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The Importance of Being Earnest

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Recommended Citation

"The Importance of Being Earnest" (1982). *Taylor Theatre Playbills*. 159.
<https://pillars.taylor.edu/playbills/159>

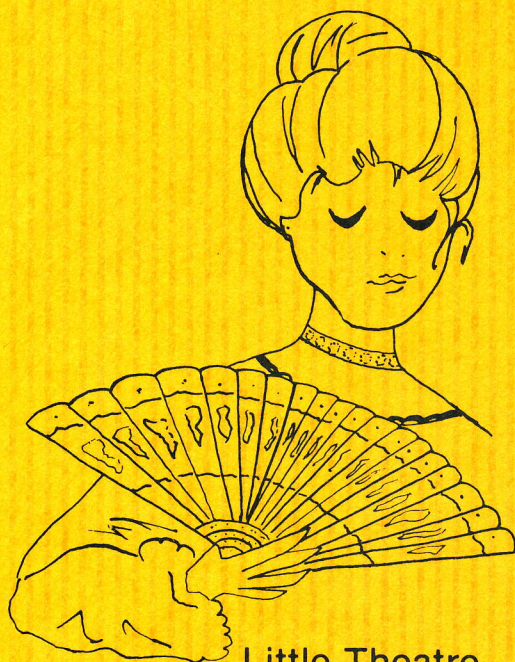
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Taylor University Theatre
presents



Oscar Wilde's

*The Importance
of
Being Earnest*



Little Theatre
Taylor University
April 27, 28, 29, 30 & May 1, 1982

Victorian Etiquette

Oscar Wilde's reputation as one of England's finest playwrights is richly deserved. Wilde's marvelous command of the English language makes his plays a verbal delight. His depiction of life among the leisured wealthy upper classes of late Victorian England is a visual feast.

With the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, the tone of British society changed from a raffish indifference to elegance to extremes of artificial sentiment and romanticism. Wilde enjoyed making light of such eccentricities and in his PHRASES AND PHILOSOPHIES FOR THE USE OF THE YOUNG stated: "The first duty in life is to be as artificial as possible. What the second is no one has as yet discovered."

Victorian young ladies were encouraged to look pale and interesting, fainting fits were considered a necessity, and it was positively vulgar to display a healthy appetite. Although they were taught a few academic subjects, their major accomplishments were to learn a bit of music, a little drawing, the execution of fancy work, and the art of reclining delicately on a sofa. At age thirteen, young ladies were subjected to the torture of the tightly-laced corset, pinching the waist, crushing the ribs and thereby achieving elegant proportions. In addition, they would wear several layers of petticoats.

The Victorian wife, while treating her husband with due respect, considered it her duty to affectionately advise him on all issues. It was an established precedent that wives generally had more sense than their husbands, especially when their husbands were clever men.

The wife was allowed to powder and crimson her cheeks and if emaciated pad her dress. It was her duty to hire the servants, supervise the household and plan social functions. To aid her in being the perfect hostess were dozens of books on Etiquette which elaborately set forth all the rules of the period.

A lady was to enter a drawing-room wearing a smile and maintaining a graceful bearing. She was to bend elegantly to common acquaintances and apply cordial pressure, *not shake*, the hand extended to her. She was to sink gently into a chair, with her feet scarcely showing and absolutely never crossed. She was to conquer a habit of breathing hard and never look hot or blue and shivery. Beautiful lace fans were fashionable in the 19th century and fan language was a popular method of expressing non-verbal messages. By placing the fan near the heart, the young lady declared her love for her suitor and by pressing the half-opened fan to her lips invited him to kiss her. To shut an open fan slowly meant a promise of marriage, while twirling the fan in the right hand indicated that she loved another. By using fan language, a complex courting conversation could be completed without the unsuspecting chaperone's detection.

The grandest social function was the ball. Admission was restricted but even if one was not prestigious enough to attend, the ladies magazines carried dramatically embellished accounts. The object of the ball was to display one's daughter who was ready for marriage and provided opportunities for flirtation and sometimes heartbreak.

For the Victorian lady with a limited budget, tea for a large number was an alternative to a ball or dinner party. By the 1880's, 5:00 p.m. tea was a national institution. The fare for a tea included coffee and tea, thin slices of bread and butter, cakes and bisquits. At fashionable teas or dinner parties, a professional musician was engaged to entertain.

The "call" was due at regular intervals and was also an established ritual. No more than three days were to elapse between receiving a call and returning it, and calls were to last no more than fifteen minutes. It was a ritual which contained a great deal of make-believe during which no momentous subject was broached. The hours for calling were between 3 and 6:00 p.m. and name cards were to be left on all formal occasions-- one for the lady and two for her husband who was content to leave the calling to his wife. A young lady did not receive calls from gentlemen unless her mother was present, the exception being if the two were very intimate or the young lady was past thirty.

Another of Wilde's trivial quotes quite accurately summed up the Victorian circle in which he travelled: "In all the unimportant matters, sincerity, not style, is the essential. In all important matters, style, not sincerity, is the essential." Lady Bracknell would have agreed implicitly.



As a courtesy to the actors, please do not use cameras during the performance.

The Importance of Being Earnest

Directed by Dr. Jessie Rousselow

Designed by Dr. Oliver Hubbard

Costumed by Laura Lee Binder

Cast

(in the order of their appearance)

Lane, <i>manservant</i>	Scott Etchison
Algernon Moncrieff	Kurt Bullock
John Worthing, J.P.	Mike Burchfield
Lady Bracknell	Laura Lee Binder
Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax	Susan Binder
Miss Prism, <i>governess</i>	Barb Hauter
Cecily Cardew	Joanne Hamm
Rev. Canon Chasuble, D.D.	Kirby Bradley
Merriman, <i>butler</i>	Steve Graves

Act I: Algernon Moncrieff's flat, Half Moon Street

Act II & III: Manor House garden, Woolton

London, 1895

*There will be a ten minute intermission between
Act I and Act II*

This Evening's Music

The harpsichord music heard this evening was selected from the works of J. S. Bach, W. A. Mozart, and Scott Joplin.



A Communication & Theatre Arts Department Production



Acknowledgements

For their help with this show, our special thanks to: Jackie Cober; Mr. & Mrs. Robert Davenport; Mr. Jeff Massott; Mr. & Mrs. Bob Harris; Miss Josephine Gates, Sinclair Glass Outlet Store, Hartford City, Indiana; DeForest Optical, Marion, Indiana; The Upland Greenhouse, Upland, Indiana; Broadway Fabrics, Lakewood, Ohio; Marianne's Bridal Salon, Fairview Park, Ohio, and Olson Hall.

Production Staff

Assistant to the Director	Teresa Cress
Technical Director	Dr. Oliver Hubbard
Set Crew	Tim Himmelwright Jim Ogborn Tom McWatters
Audio Technician	Tim Himmelwright Randy Fouts
Lighting Design	Vicki Cruse
Light Crew	Vicki Cruse Mark Burkholder Dan Dominick Georgia Reasner Dave Shipley Priscilla Smith
Properties	NANCY BARNUM Abbie Ansborg Susan Cook Rodelyn McPherson Jullane Sikkenga
Make-up	MINDY DATE Tammy Lane Jody Luxford Cindy Johnson Janice Shipley
Hair Stylist	Lisa Lickliter
Music Consultants	Dr. Barbara Dickey Dr. Fred Shulze
Dialect Consultant	Prof. William Ewbank
Costumes	LAURA LEE BINDER Susan Binder Mike Burchfield Tammy Cripps Vicki Cruse Kathy Lehman Sue Thomas Cindy Venman Liz Watson
Program Cover Design	Jennifer Helvie
House	ELIZABETH MC DUFFIE LORI MILLER Joanie Anderson Leslie Cruz Glenda Lehman Debbie Messamore Debbie Nichols Janice Shipley



During Intermission

We invite you to visit the Annual Student Art Show now being exhibited in the Chronicle-Tribune Art Gallery on the main floor.