

The Questors Theatre Archives

Questories

Peter Whelan (1968)

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PETER WHELAN

Although sporting a regency figure and an Edwardian beard, Peter Whelan (author of the feature article in this issue and who plays Eilert Loevborg in **Hedda Gabler**) is a modernist. To be precise modernists tend to lag behind Peter, particularly in matters theatrical. He has been happily married to Errangcon, one of our leading actresses, for ten years, and they have two children. His comfortable figure and benign demeanour suggest, truthfully, a kindness of disposition. Peter has the rare faculty of being able to criticise without hint of malice or patronage. When asked to supply notes about himself for this article he characteristically wrote much about other writers and practically nothing of himself.



I used the term "other writers" in the previous paragraph because Peter wrote an extremely witty one act play, **Oh Sisters**, which was performed in a shop window production in 1966. He is at present working on a full length play.

After graduating from Keele University in 1956 he came to Questors and was immediately cast as Tony Lumpkin. Two of the many parts he has since played are Vladimir in **Waiting for Godot** and Stanley in **The Birthday Party**. He is remembered more for his performance in this play than for accidentally falling off stage one night during its run. This unrehearsed business gave Peter an added dimension to Pinter's comedy of menace.

In contrast to, but not in conflict with his straight acting, Peter has put on many entertainments with **Larry Irvin** and **Don Kincaid**. His ambition is to appear in a slapstick comedy with people pouring whitewash over each other. "Somewhere in this", he says, "is a clue to my character".

Some years ago Peter produced at a **New Plays Festival** under the title of **Ends and Echoes**, three one act plays by James Saunders. This was the first time that James' plays were produced at Questors. He subsequently played in **Next time I'll Sing to You** which had its first production, at Mattock Lane. He also appeared in **Alan Clarke's** first production for us. All this indicates he is either very lucky, or an incorrigible "firster". He enthusiastically enjoys being in on the beginning of something new. To see that enterprise succeed gives him something extra to the joys of acting.

In 1964 he went to Berlin with a Questor team to participate in the production of five one act plays. These were the product of a six months residential drama session for five English and American writers, three of whom have subsequently achieved success; **James Saunders** (need we say more?), **Derek Marlowe** (with **Dandy in Aspic** in book and film) and **Tom Stoppard** (with **Rosencrantz and Guildenstern**).

Peter agrees with the Webbs (last issue of Questopics) about the quality of some of our new plays, but he believes improvement can be obtained by nurturing as many young writers as possible.