

Leeds Arts Centre

presents



*The Importance of
Being Earnest*

by Oscar Wilde

Leeds Civic Theatre 7 - 11 February 1995

The Importance of

OSCAR FINGAL O'FLAHERTIE WILLS WILDE was born in Dublin, the son of an eminent surgeon. He went to Trinity College, Dublin and from there to Magdalen College, Oxford. His mother, with whom he lived later in London and who remained a strong support in his turbulent life, had a great love of the theatre and the arts generally and seems to have encouraged Wilde in his love of flamboyance and of acting.

At the time Wilde was there, Oxford was the centre of a new wave of religious and intellectual movements that changed the rather staid face of Victorian culture to a more liberal, less complacent mood - the "naughty nineties". Life was to be like art, not art like life and Wilde cultivated the appearance of being a beautiful creation from a work of fiction, (the type of effete young man satirised by Gilbert in *'Patience'*). Certainly some of his contemporaries found it hard to believe he was quite real!

He had, however, a serious side, often ignored by those who hated his foppish effeminacy and the "artiness" of the aesthetic movement, which manifested itself in a searing criticism of the materialism of Victorian high society. Interested in beauty as Wilde was, he also knew that much of life was squalid and unjust and he ridiculed the narrow-minded complacency of those who pretended to ignore it.

After publishing a volume of poems in 1881 Wilde's first stage success was *'Lady Windermere's Fan'* in 1892 followed the next year by *'A Woman of No Importance'*. Both plays dealt with the unfair position of women in society. More outspoken than *'The Importance of Being Earnest'* they were also heavy-handed. January 1895 brought the first performance of *'An Ideal Husband'* and a month later *'The Importance of Being Earnest'* opened at St James's Theatre. Like its predecessors it was an immediate success and was recognised then, as now, as his masterpiece. Wilde himself spoke of it as "a delicate bubble". Its virtue was the cleverness and subtlety of its satire, by which Wilde knocked his enemies but made them human and very, very funny. On its opening night, 14th February 1895, Wilde was stopped by a critic as he entered the theatre. "Tell me, Mr Wilde" said the critic, "do you think the play will be a success?" "The play" replied Wilde "is a success; the question remains whether the audience will be".

But his success was not to be repeated. When the scandal of his homosexuality finally resulted in his trial, Wilde was imprisoned in Reading gaol, sentenced to two years' hard labour. Undoubtedly this led to his premature death in exile in Paris in 1900, only five years after his triumph with *'The Importance of Being Earnest'*.

To lose one parent, Mr Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness.

Being Earnest

by Oscar Wilde

Cast

Algernon Moncrieff..... *Stuart Watson*
Lane *Malcolm Brown*
John Worthing..... *Michael Brooksbank*
Cecily Cardew..... *Maureen Gokhale*
Lady Bracknell *Monica Brown*
Gwendolyn Fairfax *Belinda Burrow*
Miss Prism..... *Gwyneth Hadley*
Reverend Canon Chasuble..... *Edwin Barraclough*
Merriman *Malcolm Brown*

Production Team

Stage Manager *Martyn Drake, Richard Francis*
Assistant Stage Manager *Dave Mallinson*
Set construction *Martyn Drake,*
.....Richard Francis, Margaret Savage,
Dave Mallinson, George Teale,
George Westmoreland
Costumes *Margaret Rhodes*
and LAC wardrobe team
Properties *Doreen Parker, George Judd,*
Kathryn Heneachon
Prompts *Margaret Hall,*
Mary Nelson, Trudy Stewart
Front of House Manager *Shirley Broadbent*
Publicity Coordinator..... *Chris Ward*
Box Office Manager *Margaret Rhodes*

Directed by *Michael Brooksbank and Malcolm Brown*

Civic Theatre Staff

Theatre Manager*Steven Cartwright*
Assistant Manager*Vivien Simpson*
Chief Technician and Lighting*Peter Waddicor*
Technicians *Sandy Clark*
catering for Crown Point Foods *Shirley Tarran*
Box Office*Helen Richmond, Shirley Shortall, Sylvia Gooding*

You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter - a girl brought up with the utmost care - to marry into a cloakroom and form an alliance with a parcel.

Scenes

- ACT I Algernon Moncrieff's flat in Half Moon Street
- Act II The garden of the Manor House, Woolton
- Act III Drawing-room at the Manor House, Woolton

Time - Summer, 1895

There will be one interval of fifteen minutes after Act I

* * * * *

*I am not in favour of this modern mania for turning
bad people into good people at a moment's notice*

*All women become like their mothers. That is their
tragedy. No man does. That's his.*

*I never travel without my diary. One should always
have something sensational to read on the train*

* * * * *

Costume Hire

Costumes of various types and periods
are available for hire from the
Leeds Arts Centre costume collection
at reasonable rates either by drama societies
or by individuals for fancy dress occasions.

Please telephone Leeds 275 6796 and discuss your needs
with Mrs Margaret Rhodes, our wardrobe mistress.

In accordance with the requirements of the Licensing Sub-Committee of Leeds City Council:

- The public may leave at the end of the performance by all exits and entrance doors and such doors must at that time be open.
- All gangways, passages and staircases must be kept entirely free from chairs or any other obstructions.
- Persons shall not be permitted to stand in any of the intersecting gangways, or stand in any other unseated space in the auditorium, unless standing in such a space has been specially allowed by the Licensing Committee. A notice is exhibited in that part of the auditorium in which standing has been sanctioned.
- The safety curtain must be lowered and raised once immediately before the commencement of each performance to make sure it is in proper working order

Next Week.....

Leeds Youth Opera present "LAKME"

*Delibes' masterpiece deals with the cultural clash between the India of
exotic flowers and strange gods, and the British Raj. Sung in English.*

Director: Jonathan Clift - Musical Director: Michael Williamson

Leeds Arts Centre

Leeds Arts Centre was formed in 1945 as an amateur Society to encourage and foster interest in the Arts. Members come from all walks of life and include some who have worked in and others who aspire to the professional theatre.

Our activities are now mainly centred around the theatre with the **Drama Group** mounting four or five plays each year at the Civic Theatre. These often include a musical or review type show.

The **Green Room Group** puts on plays and other forms of entertainment in the rehearsal rooms to give members valuable experience of acting and producing before they tackle major parts or productions in the Civic Theatre. Prospective members are welcome to attend these performances.

The **Fine Arts Group** meets twice each week throughout the year for drawing, painting and other creative work. Annual exhibitions are held of members' work.

In addition there is a variety of **social activities** for members, such as theatre visits, outings, parties etc.

New Members...

We are always glad to welcome **new members** and our lively **Green Room Group** provides a friendly atmosphere in which younger and less experienced members develop their potential - making friends in the process.

If you are interested in acting, producing, drawing, painting (pictures or scenery), set building, making costumes, helping back stage, front of house or even with publicity and think you might like to join the Centre, or would like more information please have a word with one of our members tonight or write to:

*The Secretary, Leeds Arts Centre,
Stansfeld Chambers,
Great George Street, Leeds 1*

Don't miss our next production.....

The Lion in Winter

James Goldman's witty drama about the power struggle between Henry II and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine

Directed by Chris Ward

28th March to 1st April 1995

See next page for further information

Leeds Arts Centre

50th Anniversary

Productions

The Lion in Winter

James Goldman's witty drama about the power struggle between Henry II and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine over who should inherit the throne of England - will it be their legendary son Richard the Lionheart or much-maligned John?

Towering characters from history plot and counterplot, pushing each other to the very edge in this exciting and yet highly amusing play.

Director: Chris Ward

28 March to 1st April 1995

Sisterly Feelings

There are four possible versions of this hilarious comedy by Alan Ayckbourn. The toss of a coin determines whether Abigail or her sister Dorcas will choose to go off with handsome Simon, in either case with riotous consequences. Come only if you enjoy laughing!

Director: Pam Wilson

13th to 17th June 1995

Macbeth

We shall open our next season of plays with "the Scottish play" which will be in the capable hands of our most experienced Shakespearean director whose production of "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*" last year was so well received.

Director: Malcolm Brown

October 1995

Booking: City Centre Booking Office, Civic Theatre, Cookridge Street, Leeds LS2 8BH. Open 10am to 8pm Monday-Saturday.

Telephone (0113) 247 6962 or (0113) 245 5055.

Credit cards accepted. Concessions for students, senior citizens.