



www.leedsartscentre.org.uk
Registered Charity No. HS50273R

Lord Arthur Savile's

CRIME

A Study of Duty
by Oscar Wilde

adapted, designed
and directed by
Malcolm Brown

A darkly comic satire
in which it is foretold
that Lord Arthur Savile
will commit a murder.
Who should be
his victim?

Wednesday, 9th to
Saturday, 12th May, 2007

Lord Arthur Savile's Crime

A Study of Duty

by Oscar Wilde

Oscar Wilde's short story, *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, was written in 1891. It is a comic satire on the morals of the aristocracy of the time, and also ridicules the then popular pseudo-science of cheiromancy, or palm-reading. The story is subtitled *A Study of Duty* because when Lord Arthur Savile is told by a cheiromantist that he is destined to commit a murder, he feels that it is his "sacred duty" to get the crime out of the way before he marries Sybil Merton.

Previous dramatisations of the story have treated it as a farce or a melodrama. While there are elements of both these genres in the tale, it is primarily a comic satire, displaying all Wilde's characteristic wit and humour. There are passages of dialogue in the story which transfer easily to the stage, while narrative sections dealing with motivation and plot have to be converted into dialogue.

In the original story, Lord Arthur Savile acts alone, but in the play it is necessary for him to have someone with whom to discuss his feelings and intentions. He therefore goes to Mr. Podgers, the cheiromantist, for advice and assistance, and eventually confides in his beloved Sybil. An attempt at blackmail is the only major addition to the story, which otherwise sticks as closely as possible to the original.

When Lord Arthur is contemplating his murder, one of the methods he explores is using a bomb to blow somebody up. When I was working on the adaptation I was conscious of the modern resonances this would have, and wondered if it would be appropriate to include it. I quickly decided that if I were to alter it in any way it would mean that I was being influenced by those who use such methods, and that they were therefore winning, so I retained everything that Wilde wrote on the subject.

As Wilde himself was a great recycler of lines, speeches and even whole conversations, I did not hesitate to follow his example and incorporate the occasional quotation from other works into this one where appropriate.

Although *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* is undoubtedly a comedy, like many of Wilde's other comedies, it deals with serious issues. A belief in being able to predict the future, a warped sense of duty which sanctions murder, and the hypocrisy and double standards of the ruling classes, are all as relevant now as they were when the story was first written.

Malcolm Brown
Adapter and Director

Characters

Lord Arthur Savile	Keith Huckfield
Miss Sybil Merton	Emily Holloway
The Dean of Chichester	Edwin Barraclough
Lady Windermere	Margaret Savage
Mr. Septimus Podgers	Peter Sandles
Lady Clementina Beauchamp	Monica Brown
Herr Winckelkopf	Mark Williamson

Time: 1891

Place: London

The Scenes of the Play

Act One

Scene 1	The Conservatory of Lady Windermere's house
Scene 2	Mr. Podgers' Consulting Room
Scene 3	A Room in Lady Clementina Beauchamp's House
Scene 4	The Conservatory of Lady Windermere's house
Scene 5	A Room in Lady Clementina Beauchamp's House

Act Two

Scene 1	Mr. Podgers' Consulting Room
Scene 2	A Room in Lord Arthur Savile's House
Scene 3	Mr. Podgers' Consulting Room
Scene 4	A Room in Lord Arthur Savile's House
Scene 5	A Room in Lord Arthur Savile's House

There will be an interval of twenty minutes between Acts One and Two, during which the bar will be open

Production Team

Production Manager	Joyce King
Set Construction	Stephen Fryatt and Gerry Armytage
Stage Manager	Martyn Drake
Assistant stage Managers	Robert Sherwood, Maryline Pineau, Beth Lloyd and Shirley Broadbent
Wardrobe Director	Maggie Rhodes
Costumes	Pauline Ratcliffe and Chris Wilson
Properties	Denise Davies
Wigs and Hair	Jean Blundell
Lighting	Peter Waddicor
Sound Recording	Jim Marshall
Sound Operation	Maria Kwater
Prompter	Deborah Sandles
Front of House Manager	Robin Thornton

Adapted, Designed and Directed by Malcolm Brown

Cheirromancy or the Science of Palmistry

Cheirromancy or chiromancy, from the Greek *cheir*, meaning *hand*, and *manteia*, meaning *divination*, is the art of evaluating a person's character and foretelling the future through the study of the palm. It traces its roots back to the ancient Egyptians, Chaldeans, Sumerians and Babylonians, and is practised in one form or another all over the world. It is also known as palm-reading, palmistry, palmomancy, chirognomy, chirolgy and hand analysis.

The Victorians were fascinated by the possibilities of predicting the future, and the aristocracy frequently entertained fortune-tellers in their salons. Several gained considerable reputations, among them R. J. Morrison (1795 - 1874), known as Zadkiel, who specialised in crystal-gazing as a means of predicting the future, and accurately forecast the final illness of Prince Albert.

William John Warner (1866 - 1936), who styled himself as Count Louis Hamon, and was better known as the numerologist and cheiromant, Cheiro, was one of the most famous and colourful figures of the period. He certainly knew Oscar Wilde, and later claimed to have warned him against taking precipitate action in his feud with the Marquess of Queensbury. He read the hands of such famous figures as Mark Twain, Sarah Bernhardt, General Kitchener, William Gladstone, Joseph Chamberlain, Thomas Eddison, and Mata Hari, and accurately forecast the times of death of both Queen Victoria and Edward VII. When he met Rasputin he also predicted the downfall of the Romanoffs in the Russian Revolution. He moved to Hollywood in 1930, where his clients included Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Charlie Chaplin and Clark Gable. Cheiro's career included many professions. He was also a lecturer and public speaker, war correspondent, editor of newspapers in London and Paris, and successful author of a dozen books on palmistry, astrology and numerology.

In *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* Wilde raises questions about cheirromancy, without actually providing any answers. Mr. Podgers seems to be able to analyse people's characters with considerable accuracy, yet his central prediction concerning Lord Arthur Savile leads to consequences which might not have happened if he had not predicted them in the first place. Does he actually set in motion the chain of events, or would they have happened without his prediction?

Like Lord Arthur Savile and the Victorians, we, in the twenty-first century, are still obsessed with the possibilities of foretelling the future. We read our horoscopes and consult palm-readers with a mixture of scepticism and fascination which suggests that we really would like to believe their predictions.

Malcolm Brown



Leeds Arts Centre is a prestigious amateur theatre group which was founded in 1945. We are a friendly society, working together to maintain the high standards for which our productions are known. We produce four plays each year at the Carriageworks, as well as organising workshops to help members to develop their acting, directing and production skills.

We offer opportunities to all who are interested in becoming involved with any aspect of drama, including acting, directing, stage management, props, designing, costumes, lighting, sound, publicity and front of house.

New members are always welcome

If you are interested in joining our group, why not speak to one of our members front of house this evening, or in the theatre bar after the show?

You can also email us at: **publicity@leedsartscentre.org.uk**

Or you can write to:

**The Secretary,
Leeds Arts Centre,
The Carriageworks,
3 Millennium Square,
Leeds,
LS2 3AD.**

Advertising and Sponsorship

Leeds Arts Centre is a member of the Leeds Civic Arts Guild, is a registered charity and non-profit-making organisation. We are looking for companies and organisations which would benefit from advertising in our programmes and on our website, or sponsoring our productions.

To find out more, contact our publicity officer or email us at the above address. Our website can be found at:

<http://leedsartscentre.org.uk/>

Programmes and scripts for this production
produced with the kind assistance of

Lewis Francis Blackburn

-----Solicitors-----

14 - 16 Paradise Square, Sheffield S1 2DE
Telephone: 0114 272 9721

Palm trees for this production supplied by
Andrew Fisher

Swincar Nurseries

Chevin End Road, Guiseley, LS20 9DL
Telephone: 01943 874614
Email: swincar@tiscali.co.uk



Future Productions

BETRAYAL

by Harold Pinter

**A compelling study of love,
marriage and infidelity**

directed by Amy Dutton

Upstairs @ The Carriageworks

Wednesday, 20th to

Saturday, 23rd June, 2007

at 7.30 p.m.

BEDROOM FARCE

by Alan Ayckbourn

directed by Martin Key

The Carriageworks Main Auditorium

Week commencing 14th October, 2007

THE MEMORY OF WATER

by Shelagh Stephenson

directed by Peter Sandles

The Carriageworks Main Auditorium

Date to be confirmed in 2008

The next Leeds Civic Arts Guild
production at the Carriageworks
Cosmopolitan Players

HI-DE-HI!

Wednesday, 16th to

Saturday, 19th May, 2007

at 7.30 p.m.

Saturday matinee at 2.00 p.m.