

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

In the Studio

Crossfire by Michel Azama

What kind of country is it where children are old? The author suggests, "a war zone . . . a checkpoint between the world of the living and the dead, ruins which could equally be those of Sodom and Gomorra or Hiroshima". A terrifying and timeless human drama, a theatre poem all at once tender and outraged, violent and impassioned.

20 - 27 July at 7.45pm

In the Studio

Directors' Shop Windows

New Directors' Showcase – Three one-act plays in one evening.

Sunday 28 July at 7.30pm

Admission FREE

The Next Season

In the Playhouse

The Lion in Winter by James Goldman

The historical subject of this play – best known as a film – is the dynastic bickering that took place at Henry II's Winter Court in 1183.

In skirmish after skirmish, Henry and Eleanor barter, cajole and threaten to win the throne of England for their favourite son.

History involving Philip of France is seen entirely in terms of princes, palaces and family power struggles with some delicious anachronisms.

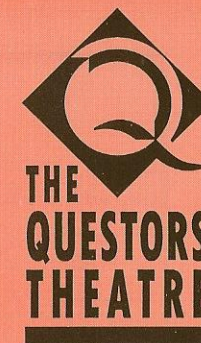
21 - 28 September at 7.45pm

In the Studio

A Taste of Honey by Shelagh Delaney

Written by Shelagh Delaney at the age of nineteen, *A Taste of Honey* was a sensational theatrical success when first produced in 1958. Now established as a modern classic, this comic yet poignant drama of a mother-daughter relationship in working-class Manchester continues to enthral with the adolescent Jo's unshakeable optimism throughout.

28 September - 19 October at 7.45pm



WHY LIVE?

The Questors 49th Student Group
PRESENTS

NIKOLAI ERDMAN'S
EXPLOSIVE BLACK FARCE

THE SUICIDE

Translated by Peter Tegel

We at the Midland, as bankers to The Questors Theatre, are pleased to have the opportunity once again to sponsor a Questors production.

We wish the company much success with *The Suicide* and can assure them that we shall not only be “Listening” but watching!



MIDLAND

member HSBC  group

The Listening Bank

We shall be pleased to listen to you at your local Midland branch, situated at
46 The Broadway, Ealing W5 5JZ.
0181 910 2200

The Suicide

The name of Nikolai Erdman (1902-70) is an unfamiliar one. He wrote, it seems, only two plays, both while still in his twenties. The first, *The Mandate*, was produced by Meyerhold in 1925. The second, *The Suicide*, was banned while in rehearsal in 1932, but is considered by Nadezha Mandelstam in her memoirs as ‘the best play in the Soviet repertory’. Gorki claimed Erdman as ‘our new Gogol’. And outside Russia, Brecht admired his satire in *The Mandate*. But in the USSR there have only been two productions, both of *The Mandate*; the Meyerhold production of 1925 and a revival by one of the original cast during the thaw of the fifties. *The Suicide* remains unperformed in the Soviet Union and neither play has been published there.

The Suicide satirises the plight of an unemployed ‘little man’. Semyon Semyonovich Podsekalnikov. Word gets round that he is contemplating suicide and he is immediately besieged by spokespeople of various discontented groups, from intellectuals to butchers, who beg him to kill himself as a gesture on their behalf. The idea is that Semyon will leave behind a note, accusing and denouncing, as ‘nowadays, only the dead may say what the living think’. Through the dead Semyon the intelligentsia, business, the church, and others can make their complaint. What ensues is not only a lively farce, the satire as funny as in *The Mandate*, but also a passionate plea (if a comical one) for the little man against the bureaucratic state. At one point Semyon, made brave by the idea that he is soon to die, even phones the Kremlin to complain. The play was apparently written in 1928, but by 1932 when it was banned, Lenin had been dead eight years and Stalin was undisputed master.

The Vakhtangov Theatre worked on *The Suicide* first, postponing a Gorki play to do so, but seem not to have got far with it. Then Meyerhold and Stanislavsky competed with each other, Meyerhold challenging Stanislavsky to ‘socialist competition’. Stanislavsky thought it ‘a splendid play’ and in a letter, written in 1934 two years after the play had been banned, recalls his impression of Erdman’s reading of the play to him: ‘I laughed so much I had to ask for a long interval, or my heart could not have stood up to the strain’. Maxim Gorki, Erdman’s champion, favoured a production of the play by Stanislavsky, being of the opinion that Meyerhold would turn *The Suicide* into ‘a coarse and unnecessary farce’. It was, however, with Meyerhold that the play went into production. Permission for it to be staged was given after Gorki had interceded with Stalin’. But after eighteen months in rehearsal the Central Licensing Board refused permission for the play to open. This was perhaps not surprising, as the play’s ‘supervisor’ was Lazar Kaganovich, then one of Stalin’s tough new young men.

We know of Stalin’s response to *The Suicide*. When both Stanislavsky and Meyerhold were working on the play, Stanislavsky’s theatre, in an attempt to circum-

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The Questors 49th Student Group presents
The Suicide by Nikolai Erdman

translated by Peter Tegel

First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: Saturday 13th July 1996

CAST

(in order of their appearance)

Semyon Semyonovitch Podsekalnikov
(a man refused employment) WAYNE ROBERTS*
 Maria Lukianovna *(his wife)* CHARLOTTE LEVIN*
 Serafima Ilinichna *(his mother-in-law)* CAROL CABOURN-SMITH*
 Alexander Petrovitch Kalabushkin EDWARD KNIGHT*
 Margarita Ivanovna Pergestova SARAH KELLER*
 Aristarchnya Dominikova Golashchapova
(a member of the intelligentsia) FELICIA MASSIAH*
 Cleopatra Maximovna *(“Kiki”)* AMICA PAVEY*
 Olga Timovgeyeva *(a post worker)* YVONNE COWARD*
 Pagachovna *(a butcher)* LISA SKETTON*
 Viktoire Viktoiryia *(a writer)* FREDDY HENRY*
 Baissa Filipovna ELENA MUNOZ*
 Mother Elpidi AVA TAYLOR*
 Young Girl/3rd Gypsy/1st Individual/1st Boy/1st Old Women ELIA ALVAREZ DIAZ*
 Old Lady/2nd Individual/Deacon ALEX BATTERBEE
 1st Gipsy/Groonya/Dressmaker CHLOE FAINE
 2nd Gypsy/Milliner/2nd Boy/Zinka/2nd Old Woman LEAH COOK
 1st Undertaker JAMES HORADA
 2nd Undertaker ANDY McCALL
 Gypsies, Peasant, Mourners, Choir

RACHEL DARLINGTON, LUCY FFINCH, ALISDAIR FRASER, DAVID
 GOLDSWORTHY, RICHARD GORBUTT,
 ULRIKE HEFNER, RICHARD LUMLEY, JILL McMAHON,
 KAREN MILBURN, CAROL MURPHY, SANDY PAHL,
 JUDITH PARR, ANNETTE RAYNOR, STEPHANIE SMITH, MICHAEL SMITH,
 VERONIKA WASNIEWSKA, MARITA

* The Questors 49th Student Group

The action takes place in Moscow 1930

Act 1 Podsekalnikov's apartment.
 Act 2 The same.

Interval of fifteen minutes

Act 3 An outdoor restaurant in a summer garden.
 Act 4 Podsekalnikov's apartment.
 Act 5 A cemetery.

PRODUCTION

Director/Designer JOHN HORWOOD
 Assistant Director KIRSTEN HEMINGWAY
 Costume Designer CHLOE FAINE
 Lighting Designer MARTIN SAPSED
 Sound Designer MARK STUART
 Stage Manager CLAIRE WHITELEY
 Deputy Stage Manager LUBNA MALIK
 Assistant Stage Managers DAVID GOLDSWORTHY
 RACHEL DARLINGTON
 JILL McMAHON
 CULLEN HENSHAW
 SANDY PAHL
 CAROL MURPHY
 Lighting Operator
 Sound Operator PANOS DIAMANTOPOULOS
 Sound Assistant DUNCAN THOMAS
 Properties KAREN MILBURN
 Special Effects NIGEL WORSLEY
 Construction ALISDAIR FRASER
 JOHN HORWOOD
 BOB COOPER
 JIM CRADDOCK
 MERITA PERVETICIA
 JENNY COOK
 TED VINEY
 Set Painting KATE MORTON
 ROBBIE FRATER
 Wardrobe Assistant BE NADETTTER
 Poster Design JOHN HORWOOD
 CULLEN HENSHAW
 CLAIRE WHITELEY
 GEMMA BARTLETT
 Make-up by GREASEPAINT
 Original Music composed and performed by MARK STUART

With thanks to:

GUNNERSBURY MUSEUM, JON WEBSTER, NICK HAWKER,
 AIDAN WHITELEY, ACROPOLIS BROADWAY RESTAURANT,
 BRIAN INGRAM

ART EXHIBITION

UPPER FOYER

13 JULY - 3 AUGUST 1996

EALING ART GROUP

Returning to The Questors after their successful exhibition in 1995.

GRAPEVINE GALLERY

13 JULY - 3 AUGUST 1996

AMANDA WELCH

Amanda Welch was born in 1945, studied painting at Chelsea School of Art 1963-67 and has been painting ever since. Working mainly in oils, water colours are a very different part of her work, but one which has "the refreshing effect of releasing me both from self-consciousness and from the consciousness of making a painting".

THE SUICIDE *continued from page 3*

vent possible censorship by the Central Repertory Committee, sent the play direct to Stalin.

Stalin's reply to Stanislavsky is dated 9 November 1931, almost a year before the play was finally banned:

Dear Konstantin Sergeivich

I do not have a very high opinion of the play *The Suicide*. My closer comrades consider it empty and even harmful. You can see the opinion (and reasons) of the Repertory Committee in the enclosed documents. It seems to me that the Repertory Committee's opinion is not far from the truth. Nevertheless, I am not against the theatre experimenting and showing its skill. Provided that the theatre achieves its aims. The Cultural Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of our party (Comrade Stetski) will help you in this matter. Comrades will judge who know about artistic matters. I am a dilettante in this.

Regards,
J. Stalin

Not much is known about Erdman after *The Suicide* was banned. Despite conflicting reports, he does not seem to have been arrested, or disappeared into a labour camp, as happened to Meyerhold and Babel. He scripted some Soviet films, but seems never to have written again for the theatre, and died in relative obscurity in Moscow in 1970.

PETER TEGEL

INFORMATION

THE GRAPEVINE CLUB

The Questors has a fully licensed Bar which is now open to all members. The Bar is open every evening plus lunchtimes on Sundays. Questors members are requested to sign in their guests when entering the bar.

THE HOTPLATE

Delicious hot and cold food is available in the upper Foyer between 6.30pm and 8.00pm during the run of Playhouse productions, and coffee, tea, and cakes are served during the interval. No hot food will be provided at the Sunday matinées.

NOTE

The Hotplate is not open for Studio productions, but when Studio performances coincide with those in the Playhouse, it will endeavour to serve those audiences whenever this is possible.

BACKSTAGE PREVIEW

Why not attend one of our new, or prospective members evenings, and have a conducted tour of the Theatre complex. Tours start and finish at the Grapevine Bar, 8.00pm every Wednesday.

THE STUDENT GROUP

The Questors runs a two year part time student course in Acting; details can be obtained from the office.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S GROUPS

There are a number of groups for younger members. These cater for all age groups, from 5-17. The classes are intended to create awareness of the theatre and provide a stimulating channel for imagination.

For The Questors Theatre

Artistic Director	Spencer Butler
Artistic Directorate	John Horwood, Norman Wilkinson
Director of Studies	David Emmet
Chair	John Davey
Vice-Chairman	Steve Hames
Company Secretary	Sue Blake
Club Secretary	Christine Garland
Finance Director	Ken Kettle
Stage Director	Nick Hawker
Theatre Manager	Elaine Orchard
Productions Secretary	Christine Greening
Membership Secretary	Alice Pennicott
Marketing Officer	Fleur Lloyd
Programme Editor	Vincent McQueen
Questopics Editor	
Sponsorship	Alan Drake
Box Office Management	Ken Parker
Programme Sales Organiser	Val Blaxland
Front of House Manager	Eric Lister
Press Relations	Sandra Hutchinson
Haberdashery	Tootal Craft
Wardrobe Equipment	Wilkinson Sword Scissors..Fiskars Ltd
Wardrobe Care	Persil, Comfort and Stergene courtesy of Lever Bros. Dry-cleaning by C.D.S.

Administration

The Questors office is open from 9.30am until 5.00pm every weekday. If you wish to make contact for details of membership, or hiring the Theatre and rehearsal rooms, telephone the office on 0181-567 0011.

Membership

If you wish to become a member please fill in the application form (copies in the Foyers); just send it to the Theatre with the appropriate subscription. 0181-567 8736.

Box Office

For personal callers the box office is open every Wednesday evening 6.45pm to 8.30pm; Monday to Friday 11.00am to 12 noon; during productions 6.45pm to 8.30pm; Sunday matinées 2.00pm to 2.30pm; Studio productions 6.45pm to 8.00pm.