

QUESTORS ARCHIVES

THE PLAYS OF
OSCAR WILDE

The Questors Theatre
1931-2014



Compiled by
John Dobson
2022

PRODUCTIONS AND PERFORMANCES

[1931](#) **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST (Play Reading)**

1938 A FLORENTINE TRAGEDY

1944 THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

1970 THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

1984 THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

1993 LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN

1993 VERA (Rehearsed Reading)

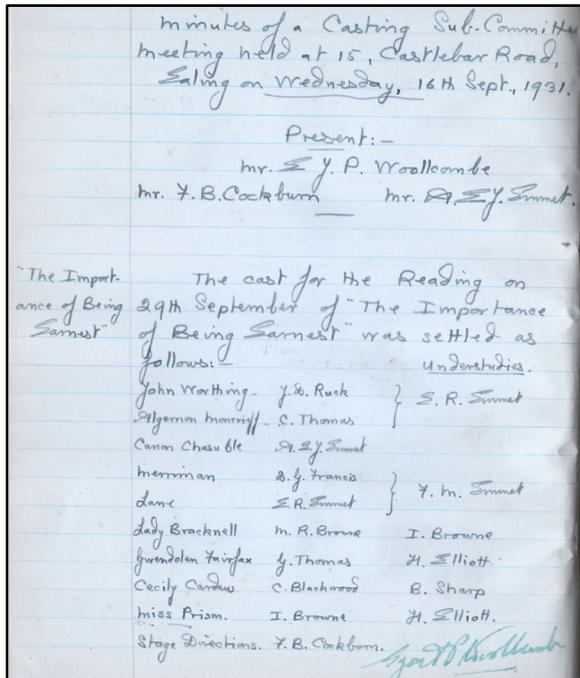
1999 A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE

2009 THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

2014 AN IDEAL HUSBAND

1931

The Importance of Being Earnest



Two years after their first production (**The Best People**) at the Park Theatre, Hanwell, The Questors were still looking round for a permanent home, performing largely at festivals and in the "vicarage garden".

In 1931 they launched a series of Play Readings at the Girl Guide Hall in Warwick Road, which continued there until they moved into the Boy Scout Hall in Mattock Lane in 1933. The first of these readings was **The Importance of Being Earnest** (see the Casting Sub-Committee minutes opposite).

Most of the cast members are of course Questors legends, but it is interesting to note the presence of three Emmets - Alfred, Eric and Frank - and that even though this was a "reading" each part was allotted an understudy!

1938

A Florentine Tragedy

THE QUESTORS

SEVENTH ANNUAL
DRAMA FESTIVAL
 at
 THE QUESTORS' THEATRE
 EALING
 on
 FRIDAY and SATURDAY
 DECEMBER 16th and 17th
 at 8.15 p.m. each night.

Entries include:

The Merry-go-round Sidney Box
 The Man Born to be Hanged Richard Hughes
 The Bear Anton Tchekov
 The King of the Great Clock Tower W. B. Yeats
 A Florentine Tragedy Oscar Wilde

Adjudicator: Miss FRANCES MACKENZIE

TICKETS, ALL RESERVED,
 3/6, 2/6, 1/6
 OBTAINABLE ONLY THROUGH A MEMBER

A major focus for the Questors in the early years was their **Annual Drama Festival**. The first of these was held at St Martin's Hall in 1933, just prior to Questors taking up residence at the scout hut in Mattock Lane (The Tin Hut).

These Festivals were internal events, giving groups of members a chance to put on a series of one-act plays, with an outside adjudicator invited to give criticism and award a winner. They proved enormously popular and drew a lot of interest.

The seventh Festival, held in 1938, was no exception. It included a presentation of Wilde's "**A Florentine Tragedy**", described as "*a fragment [which] was never completed. For the purpose of presentation the well-known poet Mr T Sturge Moore, has written the opening scene.*"

FRIDAY, December 16th.

"A Florentine Tragedy"

By OSCAR WILDE.

Maria (a tirewoman) WINIFRED GILES
Bianca (wife of Simone) DOROTHY ALLEN
Guido Bardi (a Florentine Prince) ERIC ALLEN
Simone (a merchant) CYRIL THOMAS

The action takes place in an upstairs room in Simone's house in Florence during the Sixteenth Century.

Produced by WINIFRED GILES.

This play is only a fragment and was never completed. For the purposes of presentation the well-known poet, Mr. T. Sturge Moore, has written the opening scene, Wilde's work beginning with the entrance of Simone.

(1) (max. 40) (2) (max. 30)
(3) (max. 20) (4) (max. 10)

"Marry-go-round"

By SYDNEY BOX.

Catherine BARBARA SHARP
Betty PEGGY COOPER
Ann MILDRED EMMET

Produced by ALFRED EMMET.

(1) (max. 40) (2) (max. 30)
(3) (max. 20) (4) (max. 10)

"The Herald"

By F. SLADEN-SMITH.

Prologue spoken by LISTER BECK.

Swan-Princess JEAN MACKRORY
Old Fool THELMA GORDON
The Herald FRANK WHEELER

Scene: A terrace on the roof of a Great Palace.

Produced by LISTER BECK.

(1) (max. 40) (2) (max. 30)
(3) (max. 20) (4) (max. 10)

"The Bear"

A Comedy by ANTON TCHEHOV.

Elena Ivanovna Popova
(a land-owning little widow) WINIFRED GILES
Luka (Popova's aged footman) FRANCIS WILLIAMS
Grigory Stepanovitch Smirnov

(a middle-aged landowner) T. S. SAUNDERS
A Gardener GEOFFREY SAUNDERS

Scene: A section of a drawing-room in Popova's house.

Produced by WINIFRED GILES.

(1) (max. 40) (2) (max. 30)
(3) (max. 20) (4) (max. 10)

Adjudication by Miss FRANCES MACKENZIE.

SATURDAY, December 17th.

"The King of the Great Clock Tower"

By W. B. YEATS.

First Attendant MARY ANNE STEELE
Second Attendant FRANCIS BELLETT
King PHILIP ALLEN
Queen GWENDOLEN THOMAS
Stroller FRANK COCKBURN

Scene: The Great Hall.

Produced by FRANK COCKBURN.

(1) (max. 40) (2) (max. 30)
(3) (max. 20) (4) (max. 10)

"The Lovely Miracle"

By PHILIP JOHNSON.

The Mother KATHLEEN SMITH
The Daughter JOYCE GAPP
The Neighbour MARY TURNER
The Young Man WILLIAM DANN

Scene: The living-room of a humble cottage in the country.

Produced by WILLIAM DANN.

(1) (max. 40) (2) (max. 30)
(3) (max. 20) (4) (max. 10)

"A Man Born to be Hanged"

By RICHARD HUGHES.

Bill LIONEL LOCKE
Davy GEOFFREY SAUNDERS
Mr. Spencer ERIC SAUNDERS
Nell MARY BENNETT

Scene: Inside a ruined cottage on a wet November night.

Produced by MARY BENNETT.

(1) (max. 40) (2) (max. 30)
(3) (max. 20) (4) (max. 10)

REPEAT PERFORMANCE OF THE PLAY PLACED FIRST ON FRIDAY.

Note.—Tonight's performance will not be marked; the marks allotted last night will stand.

Final adjudication by Miss FRANCES MACKENZIE.

The adjudicator, Miss Frances Mackenzie, considered "A Florentine Tragedy" "an enterprising choice, the play being magnificent theatre. The production never quite came to life, but there was a good climax at the end. The fencing was particularly well rehearsed. She was worried by the "voice beautiful" and suggested that "Bianca (**Dorothy Allen**) acted too much from the head instead of the heart. Guido (**Eric Allen**) was too cold and did not play enough to Bianca. His speech was not strong enough. Simone (**Cyril Thomas**) had style and atmosphere, his timing being excellent."

The winning trophy went to "The Man to be Hanged".

1944

The Importance of Being Earnest

THE QUESTORS THEATRE
MATTOCK LANE, EALING



present

**“THE IMPORTANCE
OF BEING EARNEST”**

A Trivial Comedy for Serious People
by OSCAR WILDE

A SPECIAL PERFORMANCE FOR MEMBERS OF
YOUTH GROUPS ONLY

on
Thursday, October 26th, at 7.30 p.m.
— 9 NOV 1944

TICKETS 1/- each

Nobody, whether seriously or trivially inclined, should miss
the chance of a real good laugh at Wilde's famous comedy!

You may obtain tickets through the Secretary of any recognised
Youth Group, or direct from the General Manager, The Questors
Theatre, Mattock Lane, Ealing, W.5, giving the name of the
organisation of which you are a member.

With the Second World War in full throttle and doodlebugs (in the words of Alfred Emmet) “*affecting us somewhat by definitely retarding the growth of membership, and causing the cancellation of all outstanding theatre lets,*” The Questors soldiered on with a production of **The Importance of Being Earnest** in October 1944.

In fact the original intention had been to put **The Tempest** on in this spot, but it had proved impossible to cast. Alfred insisted it was merely a postponement and that it was hoped to put **The Tempest** on in the following new year. In fact we didn't get round to doing it until 1960.

The Importance of Being Earnest was **Kit Hutchin's** first production and proved to be quite a busy affair. The nature of the times meant that there was a constant switching of roles as members of the cast were called away on military service, evacuated or simply taken ill. Kit herself had to step into the role of **Lady Bracknell** at twenty-four hour's notice. Alfred landed the part of **John Worthing**.

“ THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST ”

Characters in order of appearance :

Lane MICHAEL KELLY

Algernon Moncrieff PHILIP ALLEN

John Worthing ALFRED EMMET

Lady Bracknell EILEEN CLARKE

The Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax
her daughter BETTY MERCY

Cecily Cardew
John Worthing's ward ... MARY CHANTER

Miss Prism
her governess ELEANOR BISHOP

The Rev. Dr. Chasuble BILL BAYLING

Merriman MAURICE BALLINGER

ACT I. Algernon's Flat in Half-Moon Street.

ACT II. The Garden of John Worthing's Country House.

ACT III. The Drawing-Room. A short while afterwards.

The Play Produced by BARBARA HUTCHINS

Stage Manager - - - HERBERT R. LUCAS

Wardrobe Mistresses - - - MILDRED EMMET
HONOR O'NIANS
DIANA KELLY

Settings Designed by

BARBARA HUTCHINS and FRED ROBINSON

*There will be a discussion of this Play at the Theatre on
Monday, October 30th, at 7.30 p.m., to which all members
of the audience are cordially invited. Why not come along
and give us your views and hear the views of others ?*

*Written criticisms of the production are welcomed, and will be
read anonymously at the discussion*

TEA WILL BE SERVED IN THE INTERVALS

QUESTORS IN A CLASSIC

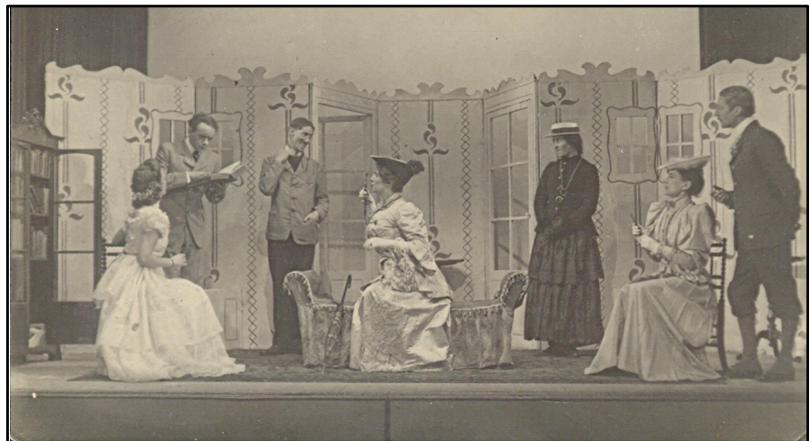
Oscar Wilde Comedy

Oscar Wilde's comedy "The Importance of Being Earnest" was put over with admirable spirit and polish by the Questors at three evening performances and one matinee in their own theatre in Mattock-lane, Ealing, commencing at the week-end.

Mr. Philip Allen and Mr. Alfred Emmet, as the "two Ernests," contributed largely to the success of the performances by their highly stylised exuberance and mastery in the art of imaginative lying. Miss Mary Chanter, in the role of Cicely Cardew, made a delightfully dainty debutante in romance, and Miss Betty Mercy was no less successful in the role of the super-aristocratic Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax, a role which she took to perfection.

Miss Barbara Hutchins, who produced, at short notice also played the part of the haughty society dame, Lady Bracknell, which, owing to illness, Miss Eileen Clarke had to abandon. It could hardly have been better or more pointedly played. Miss Eleanor Bishop and Mr. Bill Bayling were just as funny as it was possible to be in a clerical courtship, most adroitly handled on both sides, and Mr. Michael Kelly and Maurice Ballinger, as butlers, completed the cast.

A matinee will be given this (Saturday) afternoon.



n.c.t. Oct. 28/44

The Production broke box office records with a total audience of 800 for the five main performances, and packed houses for two special performances for local youth groups. The show also became part of the Questors wartime travelling repertoire visiting, amongst other places, a gun site at Wormwood Scrubs - as reported in **A Few Drops of Water:**

"The performers had to share the stage with a couple of camp cats, who behaved impeccably to begin with, sitting one on either side of the stage. As the play progressed, they began to move about and had to be accommodated in the action, one having to be removed from a chair before John Worthing could sit down!"

Overall it was reckoned the show had played to 1600 people - not bad when resources were so tight and there was a war going on.

Our first President, the influential theatre director **John Burrell**, gave the company some invaluable criticism and there was a lively after show discussion, but **Alfred Emmet's** reflections on the production are interesting:

“Opinions have been very much divided. The curious thing is that practically without exception all the unfavourable criticisms (and we had some stinking ones!) were of the performances on the Monday evening and the Saturday afternoon, when the cast had found the audience rather “sticky” and difficult, whereas the general reaction at the other performances seems to have been more favourable. Another curious fact is that the box office returns show that those two particular performances were the occasions when we had the smallest houses. One almost begins to wonder whether it is possible that in trying to “get” a rather cold audience, we may have gone rather severely off the rails and really given performances markedly inferior on those occasions.

“This may I think, be partly true, and in trying to force laughs where we felt they ought to be coming, we may have lost conviction. However that may be, we have certainly gained a lot of very valuable experience from playing this show so often to different audiences. Generally, the show was on the whole undoubtedly a popular success - which means very little; and artistically, I think we have learned many lessons.”

1970 The Importance of Being Earnest

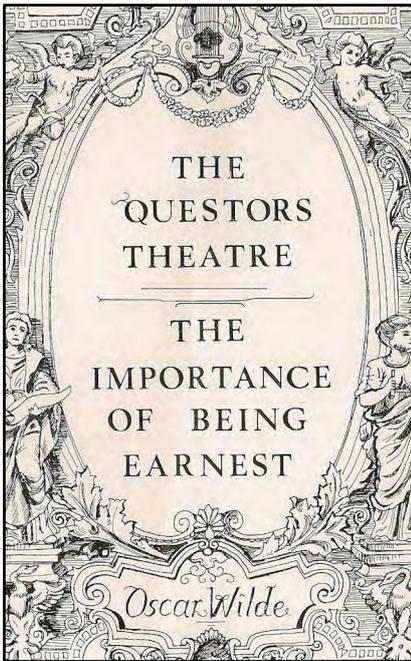


Alfred Emmet directing the 1970 production of **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**.

The set was designed by John Rolfe in the round, partly as an experiment in style and partly to facilitate travelling as it was hoped to take the production to Czechoslovakia - although that visit doesn't appear to have materialised.



The cast included **Mary Hodlin** as Lady Bracknell, **Kit Hutchins** as Miss Prism and **Tony Barber** as Dr Chasuble.



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST
 A trivial comedy for serious people
 by Oscar Wilde

Characters in order of appearance :

Lans, a Manservant	TONY WORTH
Algernon Moncrieff	TOM ELLISON
John Worthing, J.P.	MURRAY JAMIESON
Lady Bracknell	MARY HODLIN
Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax	LESLEY GOLDIE
Miss Prism, a Governess	BARBARA HUTCHINS
Cecily Cardew	ALEXANDRA GWYNN-JONES
Rev. Canon Chasuble, D.D.	ANTHONY BARBER
Merriman, a Butler	GRAHAM HOWARD
A Parlourmaid	GAYNOR ALDCROFT

Act I Algernon Moncrieff's flat in Half Moon Street, W.
 INTERVAL OF 15 MINUTES
 (A warning bell will be rung 3 minutes before the play recommences)

Act II The garden at the Manor House, Woolton.
Act III Drawing room at the Manor House, Woolton.
 TIME: Summer, 1895

The play directed by **ALFRED EMMET**
 Assisted by **TONY WORTH**
 Designed by **JOHN ROLFE**

Stage Manager	JACKIE CHAMBERLAIN
Deputy Stage Manager	COLIN FOX
Assistant Stage Managers	LIZ SABEY, PETER MANSBRIDGE
Construction	JOHN ROLFE
Wardrobe	GILL EDWARDS, VAL HILL, MARIE KETTLE, JACQUELINE LEARNER
Properties	JACKIE HARRIS
Assisted by	KATH HARRINGTON
Lighting	DAVID CHAMBERLAIN
Assisted by	PETER TRIGG, RICHARD BROADHURST
Sound	FRANK WOOD
Assistants in all departments	MIKE BRACE, TIM HAKINS, MARYON BORGONON, HILARY BRANKIN, FRED DOWSE, CES FERRARI, DECLAN DONNELLAN, BARRY HANCOX

Sandwiches and coffee are available in the Bernard Shaw Room before performances and refreshments will be served there during the interval.

Members of the audience are requested to refrain from smoking in the Auditorium.



Mary Hodlin (Lady Bracknell) was invited to introduce the production in the pages of QUESTOPICS:

After some hours of thought and a little research I decided that **Oscar Wilde** was the best person to publicise his last play and masterpiece **The Importance of Being Earnest** —A Trivial Comedy for Serious People. Here are some extracts from letters written by him which are about the play:

To: **George Alexander**

From: St. James Theatre. July 1894

The real charm of the play, if it is to have charm, must be in the dialogue. The plot is slight, but I think adequate well, I think an amusing thing with lots of fun and wit might be made.

To: **Lord Alfred Douglas**

From: 5 Esplanade, Worthing. August 1894

I have been doing nothing here but bathing and playwriting. My play is really very funny; I am quite delighted with it.

To: **George Alexander**, St. James Theatre.

From: Worthing. September 1894

I can't make out what could have become of your letter. I thought from your silence that you thought the play too farcical in incident for a Comedy Theatre like your own. I would like to have my play done by you. I may mention that the play is an ADMIRABLE PLAY.

To: **George Alexander**

From: Tite Street. October 1894

As you wished to see my somewhat farcical comedy I send you the first copy of it. It is called LADY LANCING on the cover, but the real title is THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST.

To: **Arthur L. Humphreys**

The First Night — February 14th, 1895

I enclose you a stall for the 14th — the last to be got! I hope you will enjoy my 'trivial' play. It is written by a butterfly for butterflies.

What of the critics who attended the first performance on February 14th, 1895?

It was the only time that **G. B. Shaw** made an ass of himself as a critic; perhaps he did not read the sub-title! This is part of what he wrote —

The general effect is that of a farcical comedy dating from the seventies, unplayed during that period because it was too clever and too decent and brought up-to-date as far possible by Mr. Wilde in his now completely formed style. I find other critics declaring that it could never have been written but for the opening up of entirely new paths in drama last year by ARMS AND THE MAN at which I confess to a chuckle'.

The writer who best expresses the delight experienced by those first-nighters in 1895 is Max Beerbohm who says: *Despite the scheme of the play, the fun depends mainly on what the characters say, rather than on what they do. They speak a kind of beautiful nonsense—the language of high comedy twisted into fantasy. To preserve its style fully, the dialogue must be spoken with grave unctiousness. The sound and sense of the words must be taken seriously, treated beautifully'.*

Alfred Emmet will produce with his usual meticulous care and make sure that his actors portraying the characters will, to quote John Gielgud: *Utter their delicious cadences and spin their web of preposterous sophistication.*

The action of the play will take place in the round. Do you remember how successful **Uncle Vanya** was played in this way?



A delightful set and costumes have been designed by **John Rolfe**.



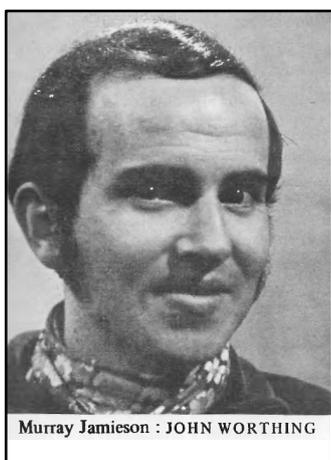
Alexandra Gwynne-Jones : CECILY

There are four new acting members in the cast...

Alexandra Gwynne-Jones, who studied drama in Cape Town and has worked in the professional theatre, plays Cecily Cardew; **Lesley Goldie**, who has delighted Questors audiences as Solveig and Desdemona is Gwendolen Fairfax. **Barbara Hutchins**—Mrs Candour in that most successful production of *School for Scandal*, plays Miss Prism, and **Gaynor Aldcroft** is both parlour maid and understudy.



Lesley Goldie : GWENDOLEN



Murray Jamieson : JOHN WORTHING

Murray Jamieson from Sydney, Australia is John Worthing, and Tom Ellison of Middlesex — Algernon Moncrief. Tony Barber is Canon Chasuble. The men-servants are played by Graham Howard and Tony Worth — Tony is also associate producer.



Tom Ellison : ALGERNON

I must add two pieces of information which give me pleasure:

Ada Leverson, a friend of Wilde's, wrote an article for *Punch* which was a skit on *The Importance*. It was entitled *The Advisability of not being brought up in a Handbag — A trivial tragedy for wonderful People*';

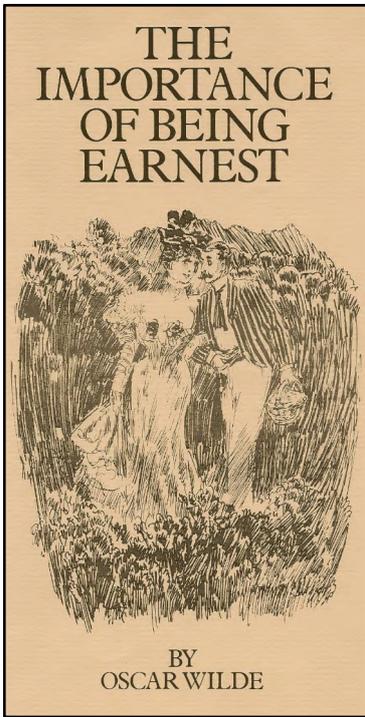
and this lovely Victorian Precept —

*'Servants talk about People;
Gentlefolk discuss Things'.*

MARY HODLIN
p.p. Augusta Bracknell

1984

The Importance of Being Earnest



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

Written by Oscar Wilde
Directed by John Wilson
Designed by Beth Crowley
Cast includes: Tony Barber, Heather Godley, Gavin McQueen, Vivienne Patterson

Performances:
 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 Oct.
 at 7.45pm
 in the Playhouse

Like children always wanting to hear the same favourite bedtime story, it's always a pleasure to renew acquaintance with Oscar Wilde's sparkling comedy. Perhaps the most sublime comedy in the English language, the humour is sharp with vitriol, and the romance has the weightless texture of a marshmallow — a satire on English manners as only an Irishman could write it! So as the nights draw in, come Bunburying with us back to those endless Victorian summer-afternoons, when cucumbers cannot be had even for ready money, when large handbags are lost and found in station cloakrooms, and when young gentlemen and young ladies fall earnestly in love all in the twinkling of an eye.

**THE QUESTORS
 THEATRE COMPANY**
First performance October 6th 1984

"Exquisitely trivial, a delicate bubble of fancy, and it has its philosophy: we should treat all the trivial things of life very seriously and all the serious things of life with sincere and studied triviality" — so, wrote Oscar Wilde about *The Importance of Being Earnest* — probably the wittiest comedy in the English language: it is certainly the least earnest.

"A trivial comedy for serious people" — a play about the only subject Oscar Wilde would admit to taking seriously — wit, elegance, and paradox. The genius of the greatest conversationalist of his day has been preserved in the framework of this play.

Before its first production Wilde wrote to George Alexander, the eventual producer "The real charm of the play, if it is to have a charm, must be the dialogue. The plot is slight, but I think adequate. An amusing thing with lots of fun and wit might be made. If you think so too and care to have the refusal of it, do let me know and send me £150. If when the play is finished you think it too slight — not serious enough — of course you can have the £150 back".

The first night on 14th February 1895 brought triumph and acclaim — Wilde once said "I never write plays for anyone. I write plays to amuse myself. Later, if anyone wants to act in them, I sometimes allow him to do so".

Oscar Wilde was arrested in April 1895. A month later, after two trials, he was sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labour for homosexuality.* After serving his sentence he went into exile and died in Paris in November, 1900. He was 46 years old.

"I am sorry my play is boycotted by the press. However I hope some of the faithful, and all the elect, will buy copies. If you hear anything nice said about the play, write to me; if not invent it."
Oscar Wilde (after his arrest).

* The Oxford Companion to the Theatre.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

*A trivial comedy for serious people
 by OSCAR WILDE*

Characters in order of appearance

Lane (*Mr. Moncrieff's man-servant*) . . . Neville Bradbury
 Algernon Moncrieff Gavin McQueen
 John Worthing (*of the Manor House,
 Woolton, Hertfordshire*) Tony Barber
 Lady Bracknell Heather Godley
 Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax
 (*her daughter*) Vivienne Patterson
 Cecily Cardew (*John Worthing's ward*) . . . Alison Wilson
 Miss Prism Paulina Nichol
 Rev. Canon Chasuble (*Rector of Woolton*) Ken Ratcliffe
 Merriman (*Butler to Mr. Worthing*) Peter Holmes
 Footman Chris Waldock*
 Maid Linda Buxton

* Chris Waldock is a member of the Questors Student Group.

Directed by John Wilson
Sets designed by Beth Crowley
Lighting designed by Martin Stoner
Costumes designed by Stella Bond
Sound by Tony Swaby

Music used in this production: Bach's Overture, Suite No. 2.

ACT I
 Algernon Moncrieff's Rooms in Piccadilly.

ACT II
 The Garden at the Manor House, Woolton.

ACT III
 The Morning-Room at the Manor House, Woolton.

THE ACTION OF THE PLAY IS SET IN 1895.

There will be TWO intervals of 15 minutes and 10 minutes respectively.
 The performance, including intervals will last approximately two and a half hours.

Set Construction — Neville Gillett
assisted by — Gordon Miller & Roger Sturm

Properties — Iris Phelps
assisted by — Glyn Backshall

Wardrobe — Mary Angus, Stella Bond, Anne Gilmour, Lesley Harris, Jackie Hulbert, Julie Matthews, Valerie Palmer, Sue Peckitt, Edith Rickett, Gail Sharp, Nikki Tait

Lighting Operator — Liz Wood
 Sound Operator — Tony Swaby
 Wigs & Make-up — Julie Cruttenden and members of the 'Greasepaint' course

Stage Management — Brian McLoughlin, Jenny Richardson, Caroline Bleakley, Linda Buxton, Wendi Harrison, Friedl Landau, Elizabeth Marshall, Clare McKeown, Gordon Miller, David Palmer, Jeremy Scottowe, Roger Sturm, Tracey Tomlinson

Flowers and Garden Decorations — Chris Brandt

With thanks to Cecily Blyther, Pauline Garrett, Colin Horne, Joe Phelps and Geoff Moore

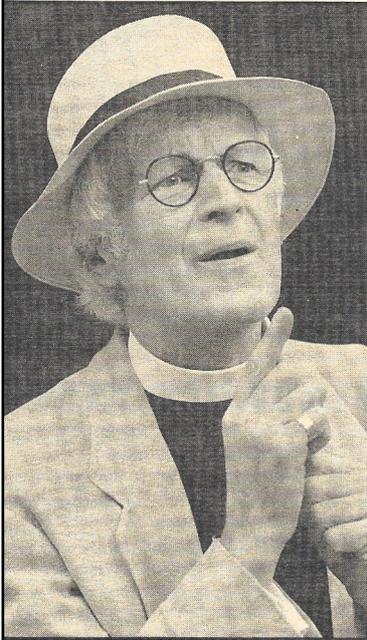
Bread and cakes provided by Clark's (Ealing) Ltd.

Plants provided by Barralets (Ealing) and Parks Department, London Borough of Ealing

Ken collars the religious roles

84

By Sue Blackhall



Ken Ratcliffe in *The Importance of Being Earnest*

CANON character player Ken Ratcliffe is fired with enthusiasm for his religious roles.

When he stars as Dr Chasuble in the Questors' new production, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, he'll be completing a hat-trick of dog-collar performances.

So luckily for Ken, a Questors player for 22 years, he wasn't sticking his neck out when he invested in his very own dog-collar for his first ecclesiastical part.

Collared

"I bought it when I was in *Habes Corpus* so that I had one that wasn't choking me, but I didn't expect to be using it quite so much afterwards," said Ken, who took the role of Canon Throbbing.

He then took on the role of Canon Spratte in *Loaves and Fishes*.

Which means he really has collared the market in the clerical field.

But Ken, who lives in Windmill Road, Ealing, said: "I enjoy playing all kinds of parts."

"I think the only reason I was offered a part in *Loaves and Fishes* was because I added a note to my casting slip saying 'Have dog-collar, can play!'"

Ken dons his collar tomorrow night for the opening performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, at The Questors Theatre in Mattock Lane, Ealing.



Classic wit lasts the test of time

MANY so-called classic comedies fail to live up to their promise of timeless humour but not this Oscar Wilde satire written in the final years of the last century.

Line after memorable line are still as exquisitely funny as they ever were and a packed audience at the Questors loved every minute of it.

Many of Wilde's witticisms have been quoted, and misquoted, down the years and much of the play is probably familiar to people who have never even seen it.

The plot is unlikely but it is Wilde's satirical look at English social graces that dominates the play — everyone desperately trying to be something they aren't really, from the double lives led

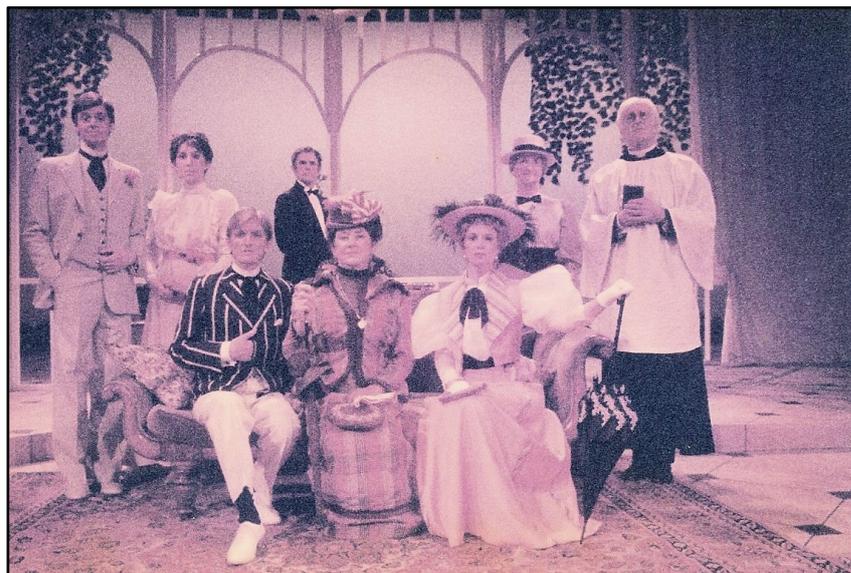
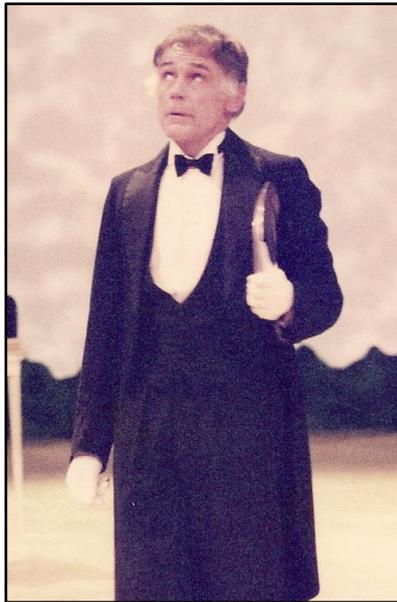
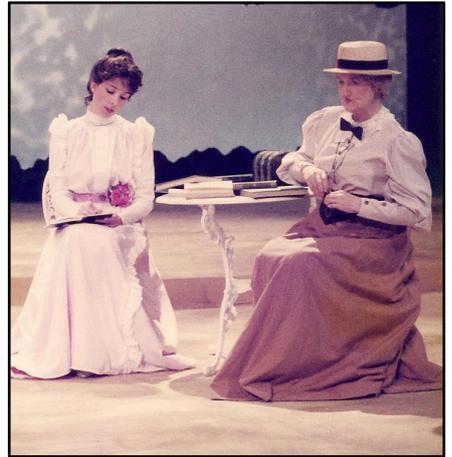
The Importance of Being Earnest Questors Theatre

by the two main characters Algernon and Jack (well played by Gavin McQueen and Tony Barber) to Cecily's engagement to a man she hasn't met and who doesn't really even exist.

In a play littered with wit Heather Godley puts in a suitably over-the-top performance as Lady Bracknell.

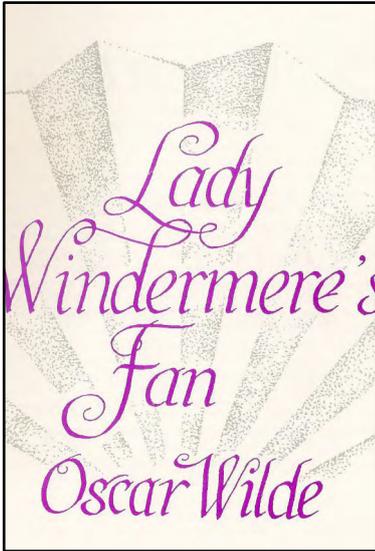
Alison Wilson as Cecily and Vivienne Patterson as Gwendolen play out a marvellous scene in which their attitude to each other changes from friendship to hatred and back to sisterly love as they sort out just who they are in love with.

Ian Tasker



1993

Lady Windermere's Fan



When first produced in 1892 **Lady Windermere's Fan** was an instant hit and was hailed as the wittiest play in English since **The School For Scandal**. Wilde himself, when asked how the play was doing, replied, "*Capitally. I am told that Royalty is turned away nightly*". The best critics called the play a masterpiece, and though a few carped it was more about Wilde himself and his character than the play. One suspects they might have heard Wilde's remark that, "*I am told the London critics can be bought. Perhaps they can, but, judging from their appearance, they cannot be at all expensive*".

The play has been frequently revived since and, after *Earnest*, is Wilde's most often performed and best-loved comedy. Audiences never cease to be fascinated

by the story of Lady Windermere, her errant fan, her seemingly errant husband, her would-be lover, Lord Darlington, and her — but that would be telling!

When one adds to these such splendid characters as the Duchess of Berwick (a prototype for Lady Bracknell), her "chatterbox" of a daughter with her rich, but Australian, suitor, and an array of witty Society gentlemen and bitchy Society ladies (in all a cast of twenty-four, all of whom are on stage together for the dazzling ballroom scene) one can understand its popularity.

Our production is directed by **Steve Fitzpatrick**, whose best-remembered productions include **Tartuffe**, **Dr. Faustus** and **Aristophanes' Wealth**. He is joined by the experienced design team of **John Rolfe**, who is responsible for the elegant set, **Celia Dowell**, who has designed the sumptuous costumes, and **Andrew Dixon**, who will light both to their best advantage.

As for the cast, it is almost a roll-call of top Questors talent, headed by **Gillian Kerswell** as Mrs. Erlynne, **Anne Renn** as the formidable Duchess of Berwick, **Jane Backlog** as Lady Agatha and, making her Questors debut, **Amanda Aldred** as Lady Windermere.

Sparkling wit, powerful drama and a dazzling feast for the eyes, what more could one ask for as the perfect entertainment for a Spring evening?

VIEWS FROM THE BACK ROW

I think the play got the production it deserved. Sumptuous costumes, dinky little umbrellas, hats! When, after the night before, we were back with the original set the costume department might have relaxed, but no, on came Lady W a vision in violet and her mother luscious in lilac. The text was handled with equally loving care. I thought it started a touch slowly, but settled to a good pace which allowed excellent diction from everyone. I hate that gabble which announces "we are getting over the boring bit as fast as we can", and there was none of that here.



Lady W had the necessary wide-eyed sincerity and Lord W looked correctly hag-ridden, as anyone should who has been under the threat of blackmail for six months. He seemed well in control of his coat-tails and should have given lessons on the subject to Lord Darlington. I can't recall having seen Robert Jones before.

Gillian Kerswell we certainly have seen before, and this may well have been her best ever performance. Lesser characters were nicely done without hamming. Anne Renn gave us a sort of Edith Evans rendering of the Duchess with "Australia" as her personal handbag. This was 1892 and Wilde was the toast of London. With this production you can see why.

Hilary Potts

Women on top in Wilde's moral tale

Lady Windermere's Fan, Questors Theatre, Mattock Lane, Ealing, until tomorrow (Saturday).

LADY Windermere's Fan was Oscar Wilde's first play to be produced. It is a work on many levels, a comedy, social satire and melodrama that at times almost descends into a kind of Victorian bedroom farce.

Questors Theatre company make an ambitious effort in staging a complex play concerning the moral dilemma of a group of aristocrats faced with the spectre of a fallen woman in their midst.

It seems that Victorian society was particularly obsessed with that unfortunate breed 'the bad woman'. It was an obsession that manifested itself in cruelty and disdain from fellow women, perhaps a way of retaining their own fragile hold on respectability, and a mixture of outrage and curiosity from the men.

Wilde wrote excellent parts for women, strong individualists with razor sharp wits who seem to have no problem in getting the better of the morally bankrupt men. As the Duchess of Berwick so casually explains to the naive Lady Windermere, "All men are monsters".

Like Wilde's later work *A Woman of No Im-*

portance, we find women sacrificed on the alter of society's double standards, in this case the infamous Mrs Erlynne who attempts to make amends for her sin and gain readmittance into the society that banished her. Her crime is abandoning her faithless husband.

The exquisitely costumed cast, who cope admirably with the verbal pyrotechnics of Wilde's highly quotable wit, are resourcefully directed by Steve Fitzpatrick, who assuredly recreates the two-faced, locker room mentality of the prejudiced males.

This entertaining evening has notable performances, particularly from the women. Anne Renn as the Duchess of Berwick, Gillian Kerswell as Mrs Erlynne and Derek Chandler as Lord Augustus were all memorable. **Gayle Westgate**

LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN

by Oscar Wilde

First performance of this production Saturday, April 24th 1993

CAST in order of appearance

Lady Windermere	AMANDA ALDRED
Parker (<i>Butler</i>)	BYRON TODD
Lord Darlington	ROBERT JONES
The Duchess of Berwick	ANNE RENN
Lady Agatha Carlisle	JANE BACKLOG
Lord Windermere	PETER GARDINER
Rosalie (<i>Maid</i>)	HELEN GEORGIU
Lady Plymdale	ANNABEL FISHER
Mr Dumby	DAVID PHILLIPS
Lady Stutfield	KATY BEARD
Sir James Royston	ROGER DOUGLAS
Mr Guy Berkeley	JULIAN TURNER
Mr Rufford	TOM HAMPTON
Lady Jcdburgh	JO AUSTIN
Miss Graham	ALEXANDRA TISON
Mr Hopper	JERRY MORETON
Lord Augustus Lorton	DEREK CHANDLER
Mr Cecil Graham	RICHARD SHELTON
Mrs Erlynn	GILLIAN KERSWELL

ACT I

The Morning-room in Lord Windermere's house

ACT II

A Reception-room in Lord Windermere's house

INTERVAL OF FIFTEEN MINUTES

ACT III

Lord Darlington's rooms

ACT IV

The same as Act I

TIME

1892

PLACE

London

The action of the play takes place within twenty-four hours, beginning on a Tuesday afternoon at five o'clock, and ending the next day at 1.30 p.m.

THE PLAYHOUSE IS EQUIPPED WITH AN INFRA-RED SOUND TRANSMISSION SYSTEM FOR USE BY PEOPLE WITH HEARING DIFFICULTIES. To obtain a headset please contact the duty house manager.

The Playhouse is equipped with a lift for the benefit of those with mobility problems. The Questors acknowledges the generosity of the ADAPT fund in making this possible.

PRODUCTION

Directed by	STEVE FITZPATRICK
Designed by	JOHN ROLFE
Costumes designed by	CELIA DOWELL
Lighting Designed by	TIM HAYWARD
Sound Design by	NAT TURNER, NIGEL WORSLEY
Stage Manager	JO BOOTH
Deputy Stage Manager	KATY GALLANTRY
Assistant Stage Managers	COLIN BELL, CHARLOTTE EATON, SIMON GREEN, AMRIT MAHAL, ROB MCGREGOR, JERRY MORETON, MARK PHILLIPS, ALWENA WILLIAMS
Lighting Operator	TRISH FOX
Lighting Rigger	JAMES MILLMAN
Wardrobe	LORAIN COESHOTT, ALICE CORRIGAN, EILEEN COX, GRACE CRADDOCK, JANE GOTTS, JOAN GRIFFIN, CORINNE NIELD, VALERIE PALMER
Properties	JAY SARWAR, CLARE WARREN
Wigs and Make-up	JACQUELINE CROPPER, SARAH FRY, CAROLYNE MARTINI, SEVDA HUSEYIN
Dance Advisor	DIANA NESBITT
Construction	COLIN BELL, BOB ATKINSON, BERNARD MCRORY
Prompter	GORDON MILLER

With thanks to John Webster, Gordon Miller, Joy McQuade, Jackie Dover,
Lights on Broadway, W13 Antiques, Barbara Blake, Jim Craddock,
Roger Brace, Martin Stoner, The Ladies of Pins and Needles, Brad Askew,
Paul Worsley, Strand, Sussex House, Phil Pinkham



1993 Vera or The Nihilists

Rehearsed Reading
Sunday 23rd May
 7.45pm Foyer

VERA
 by Oscar Wilde
 directed by David Gowman

In the sweltering summer of 1883, Wilde's early play, *Vera*, full of revolutionary zeal spiced with reactionary wit, roused the New York audience to cries of "Author!"

Assassinations, Siberia, masked conspirators, a thrilling heroine: Wilde gave this play the works. It is still an exciting piece, with the authentic Wildean flavour surfacing in the Czar's villainous Prime Minister: "Heaven is a despotism, I shall be at home there".

Forget the fans and handbags, if you find Wilde fun, and haven't got a heart of stone, come to this reading. Wilde's Russia is just the place to be on a May evening. The *New York Sun* proclaimed it "A masterpiece", but London seems never to have seen it. It's time we did.

Admission by programme, 50p

or
The Nihilists

by
Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900)
 premiere in New York, August 1883 - the author was 29

Scenes

Prologue: On the way to Siberia; an inn run by Vera's father.
 Act 1 Five years later, the nihilists meet in Moscow
 Act 2 The court of the Czar
Interval
 Act 3 The Nihilists' garret
 Act 4 The Czar's ante chamber

Characters

Prologue	Old Peter, Vera's father, an Innkeeper Michael, in love with Vera Vera, Dmitri, her brother Colonel Kotemkin, soldiers, prisoners	Dennis Adams Peter Gardiner Cecily Blyther
Nihilists	Some of those above and some unnamed, plus: Alexis Their President, Professor Marfa General Kotemkin	Nigel Lawrence
At Court	Prince Paul, Prime Minister The Czar Prince Petrovitch, Count Rouvaloff, Marquis de Poivard, Baron Raff etc...	Robin Ingram Ken Ratcliffe <i>Peter Knight</i>

Czar Alexander II was assassinated by Nihilist Revolutionaries in March 1881. a proposed production of the play at the Adelphi was cancelled 'because of the present state of political feeling'. Wilde had met the new Czar, whose wife was a sister of the Princess of Wales. Wilde crossed for the New York production; but he would wait until the nineties for his theatrical successes.

Wilson Knight, in *The Golden Labyrinth*, surprises one with his enthusiasm: 'Wilde has left nothing else so good, at least in conception ... Scene on scene has power; characterisation is excellent, rhetoric is adequate, the dialogue often crisp and the romance moving. Without sentiment or propaganda a full consciousness of European politics and sociology is felt to be in control. The opposition of the stern and cold revolutionaries and the heartless brilliance of the aristocracy is replaced by Alexander's will to build from his marriage a reign serving his people'. After this Wilde was more inclined to wear his heart in his buttonhole.

Rehearsed Reading Sunday May 23rd 1993
 Admission by programme 50p

1999

A Woman of No Importance

In the Playhouse
A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE

An intriguing and witty comedy drama of social scandal and a woman's concealed past.

The setting is a weekend party at Lady Hunstanton's country house. When Gerald Arbuthnot is elevated from bank clerk to become secretary to the dashing and amoral Lord Illingworth, why is everyone delighted but his mother? What secret has isolated her for twenty years and makes Gerald unfit for this golden opportunity? In a gentrified world, where dalliances, liaisons and adultery are everyday fare, what happens when real shame is loudly exposed and the past starkly revealed in the present?

Thrusting through some of Wilde's wittiest dialogue is a story of social hypocrisy and a powerful struggle of the sexes. A drama of late Victorian society which still echoes poignantly one hundred years after it was written.



THEATRE **REVIEW** 1999

THEATRE **No Oscar winner**

A Woman of No Importance
 Questors Theatre
 Ealing

OSCAR WILDE wrote this sparkling, witty comedy in 1893 when his affair with his beloved Bosie, Lord Alfred Douglas was at its height. His undoubted personal happiness is revealed in the lightness of touch, particularly in a joyous first act. The plot centres on Lord Illingworth (Piers Whibley) who has employed young Gerald Arbuthnot (David Boyle) as his personal secretary, unaware that he is his illegitimate son. When the secret is revealed and Gerald insists his parents marry, Lord Illingworth is initially reluctant but eventually agrees.

When he visits Gerald's mother and proposes, she rejects him. Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the actor/manager of the Haymarket Theatre where the play was premiered, commissioned the work. Wilde made it clear to Beerbohm Tree that he had based Lord Illingworth on himself and thus ensured the character got all the best lines, which are delivered, in the main, with languid confidence by Whibley. Many of the witticisms will be familiar, for instance Wilde's description of foxhunting being "the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uncatchable". The most enjoyable part of this production is the verbal sparring between Illingworth and society

belle Mrs Allonby played with flashing eyes by Sarah Morrison. Chris Storer is engagingly eccentric as Lord Alfred Rufford and Anne Neville imparts the required grandness as Lady Hunstanton. Margaret Turner is a little disappointing as the ill-used Mrs Arbuthnot, but she was not helped by director Ian Amos, who allowed her to play most of the part with her back to the audience. And why, it must be asked, has designer James Rolfe used such a large open stage which adds nothing to what is essentially a drawing-room comedy drama? The Questors has done better than this!

Terry Bellamy

A Woman of No Importance

by Oscar Wilde
First performance of this production Saturday 27th February 1999

Cast

in order of appearance

<p>Lady Caroline Pontefract Miss Hester Worsley Sir John Pontefract Lady Hunstanton Francis, butler to Lady Hunstanton Gerard Arbuthnot Mrs Allonby Lady Stutfield Mr Kelvil M.P. Lord Illingworth Lord Alfred Rufford Mrs Arbuthnot The Ven. Archdeacon Daubeny Alice, maid to Mrs Arbuthnot</p>	<p>Grace Craddock Vicki Butler John Martin Anne Neville Brian Ingram David Boyie Sarah Morrison Clare Mitchell Richard Dunkerley Piers Whibley Chris Storer Margaret Turner Derek Chardler Lynn Jackson</p>
---	---

Act ONE Lawn in front of the terrace of Hunstanton. Late afternoon, early Autumn.
Act TWO Drawing Room at Hunstanton. Later that day. After dinner.
There will be a interval of 20 minutes
Act THREE The picture Gallery at Hunstanton. Later that same evening.
Act FOUR Sitting-room at Mrs Arbuthnot's. The next morning.

PRODUCTION

<p>Director Stage Manager Designer Lighting Design Lighting Operator Costume Design Wardrobe Assistants Construction Flying Sound Design Sound Operator Deputy Stage Manager Properties Stage Management Crew Rehearsal Prompt Voice Workshops Hester's Painting Make-up/wigs</p>	<p>Ian Amos Katy Gallantry James Rolfe Chris Newall Mark Long Emma Harman Lydia Akonas, Anna Josiff, Donna Tomkins Jim Caithness, Peter Collins, Jim Craddock, Richard Kelly, John Rolfe, Celia Wenbane Smith Eric Lister Nigel Worsley Nick Malewski Dinah Squire Sophie Thorpe Giles Brown, Neil Holmes, Lynn Jackson, Katie Longhurst, Matthew Lyons, Karen Richardson, John Rolfe, Jonathan Rose, Lesley Wilkins Gordan Miller Brian Ingram Adrienne Talbot Rosie Elms, Kathryn Leibou</p>
---	--

Thanks to
Bentalls of Ealing, Cargo of Ealing, Charlie Lucas, Karen Milburn, Kate Smith,
Ealing Health and Racquets Club, Alison Salter, Katherine Salter, Francis Lloyd and Scruffy
Music: Piano Quintet in A minor, Op. 84 by Sir Edward Elgar
Polka (Grand Duo for Violin and Piano) by Lou Harrison
Poster/programme image based on Mrs Joshua Montgomery Sears by John Singer Sargent



2009

The Importance of Being Earnest



The Importance of Being Earnest

The darling of society who stood before an adoring audience on 14th February 1895 at the St James's Theatre would, within only three months have become a convicted criminal. In five years he would be dead.

Wilde's reputation has since been handed back to him by history and the ignominy of his last years has been transformed into a tragedy visited upon him by late Victorian prudery rather than the deserved consequence of scandalous immorality.

The truth is, of course, not so black-and-white. If not the actual architect of his own downfall, Wilde was at least supremely arrogant in his careless attitude to danger. **The Importance of Being Earnest** contains many hidden references to a private life that was teetering on the brink. Some of them are, perhaps,

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

by Oscar Wilde

The Playhouse
18 April – 25 April 2009

THE COMPANY

Algernon Moncrieff	Nick Moorhead
Lane	Tony Diggle
John Worthing	Robert Seatter
Gwendolen Fairfax	Juliet Vaughan Turner
Lady Bracknell	Richard Gallagher
Cecily Cardew	Rebecca Pitt
Miss Prism	Anne Neville
Dr. Chasuble	Anthony Curran
Merriman	Adam Sutcliffe
Mr. Gribbsby	James Goodden

Act One: The morning room in Algernon Moncrieff's flat, Half Moon Street, London

Act Two: The garden at the Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire.

Director	Francis Lloyd
Set Designer	Alison Gregory
Lighting Designer	Nigel Lewis
Sound Designer	Ben Garside
Costume Designer	Raymonde Childe
Stage Manager	Michelle Weaver
Deputy Stage Manager	Olivia Howard
Assistant Stage Managers	Bernard Brady
	George Duane
	Mel Pereria
	Victoria Phillips
	Antonio Scaramuzzino
Properties	Harriet Parsonage
Wardrobe	Jean Derby
	Nichola Thomas
	Pam Smith
	Therese Andersson
	Rebecca Mitchell
	Sue Peckitt
	Sylvia Stirling
	Allison Simmons
	Natasha Farooq
	Astrid Sarkissian
Set construction	Clive Whitcroft
	Gordon Miller
	John Howe
Sound Operator	Geoffrey Morgan
Poster	Ian Cole
Photography	Peter Collins
Hair & make-up	Tanya Barlow
	Emma Pritchard

subconscious; some are coded and some simply expedient (such as the name Worthing, which is where Wilde and his lover, **Lord Alfred Douglas**, were staying when he wrote it).

Earnest is subtitled **A Trivial Comedy For Serious People** and, though this could simply be one more of the many inverted aphorisms that pepper the script, it is perhaps worth dwelling on whether it should be taken more literally. Wilde's greatest love affair had to remain hidden yet he was venerated for what amounted to the clever party trick of being able to "come up with a good line": the serious is trivial and the trivial is serious. Thus, Gwendolen and Cecily fall in love with a name and are quite prepared to abandon the actual person if that person transpires to be called something else.

Unsurprisingly - and certainly not uniquely - Wilde's own prejudices, likes and dislikes come through in his writing. You can see his horror of age, his fatal adoration of youth and beauty and his delight at a neat phrase or clever joke. In his portrayal of the upper classes he gives us characters that are scheming, manipulative, vain, avaricious and mendacious; could this have been how he actually saw the people around him?

It is likely that Wilde's reputation was sacrificed in place of the prime minister, **Lord Rosebery**'s. Rosebery had an affair with Lord Alfred's older brother who had later - it was rumoured - committed suicide. (And this would certainly account for the rabid attitude of the young men's father, the **Marquis of Queensberry**.) However, in 1895, another way homosexuality threatened the social structure was by transcending the class barrier. In the play, Worthing's inscribed cigarette case is similar to many Wilde gave to lower-class male prostitutes. (Doing so, he flirted with blackmail and provided some of the evidence that was used against him at his trials.)





Whether he was thumbing his nose at danger, sharing a private joke with friends or nodding and winking to those in the know, he seems to have taken an almost childish delight in smuggling gay references onto the West End stage.

“Earnest” (used as an adjective and with an “a”) and *“Cecily”* were slang words for homosexuality; *“morbidity”* (for which *“Bunbury”* is “well-punished” by his death) was a more widely used euphemism, as was *“social legislation”*, which referred to the move to change the laws regarding sex between men. The invented word, *“Bunburying”* - referring to Algernon's fictional invalid who is his excuse for escaping to the country - could easily be read as a euphemism for illegal sex of any kind or homosexuality specifically. It's tempting to read things into the line *“A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.”* Indeed, Wilde had his own *“Bunbury”*, which was his work: his sexual adventures were protected by the excuse of needing peace and quiet to write, away from his wife and children.

In this version of the play, some of the original cuts have been restored. In it, we meet **Gribsby**, who arrives to arrest *“Ernest”* for debt. The amount - £762 14s 2d - is almost exactly what Wilde owed to the Savoy at the time of writing and it is indeed astounding to consider how blatantly he conducted his highly dangerous *“Bunburying”* in such public and *“respectable”* places.

Other lines, names and places more prosaically reflect the conditions under which the play was written. They are of interest to those seeking to link the trajectory of Wilde's disgrace to this, his most frivolous and apparently light-hearted work. For instance, the names of some of **Lady Bracknell's** social circle refer to actual people. More interestingly, her name is arrived at from Lord Alfred's mother who came from Bracknell.

Another reinstated cut refers to a book, **The Green Carnation**, about *“the culture of exotics”*. The green carnation was a symbol of the aesthetic movement - young men who, as **W.S. Gilbert** put it, would *“walk down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily in [their] medieval hand”*. Wilde remains the most famous of these and is the prototype of **Bunthorne** in *Patience*. Gilbert, in turn, possibly provided inspiration for *Ernest*, both with his play **Engaged** and in the nonsensical plots of the Savoy operettas. (The lost baby is a very Gilbertian idea.)

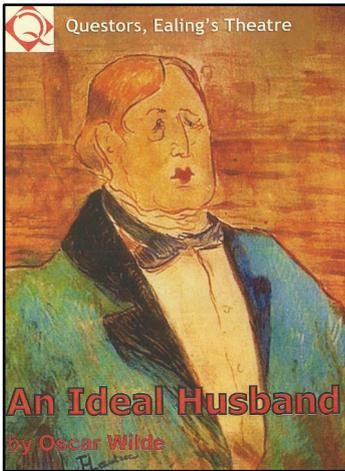
Incidentally, Sir George Alexander, the original producer, was responsible for the version of *Ernest* that is most often done and it was he who cut the fourth act. Wilde objected. *“What does that matter if it's wasted?”* Alexander said. *“You are clever enough to think of a hundred things just as good.”* *“Of course I am,”* Wilde replied. *“But that is not the point. This scene that you feel is superfluous cost me terrible, exhausting labour and heart-rending strain. You may not believe me, but I assure you that it must have taken fully five minutes to write.”*

When he is told that *“Ernest”* has expressed a desire to be buried in Paris, **Chasuble** fears that it *“... hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last.”* This was prophetic: Wilde died and is buried in Paris. **The Importance of Being Earnest** written in a hurry at this cataclysmic time in his life - remains his most popular work. Unlike Miss Prism's *“revoltingly sentimental”* novel, it manages to avoid the earnest sentiment of his earlier plays. It is as hard and sparkling as a diamond; it is seriously slight and slightly serious. We hope you enjoy it.



2014

An Ideal Husband



A greedy politician is trying to avoid a scandal after selling government secrets to make his fortune.

Will his political career be ruined? Or can he hush it up by doing a deal with the one person who knows the truth?

It has all the ingredients of one of those clever Westminster thrillers we see on television, where the plot is inspired by the misdemeanours of present-day politicians.

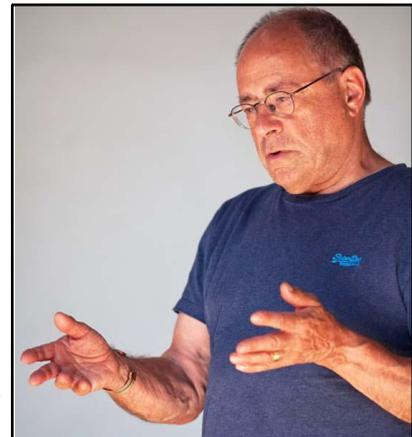
But remarkably, this story was first brought to the stage by Oscar Wilde in 1895.

More than a century later, **An Ideal Husband** is being revived as the first production of the new season at The Questors Theatre in Ealing.

At the centre of the plot is a distinguished parliamentarian, a man with an unblemished reputation and an adoring wife who thinks he can do no wrong. Then an error of judgement from his past comes back to haunt him. He might just be able to prevent the story being made public.

But can his wife ever forgive him, a man she thought was perfect?

The director of The Questors production, **Paul Collins**, believes present-day audiences will have no difficulty spotting the parallels between Wilde's play and public life today.



Paul Collins



"An Ideal Husband *cries out to be placed in a contemporary setting,*" he says. *"Its themes of political and financial corruption, blackmail and hypocrisy can hardly be less topical than they were in 1895."*

So the Victorian setting of the play has been abandoned, and the action has been moved to the present day. The story is essentially the same, but some modern political references have been worked into the script to heighten its contemporary resonance.

Paul Collins thinks **Oscar Wilde** would approve of this updated version for the 21st Century.

"An Ideal Husband *shows people's lives being torn apart by deceit,*" he says. *"But it's also about love and forgiveness. And, being Wilde, it's very funny."*



During the play's first run at the Haymarket Theatre in 1895, Wilde faced a personal scandal of his own, being arrested for an act of gross indecency. The production continued, and proved to be a big hit with West End audiences. But Victorian society was less forgiving, and Wilde's name was removed from the theatre billboards as his own troubles deepened.

Paul Collins likes to think the playwright would smile and raise a glass of absinthe to this fresh new production of the play. 1895? 2014? *Plus ça change.*

CAST

in order of speaking

Tommy Trafford (Robert's secretary)	Mark Redrup
The Earl of Caversham KG (Bernard)	Alan Waldock
Lady Chiltern (Gertrude)	Nina Flitman
Mabel Chiltern (Robert's sister)	Lauren McGee
Lady Markby (Leonora)	Anne Sawbridge
Mrs Cheveley (Laura)	Jananne Rahman
Sir Robert Chiltern	Iain Stirling
Phipps (first name never discovered)	Mark Redrup
Lord Goring (Arthur, Bernard's son)	Richard Graylin

The action takes place in London, June 2014

Act I – evening; the reception hall at the Chilterns' house in Holland Park

Act II – the following morning; the morning room at the Chilterns' house

INTERVAL

Act III – that evening; the study in Arthur Goring's penthouse overlooking the river in Chelsea

Act IV – the following morning; as Act II

The performance lasts approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes including a 15-minute interval.

PRODUCTION

Director	Paul Collins
Set Designer	Mike Langridge
Costumes by	Sarah Andrews
Lighting Designer	Chris Newall
Sound	Colin Horne
Stage Manager	Sarah Vass
Deputy Stage Manager	Sue Collins
Assistant Stage Managers	Emma Peacock, Mel Pereira
Properties	Cathy Swift, Sue Collins, Harriet Parsonage
Rehearsal Prompter	Bridgett Strevens
Wardrobe Assistants	Mary Davies, Helen Karasiewicz
Lighting Operators	Camille Bortz, Helen King
Lighting Assistants	Terry Mummery, Alan N Smith, Andrew Whadcoat
Sound Operator	Paul Wilson
Construction Manager	Colin Horne
Construction	Jeff Baynham, Bron Blake, Dan Cawtheray, Mark Fitzgerald, Tina Harris, Rich Keeble, Cathy Swift
Scenic Painter	Mike Langridge
Photography and Marketing	Peter Gould
Thanks to	House Services

Respectful acknowledgements to **Mark Rothko** and **Jackson Pollock**

AN IDEAL HUSBAND

by Oscar Wilde

First performance of this production at The Questors Theatre: 26 September 2014





“An actor is part illusionist, part artist, part ham.”

“While we look to the dramatist to give romance to realism, we ask of the actor to give realism to romance.”

“It is not good for one’s morals to see bad acting”

“I love acting. It is so much more real than life.”