

QUESTOPICS

THE QUESTORS THEATRE · MATTOCK LANE · W5 5BQ · 567 0011 · Box Office 567 5184

No. 226 MARCH 1983

March Production

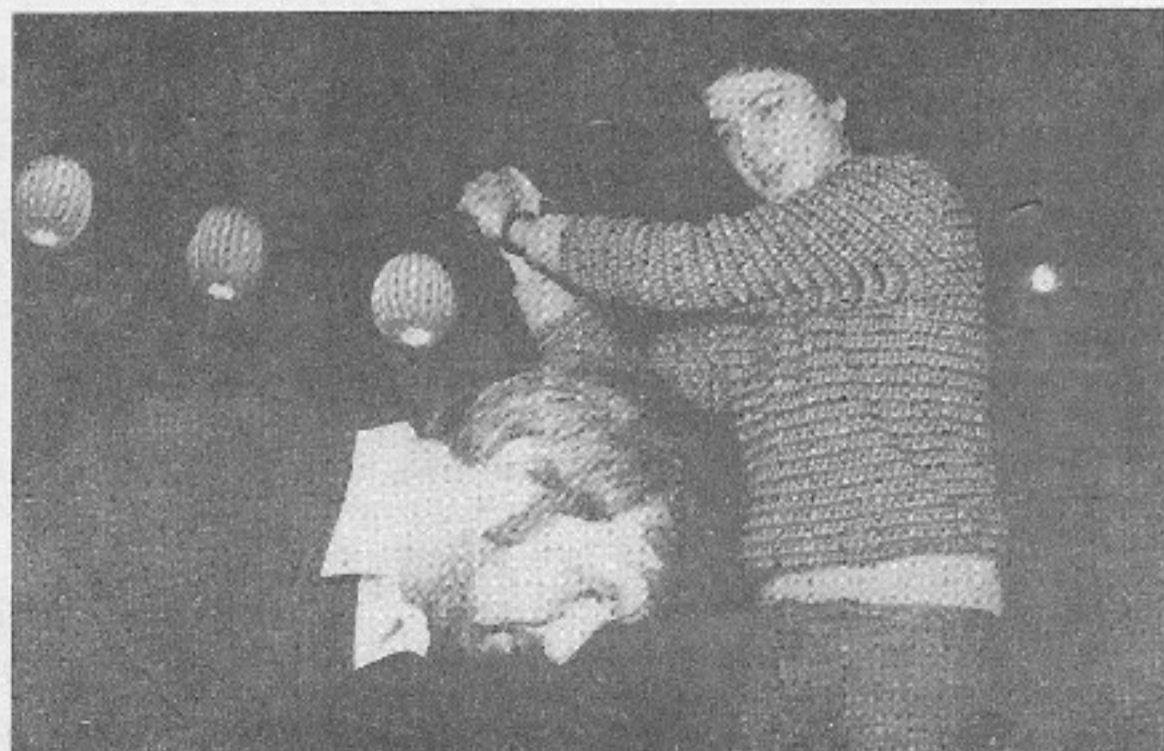
SIR GAWAIN and the GREEN KNIGHT by Peter Stevens

It's a legend from the dark ages, an Arthurian tale of magic and mystery. It's a medieval narrative poem, full of adventure, blood and romance. But it's also a play which combines all the ancient influences with a robust modern style to produce an excellent piece of contemporary theatre.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is a play that will stimulate you with some very modern ideas, as well as entertain you with magic, music, songs, dances, comedy and carols. The whole should be a very exciting show.

The story of Sir Gawain is fairly well known and it's an excellent story. At the court of King Arthur arrives a giant in green armour who challenges one of

the knights to strike him a single blow, on condition that he is prepared to receive a single blow in return in a
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Keith Parry (*Bertilak*) and Simon Meadon (*Sir Gawain*)

WHAT'S NEXT

MIXED BILL
ELECTRA, CODA,
BLACK COMEDY
February 23-27
March 1-5

in the Studio at 7.45 pm
Members FREE, Guests: £1.40.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUPS
WORKSHOPS. March 8th, 10th
and 12th at 7.30 pm in the
Stanislavsky Room.

SIR GAWAIN
AND THE GREEN
KNIGHT

March 12, 13, 15-19
in the Theatre at 7.45 pm
Members FREE.
Guests: Sun. £1.50;
Tues. Wed. Thurs. £1.80;
Fri. Sat. £2.20.

DISCUSSION on SIR GAWAIN
AND THE GREEN KNIGHT.
March 22 at 7.45 pm in the Shaw
Room.

CHICAGO

presented by Martyn Beany
Theatre

March 24-26 at 7.45 pm
March 26 at 2.30 pm.
in the Theatre
All tickets £2.50 from
Norman Divall 636 8311
(office hours).

A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY

April 9-16 at 7.45 pm
in the Theatre
All tickets: Sun. Mon. £1.50;
Tues. Wed. Thurs. £1.80;
Fri. Sat. £2.20.

OPEN MEETING for non-members
and new members. Information and
tour.
EVERY WEDNESDAY at 7.45 pm.

SIR GAWAIN

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year's time. Gawain accepts the challenge and beheads the Green Knight with one stroke. However the giant calmly picks up his head and departs. A year later Gawain sets out on his quest for the knight and is entertained and befriended by Bertilak and his Lady. At their castle he finds his honour and virtue put to the test, before he finally faces the Green Knight, who lets him off with only a scratch.

The legend was doubtless handed down in many forms, but our knowledge of it comes mainly from a 14th century narrative poem which adds a touch of medieval romance to the original. It is a translation of this poem by Brian Stone that Peter Stevens has adapted into the play *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* which was premiered by the National Theatre.

There is a great deal of the dynamic alliterative verse of the poem which gives the play a robust and larger than life quality. It sounds harsh, but it's very speakable. But there is also a lot of movement involved, to make it a very physical play. Peter Stevens has managed to combine the best qualities of all periods to make the whole thing work as a piece of theatre, not just as a story or poem.

The play presents the story with honesty and openness. The knights are bold and the ladies beautiful – but the hunt is bloody and the seduction is steamy. Its theme is the conflict between the old magic and the new. The new is represented by Arthur's court, where ideals are pursued, beauty is ethereal and women are on pedestals. The Green Knight stands for the old, animal magic that is much more down to earth. Neither side wins – they are the two complementary sides of man.

Bringing this production to life will be a challenging task for director Alan Chambers. As associate and movement director he has Glynn Caren, director of *Questabout*. Indeed all the *Questabout* team are involved as well – and they're going to have a pretty hectic time! The music director, Andrew Brixey, is also going to have a great deal to do, but we can look forward to some wonderful sounds. The design team of Geoff Moore (sets) and Sue

Next in the Theatre

A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY

by Ivan Turgenev

directed by David Pearson

This is one of the masterpieces of the Russian theatre, a subtle, atmospheric, psychological drama that did much to open the way for Chekhov. Only in this century has its true greatness been recognised, and it is now a frequently revived and always popular classic.

*Our production has a particular significance however, because we are presenting *A Month in the Country* to mark the 75th birthday of our President, Sir Michael Redgrave, who has been closely associated with the play over many years. We hope you will want to join with us in making this special tribute.*

Full details in What's Next



Maria Bonsa (Lady) and Simon Meadon

BOX OFFICE NEXT OPEN

6.45 – 8.45 pm

MARCH 7 – 19

**BUT THE BOX OFFICE IS
NEVER CLOSED TO POSTAL
BOOKINGS.**

Wyatt (costumes) has to solve the problem of beheading a 9ft high giant on stage among other things! The cast, which includes Keith Parry, Sylvia Hyson, Maria Brusa and Simon Meadon, should have a lot of fun.

So will you if you come along. Book now. It's FREE to members.

Y P G WORKSHOPS

During the week of March 7th to 12th, our Young People's Groups will move into the Stanislavsky Room to present a series of workshops. Each of the 12 groups of Stage Two and the Junior Drama Workshop will be taking part, four on each of the three evenings March 8th, 10th and 12th.

The reason we never advertise these workshops widely is that space is extremely limited, and with up to 80 young people taking part each evening, parents and family tend to take all the seats. However this year, there is a fair chance that on Saturday March 12th, there will be a small number of tickets available at the door. So if you are interested in the work of our YPGs, do come along. It's only 60p.

EVENTS

ENGLISH AMATEUR THEATRE WEEK

Plans for our third English Amateur Theatre Week – which will take place between May 30th and June 4th – are already well advanced. As with our International Weeks each of the visiting companies will give two performances in repertoire. This year, two of the three companies have visited us before. Bolton Little Theatre, who presented Harold Brighouse's *Dealing in Futures* in our 1980 Week, will this time be giving Robert David MacDonald's adaptation of the classic thirties novel *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*. South London Theatre Centre played *Sing Brel* in the Studio two years ago and in the summer will produce for us Kevin Laffan's *Zoo, Zoo, Widdershins*

Zoo. The newcomers will be the Loft Theatre from Leamington Spa with *The Short Sighted Bear*, a play new to London by Andrew Davies, who had a big success three years ago with Glenda Jackson in *Rose* at the Duke of York's Theatre.

Together with our own production of *Cabaret* which immediately precedes the Week, it will be a unique opportunity to see some of the best of amateur theatre in this country. The fact that we are able to stage an occasion as big and as complicated as this is to a great extent due to the financial assistance which has been promised by Marks and Spencer. Why not take advantage of the generous season ticket offer and come to all these productions?

FORTHCOMING FIRST NIGHTS

April 26

THE MIDNIGHT SUN

by David Mowat

May 21

CABARET

by Joe Masterhoff, John Kander
and Fred Ebb

May 29

ENGLISH AMATEUR THEATRE WEEK

June 18

AND A NIGHTINGALE SANG

by C.P. Taylor

CARDS

Easter and Birthday cards will be on sale in the Foyer during the run of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, before the performance and during the interval.

OBITUARY

BILL WALL

Bill Wall, who died on Feb. 1st after a courageous struggle against ill-health, was one of those rare people to whom others warmed instantly and his death leaves a gap at The Questors which it is impossible to fill. Although most people think of him simply as a kind, loveable personality, he also did much work for the theatre. He was the first secretary of the Grapevine in 1958 and there would have been no Bar if William had not characteristically volunteered for the hot seat. A witty contributor to *Questopics* he also undertook a whole host of small parts at which he worked unstintingly, and was a regular front-of-house steward.

He was always so cheerful one might forget he had a serious side. In 1945 he won the Military Medal and bar for gallantry. He held an O.U. degree and a London University diploma in English Literature. He loved classical music and the great 19th century novels.

To his wife Sylvia we extend our deepest sympathy on the loss of one who was, as Dr. Watson wrote of Sherlock Holmes, '... the best and kindest man I have ever known.'

MIKE GREEN

CALLING

MEMBERSHIP FOR FRIENDS

Members will be aware that we are always looking for new members, especially in these financially difficult times. We had a big drive last autumn, and we sent every member an application form to pass on to a friend. We pointed out the astonishing statistic that if every member introduced one new member every three years, the number of members would remain steady at the right level, with no need for membership drives at all!

SPONSORSHIP

As stated at the AGM, The Questors offers a very competitive package to companies wishing to sponsor a production. The cost can be quite low depending on the scale and length of run of the play involved. Do you know a company which would be interested in sponsorship? If you have any ideas and particularly names of contacts please contact the Theatre Manager (567 0011 daytime) or myself (567 8456 evenings), or write to us at the theatre. Remember every sponsor we get is an aid to both increased quality of production and keeping down membership fees.

ROGER KELLY

But over the years, one complaint we've frequently heard from members is that they never have an application form to hand at the right moment, and that if they had, they could probably have introduced a friend.

This seems to us a very good point. So, starting with this issue, every edition of *Questopics* you receive will contain a form for you to pass on. We're not asking you to use every one, of course. But we do hope you'll always keep one available to give to a friend when the opportunity arises.

REMINDER

SMOKING & DRINKING

Members are reminded that audiences are *not* permitted to smoke in the auditorium or to take coffee or other drinks in with them. Stewards have been instructed to enforce these rules, which are common to most theatres, are for the benefit of the audience as a whole, and which, regrettably, have been broken by some members of the audience during recent productions.

ARSENIC AND OLD LACE

What do you want in a Christmas play? A fairy story, with of course a god-mother, a demon, love rewarded, some comic characters (a policeman will help), lots of laughs, and at the centre hearts of gold. A game for winter evenings could be to fit plays to this description — omitting pantomimes. *Arsenic and Old Lace* would surely come near the top. Of course there has to be complete suspension of belief — even though you don't believe a word of it — and so, how right it was to bring all the corpses on to the stage at the end, for the sake of the

lady in the audience who cried out 'Don't look in the box!' and again 'Don't look behind you!' It is a farce — and how well The Questors produces farces — but it uses a very human desire, that of the old who are alone but want a proper funeral and someone to mourn them when they are gone. That is why the Brewster sisters are fairy godmothers. The play depends on them, and how excellently Mary Hodlin and Barbara Hutchins played them — with obvious enjoyment.

It was first rate — not a false moment or hesitation, the timing was excellent,

the accents good and the comic characters hilariously funny.

If the opening was slow, that was right for the play since the background of quiet and genteel respectability in which nothing startling could possibly happen has to be fully established.

In such a good cast, it is not easy to single out anyone, apart from the Old Ladies. John Turner's playing of Mortimer Brewster should, however, be specially mentioned. This is the role that needs most flexibility and versatility, and that we had. His American accent was natural and well maintained; his acting easy and polished — almost as if he had strayed in from a Henry James play.

Geoffrey Webb is to be congratulated on his fine production. The set designed by Beth Crowley was a triumph in itself.

KITHARISTES

REPORT

A G M

The thirty third Annual General Meeting of the Company took place on 10th January. The meeting opened with the Chairman's review of the year in which he moved the adoption of the Annual Report of the Committee of Management.

In his address the Chairman drew attention to how fortunate we were in the size and complexity of our facilities. Our size and the loyalty of our membership had helped us to weather a worsening financial climate for British theatre. At the close of our financial year a quarter of West End theatres were dark, and even at the height of the Christmas season many famous playhouses were still closed. On the debit side, however, the scale of our premises meant that our maintenance and running costs were equally large. 1982 had seen both a change in our accounting system to allow for this plus considerable expenditure on the refurbishment of Mattock Lodge.

The Chairman dealt with two specific financial matters. First the encouraging increase of subscription payments by variable direct debit which would reduce the administrative load caused by a subscription increase. Secondly the success we have had in attracting sponsorship from major national companies. The Chairman stated: 'Certainly

few other amateur theatres have been as successful as we have in obtaining national sponsorship. But at the same time it is very clear that we are falling behind in the important process of setting up a group whose energies will be devoted specifically towards seeking out new sponsors, drafting the necessary literature and preparing sponsorship packages. Our membership list for example is a very valuable commercial commodity to any local firm which wishes to place its name before 4000 or so potential consumers.

If anyone here has a potential contact with any such firm I would be delighted to discuss the possibilities with them'.

In reviewing our productions during the year it was clear that *Bonjour, Lá, Bonjour* which resulted in national press coverage was a major success. So too was the development of our touring programme with four productions being taken on the road. Audience attendance at many productions had been affected by outside influences ranging from public interest in major sporting events to rail strikes and bad weather. Particularly badly affected were audiences for visiting companies.

The Chairman concluded his remarks by paying tribute to the retiring members of the Committee of Management and to all who worked for the theatre. He also outlined many of the highlights for 1983. These will all be featured in *Questopics* but in brief they are our production of *A Month in the Country* in April as a tribute to our President Sir Michael Redgrave on his seventy fifth birthday, the English

Amateur Theatre Week in June, and various activities in the Autumn to celebrate fifty years at Mattock Lane.

An amendment referring the Annual Report back to the Committee of Management because of its typographical inaccuracies was defeated. The Report was adopted subject to a corrected edition being reprinted.

During the remainder of the meeting the accounts for the year 1981/82 were approved and auditors for 1982/83 were appointed. John Davey and Alan Chambers were re-elected to the Committee of Management; Roger Brace, Roger de Toney, David Fletcher and Eric Lister were newly elected.

ROGER KELLY

QUESTOPICS

SPECIAL ISSUE

Next month's issue of *Questopics* will be a special double size publication to mark the 75th Birthday of our President, Sir Michael Redgrave, in whose honour our production of *A Month in the Country* is being presented. It will contain an appreciation of Sir Michael by Alfred Emmet, our founder.

But, only 10 days separate the 75th birthdays of Sir Michael and Alfred himself, so in celebration there will also be some tributes to Alfred from members with a special knowledge of particular areas of the work he has done for The Questors.

This special issue should reach you around March 25th.