *The Seagull*, amongst others.

Emerson Bramwell – Sound Designer

Emerson is a composer and sound designer with a background in drums and percussion. Most recently, he composed the theme music for *God of Carnage* and designed the sound for *The Ghost Train*, *Apologia*, *Hangmen*, *Death and the Maiden*, *Peregrine Proteus* and *A Doll's House*.

John Green – Lighting Designer

John has had a lifelong interest in the use of light, but only got involved in stage lighting comparatively recently. In his 12 years as a member of The Questors he has been involved in various lighting roles, recently designing for *Dead Boy Café*, *Loveplay*, *How To Spot An Alien* and *Hairspray*.

Alex Marker – Set Designer

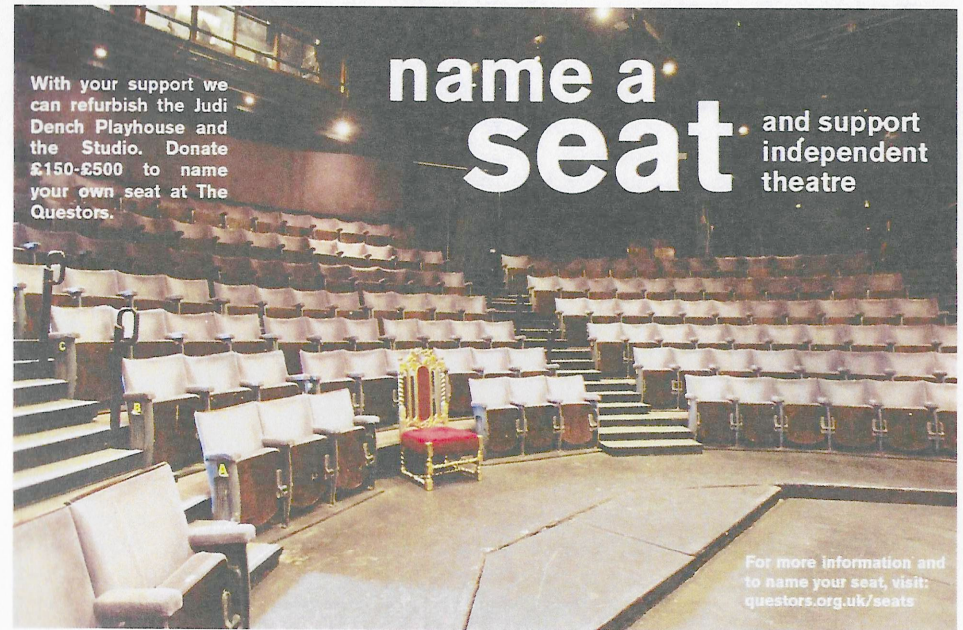
Alex joined The Questors in 1988, and is the Artistic Director of The Questors Theatre and Director of Questors Youth Theatre. Trained as a stage designer at Wimbledon School of Art, he has designed over 150 productions from the fringe to the West End, most recently at The Questors for *Murder on the Nile*.

Anne Neville – Director

Anne has been directing at The Questors since 1991, including *Hangmen*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Larkin with Women*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *Macbeth*, *London Assurance*, *ENRON*, *A Servant to Two Masters*, *The Weir*, *Trojan Women*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Faith Healer* and *Translations*.

Nichola Thomas – Costume Designer

Nichola has been the costume designer on over 20 shows in the last 18 years, including *Shadowlands*, *The Last of the Haussmans*, *Endgame*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Present Laughter*, *Mrs Warren's Profession* and *Things I Know to be True*. She particularly enjoys designing shows set in the 1920s to 1950s.



Next at The Questors

LOW LEVEL PANIC

by Clare McIntyre

5 – 13 May 2023

The Studio

Three flatmates. A stash of porn. A single bathroom. And a whole world of men. This unapologetically hysterical play probes the effects of society's objectification of women, as friends Mary, Celia and Jo figure out how they really feel about sex, their bodies and each other. Winning the Samuel Beckett Award, this powerful and timely tale opened at the Royal Court in 1988 to critical acclaim. 'McIntyre has a deadly accurate ear, a subtle sense of humour and a deep fund of compassion: she writes with thrilling understanding' – *The Sunday Times*

ARCADIA

by Tom Stoppard

3 – 10 June 2023

The Judi Dench Playhouse

Two contemporary scholars, Hannah and Bernard, set about a Derbyshire country estate, piecing together clues recalling events of 1809. What really happened to Thomasina Coverly, a gifted student, 180 years ago at Sidley Park? Thomasina proposed an extraordinary theory. Around her, the adults, including her tutor Septimus, were preoccupied with forbidden desires, illicit passions and burning rivalries. *Arcadia*, is a tale where past and present come crashing together to search for an elusive truth.