

questotopics

and a Merry Christmas to you all

QUESTORS THEATRE MATTOCK LANE W5 5BQ 5670011 Box Office 567 5184

No.87 DECEMBER 1973

Christmas Production

Christmas already, and we have a bumper show in 'The Ghost Train' to follow it. Michael Green introduces his production below. Do book early to ensure your seats. Elsewhere in this issue, Larry Irvin introduces Les Girls in 'Godot', and Roger de Toney sets the scene for our annual sell out—the A.G.M.

Happy Christmas all! ...Ed.

THE GHOST TRAIN

by Arnold Ridley

directed by Michael Green

This year's Christmas Show, *The Ghost Train*, is one of those plays that have almost become a classic within a lifetime. It has been more or less continuously performed, somewhere or other, ever since its West End premiere in 1925. It was the first repertory theatre show I ever saw, paying threepence in the 'gods' at the old Leicester Theatre Royal when I was a schoolboy, and it fascinated me so much that ever since I've wanted to be in it.

The play has been filmed twice, the first version starring Jack Hulbert and the second Arthur Askey, and its most famous line became a national catch-phrase—"...where do it come from? Where do it go?" People still use the phrase today without realising its origin.

An unusual aspect of *The Ghost Train* is that its fame lies in two things that happen *off-stage*. Firstly, its chief ghost

(there are more than one) isn't the shade of a human being at all. It's the ghost of a railway train. And secondly, it has become famous for the sheer drama and ingenuity of its stage effects, which involve trains stopping, departing and shrieking through the station. These were originally done live by teams of sweating stage-hands working to careful instructions in the script, and they reach their climax as the ghost train itself shrieks through the lonely station on its errand of death.

These live effects have traditionally become part of the play itself, contributing as they do, a sense of physical actuality that only live sound can give. So, in the Questors' production we intend to ignore the theatre's electronic equipment and revert to the methods of fifty years ago with a sounds team of more than a dozen bashing away like demented blacksmiths.

In fact, the whole evening will be in the style of the twenties and even the programme will be a reproduction of the first night programme at the St. Martin's. This means that music maestro



MICHAEL GREEN Directs



JOHN WILROURN plays Teddy

Eric Kirby will be denied his traditional musical accompaniment to the action, but he has other delights in store. And, of course, as *The Ghost Train*, although highly dramatic, isn't a hiss-boo melodrama of the Victorian style, there won't be any of the more robust audience participation.

Today, of course, we accept *The Ghost Train* on two levels. Firstly, as the great comedy-thriller it is. But we can also smile at some of the more absurd conventions of the Theatre of the Twenties with its brave little women, its good chaps and its utter bounders. We hope it will be enjoyed on both levels.

The author, Arnold Ridley, is perhaps better known today as that gentle character Godfrey in 'Dad's Army' on TV. I have deliberately underplayed that fact because *The Ghost Train* can stand by itself. It was world-famous long before TV was thought of and I hope, after seeing it, you will understand why.

MICHAEL GREEN

"That is the Question"-- Answered

As those who packed The Theatre on November 11th will know, the valiant panellists of the Royal Shakespeare Company thwarted The Questors unbroken run of success in the two companies' series of competitive engagements i.e. they beat us in the theatre quiz.

Bamber Gascoigne ran a very clean contest in such a fluid manner that his Chairmanship was an evening's entertainment on its own.

The evening began with the Challenge, presented by Martin Bowley for the Questors, being answered in strident and eloquent tones by Jeffrey Dench for The R.S.C.

The two teams came to battle. Bamber Gascoigne had evidently expressed some fears that the questions were perhaps too difficult, but no, both teams proved how ably they had been selected

by demonstrating their wide knowledge of theatre.

At the interval, after three quarters of an hour of competition, both teams were exactly level. But after this extraordinary half time score, The R.S.C. began to creep ahead (thus demonstrating how well they hold their interval drinks). But The Questors rallied, only to be beaten back by the better team. The final result, tumultuously applauded by the small but vocal band of R.S.C. supporters, was R.S.C.—575, The Questors—495. Everyone enjoyed a most interesting, exciting and, not least, educational evening.

For The Questors:

Martin Bowley Mary Hodlin
David Gower Bill McLaughlin

For The R.S.C.

Tony Church Clement McCallin
Jeffery Dench Janet Whiteside

Organiser—Frances Martin

Correspondence

To: The Editor, Questopics

Dear Sir,

May I enquire through the courtesy of your columns (having enquired in other places and received no reaction), why it is that so few actors and actresses at The Questors can be heard with any reasonable clarity?

I am no lover of Shakespeare—his involved plots—his archaic language and the generally fusty atmosphere, turn me right down to min. on the dial—but I did spend an enjoyable evening at *Cymbeline* with a pencil and paper writing down exactly what I heard. The references to 'respex' and 'Queeg' (how did the Caine Mutiny get in?) are easy: but what in heaven's name was 'you have done none wock - a -thort' (spoken into the beard)

or 'as small a drop of piglet as a red light' (an exit line — may have been important). However, the really obscure exchange was 'has he no fork?' 'You squeak him fart!'

An enjoyable evening as I said — but I am no theatrical egg-head. It is a pity that so much time, trouble and, yes, money should go into a production that the audience perhaps imperfectly hear. We really ought to make an effort to change for the better.

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE BENN

Sir,

May I correct an obvious error in the last *Questopics* where the extraordinary statement was made that *The Promise* was the

first play allowed out of Russia since Chekhov's.

One could quote many examples to disprove this statement — let one suffice: *Squaring the Circle* by Valentine Kataev, produced by the Questors in February 1942, a comedy that pokes a lot of fun at life under the Soviet regime.

Yours sincerely,

ALFRED EMMET

BISTROS SUSPENDED

Owing to the present fuel crisis we regret that BISTROS are suspended until further notice.

Would those who have already booked for the Bistro advertised for January 5th, please return their tickets to the Box-Office when money will be refunded.

WAITING FOR GODOT

by Samuel Beckett

December 14 : 15 : 16

I saw *Waiting for Godot* when it was first produced in England, nearly twenty years ago. The magic of the theatre had cast its spell on me the first time I saw Father Christmas at a London store and wondered how his false whiskers were stuck on and since then I've been spellbound many times, in varying degrees, by all forms of theatre. But *Godot*, master-minded by Beckett was the trick that really got me and left me wondering, 'how's it done?' I wanted to know more about it, I wanted to be in it, I wanted to produce it.

Today, with man on the moon and technology gone crazy, the play's statements seem even more relevant. The gaps in human relationships are getting larger,

despite (or because of?) the tremendous improvement of scientific communications. Man's need to fill the void of existence with some kind of faith or belief in the unknown, seems even greater. Is scientific progress itself governed by some super power?

When this play was written it was still possible to drop out of society and live by the wayside; to nick a spud from a field, or hang yourself from a tree. Soon, spuds will be grown ready mashed in packets and there will be no trees.

Our workshop production has Ruth Lister and Julie Cruttenden as Estragon and Vladimir, Mary Hodlin and Jillyann Healy as Pozzo and Lucky and Polly Irvin as the girl. Why women? It seems



RUTH LISTER plays Estragon

so obvious now, I've practically forgotten why, in fact I've been thinking if we did this play again, it might be an idea to try it with men playing the women's parts.

LARRY IRVIN

Next Production

THE CENCI

by Antonin Artaud

translated by Simon Watson-Taylor

THE BREASTS OF TIRESIAS

by Guillaume Apollinaire

freely adapted for the English Stage by Alfred Emmet

January 26,27,29,30,February 1,2
at 7.45 p.m.

Members Free · Guests 60p & 40p

Christmas Gift Stall, 1973

After V.A.T. had taken its toll, the Gift Stall and Raffle made a profit of £385.

Thanks to all who donated gifts, risked frostbite to sell them in the power emergency and to all the customers who cheerfully spent so much. But, most of all, thanks to Meg Kirby who organised the event for the third year running.

The winners of the raffle were:

Whisky – Miss Julia Cook.

Pernod – Mrs Godman.

Voucher for £3 worth meat, donated by H. Gilbert, Ltd. – Mrs M.E. Cann.

Voucher for lunch for four at the Penthouse Restaurant, donated by Daniels of Ealing – Mrs Elizabeth Chisholm.

Luncheon Set – Mr. Matthews.

A.G.M.

Another year has rushed by us and it is Annual General Meeting time once again. This year we can look back on a season of increased attendances, some good productions and a reasonable financial report, but we must also look to the future. The effects of inflation on the cost of running the Theatre and how we should develop the artistic policy of the Theatre are the two topics of overriding importance being considered by the Committee of Management and the meeting will offer an opportunity for members to express their views on these subjects.

The business of the meeting will be as set out in the notice convening the meeting (on this page), and the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting are available in the office should anyone require to read them.

In accordance with Articles 26 and 27 of the Articles of Association, the six members of the Committee of Management who have been longest in office since their last election, retire. This year the members who retire are Gerry Blake, Martin Bowley, Alan Chambers, Neville Cruttenden, Robin Duval and Alfred Emmet. Of these, Gerry Blake, Martin Bowley, Alan Chambers, Neville Cruttenden and Alfred Emmet offer themselves for re-election. In addition there is a vacancy on the Committee caused by the resignation of Tom Pritchard in October, 1973.

If you should wish to make other nominations for election to the Committee of Management, these must be submitted in writing, signed by the proposer and seconder, together with a signed statement of the willingness of the candidate to stand for election, and must be received at the Theatre not later than midnight on Thursday,

January 10th. Retiring members of the Committee of Management seeking re-election:

GERRY BLAKE— member of Grapevine Committee. Chairman of the Theatre and Youth Committee. Stage Manager. Acting Member. Member of Executive Committee.

MARTIN BOWLEY— Hon. Sec. 1963-71 and Chairman since 1972. Deputy House Manager. Member of Plays and Productions Committee 1965-68 and Auditioning Committee 1966-73. Member of Executive Committee. Acting Member.

ALAN CHAMBERS— Member of Grapevine Committee, Secretary 1968-73. Member of Plays and Productions Committee 1962-65 and since 1969, Chairman since 1971. Member of Auditioning Committee. Acting Member and Producer.

NEVILLE CRUTTENDEN— Vice-Chairman. Chairman of Publicity Committee and of Statement of Aims working party. Acting Member. Member of Executive Committee. Editor of *Questopics*.

ALFRED EMMET— Founder Member. Hon. Director and Chairman of Plays and Productions Committee until 1969. Member of Theatre and Youth Committee. Member of Auditioning Committee. Student Group Director of Studies. Producer and Acting Member.

Diary

December 31, January 1,2,4,5,7,8,9, 11,12 at 7.45 p.m.
THE GHOST TRAIN
by Arnold Ridley
Members free seats not available
Tickets 60p & 40p

January 5th in the Foyer after the Show
BISTRO— Cancelled—See page 2

January 14th at 7.45 p.m. in the Shaw Room
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that
TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE QUESTORS LTD.

will be held in The Bernard Shaw Room, The Questors Theatre, Mattock Lane, Ealing, W5 5BQ.

on

Monday, 14th January, 1974 at 7.45 p.m. precisely.

To receive and adopt the Report of the Committee of Management and the Accounts for the year ending 31st August, 1973; to elect members of the Committee of Management and to consider and, if thought fit, to pass the undermentioned Resolution:

'That approval be given to the creation of the office of Personal Assistant to the Administrator, as approved by the Committee of Management on 30th July, 1973'.

By order of the Committee of Management.

Roger de Toney
Hon. Secretary

January 16th at 7.45 p.m. in the Shaw Room
NEW MEMBERS MEETING

January 26,27,29,30, February 1,2 at 7.45 p.m.

THE CENCI
by Antonin Artaud
with
THE BREASTS OF TIRESIAS
by Guillaume Apollinaire
Members free seats available.
Guests 60p & 40p

February 2nd in the Foyer after the Performance
Discussion on 'The Cenci' and 'The Breasts of Tiresias'.