

*BEN JONSON (1572-1637)*

Had Shakespeare never lived, "Rare Ben Jonson" would probably have been hailed as the greatest playwright of the first Elizabethan age, but his obsession with classical models - possibly as a result of his education at Westminster School - makes his work suffer in comparison with that of his contemporary. He is best known today for his series of "City Comedies" which were set in the heart of seventeenth century London and deal with characters drawn from the middle and upper classes rather than the court.

Moot House Players have already given two of these, *THE SILENT WOMAN* and *BARTHOLOMEW FAIR*, as well as his *VOLPONE*. The present production completes a quartet of truly great drama ... certainly the best of Jonson.

*FUTURE PROGRAMME*

Sunday June 23 - Moot Hall - at 8.00 pm

FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY! THE CURRENT EDITION OF MUSIC HALL -  
FULL OF JOYS

The show that has been 'on the road' since early this year and has, at last, found a free date on its own ground.

Directed by Yvonne Mitchley

July 4-5-6

CAN YOU HEAR ME AT THE BACK?  
A serious comedy by Brian Clark

A play about the architect of a New Town and his reactions to the people who come to live in it. Brian Clark is not, perhaps, quite the Players' "house dramatist", but is now an international one who was once a leading member of the company.

Directed by Ian Beckett





1991

MOOT HOUSE PLAYERS  
present

## THE ALCHEMIST

by Ben Jonson

*Characters in order of their appearance:*

SUBTLE, an alchemist	...	...	...	Ken Collins
FACE, a housekeeper	...	...	...	Nigel Porteous
DOL COMMON, their colleague	...	...	Christine Scriven	
DAPPER, a clerk	...	...	...	Tim Crofton
DRUGGER, a tobacco man	...	...	...	Neil Bird
EPICURE MAMMON, a knight...	...	...	...	Tony Davey
SURLY, a gamester	...	...	...	David Schacht
ANANIAS, a deacon of the Anabaptists...	...	...	...	Jack Mitchley
KASTRIL, the angry boy	...	...	...	Mark Puddefoot
DAME PLIANT, his sister, a widow	...	...	Holly McKibbons	
LOVEWIT, the master of the house	...	...	Michael Rawle-Cope	
NEIGHBOURS:	...	...	...	John Banks
				Ray Devonshire
				Yvonne Michley

*The action of the play takes place in and around  
Lovewit's house in Blackfriars, London,  
during the course of one day.*

The play directed by Yvonne Mitchley

Setting devised by the director, built by Roger Williamson  
and Christopher Driver, painted by members of the cast and  
decorated by Paul Regeli.

Lighting and sound devised by Christopher Driver  
Costumes by Laws. Stage staff - Jennifer Southwell

There will be one interval, during which  
refreshments will be available in the foyer.

## THE ALCHEMIST (1610)

Here is satirical comedy at its best; Jonson goes all out for the kill in this devastating attack on the "unacceptable face of capitalism". The story is deceptively simple.

Lovewit, a merchant fleeing from plague-stricken London, leaves his home in charge of his housekeeper, Jeremy Face. Face promptly teams up with a bogus alchemist, Subtle, and a prostitute, Dol Common, to use his master's house as a *dream factory* to sell the myth of the Philosopher's Stone, which was believed to turn all base metals into gold. The infamous trio has to work ever more frenetically as new areas and complications open up for marketing and consultancy, and the piece culminates in the unexpected return of Littlewit.

Jonson presents a gallery of would-be street-wise dupes, religious hypocrites and sexual opportunists, which is as recognisable today as it was in 1610. Forget about the Jacobean vocabulary and the hocus-pocus of alchemy; think of it in terms of the high-pressure salesmanship involved in persuading you to buy almost any modern product - and marvel at the spectacle of unchanged human gullibility.

## ALCHEMY

The alchemical jargon used by Jonson in THE ALCHEMIST is absolutely authentic, but the totally bogus Subtle uses it to gull and fleece his dupes. The modern audience needs no knowledge of this jargon except, perhaps, that *fly* can be equated to a familiar spirit, and *the projection* is the final step in the production of the Philosopher's Stone.

## THE PRODUCTION

Yvonne Mitchley directed the first of the Players' essays into Jonson's works, VOLPONE, on a large acting area at floor level; this time she has decided on a completely Jacobean approach and produced the play on the unlocalised stage of its own day. Recent excavations on the site of The Rose Theatre on the South Bank have shown that the interior dimensions of that famous playhouse approximate very closely to those of Moot Hall. We have followed the well-known Elizabethan practice of building small self-contained scenic pieces by the provision of a privy in one corner of the auditorium.