

Join Us

Club Membership – Benefits

- ✓ The right to participate in club activities, including putting on shows
- ✓ A say in the running of the club through voting rights at the AGM and in electing the Board of Trustees
- ✓ Access to our members' website and receive a regular club newsletter by email
- ✓ Full credit to your account for booked tickets to Questors productions if you let us know that you can't make the show
- ✓ Priority booking for courses or special events
- ✓ Meet new people and learn fresh skills as part of the Questors team
- ✓ Feel great about being a member of one of Europe's largest community theatres with over 90 years of contribution to the arts

Note that this new, lower-priced membership does not include ticket discounts.

We have a wide range of opportunities for you to become actively involved throughout the theatre. Volunteer help is always needed for selling programmes, stewarding or serving behind the bar, and training is provided if you'd like to work in Box Office with our computerised system. 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 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.

Season Pass – Benefits

A Season Pass is also available to both Club Members (the combined cost is equivalent to that of the old-style membership) and non-members, which gives the following benefits:

- ✓ Ticket discounts for every Questors production (except the pantomime):
 - up to 50% discount on an adult ticket for the Season Pass holder (to a minimum ticket price of £10, £8 concessions)
 - £2 off ANY number of additional adult or concession tickets
 - up to FOUR child tickets at up to 50% discount
- ✓ Will receive other *audience loyalty* special offers from The Questors or other organisations performing at The Questors
- ✓ Available to all – you do not need to be a club member

Further details and pricing of Club Membership (and enhanced Supporter Memberships), the Season Pass and Questors Youth Theatre can be found on the Questors website: questors.org.uk.

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

Programme: Nigel Bamford
Theatre Office: 020 8567 0011
Box Office: 020 8567 5184
Email: enquiries@questors.org.uk



The Questors
THEATRE

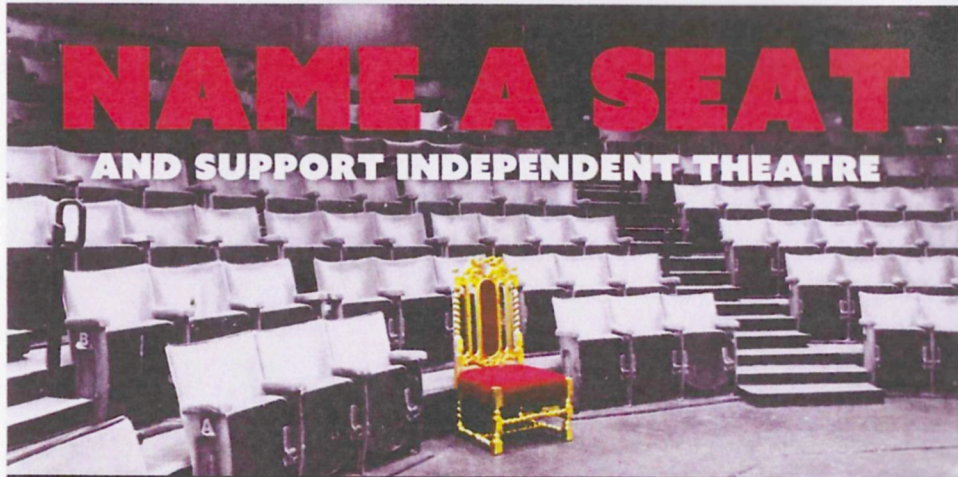
BLITHE SPIRIT

by Noël Coward



27 SEPTEMBER - 5 OCTOBER

The Judi Dench Playhouse



Write your name into the history books of our theatre by sponsoring one of the new seats in the Judi Dench Playhouse. Find out more and name your seat: questors.org.uk/seats

THE GRAPEVINE BAR

The Grapevine is our friendly club bar open to Members 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 proud of the quality of our real ales, we appear in the 2024 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):

Monday – Saturday: 7:00 pm – 11:00 pm

Sunday lunchtime: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

See questors.org.uk/grapevine for more details.



image: Robert Vass

BLITHE SPIRIT

by Noël Coward

The Judi Dench Playhouse

27 September – 5 October 2024

BLITHE SPIRIT

“Hail to thee, blithe Spirit! / Bird thou never wert”
To a Skylark by Shelley

Born in 1899, Noël Coward became one of the most prolific and celebrated playwrights of the 20th century. By the age of 40, he had penned more than 40 plays, including the timeless classics *Hay Fever* (1924), *Private Lives* (1929), *Design for Living* (1932) and *Present Laughter* (1939). However, the outbreak of war that year prompted Coward to declare he wouldn't write another play 'for the duration'. He shifted his focus away from the theatre, seeking to contribute to the war effort instead.

Initially, Coward was tasked with running the British propaganda office in Paris, though he famously quipped, “If His Majesty's Government plans to bore the Germans to death, I don't think we have the time.” He spent much of the war travelling extensively, particularly to the USA, rallying support for the Allies. Critics, however, accused him of living lavishly while soldiers fought and died. What they didn't know was that Coward was working secretly for British intelligence; King George V even sought to knight him for his services, but Winston Churchill had other plans.

Churchill recognised that Coward's greatest weapon was his wit and charisma, not espionage. “Go and sing to them when the guns are firing, that's your job!” he instructed. And so, Coward launched into an exhausting series of concert tours to entertain the troops, performing his new wartime songs, such as *London Pride* and *Don't Let's Be Beastly to the Germans*.

By 1941, Coward's London office had been destroyed in the Blitz. Seeking refuge and inspiration, he took a brief holiday in Portmeirion with his old friend, Joyce Carey. While Carey considered writing a play about Keats, Coward revisited an idea that had long intrigued him: a play about ghosts. Originally, Coward imagined a haunted house in Paris filled with spirits from different eras, but this concept never materialized. Instead, sitting on the beach in Portmeirion, *Blithe Spirit* was born.

“We sat on the beach, backs against the sea wall, discussing my idea for hours,” Coward later recalled. “Keats, I regret to say, was not mentioned.” By lunchtime, the title, characters, and a rough outline had emerged. The very next morning, he sat down at his typewriter and, within six days,

he had completed *Blithe Spirit: A Light Comedy in Three Acts*. Coward admitted, without false modesty, “I knew it was witty, I knew it was well-constructed, and I knew it would be a success.”

And a success it was. Just six weeks after finishing the script, *Blithe Spirit* premiered at the Opera House in Manchester before transferring to London's Piccadilly Theatre on July 2, 1941. The original cast featured Fay Compton as Ruth, Cecil Parker as Charles, Kay Hammond as Elvira and the incomparable Margaret Rutherford as Madame Arcati. Though one disgruntled audience member shouted “Rubbish!” from the Dress Circle, most critics were enthralled. Graham Greene called it a “weary exhibition of bad taste”, but otherwise the reviews were glowing. The play ran for an astonishing four and a half years, making it the longest-running comedy in British theatre – a record it held for 30 years until *Boeing-Boeing* came along.

In 1945, *Blithe Spirit* was adapted for the screen, directed by David Lean, who had previously worked with Coward on the wartime film *In Which We Serve*. The movie starred Rex Harrison as Charles, Constance Cummings as Ruth, Kay Hammond reprising her role as Elvira and Margaret Rutherford once again stealing the show as Madame Arcati. Though Coward was displeased with certain changes in the film, particularly a major plot alteration, the film found success and is still widely beloved.

Yet, it is on stage where *Blithe Spirit* has truly thrived. Over the years, some of the finest actors of our time have taken on the role of the eccentric Madame Arcati, including Penelope Keith, Stephanie Cole, Angela Lansbury and, most recently, Jennifer Saunders. Coward himself once stepped in to play Charles and John Gielgud took on the role during an early ENSA tour. The play has been revived countless times around the world, proving its enduring charm and brilliance.

In 2004, Charles Spencer wrote in *The Daily Telegraph*: “With *Hay Fever* and *Private Lives*, *Blithe Spirit* is one of Coward's three indisputable comic masterpieces. Its irreverent treatment of mortality gives the piece an irresistible energy.”

What is truly remarkable about *Blithe Spirit* is that it was written during one of the darkest periods of the Second World War, when loss and grief were rampant. And yet, here was a play that dared to make light of death itself. It could only have been born from such times, and the laughter it inspired remains just as infectious today. It has been an absolute joy to bring it to life.

Francis Lloyd and Francesca McNally

BLITHE SPIRIT

by Noël Coward

First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: 27 September 2024

CAST

in order of appearance

Edith the maid	Sweta Gupta
Ruth Condomine	Kate Langston
Charles Condomine	Robert Seatter
Dr Bradman	Anthony Curran
Mrs Bradman	Samantha Moran
Madame Arcati	Annabelle Williams
Elvira	Claire Durrant

The action of the play passes in the living room of the Condomines' house in Kent.

ACT I: **Scene 1** – Before dinner on a summer evening
Scene 2 – After dinner

Interval – 15 mins

ACT II: **Scene 1** – The next morning
Scene 2 – Late the following afternoon
Scene 3 – Early evening, a few days later

Interval – 10 mins

ACT III: **Scene 1** – After dinner, a few days later
Scene 2 – Several hours later

The performance lasts approximately 2 hours and 35 minutes including two intervals

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	Francesca McInally
Assistant Director	Francis Lloyd
Set Designer	Alex Marker
Costume Designer	Nichola Thomas
Lighting Designer	Emma Hunt
Sound Designers	Russell Fleet, Maria Anna Foti Rossitto
Choreographer	Sara Page
Production Manager	Jane Arnold-Forster
Stage Managers	Oliver Ings, Guy Smith
Deputy Stage Managers	Gemma McDonald, Mel Pereira
Assistant Stage Manager	Dotti Lawson
Properties	Harriet Parsonage
Prompter	Bridgett Strevens
Wardrobe Assistants	Caroline Gibbon, Jane Higginson, Sue Peckitt, Jenny Richardson
Hair and Make-Up	Leah Digby
Lighting Operator	Sydney Stevens
Lighting Riggers	James Connor, Alasdair Graebner, Ben Hart, Lloyd Wallis
Set Constructors	Bob Bedford, Andy Kotowicz, Steve Souchon
Set Painters	Ian Black, Ashley Chang, Parm Choudhary, Gabrielle Herve, Monica Lomas, Jodie Sech, Nel Wilson
Get In Assistance	Mobolaji Babalola, Tom Barry, Michael Eppy, Ben Hart, Derek Stoddart
Photo/Videographer	Robert Vass

Thanks to: **Roger Beaumont, Dylan Fryer, Catherine Luff, Sophia Orzel, Paula Robinson, Vicky Saumarez, Oxfam – Ealing Broadway**

Biographies

Anthony Curran – Dr Bradman

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

Claire Durrant – Elvira

Claire joined The Questors as part of Student Group 65 in 2010, and Questors acting credits include: *4.48 Psychosis*, *Yerma*, *The 39 Steps*, *Arms and the Man*, *Dracula – Fangs of Destiny*, *Dick Whittington & His Cat*, *Woyzeck*, *Bull* and more. Other performance credits include *The Brink*, [citation needed], various zombie roles in film, TV and live events, the 2012 Olympic Ceremonies, modelling for national campaigns with Matalan and Sky, voiceover roles for TV and corporate videos, and all sorts of other weird and wonderful bits and pieces. When not tied into a production, Claire can generally be found wandering around some part of Asia.

Sweta Gupta – Edith

Sweta performed a variety of roles in several plays while learning the art in the renowned Asmita Theatre Group in New Delhi, India. She is best known here for playing Little Dorrit in *Little Dorrit* and Lydia Paxton in *Dragon's Teeth* at The Questors.

Kate Langston – Ruth Condomine

Kate joined The Questors in 2003. Most recently she has been seen as Amanda in *Private Lives*, Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* and HMQ in *Single Spies*.

Samantha Moran – Mrs Bradman

Sam is absolutely thrilled to be playing Violet Bradman. You may have seen her before at The Questors as the Wicked Queen in *Snow White*, Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Monica in *Larkin with Women* – and a wide variety of rehearsed readings or performing Ghost Stories.

Robert Seatter – Charles Condomine

Robert played Elyot Chase in Noël Coward's *Private Lives*, as well as leading roles in *Much Ado About Nothing* (twice), *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Dangerous Liaisons*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Translations* and *The Recruiting Officer*. He was also a founder member of the Bridewell Theatre, Theatre Agog and Pressgang companies.

Annabelle Williams – Madame Arcati

Annabelle has appeared in many plays at The Questors over the last 27 years, amongst them she has played Eliza Doolittle in *Pygmalion*, Nancy in

Oliver!, Mrs Lovett in *Sweeney Todd*, The Witch in *Into the Woods*, Charlotte in *A Little Night Music* and Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She also plays several musical instruments and enjoys playing and singing at occasional gigs.

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 an actor, sound designer, stage manager and director. His most recent sound designs were for the Caryl Churchill double bill, *The Gut Girls*, *Dragon's Teeth*, *Sara Sampson* and *Julius Caesar*. He most recently directed *The Physicists*.

Maria Anna Foti Rossitto – Sound Designer

Born and raised in Italy, Maria Anna began her creative journey with a deep-rooted passion for sound, cinema, and performing arts. After moving to Edinburgh to pursue a degree in sound design, she relocated to London and joined The Questors last year. Her first role as a sound operator was for *Sara Sampson*, and now she's stepping into her first show as a co-sound designer for *Blithe Spirit*.

Emma Hunt – Lighting Designer

Emma is excited to begin her third season as a member of The Questors with her first lighting design for the Playhouse, having previously designed *Low Level Panic* in the Studio in 2023. In the interim, she's taken on a number of other roles here, including most recently as Lighting Programmer & Operator for *Single Spies* and *Neville's Island/Sheila's Island*. Previous lighting design credits include: *The Lightning Thief* (French Woods Festival), *Legally Blonde* (Edinburgh University Savoy Opera Group) and *Three Sisters* (Edinburgh University Theatre Company).

Francis Lloyd – Assistant Director

Francis has been an active member of The Questors for nearly 30 years. Plays directed include *After the Dance*, *Charley's Aunt*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Engaged*, *Otherwise Engaged*, and new works by Brian Abbott, Richard Gallagher and Christopher Reid (*Six Bad Poets*). Last Christmas he directed *The White Carnation* by R C Sherrif. He has also acted in a number of plays, including *Private Lives* and, most recently, *Single Spies* in which he played Sir Anthony Blunt.

Alex Marker – Set Designer

Alex trained as a designer at Wimbledon School of Art. He has designed over 50 productions for The Questors (most recently *Tom Jones*, *Julius Caesar*, *Whispers in the Wings*, *Sara Sampson*, *The White Carnation* and *Treasure Island*) and many more for professional theatres and companies around the country. He is currently the Artistic Director of The Questors and Director of Questors Youth Theatre.

Francesca McNally – Director

For The Questors, Francesca has directed: *Private Lives*, *Rabbit Hole*, *Love and Money*, *Burning Bird* and *Find Me*. Elsewhere: *Breathing Corpses*, *A Vampire Story* (The Tabard Theatre), *You Can't Kill the Spirit* (The Playground Theatre), *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo & Juliet* (Guildford Shakespeare Company School's Tour), *One Million Lovely Letters* (Richmond Theatre), *The Shakespeare Solitaire*, *All That Glisters* (GSC Online). Co/Assistant Director: *King John*, *Two Noble Kinsmen* (Guildford Shakespeare Company), *The Nightingale and the Rose* (Baron's Court/Landor Space).

Sara Page – Choreographer

Sara is a choreographer, pianist, singer-songwriter and teacher. She has choreographed many shows at The Questors, directed once and was previously famed for being cast as a child in productions such as *How to Spot an Alien* and *The Crucible* despite being 24+ years old at the time.

Nichola Thomas – Costume Designer

Nichola has worked on various shows over the last 20 years at The Questors, including productions such as *Shadowlands*, *Burnt by the Sun*, *Endgame*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Single Spies*. She has a particular interest in costuming shows for the period from 1920 to 1960.

The Questors
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T&Cs: Includes any main dish from our A La Carte Menu; excludes Brunch menu.
Price is determined by the dish of higher value/cost.

You must present Questors Theatre ticket or ticket confirmation email to redeem.

Offer valid once per person per ticket/show. For Dining In only.

Must be redeemed within 1 week of your booked performance.

Offer available Monday - Friday from 12PM and Saturday - Sunday from 3PM.

Not available in conjunction with other promotions, Happy Hour & Lunch Set Menu.

NEXT AT THE QUESTORS

THE PILLOWMAN

by Martin McDonagh

11 – 19 October 2024

The Studio

In a shadowy totalitarian state, a writer is arrested and interrogated following a spate of gruesome child killings. His connection to the murders? They closely resemble the plots of his disturbing short stories. Are these copycat crimes or is something more sinister at play? And what drives him to craft such dark tales? This wickedly funny, twisted masterpiece explores the blurry line between truth and fiction, and forces us to ask the question – how much power do stories have?

WHITE RABBIT RED RABBIT

by Nassim Soleimanpour

29 October – 2 November 2024

The Studio

Get ready for a journey of discovery that will never be repeated. Join a new performer every night as they step on stage, remove a script from a sealed envelope and begin a solo show they have never seen or read before. Who will you see perform it for the first and only time? Barred from leaving Iran, *White Rabbit Red Rabbit* was created by award-winning playwright Nassim Soleimanpour to have his voice heard around the world.