



The

Importance

of Being

Earnest

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

The Importance

OSCAR FINGAL O'FLAHERTIE WILLS WILDE was born in 1854 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 satirized 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

Leeds Arts Centre at the Civic T

of Being Earnest

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.

costume hire

You may not realise that the costumes you have seen tonight and countless others from different periods are available for hire from the Leeds Arts Centre costume collection at reasonable rates.

If you are interested please telephone Leeds 756796 and discuss your requirements with Mrs. Margaret Rhodes, our wardrobe mistress.

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.

theatre 7th to 11th February, 1978

by Oscar Wilde

FOR THE ARTS CENTRE:

Stage Manager	Gordon Carlin
Assistant Stage Manager	Chris Richmond
Set Design	Anne Robinson
Properties	Doreen Parker, Nina Goldthorpe.
Music and Sound Control	Peter Manning
Prompt	Joyce King
Front of House Manager	June Stevenson
Wardrobe	Elsie Bell, Jo Thackwray and the L.A.C. Wardrobe Team.
Publicity	Gordon Wilson and the Publicity Team
Box Office	John Pemberton, Dennis Stevenson

FOR THE CIVIC THEATRE:

Theatre Manager	Fred Mower
Resident Stage Manager	Julia Piggott
Lighting Technician	Nick Morris.

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

New Members are always welcome so if you are interested in acting, 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 write to:

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

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

The public may leave the Civic Theatre at the end of the performance by all exit 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 obstruction. The safety curtain must be lowered and raised once immediately before each performance to check that it is in proper working order.

of Being Earnest

by Oscar Wilde

The Persons of the Play

John Worthing, J.P.	<i>Jim Young</i>
Algernon Moncrieff	<i>David Scott</i>
Rev. Canon Chasuble D.D.	<i>George Teale</i>
Merriman (Butler)	<i>Robin Clayton</i>
Lane (Manservant)	<i>George Westmoreland</i>
Lady Bracknell	<i>Ann Benson</i>
Hon Gwendolen Fairfax	<i>Anne Robinson</i>
Cecily Cardew	<i>Pam Wilson</i>
Miss Prism (Governess)	<i>Betty Triggs</i>
Servants	<i>Peter Manning, Christine Wilson</i> <i>Gillian Thresh, Christine Hulme</i>

Directed by Margaret Rhodes

It is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking but the truth.

The Scenes of the Play

ACT I Algernon Moncrieff's flat in Half Moon Street, W.

ACT II The garden of the Manor House, Woolton.

ACT III Drawing-room at the Manor House, Woolton.

Time — Summer, 1895.

I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.

There will be two intervals, during which the theatre bar will be open. Ice cream will be on sale in the auditorium and coffee will be available in the bar.

ROOKERY NOOK

a Ben Travers farce

directed by Stan Smith

11th to 15th April 1978

Our last production of the season will be:

ANY MORE FOR TENNIS

Another original musical revue.

Music and lyrics by David Carrack.

Directed by George Westmoreland.

20th to 24th June 1978

BOOKINGS

If you would like tickets for any of these shows please ask at the box office during the interval or telephone Leeds 892346.

Tickets can also be obtained from the Tourist Information Bureau at the Leeds Central Lending Library during the month before each show.

Next season our programme will include

RICHARD III

by William Shakespeare.