

# THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST



BY  
OSCAR WILDE



# THE QUESTORS THEATRE COMPANY

*First performance October 6th 1984*

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"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".

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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

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## *Characters in order of appearance*

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

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

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

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*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.

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- 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  
Ricket, Gail Sharp, Nikki Tait
- Lighting Operator — Liz Wood
- Sound Operator — Tony Swaby
- Wigs & Make-up — Julie Cruttenden and members  
of the 'Greatpaint' 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 Horns,  
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

## OPEN DISCUSSION ON THIS PRODUCTION

TUESDAY, 16th OCTOBER at 7.45 pm  
in the SHAW ROOM

It is 90 years since *The Importance of Being Earnest* was first performed and about 15 years since it was last seen on The Questors stage.

Is this classic comedy 'fixed' or does it change with the times?

THE DISCUSSION WILL BE LEAD BY A PANEL OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THE QUESTORS 1970 PRODUCTION AND THE DIRECTOR AND CAST OF THE PRESENT PRODUCTION WILL BE THERE TO TALK ABOUT THE PLAY AS WELL.

DO COME ALONG, EITHER TO CONTRIBUTE YOUR OWN VIEWS OR TO LISTEN TO THOSE OF OTHERS.

ALL ARE WELCOME

ADMISSION FREE

### REMEMBER THE DATE

TUESDAY 16th OCTOBER 7.45 pm, THE SHAW ROOM

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### HOTPLATE

Delicious food is available in the Upper Foyer from 6.30 pm during the run of Playhouse productions.

Interval refreshments will be served and you can buy tea or coffee tokens in advance.

Orders for Interval drinks can also be given at the bar prior to the performance.

Patrons are respectfully asked to refrain from taking refreshments into the auditorium.

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New and Prospective Members evenings are held every WEDNESDAY, commencing at 7.45 pm in the Grapevine bar. Included in the programme will be a comprehensive tour of the acting areas, workshops, wardrobe and rehearsal space.

# *Forthcoming Attractions*

## IN THE PLAYHOUSE

November 3 – 17

### **HENRY IV Part I**

by William Shakespeare

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November 26 – December 3

### **DON JUAN COMES BACK FROM THE WAR**

by Odon von Horvath

translated by Christopher Hampton

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## *CHRISTMAS ATTRACTIONS*

December 31 – January 12 *Evenings*

### **SHERLOCK HOLMES**

by Conon Doyle and William Gillette

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December 29, 30, January 1, 5, 6, 12 *Matinées*

### **THE FANTASTIC FAIRGROUND**

A musical play by Bernard Gross

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## IN THE STUDIO

October 31 – November 3

### **KNACKERING FOR ALL**

by Boris Vian

translated by Simon Watson Taylor

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December 7 – 9

### **THE RAPE OF LUCRECE**

A Poem by William Shakespeare

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*FUND RAISING CONCERT IN AID OF  
THE NEW BUILDING PROJECTS*

**SUNDAY 11 NOVEMBER at 7.45 pm**

### **INSTANT SUNSHINE**

TICKETS £3.50

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