

Join Us

If you would like to be involved in the world of theatre, why not join us as a Member.

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 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):
an adult ticket at a 50% discount for the Season Pass holder
£2 off ANY number of additional adult or concession tickets
up to FOUR child tickets at 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

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SARA SAMPSON

BY GOTTHOLD LESSING
New translation by David Emmet

The
Studio

Feb
16 - 24



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 Monday to Saturday (9:30 – 6:00), and 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 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 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.



SARA SAMPSON

by Gotthold Lessing,
translated by David Emmet

The Studio

16 – 24 February 2024

GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING (1729-1781)

Lessing was the son of a Lutheran minister, and was initially brought up to follow in his father's footsteps, given a religious education at school, learning Latin, Greek and Hebrew, before enrolling at Leipzig University, where he studied theology, medicine, philosophy and philology. So he was something of a polymath, but in the end it was his love of art, literature, poetry and above all theatre which drove the rest of his career.

He gained a reputation as a serious critic and theorist of art and drama, taking a master's degree in Wittenberg, then working in Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland) publishing his great critical work *Laocoön, or the Limitations of Poetry*. He also wrote a lot about art in general and was the first writer to explicitly put forward the concept of "art for art's sake".

Having written a few plays, he was invited to join Germany's first national theatre company, the Hamburg National Theatre, and he worked there for three years as the theatre's critic of plays and acting. He was the very first "dramaturg", and indeed it was Lessing who invented that word. He wrote: "The great discernment of the drama critic lies in his ability to distinguish, whenever he feels pleasure or displeasure, to what extent that feeling should be credited to the writer or to the actor". A skill sometimes sadly lacking in some of our modern theatre critics.

As a playwright he is known for four major works: *Miss Sara Sampson* (to give it its full title) in 1755, *Minna von Barnhelm* in 1767, *Emilia Galotti* in 1772 and *Nathan the Wise* in 1779. Of these only *Minna von Barnhelm* is a comedy; it's possible that it was an influence on Oliver Goldsmith who wrote *She Stoops to Conquer*, with which it has some similarities, only eight years later.

In spite of his theological background, Lessing was somewhat ambiguous when it came to religious belief. He believed in free will; he explicitly attacked the fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible; he never openly affirmed or denied a belief in God; he questioned at all times. This came out very clearly in *Nathan the Wise*. And there are many religious references in *Sara Sampson*. Sara is continuously torn between her love for Mellefont and her faith in God.

Towards the end of his life, Lessing gained many enemies because of his views on art and religion, and they persuaded the authorities to subject his works to censorship. He died in poverty at the age of 53.

His dramatic theories

Lessing had started writing plays at the age of 19, initially comedies. He was influenced by the works of Plautus and Terence and hoped he might become the German Molière. But by the time he wrote *Sara Sampson* at the age of 26, he had moved on.

For more than 100 years German drama had followed the classical French model, epitomised by Racine and Corneille, and based on Aristotle's *Poetics*. He believed that this dramatic tradition had distorted the purity of the form by introducing too many rules and stifling it. He also thought it stifled German genius, and urged German playwrights to follow the English tradition and take Shakespeare as their model.

So he was one of the initiators of the bourgeois tragedy – "bürgerliches Trauerspiel". Aristotle had set out the theory that tragic heroes should always be men of noble rank, and this idea had prevailed for centuries, the justification being that only members of the higher classes were capable of suffering harm serious enough to deserve dramatic re-enactment.

Lessing rejected this and brought the bourgeois tragedy into prominence by writing *Sara Sampson*, which marked a major change in direction in German drama. It influenced the great writers of the *Sturm und Drang* era: Schiller and Goethe, who were writing about 50 years after him.

Sara Sampson

The desire to break the mould and to adopt the English model clearly influenced his choices in writing this seminal play. It can't be incidental that he set the story in England rather than Germany. His addition of *Miss* to the heroine's name marks the bourgeois setting. It's also written in prose rather than alexandrines or iambic pentameters. While we might think that Sara as the daughter of a knight or baronet is hardly middle class, she is certainly not upper class, and there are no kings or princes in the story.

The names that Lessing gives to his characters are also stolen from English Restoration works, especially those of Congreve. Sir Sampson comes from *Love for Love*; Mellefont from *The Double Dealer*; and Marwood, Waitwell and Betty from *The Way of the World*.

But the play does conform approximately to Aristotle's three unities – of time, place and action. *Sara Sampson* takes place over the course of a single day; it's mostly set in an inn (though in different rooms, and in Act 2, a different inn); and there is no subplot.

But there is much ambiguity in the play when it comes to character interpretation. Is Sara bold and resolute or naïve? Has Mellefont truly reformed himself and rejected his past life? Does he truly love Sara, or is he just her seducer? Would he really have married her? Does he still love Marwood? Is Marwood a wronged woman or a strumpet? Is she driven by love or hate? Is she a good mother? Is the story she tells of her relationship with Mellefont entirely true? We are left to make up our own minds on all these questions.

The translation

I have remained as faithful to the original as I felt able to be. But the German text contains a great deal of heightened language that would be quite impossible for the modern audience to take, and I have either toned it down, or in some places cut it. I have also got rid of some excessive religiosity. However, I hope that I have retained a period feel, while making the language speakable and natural.

This is the third German play that I have translated and directed at The Questors. The others were Goethe's *Urfaust* in 1978 and Schiller's *Mary Stuart* in 2013. So *Sara Sampson* completes a trilogy of classic plays by the three most important playwrights of that era.

David Emmet, Director

SARA SAMPSON

by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, translated by David Emmet

First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: 16 February 2024

CAST

in order of appearance

Sir William Sampson, Sara's father	Robert Staines
Waitwell, his old servant	David Sellar
Landlord of the inn	Alex Marker
Mellefont, Sara's lover	Pip Nixon
Norton, his manservant	Robert Wixey
Betty, Sara's maid	Ella Gittens
Sara Sampson, Sir William's daughter	Logan Crouch
Marwood, Mellefont's former mistress	Tamara Gordon Laryea
Hannah, her maid	Despina Sellar
Belford, a servant at Marwood's inn	D'Andre George
Arabella, Marwood's daughter	Zoë Kemp

Setting	A town near Dover
Scene 1	The hall of an inn
Scene 2	Mellefont's room in the inn
Scene 3	Marwood's room in a nearby inn
Scene 4	Sir William's room in the inn
Scene 5	Sara's room in the inn
Scene 6	Sir William's room
Scene 7	Mellefont's room
Scene 8	Sara's room

Running time about 2 hours 45 minutes,
including a 15 minute interval during scene 5

PRODUCTION

Director	David Emmet
Set Designer	Alex Marker
Costume Designer	Carla Evans
Lighting Designer	Andrew Whadcoat
Sound Designer	Russell Fleet
Stage Manager	Jane Casey
Relief Stage Manager	Harriet Parsonage
Deputy Stage Manager	Gemma McDonald
Assistant Stage Manager	D'Andre George
Rehearsal Prompter and ASM	Sue Kendrick
Properties	David Emmet
Costume Makers	Helen Cooper, Caroline Gibbon, Jane Higginson, Karen Latimer
Wardrobe Assistants	Helen Karasiewicz, Jenny Richardson
Wigs and Hair	Pauline Hudson and the students of West Thames College
Lighting and Sound Operators	MariaAnna Foti Rossitto, Emmanuel Hardy
Lighting Rigger	Terry Mummery
Set Constructors	Monica Lomas, Derek Stoddart
Set Painter	Ian Black
Get-In Assistance	Bernie Brady
Photographer	Katarzyna Kryńsk

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

Logan Crouch – Sara

Logan is 20 years old but has had a passion for acting ever since a much younger age, and has ambitions to pursue it as a career. She did a course at LAMDA including *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams. She joined Student Group 75 in September 2021 and graduated last summer after playing Kate in *The Gut Girls* and Christopher in *On the Razzle*.

D'Andre George – Belford

D'Andre is currently in the 1st Year Student Group, Group 77, having auditioned in September 2023. D'Andre is a skilled barista and excited to be involved in his first Questors production.

Ella Gittens – Betty

Ella is from Ireland, where she was in Kilkenny Youth Theatre and then gained a foundation diploma at the Lir Academy. She moved to London last autumn to pursue a professional career, and joined The Questors in October. This is her first production here, but she has appeared in numerous short films and stage productions and is currently training at Identity School of Acting.

Zoë Kemp – Arabella

Zoë has been a member of Questors Youth Theatre for seven years and is currently in Year 12. This is her fifth appearance on the Questors stage, following *Bugsy Malone*, *Peer Gynt*, *Emil and the Detectives* and *The Light Burns Blue*. She is passionate about environmental issues and hopes to become an environmental engineer.

Tamara Gordon Laryea - Marwood

Tamara first joined The Questors in 2001 as part of the Youth Theatre and later joined Student Group 65. Following her degree in Drama with English, she went on to train professionally at Michael Howard Studios New York. On her return to England, she became a Questors Acting member and appeared in *Don't Dress for Dinner*, *Apologia* and most recently *The Rehearsal*. Tamara has recently co-written her first short film and is a current Trustee on The Questors Board.

Alex Marker – Landlord and Set Designer

Alex made his stage debut at the Questors in 1989 in *The Penny Showman*. More recent productions as an actor include: *Treasure Island*, *King Arthur and the Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Trained as a designer at Wimbledon School of Art, he has designed over 50 productions for The Questors and many more for professional theatres and companies round the country. He is currently the Artistic Director of The Questors.

Pip Nixon – Mellefont

Pip did his MA in European Theatre at Sheffield 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 second appearance at The Questors, following Don John in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

David Sellar – Waitwell

David's first appearance at The Questors was in *Sleepers in the Field* in 2018, followed by John Rutherford in *Rutherford and Son*, two roles in *King Charles III*, Bob Price in *Things I Know to be True*, *The Remarkable Theatrical Adventures of Peregrine Proteus* and most recently *The Contingency Plan*. Productions with previous companies include *What the Butler Saw*, *The Birthday Party*, *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*, *Chicago*, *Guys and Dolls* and *A Little Night Music*.

Despina Sellar – Hannah

Despina's first appearance at The Questors was in Peter Whelan's *Sleepers in the Field* in 2018, then as Ann Rutherford in *Rutherford and Son*, Fran Price in *Things I Know to be True*, *The Remarkable Theatrical Adventures of Peregrine Proteus* and most recently *The Contingency Plan*. Roles with previous companies include Mrs Manningham in *Gaslight*, Maggie in *Outside Edge*, Amanda in *Private Lives* and Beatrice in *A View from the Bridge*. Directing credits include *Shirley Valentine*, *Stones in His Pockets*, *Moonlight and Magnolias* and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

Robert Staines – Sir William

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*, *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Robert Wixey – Norton

This will be Robert's fifth production with The Questors since joining in 2008. He has appeared in *Dinner* and *Madam Bovary: Breakfast with Emma*. Then after a gap, his more recent performances have been as Peter in Alexi Kaye Campbell's *Apologia* and as Gooper in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

David Emmet – Director

David trained as an actor in Student Group 28, but is now known more as a director. *Sara Sampson* his 62nd main production. His most recent productions were *The Contingency Plan*, *Whipping It Up*, *Things I Know to be True*, *Nell Gwynn*, *Daisy Pulls It Off*, *Scarborough* and *Don't Dress for Dinner*. In 1978, his first production was his own translation of Goethe's *Urfaust*, and in 2013 he translated and directed Schiller's *Mary Stuart*, so *Sara Sampson* is his third credit as a translator. David is also Director of Studies for the Student Group and teaches acting in the Foundation Year.

Carla Evans – Costume Designer

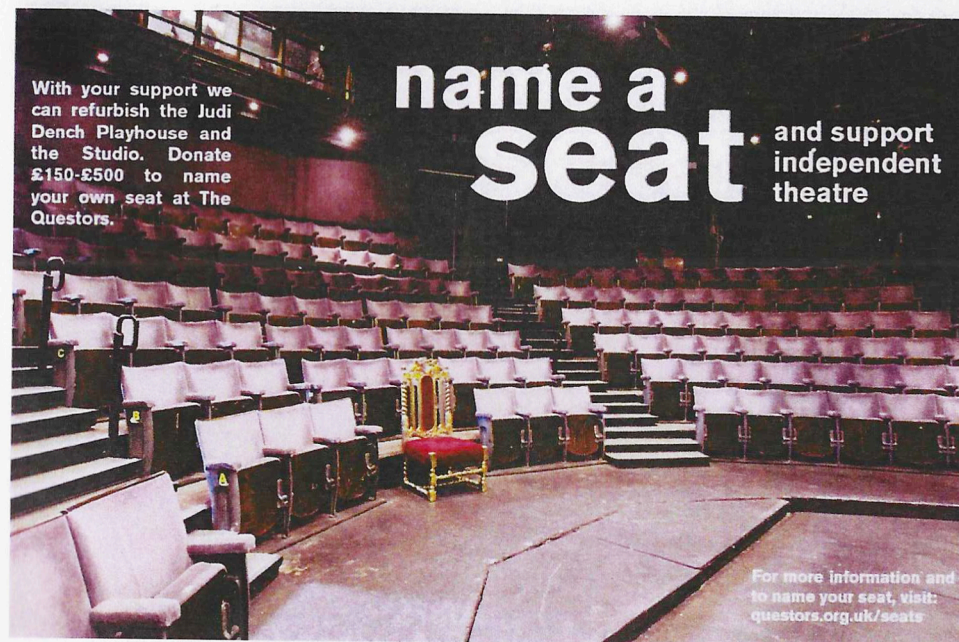
Carla joined The Questors in 2013 as an ASM on David's production of *Mary Stuart*. She has since worked on over 40 productions as a costume maker, set designer, photographer and poster illustrator. Her most recent designs include the set for *How to Spot an Alien* and costumes for *Arcadia*, *A Doll's House*, *King Arthur* and *the Twelfth Knight* and *Treasure Island*.

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* and *Dragon's Teeth*. He has just finished directing *The Physicists*.

Andrew Whadcoat – Lighting Designer

Andrew joined the lighting team in 2013 and enjoys lighting shows in the Studio and Playhouse and training new members. Recent lighting designs include *The Ghost Train*, *Peregrine Proteus*, *Little Dorrit*, the Caryl Churchill double bill, *A Doll's House*, *Murder on the Nile*, *The Herd*, *Dragon's Teeth*, *The Rehearsal* and *The White Carnation*.



Next at The Questors

WHISPERS IN THE WINGS

by Rory Hobson and James Rushbrooke

27 February – 2 March 2024

The Judi Dench Playhouse

To celebrate 70 years of the Questors Youth Theatre, we have commissioned a brand new play from Rory Hobson and James Rushbrooke, the writer of *Treasure Island* and *King Arthur and the Twelfth Knight*.

On opening night in 1954, disaster strikes moments before curtain up. With the star indisposed, will the show go on? And will they work out whodunit?

FIND ME

by Olwen Wymark

22 – 30 March 2024

The Studio

The Student Group presents a play based on a true story. It's 1976 and Verity Taylor is a troubled young woman. Her father thinks she is just being a typical child but her mother knows that Verity's condition is serious. As her parents desperately try to support her, they soon realise they cannot cope – without help.

A thoughtful and sensitive look at how problematic mental health is perceived by practitioners, mental health professionals and the wider world.