

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

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

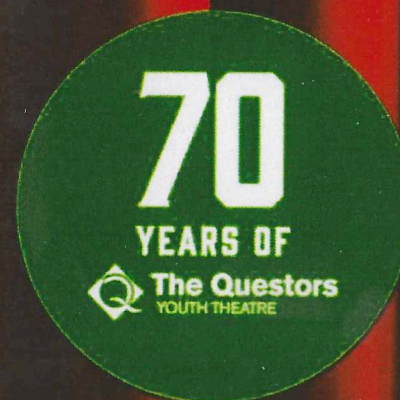
Programme: Nigel Bamford  
Theatre Office: 020 8567 0011  
Box Office: 020 8567 5184  
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 The Questors  
YOUTH THEATRE

27 FEB - 2 MAR

# WHISPERS IN THE WINGS

BY JAMES RUSHBROOKE & RORY HOBSON



JUDI DENCH PLAYHOUSE

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



## WHISPERS IN THE WINGS

by James Rushbrooke and Rory Hobson

The Judi Dench Playhouse

27 February – 2 March 2024

# WHISPERS IN THE WINGS

According to The Questors' records, this is the first play that has been written specifically for QYT in eighteen years. Nobody performing in tonight's show was alive the last time a creative team was mad enough to attempt a devised piece of work, so why attempt it now? There are plenty of sensible reasons of course: we have an overlapping skillset as drama teachers, specialisms in both playwriting and directing, one of us has extensive knowledge of QYT from childhood and both of us have been paid for making things up on the spot.

In reality though, we just wanted to see what would happen.

Many of us will remember playing some variation of 'wink murder' from our childhood and most of us have told a ghost story or two in our time. This was the genesis of our production: a nonsense Cluedo plot wrapped in a ghost story. We listed the characters, then auditioned our cast without the usual scripts. We cast on the basis of collaborative abilities and tendency to play creatively whilst under pressure.

Then the poster went out, people started buying tickets and we realised we'd need a story or at least some semblance of a plot. Luckily, we'd already made that the cast's problem.

Devising a full-length play in the room with a cast of forty young people is exhilarating and daunting in equal measure. On the one hand, whittling down hundreds of ideas to form an enjoyable piece of theatre is no easy feat. On the other, that same influx of ideas is a testament to the enthusiasm in the room, and proof the imaginations of young people often surpass those of the adults around them. Devising a work from scratch allows the director and writer to shirk their responsibilities until well into the rehearsal process. That's exactly what we did. This piece and many of the ideas you'll see were both written and directed by the cast with the creative team of adults simply acting as a conduit to give the best ideas form.

The early stages of this process involved discussions with the three components of our cast. It was agreed that our 'Fragments', an ensemble of around 25 actors, would world-build. This meant using movement, voice, instruments and props to generate dynamic settings and create the atmosphere. We went backstage at The Questors, hoovered up items that were scattered about, threw this theatrical detritus into the space and told our Fragments to build worlds with them. We gave our leading chorus three bits of curtain and told them to make a ghost... We were delighted when they did exactly this and went off to find a puppetry expert to guide them. We found a piano player and a violin player and incorporated these into the

production, then some ballet showed up one day during rehearsal and so we threw that in too. Much of the initial work with the Fragments was done through scaffolded learning; things we do during games and warm-ups often magically show up in the production a few sessions later.

It's almost like we have a plan. Almost. Whodunnit? The kids did it.

Over the first month a script was written with oversight, scrutiny and input from the cast – many of the plot twists and characters developed through conversation and consultation. We worked on creating characters with our 'Cluedo cast' and building suspense with our 'Ghost Story' actors. Playwriting by democracy with a cast invested in telling a collective story doesn't feel like work at all.

Whilst we've been busy, the set has been built, the lighting design is underway, costumes and props are being sourced and the soundscape is being generated. We are excited about where this production is headed and the creative directions it can still be pulled in. At the time of writing these notes, we're on the cusp of putting all these separate elements into the space and seeing if it'll work.

We're quietly confident. And if it doesn't work the way we want it to – then at least we had fun (and it's all the children's fault).

**Rory Hobson and James Rushbrooke**

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## THE CURTAIN RAISERS

To commemorate the 70th Anniversary of Questors Youth Theatre, before each performance we are proud to present a devised piece from our younger members celebrating the previous decades in which QYT has been active.

YEAR 6 – The 1950s

YEAR 5 – The 1960s

YEAR 4 – The 1970s

YEAR 3 – The 1980s

YEAR 2 – The 1990s

YEAR 1 – The 2000s

## 70 Years of Questors Youth Theatre

Seventy seems a funny age for a 'youth' theatre but that's how long we have run groups for young people interested in drama. Initially, the first group came about because there were a number of young people interested in joining our student group (established in 1946) who were not yet old enough to participate. So in 1954 the first 'Young Questors' group was established by theatre administrator Rena Rice who continued to run groups until at least the late 1960s.

For the first few decades the classes functioned as an end in themselves, although many group members appeared in Questors productions when the need arose. In the early years the youth theatre would participate in drama competitions and events such as The Middlesex Festival of Youth Theatre where they performed a piece called *The Well and the Moon* at City Temple Hall, Holborn in 1962 (see picture right).



The yearly youth showcases (or look-ins), presenting original work by a group, were certainly in operation by the late 1960s (see picture below) although the primary ages weren't included in these performances until much later. By the 1980s the established pattern of secondary age groups meeting on week-day evenings and primary age classes being run on Saturday mornings was firmly established, although the various age groups ran under a series of different titles (Drama Playgroups, Junior Drama Workshops, Stage 3). One feature of the 1980s was the Quimps. These were twenty-four hour long improvisation marathons performed by young members as fund raising activities for the theatre. Until the turn of the millennium the groups were taught by volunteers and participation in a class in the late



1980s would cost you 50p (these all had to be collected at the beginning of an hour long class!). Over this period, David Emmet (who from 1975 taught groups for a staggering 33 years) co-ordinated youth theatre activities aided by various people including Ian Briggs.

In 1991 *Gregory's Girl* (pictured below) was the first QYT production to be staged (directed by playwright Peter Whelan at the suggestion of his daughter Megan who was a group member). The late 1990s saw a flurry of youth activity under Michael Dineen and Claire Hocter both in terms of productions involving young people and programmed for them. The musical *Godspell* was the first youth production to be staged in The Playhouse, establishing a precedent which gradually evolved into the annual productions that we see today.



By the year 2000 finding volunteer leaders who could commit to a group for a year had proved increasingly difficult and we had a waiting list backlog of over 250 people wanting to join. At this point Alice Pennicott (QYT administrator) and I took the decision to 'professionalise' the youth theatre and unite all the various strands under the banner The Questors Youth Theatre. Since then we have not looked back. Over the last 24 years we have become one of the largest youth theatres in Britain, with a peak attendance of just over 500 before the pandemic. Over this period we have staged many productions, events and site-specific performances. We have nurtured the very earliest versions of what became the hit West End production of *The Play That Goes Wrong*, toured to Austria, produced a winning entry for the Young Magician of the Year competition and even won a European languages award for our bilingual production, *Cogner Au Plafond* (written by Questors member Wanda Duszynska).

Some of the many QYT members who have gone on to make their mark in the arts include: Michael Rosen (children's author and current Questors Vice-President), Declan Donnelan (award winning stage director and author), Konnie Huq (the longest serving female Blue Peter presenter), Phoebe Fox (actor, Olivier Award nominee) and Henry Lewis (actor, writer, Olivier Award winner, creator of *The Play That Goes Wrong*). Even Ace, Doctor Who's 1987 companion, was based on QYT students by *Doctor Who* writer, Ian Briggs.

When I attended my first drama class here in September 1988 I couldn't have conceived that I'd still be connected to the organisation 35 years later. It only remains for me to thank all those who have contributed to QYT and its activities in all ways large and small over the decades.

A full list of QYT productions is too long to include here, but can be found in the Questors Archive at <http://archive.questors.org.uk/lists/Youth.html>.

**Alex Marker – Director QYT**

QUESTORS YOUTH THEATRE PRESENTS

# WHISPERS IN THE WINGS

by James Rushbrooke and Rory Hobson

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

## CAST

### 2024

**Sienna Barry, Cerys Sandford,  
Kyla Shaw, Rufus Peaty**

### 1954

Gerald Moose	<b>Joel Watson</b>
Blanche Weiss	<b>Marianne Deutsch-Bruce</b>
Gareth Garton	<b>Wilfie Goodliffe</b>
Peggy Paycock	<b>Hannah Goldsworthy</b>
Monty Mayhew	<b>Luke Mitchell</b>
Suzie Schwartz	<b>Niamh Brennan</b>
Scarlet Swann	<b>Kenza Hurley</b>
Pete Plumtree	<b>Nikhil Ghai</b>
Detective Scott Lanyard	<b>Edward Gamazeliuc</b>

## The Fragments

<b>Rory Andrews</b>	<b>Madeleine Cottrell-Kirby</b>	<b>Alexandra Kern</b>
<b>Thomas Ayres</b>	<b>Maya Barbe</b>	<b>Lottie Brown</b>
<b>Molly Cowley</b>	<b>Issy Duffy</b>	<b>Mary Feehan</b>
<b>Lilia Folson</b>	<b>Stella Gourgaud-Jacob</b>	<b>William Harmer</b>
<b>Bethan Hunter</b>	<b>Ariya Jolly</b>	<b>Cleo Kumar</b>
<b>Edie Kumar</b>	<b>Isabella Matsunaga</b>	<b>Felix McGinnity</b>
<b>Lottie McManus</b>	<b>Abigail Penn</b>	<b>Georgia Rambridge</b>
<b>Dora Ratkovic</b>	<b>Isobel Spurling</b>	<b>Zoe Spurling</b>
<b>Ileana Steijger-Arocha</b>		<b>Annabelle Tan</b>

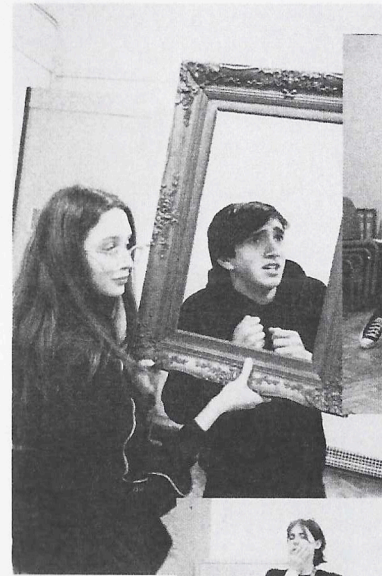
The performance lasts approximately 2 hours and 15 mins  
including a 20-minute interval

## PRODUCTION

Director	<b>Rory Hobson</b>
Writer	<b>James Rushbrooke</b>
Assistant Directors	<b>Grace Connett, Emily Hawley, Danny Hayes</b>
Set Designer	<b>Alex Marker</b>
Costume Designers	<b>Anne Gilmour, Jane Higginson, Jenny Richardson</b>
Lighting Designer	<b>John Green</b>
Sound Designer	<b>Emerson Bramwell</b>
Puppet Designer	<b>Ella Jackson</b>
Stage Manager	<b>Bernie Brady</b>
Deputy Stage Manager	<b>Emma Hunt</b>
Properties	<b>Sue Collins</b>
Movement Consultant	<b>Sara Page</b>
Puppet Electronics	<b>Nigel Worsley</b>
Lighting Assistant	<b>Alasdair Graebner</b>
Lighting Operator	<b>Colette Green</b>
Lighting Riggers	<b>Carroll Konopacki, Terry Mummery</b>
Set Construction / Get In	<b>Roger Brace, Ignatius Crean, Nikhil Ghai, Stephen Souchon, Derek Stoddart, Doug Willis</b>
Photographer	<b>Jamie Gould</b>
QYT Coordinator	<b>Michelle Spencer</b>
Thanks to	<b>James Connor, Helen Cooper, Russell Fleet, Quinn Goodliffe, and all the chaperones and parents</b>

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

# REHEARSAL PICTURES



# Biographies

## **Bernie Brady – Stage Manager**

Bernie has been at The Questors for over 20 years, and this is the third Youth Theatre show he has stage managed; they have all been great experiences. He has also just done *QWho* before this show and has worked on *The Rehearsal* this season.

## **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*, *A Doll's House*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Arcadia*, *Albion* and *The Physicists*.

## **Sue Collins – Properties**

During the many years Sue has been a member of The Questors, she has enjoyed numerous behind the scenes roles including that of Stage Manager, DSM, props and most recently set realisation. This is the first time she has been involved in a QYT production and she is blown away by the talent and dedication shown by the cast of young actors, who helped shape this terrific show.

## **Grace Connett – Assistant Director**

Grace has been a member of QYT for 10 years and is delighted to be returning as an Assistant Director after playing Holly Trelawney in *Treasure Island* and Martha in *King Arthur and the Twelfth Knight*. Grace has performed in two other pantos as part of the QYT ensemble and looks forward to this new challenge before going to university next year.

## **Anne Gilmour – Costume Designer**

Anne is a longstanding member of The Questors. It's over 40 years since she first tentatively produced a hat for *Bodies* and it remains the only hat she has ever had to make. Her most recent shows as designer or maker include *Neville's* and *Sheila's Island*, *The Light Burns Blue*, *The Ealing Club*, *Dead Boy Café*, *Whipping It Up*, *Dear Brutus*, *The Dog & the Scarf*, *Di and Viv and Rose*, *Rosmersholm*, *Taking Sides*, *Bird on the Wire*, *Red Peppers*, *The Village Bike* and *Rhinoceros*. She is The Questors' LTG (Little Theatre Guild) Representative and is a member of the PlayBack Reminiscence team.

## **John Green – Lighting Designer**

John has had a lifelong interest in the use of light to sculpt a space, set a mood and direct the eye. In his twelve years as a member of The Questors, he has taken on a number of show lighting roles. Shows as Lighting Designer in the last few years include *Dead Boy Café*, *Love Play*, *How to Spot an Alien*, *Hairspray* and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

## **Emily Hawley – Assistant Director**

Emily was a member of Student Group 75, where she appeared in *The Gut Girls* and *On the Razzle*. She then went on to play Lucile in *The Rehearsal* and was most recently involved in *QWho*. She is also a keen writer and is thrilled to be assisting a great team in the Youth Theatre.

## **Danny Hayes – Assistant Director**

Danny has been a QYT member from a young age and is currently studying A-Levels. He has previously been in productions such *Hairspray* and *The Light Burns Blue*. Danny has an interest in directing for both stage and film and makes short films in his spare time.

## **Jane Higginson – Costume Designer**

Jane has been working in the Questors wardrobe for two years and really enjoys being part of the wardrobe team. This is her first foray into costume design.

## **Rory Hobson – Director**

A former member of Questors Youth Theatre and Student Group 71, this is Rory's second venture into directing after *King Arthur and the Twelfth Knight*. Rory trained with Artists Theatre School and last Christmas he appeared as Ramsbottom in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* at Dorking Halls.

## **Emma Hunt – Deputy Stage Manager**

Although she only joined The Questors 13 months ago, *Whispers in the Wings* is Emma's fifth Questors show! After having had such a fantastic time as part of the team on the recent pantomime, Emma is thrilled to be working with QYT once again. Previous stage management credits at The Questors include *Treasure Island* and *Murder on the Nile*, as well as *The Pirates of Penzance* at the Pleasance Theatre, Edinburgh.

## **Ella Jackson – Puppet Designer**

Ella last made puppets for 2022's panto *King Arthur and the Twelfth Knight* and is back this year with something even more spectre-cular! Creating the show's ghostly apparition was an exciting challenge and she hopes it will leave audiences in good spirits. Previous Questors productions include *Treasure Island* (Scenic Painter) and *The Light Burns Blue* (ASM / Props).



**Alex Marker – Set Designer**

Alex joined Questors Youth Theatre in 1988 and performed in the very first QYT production *Gregory's Girl* in 1991. Over the last 34 years he has worked on every QYT production (bar three). He started to teach for QYT in 1997 becoming its director in 2000. Additionally he is now the Artistic Director of The Questors Theatre.

**Sara Page – Movement Consultant**

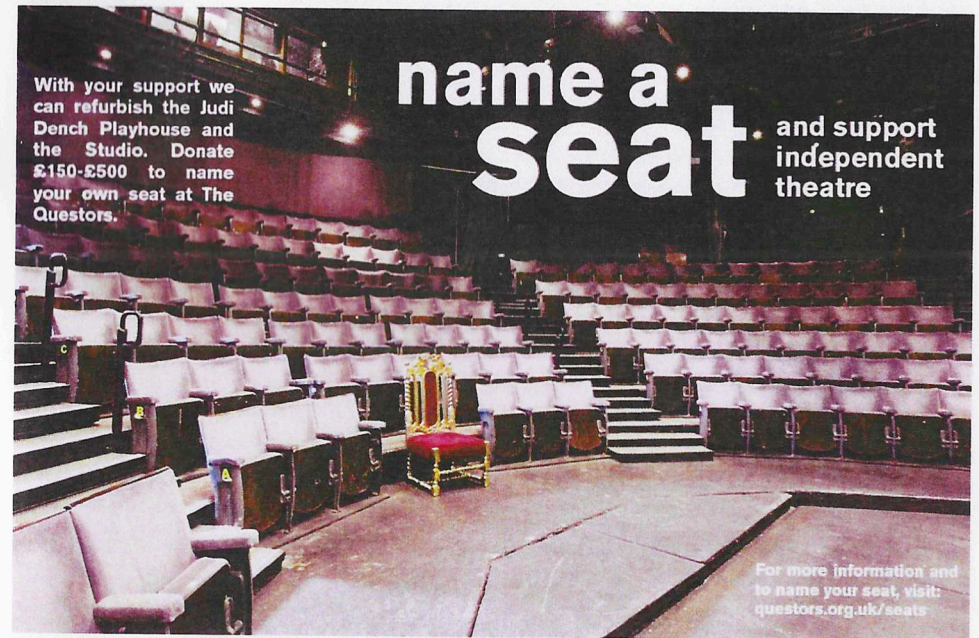
Sara is a choreographer, pianist, singer-songwriter and teacher. She has choreographed many shows at The Questors, directed once and was previously famed for being cast as a child in productions such as *How to Spot an Alien* and *The Crucible* despite being 24+ years old at the time.

**Jenny Richardson – Costume Designer**

After many years working in stage management, props and set design, Jenny enjoyed a change of direction to costume design, recently for *You Can't Take It With You*, *The Herd*, *The Contingency Plan*, *Murder on the Nile*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Little Dorrit*, *Peregrine Proteus* and *Hangmen*. Jenny is also frequently in demand as an upholsterer.

**James Rushbrooke – Writer**

James is a playwright and screenwriter who joined The Questors in 2021. He is the author of the last two Questors pantomimes, *King Arthur and the Twelfth Knight* and *Treasure Island*. When not pitching TV scripts, James can be found pretending to work in Ealing Hospital.



# Next at The Questors

**FIND ME**

**by Olwen Wymark**  
15 – 23 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.

**SINGLE SPIES**

**by Alan Bennett**  
22 – 30 March 2024

**The Judi Dench Playhouse**

A brace of brilliant plays that show Alan Bennett at his finest.

**An Englishman Abroad**

Guy Burgess, a once charismatic Cambridge spy, has defected to Russia. He invites the actress, Coral Browne, to his chaotic Moscow flat to flirt, reminisce and ask a favour.

**A Question of Attribution**

A decade later, spy Sir Anthony Blunt is Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures when he unexpectedly faces an inquisition from Her Majesty, apparently about art...or is it really about something else?