

THE GUT GIRLS – A MAGIC LANTERN ON STAGE

Richard Gallagher

The Questors Theatre in Ealing has a long-standing reputation as an amateur theatre and for its excellent facilities and talented company members. It also runs – amongst other courses – a part-time 'Academy', which not only provides us with 'new blood', but also serves as a precursor to drama school for many of our students who have turned up in professional productions up and down the country, on television and in films.

As the demographics of the group are dictated by how many females/males each year has, our final two productions have to be chosen accordingly. This year (Group 75) has only two men, five women and one non-binary. We came up with Sarah Daniels' play *The Gut Girls*, set in Victorian Deptford, London, where a well-meaning but dreadfully misguided upper-class woman trains a group of slaughterhouse 'girls' into the much less profitable professions of housemaids, nannies, etc.

Playwrights can be quite cavalier when including difficult props and, though the theatre has an extensive collection, a Victorian magic lantern was not among them. It also had to work.

Our lighting designer, Andrew Whadcoat, happened to know George and Mary Ann Auckland, members of the Magic Lantern Society, who very kindly came to our rescue. We are very grateful and the resulting slide show was often commented on by audience members ("Where on earth did you manage to find that wonderful magic lantern?").

Richard Gallagher was the Director of The Gut Girls which ran from 24 March to 1 April 2023.



*The Gut Girls at The Questors, Ealing
(photograph by Maya Jagger)*