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### The Importance of Being Earnest

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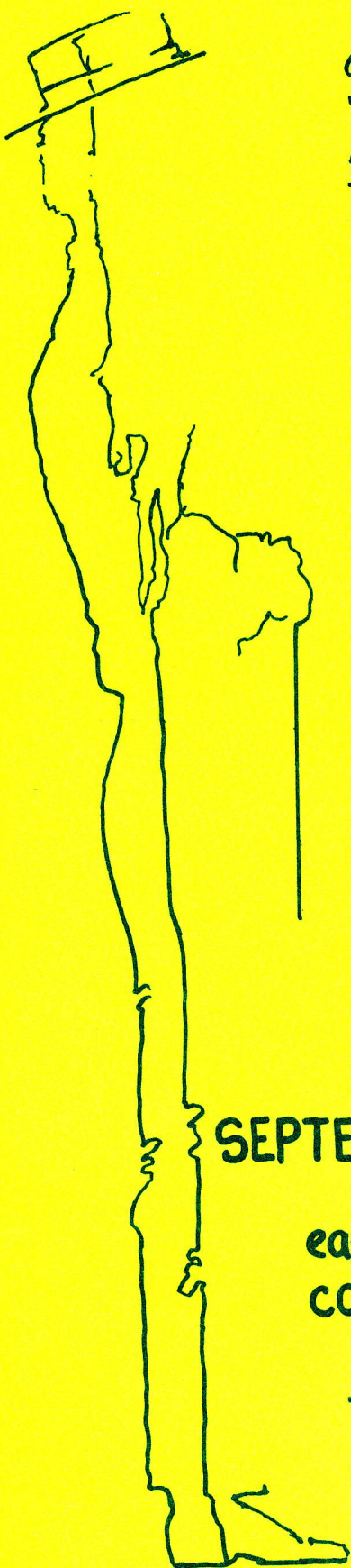
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OSCAR WILDE'S  
"The  
Importance  
of  
Being  
Earnest"

SEPTEMBER 28, 29, 30

eastbrook  
cafetorium

taylor  
university  
theatre

\*\*\*\*\*

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

OSCAR WILDE was born in Dublin on October 16, 1854, of brilliant and socially prominent parents and began to reveal his talents at an early age. He made an enviable record at Magdalen College, Oxford, and became a distinguished student of the classics, winning a Newdigate Prize for poetry. Among the admiring teachers and friends of his undergraduate years were such leaders in the world of art as John Ruskin, then Slade Professor of Art, and Walter Pater.

After traveling in Italy and Greece, Wilde came to London where a book of his poetry and his melodrama, *VERA, OR THE NIHILISTS* were published. Following that, supported in high society by his wife's ample fortune, Wilde became the most lionized wit in England. Regarding himself as an "apostle of the beautiful" he raised the slogan of estheticism and put his preachment into practice with such extravagance that he shocked his social inferiors and amused his equals.

More important than his artificial early verse and his decadent novel were the comedies in which Wilde exhibited his talent for witty conversation. Wilde used clever inversions of conventional opinion and often barbed comments on British society, supplemented by situations and portraits of society people that showed a critical faculty heretofore revealed in British drama only by Shaw. General opinion holds that he was most successful in the pure farce *THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST*.

Wilde was evidently confident when he wrote *THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST* in 1895 that his skill had not failed him. Asked the day before the premiere whether he expected his play to be a success, he replied, "My dear fellow, the play is a success. The only question is whether the audience will be a success." It was. The play was revived in the season of 1909-1910 and was highly successful, as were John Gielgud's 1939 production in London and his 1947 production in New York.

In the estimation of the pioneering critic of the British Stage, William Archer, Wilde became "the most exquisite stylist that had written for the stage since Congreve." Another critic appraised his "light elegant comedies were unsurpassed in wit and epigrammatic brilliance since Sheridan."

Wilde spent his last years in Paris in a state of progressive physical deterioration and died in straitened circumstances on November 30, 1900.

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Directed by Allen Goetcheus  
Set and Lighting Design by Harvey Campbell  
Costume Design by Jessie Rousselew

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

Algernon Moncrieff . . . . . John Norris  
Lane, *manservant* . . . . . Paul Jenks  
John Worthing, *J.P.* . . . . . Don McLaughlin\*  
Lady Bracknell . . . . . Linda Sulfridge\*  
Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax . . . . . Marilyn Jones\*  
Miss Prism, *governess* . . . . . Janis Wahl  
Cecily Cardew . . . . . Carolyn Butler  
Rev. Canon Chasuble, *D.D.* . . . . . Jim Clark\*  
Merriman, *butler* . . . . . Edward Jenks

Time: 1895 Place: London

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

*ten minute intermission*

Act II: The garden at the Manor House, Woolton.

*ten minute intermission*

Act III: Drawing-room of the Manor House, Woolton.

Presented by the Speech and Drama Department  
and Trojan Players

\*Denotes Trojan Players Members

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Our Next Production: *A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS*  
October 26, 27 and 28, 1972

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

## READERS THEATRE

### A Note About the Style of This Production

Theatre may be defined as a medium characterized by two features: a text and a performance. When we look at this definition in the light of contemporary theatre practice, we can see that the relationship between the two elements is such that the performance is the dominant feature in most theatrical presentations. On the other hand, a need has frequently been voiced for another kind of theatre--a theatre in which the text would be featured.

Almost since its inception, Readers Theatre has been committed to the principle of featuring, with a special kind of clarity, literary texts. By "featuring the text," I mean that the purpose of the production is to clarify, illuminate, extend, or provide insights into the particular literary text being presented.

A Readers Theatre presentation differs from a conventional play in that it demands stricter attention to the aural elements of the literature. The interpreter must express the emotions, the attitudes, and the actions of the characters by economically using his face, his voice, and his body as vocal and physical clues to meaning. Nothing he does should distract the audience's attention from the characters, the scene and the action within the literature.

It should be made clear that there is no "one way" to do Readers Theatre. In this evening's performance, we have tried to "feature" the text in a number of different ways. Central to this production is the idea that the "written text" should be primary. Therefore, the scripts are carried by the characters and are used in various ways, i.e., as properties (diary, notebook, German Grammar, military directory, tea saucer), as a source of information (Jack tries to look up the meaning of the term "Bumburyest", Algernon pulls the calling card from the script,) and as a source to put information (Lady Bracknell's notetaking, Algernon's list of possible things to do).

Scripts are not used in this presentation in order to read the lines. But the physical presence of the text suggests the character's dependence upon it. Further, by binding the books with the material used in the costumes, we are trying to suggest the close relationship of the character and the text. The characters are an extension of the text.

Except for most entrances and exits, and an occasional few lines, most of the play is projected forward--that is, the majority of the action does not occur onstage with the interpreters but rather in the imagination of the audience. Hopefully, the audience is stimulated to experience the emotional impact of the literature as well as its intellectual content; and since so much of the performance depends upon the mental creativity and contribution of the audience, Readers Theatre may well be called the Theatre of the Mind.



## PRODUCTION STAFF

Technical Director . . . . . Harvey Campbell  
Assistant to the Director . . . . . Sue VanPoucker  
Assistant to the Technical Director . . . . . Diane Oman

Dialect Consultant . . . . . Elizabeth J. Maishment

Set Committee . . . . . ROBERT SCHOBERT  
Rose Knapp  
Rick McKee  
Jack Marsh  
Brad Moser  
Joe Rupp  
Nancy Spaulding

Sound . . . . . MARILYN JONES\*  
John Mazurick  
Philip Muinde  
Kirk Parr  
Tim Nelson

Scene Painter . . . . . Stormy Manning

Properties . . . . . BRAD MOSER  
Jennifer Horton

Make-up . . . . . DEBBIE SMITH  
Debi Carnefix  
Debbi Lewis  
Stormy Manning  
Pam Spencer

Lights . . . . . JACK MARSH  
Steve Frick  
Rick McKee  
Joe Rupp

Costumes . . . . . Joanie Giles  
Debi Carnefix  
Mara Hill  
Chris Newman  
Pam Spencer

House . . . . . BARBARA SPRINGER  
Debi Carnefix  
Judy Elliot  
Portia Johnson\*  
Angie Killian  
Glynis Marlette  
Kathi Wood

Cover Design . . . . . Aletha Jones

Program Editor . . . . . Barbara Springer

\*Denotes Trojan Player Members

