

## Join Us

If you enjoy theatre, why not join us and become a member of The Questors?

If you enjoy a regular night out at the theatre with friends, why not become a member of The Questors? As a Playgoer Member, you'll receive a 20 per cent discount on your ticket to most Questors productions, free tickets for your children to most Questors productions, regular information about our productions, and membership of the Grapevine Bar, so you can enjoy a quiet evening in the Grapevine throughout the year.

Or you could join as a Company Member and receive a 50 per cent discount on your ticket and opportunities to get involved in our productions. In addition to all the benefits for Playgoer Members,

You can get all this for just £30 for Playgoer membership and £60 (£45 concessions) for Company membership, until 31 August 2009, with discounts for payment by Direct Debit. You can find membership application forms by Box Office, or download one from our web site.

## Stay in touch

Sign up for our weekly or monthly emails and get the latest news of our productions. Find out at [questors.org.uk](http://questors.org.uk).



### Full details on our web site

You'll find full details of our current and forthcoming productions – along with lots more information – on our web site.

- ◆ What's on
- ◆ Online booking
- ◆ Getting Involved
- ◆ Courses
- ◆ Hire facilities
- ◆ Grapevine Bar
- ◆ Art exhibitions
- ◆ QYT youth theatre
- ◆ Weekly Open Evenings
- ◆ Receive our email news

THE QUESTORS THEATRE  
12 Mattock Lane, Ealing W5 5BQ

Box Office:  
**020 8567 5184**

Theatre Office:  
**020 8567 0011**

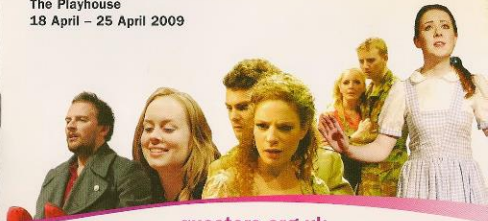
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# Questors Ealing's Theatre

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

by Oscar Wilde

The Playhouse  
18 April – 25 April 2009





## Café

Enjoy a coffee during the Interval at our Café in the Upper Foyer. It's open before the performance and during the interval for most performances in the Playhouse. (Studio audiences can enjoy a coffee in the Grapevine Bar instead.)



## Grapevine Bar

The Grapevine is our friendly club bar open to members of The Queestors Theatre and their guests, as well as serving audience members on show nights. The club is open seven nights a week and Sunday lunchtimes and is managed and staffed entirely by volunteers. We are the proud holders of a Cask Marque award for the quality of our real ales, we appear in the 2009 edition of The Good Beer Guide, and we have been named as West Middlesex CAMRA Club of the Year 2008. Real ales recently on tap include Fuller's London Pride, Adnams The Bitter and Sambrook's Wandle Ale. We also provide a range of draught lagers and ciders, as well as wines and spirits - all at very reasonable prices.

**Opening hours:**  
**7.00-11.00pm (10.30pm close on Sundays)**  
**also Sunday lunchtime 12.00-2.30pm**



# THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

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## 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, 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 certainly 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; 'morbidly' (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 Algeon'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 Gribby, 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] mediaeval hand'. Wilde remains the most famous of these and is the prototype of Bunthorne in *Patience*. Gilbert, in turn, possibly provided inspiration for *Earnest*, 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 *Earnest* 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.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

by Oscar Wilde

First performance of this production: Saturday 18th April 2009

## THE COMPANY

Algernon Moncrieff

Lane

John Worthing

Gwendolen Fairfax

Lady Bracknell

Cecily Cardew

Miss Prism

Dr. Chasuble

Merriman

Mr. Gribby

Nick Moorhead

Tony Diggle

Robert Seatter

Juliet Vaughan Turner

Richard Gallagher

Rebecca Pitt

Anne Neville

Anthony Curran

Adam Sutcliffe

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.

Interval of 20 minutes

Act Three: The garden at the Manor House.

Act Four: The drawing room at the Manor House.

Director

Set Designer

Lighting Designer

Sound Designer

Costume Designer

Stage Manager

Deputy Stage Manager

Assistant Stage Managers

Properties

Wardrobe

Set construction

Sound Operator

Poster

Photography

Hair & make-up

Programme Editor

Programme design and print

Francois Lloyd

Alison Gregory

Nigel Lewis

Ben Garside

Raymonde Childe

Michelle Weaver

Olivia Howard

Bernard Brady

George Duane

Mei Perera

Victoria Phillips

Antonio Scaramuzzino

Harriet Parsonage

Jan Derby

Nichola Thomas

Pam Smith

Therese Andersson

Rebecca Mitchell

Sue Peckett

Sylvia String

Allison Simmons

Natasha Farooq

Astrid Sarkissian

Clive Whitcroft

Gordon Miller

John Howe

Geoffrey Morgan

Ian Cole

Peter Collins

Tanya Barlow

Emma Pritchard

Penelope MacLachlan

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Thanks to:

Alec Atchison, Bozena Craciova of the TVU, John Feather, Michael Heywood, Colin Horne, Chris Jarvis, Richard Jones and Eric Lister

## Biographies

### Francis Lloyd – Director

Francis has directed *After the Dance* (Terence Rattigan) and co-directed *French Paste* (Richard Gallagher). Last summer, he directed *Charley's Aunt* – at both The Questors and in Cornwall. He also directed his son, Toby's, play, *Pictures on the Air* at the Edinburgh Festival. Recent acting parts include Arthur Wicksteed in *Habeas Corpus* and Henry Carr in *Travesties*.

### Alison Gregory – Set Designer

Alison trained as a set and costume designer at Wimbledon School of Art and has since worked in small-scale theatre productions and short films. Her previous set designs at The Questors include *Habeas Corpus* and *After the Dance*. Alison is currently working as a visual merchandiser.

### Nigel Lewis – Lighting Designer

Nigel frequently designed lighting at The Kenneth Moore and Queen's Theatre during the 1960s. Over the past twenty years, he has in many plays and operas at fringe theatres. A member of the Association of Lighting Designers, Nigel is the founder and company director of Ealing Lighting Design Limited.

### Ben Garside – Sound Designer

This is Ben's second show with The Questors. Previously, he designed sound and lighting for various amateur and small theatrical companies in West London. He has also been involved in sound production for amateur short films and animations.

### Raymonde Childe – Costume Designer

After training and working as a professional actor, Raymonde changed careers and spent twenty years at Thames Television, designing costumes. For The Questors, he has designed costumes for *Cinderella*, *The Seagull*, *Tartuffe*, *A Little Night Music*, *The Snow Queen*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

### Anthony Curran – Dr. Chasuble

Anthony Curran has been an acting member since 1994. Recently he was Lord Fancourt Babberly in our Minack production of *Charley's Aunt*. Among his many parts are Kite in *The Recruiting Officer* and Tom Lumpkin in *She Stoops to Conquer*. His most recent part was Truffaldino in *A Servant to Two Masters*.

### Tony Diggle – Lane

Tony Diggle joined The Questors in 1980. His first appearance was as Knight/Tempter in *Murder in the Cathedral* in 1981. His most recent appearance was as 'Professor' in *Insignificance* in 2008. He is the treasurer of Player-Playwrights, a writers'/actors' group that reads and discusses new scripts. He is also the author of nine unpublished plays.

### Richard Gallagher – Lady Bracknell

Richard trained with Manchester Polytechnic School of Theatre. At The Questors, favourite parts include: Sir Toby in *Twelfth Night*, Terri in *Privates On Parade*, Hugh in *Absolute Hell*, Pitt in *The Madness of George III*, James Joyce in *Travesties*, Feldman in *Duet For One*. He directed *Habeas Corpus* and co-directed his own play, *French Paste*.

### James Goodden – Mr. Gribbly

James joined The Questors in 1987 and has since appeared in over twenty productions. The most recent of these have been *Great Expectations*, *There's Always Be a Brentford* and *Habeas Corpus*.

### Nick Moorhead – Algernon Moncrieff

Originally from Sydney, Australia, Nick graduated from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in 2005. Since arriving in London, he has performed in the world premiere of *When Midnight Strikes* at the Finborough. For The Questors, he appeared in *Company* as Bobby and *The Wizard of Oz* as Scarecrow.

### Anne Neville – Miss Prism

Anne's most recent roles include Miss Shepherd in *The Lady in the Van*, Miss Havensham in *Great Expectations*, Maccame Ranyevskaya in *The Cherry Orchard*, films in *Dolly West's Kitchen*, Winnie in *Happy Days* and Mrs Swabo in *Habeas Corpus*. Recently created plays include: *A Servant to Two Masters*, *Trojan Women*, *The Weir*, *The Recruiting Officer* and *The Winter's Tale*.

### Rebecca Pitt – Cecily Cardew

Rebecca is a recent graduate of Cambridge University and a newcomer to The Questors. Her acting credits include Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Julie in *The Cement Garden*, Madeline in *The Fall of the House of Usher*, C in *Crave* and Dabby in *Our Country's Good*.

### Robert Seatter – John Worthing

Shows at Questors lately include *A Servant to Two Masters*, *The Pity She's a Whore*, plus lead roles in *The Recruiting Officer*, *The Bedouin Strategem*, *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Design for Living*, *Translations and Plenty*. Work outside The Questors includes The Bridewell Theatre Company, Theatre Agog and Fressgang.

### Adam Sutcliffe – Merriman

Having joined last October, Adam is delighted to make his Questors debut. A regular audience member, he is a relative newcomer to acting and, after a sequence of seriously authoritative roles with other groups (including Capulet, Oberon, Berensson and Clarence), is particularly pleased to take a turn at being seriously trivial.

### Juliet Vaughan Turner – Gwendolen Fairfax

Juliet graduated from drama school in 2004 and was last seen in *Midsomer Murders*. Her latest appearances at The Questors include Peggy in *The London Cuckolds* – which went to Minack in 2008 – and Anna in *Time and Time Again*. She's delighted to be playing Gwendolen in this production.

Anthony Curran, Anne Neville, Robert Seatter and Francis Lloyd are all currently involved in taking The Questors' production of *A Servant to Two Masters* to Venice in June of this year.

Please remember to turn off all mobile phones

Please note that photography is not permitted in the Playhouse

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## Dogs Barking

9 - 16 May 2009

In the Studio

The death throes of love explored with uncompromising savagery

## Stiff

30 May - 6 June 2009

In the Studio

Saucy, adult farce when four prostitutes open a brothel in an undertaker's parlour



## Questors E-News direct to your Inbox

Get all the latest news and offers for our shows by joining our e-mail lists.

- You can choose to receive short snippets of information every week or so, or longer round-ups every month – or both if you wish!
- We'll keep the e-mails as short and simple as possible – because we know you'd prefer it that way.
- And we'll have an unsubscribe facility (which actually works) at the bottom of every message!

It's easy to sign up – just a few clicks is all it takes.

Visit [questors.org.uk](http://questors.org.uk)  
and you'll start getting our E-News in your inbox.

## Getting the most from your membership

Many members join just to see shows, but there is so much more on offer to Company Members. So why not get involved?

Front-of-House is a great place to start. No previous experience is needed for selling programmes, stewarding or serving in the Café; and training is provided for anyone who funds working in Box Office. If you want to meet people and have a good time, then the best place to be is behind the Grapevine Bar – where you can volunteer for just one night or several. Backstage staff – including stage managers, prop makers, set builders, painters, wardrobe staff, and costume and set designers – are always welcomed, and whatever your skills we'll find a place for you. If you have some experience then The Questors is a wonderful place to be a designer. But even without experience, you can help out on shows, and you're sure to get some hands-on experience. The same goes for lighting and sound – our Playhouse and Studio are both well-equipped and excellent places to learn.

You can direct if you have some experience or training, but if not, then we have various learning opportunities. The Questors have a high standard of acting, and to maintain this, everyone wanting to act must first take an audition. These are held every month – so if you have some training or experience of acting, call the Theatre Office for details of forthcoming auditions.

There are many other activities you can join in to help out. If you're free during daytime, you can help with our monthly mailing or delivering leaflets, and if you're handy with maintenance then there are always little jobs to be done. Only Company Members can take part in our activities, so please contact the Theatre Office if you would like to get involved or receive further information about Company Membership.

### QYT Youth Theatre

Our youth theatre – QYT – runs weekly drama classes for all ages from 8 to 16 years old. Younger groups meet on Saturday mornings and older ages meet on weekday evenings. There's often a waiting list for membership, so put your name down now! You can find details online at [questors.org.uk/qyt](http://questors.org.uk/qyt).

