

DRAMATURGICAL PRODUCTION BOOK FOR THE 2007
TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY PRODUCTION OF
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

THESIS

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Master of ARTS

by

Johnathon Douglas Boyd, B.A.

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CHAPTER I

THE ROLE OF A PRODUCTION DRAMATURG

A. Overview of Dramaturgy

The practice of dramaturgy in the United States is relatively new compared with traditions in European countries such as Germany. Despite this fact, many professional and university theatres have begun to incorporate dramaturgs into the production process. As the practice of dramaturgy in American theatre grows and develops, there are two challenges that require attention. Not only must we address the necessity and utility of dramaturgical practice, but we must also work to identify a cogent definition of dramaturgy.

The role of a dramaturg is difficult to classify because the specific functions of a dramaturg vary depending on circumstance and individual need of a production. A dramaturg working at a professional theatre might conduct research in a completely different manner than one working in an educational setting, such as a university. Likewise, the specific duties performed by a professional dramaturg may be different than those performed by a student dramaturg. This particular situation creates problems when attempting to communicate a concrete understanding of dramaturgy.

One technique used to clarify understanding is to categorize dramaturgical practice into three areas: institutional dramaturgy, new play dramaturgy, and production

dramaturgy. Perhaps the least difficult type of dramaturgy to define is institutional dramaturgy. Institutional dramaturgs act as a liaison between the director and producers, and help to articulate the institutional mission of a theatre company. Institutional dramaturgs are often invited to serve on season planning committees, and compose public statements about the goals and vision of the theatre institution they work for. Other supplementary jobs performed by an institutional dramaturg may include advising a theatre marketing team, working with education staff, organizing post-play discussions, or maintaining research materials.

A new play dramaturg is primarily responsible for the solicitation, translation, adaptation, and development of new plays. The specific tasks performed by a new play dramaturg are unique and easy to identify. New play dramaturgs read scripts, manage play development departments, and act as a liaison between writers, directors, and agents, which often requires agent negotiation. In addition, new play dramaturgs work on creating an archive of drafts and versions of play scripts. Finally, because new play dramaturgs must work with playwrights on developing their material, this job requires a strong understanding of dramatic structure.

Unlike new play and institutional dramaturgy, production dramaturgy is the most difficult to define. The jobs performed by a production dramaturg are adaptable and include any number of specific tasks. One particular job includes script preparation, which may involve translation, adaptation, or editing. Other duties include providing image research, gathering information on issues related to the production, and conducting historical research. Production dramaturgs may attend all meetings and rehearsals to serve as an advocate for the playwright and to communicate any necessary business

related to research, outreach, or publicity. Production dramaturgs are also responsible for writing program notes and press releases, providing notes to the director, and organizing lobby displays, post-show discussions, seminars, web pages, and other instructional materials. Finally, it is important for a production dramaturg to archive materials to provide a record of the overall production. With so much responsibility, it is important to realize that for each individual show, a production dramaturg may be called upon to perform all of these duties, or perhaps only a few of them.

The contemporary theatre can benefit tremendously by employing and utilizing production dramaturgs. Utilizing the resources provided by production dramaturgs can and will enrich the overall quality of a theatrical event. After having studied and practiced the art of production dramaturgy at Texas State University-San Marcos, I can attest to the fact that there is a practical need for dramaturgs in educational theatre.

B. My Functions as a Dramaturg

For the purpose of my thesis, I intend to provide information from my work as a production dramaturg on the Texas State production of The Importance of Being Earnest, from the Fall 2007 semester. The following chapters will include topic-related research as well as personal commentary on the process and function that my research influenced. The job requirements of a production dramaturg at Texas State are relatively specific. In fact, I have found that when asked by fellow students to define the role of a dramaturg, I often preface my answer by distinguishing between my function as a dramaturg and the variety of tasks that professional dramaturgs may perform. Additionally, I have noticed

that my work on this production involved a process of learning how to appropriately serve the vision of a director.

During the summer of 2007, I received an e-mail from the director, Dr. Richard Soddors, asking me to gather initial research on movement and manners from the Victorian era. I was also informed that Karen Wilson, another graduate student, would act as my assistant for this production. During the weeks before the Fall 2007 semester, Karen and I gathered research on Oscar Wilde and the Victorian era. After two meetings to discuss the play and share research, Karen's role became that of an observer, while I took over all dramaturgical responsibilities for the show.

In late August, 2007, I met with the director, Dr. Soddors, to share my research and discuss tasks that I might be able to perform as a production dramaturg. Dr. Soddors asked a few specific questions that would require further research, and we talked about my contribution to a Touch Tour that Debbie Swann, another fellow graduate student, was organizing. This unique event would provide visually impaired theatre guests with an opportunity to physically touch the set and properties before the show, as well as meet the cast to hear the sound of the characters' voices. In addition to the Touch Tour, I was invited by Dr. Soddors to be an active participant in the rehearsal process. Dr. Soddors requested that I attend all production meetings, and assemble materials for a production protocol, a presentation on Victorian manners and movement, a lobby display, a press release, and program notes. Finally, I would be responsible for regular communication concerning actors' questions and/or requests for additional research.

During the production, Karen and I attended regular production meetings to discuss business for the play. My previous experience working as an assistant dramaturg

helped prepare me for this process, especially with regards to appropriate etiquette for production meetings. Specifically, I learned that a production dramaturg must be impartial towards all design-related ideas. For example, when costume sketches were shown around, rather than taking time to look and comment, I sat expressionless and quiet. This way, I would not make any verbal or nonverbal comments concerning areas of the production, such as design, when my input was not necessary. In fact, the only time I contributed to the discussion was when the stage manager asked me if I had anything to contribute to the meeting. For the most part, unless there was something urgent, my typical response was to say that there was nothing at this time. Often, if I did want to ask a question to one person, I would wait until after the meeting and approach that person individually. This was a personal choice that I made, rather than a form of etiquette recommended for dramaturgs to follow.

Early in the rehearsal process, I found that many actors would ask me questions regarding confusing words in the text, specific codes of behavior, and even how to take off a hat or wear gloves. My process for responding to actors' questions was to write down necessary information on a note card, and then give the note card to Dr. Sodders. This process allowed the director time to review what information had been collected, and decide if and when he would give that information to his actors. Dr. Sodders was willing to let me work with the actors on stage during rehearsals, but I was very careful not to interfere with his directing. After I presented Dr. Sodders with my protocol and a video that I wished to show the cast, he compared it to his own research. During rehearsals, we discussed a few details that were contradictory, and organized a time for my formal presentation on Victorian movement and manners to the cast.

On September 10th, I presented my research to the cast. After a brief introduction, I showed one of the videos on Victorian period movement. As the video played, I pointed out specific techniques that applied to moments in the text. Following the video presentation, the cast met on stage for a tea party that I had prepared. As we ate cucumber sandwiches and drank tea, I gave a fifteen-minute lecture on Victorian manners, including how to properly enjoy an afternoon tea. After the party, I gave my program notes to Dr. Soddors, e-mailed a copy to Dr. Charlton for approval, and continued working on the press release.

The following week of production was primarily spent revising the program notes and press release. I did have a few questions from the cast regarding our afternoon tea presentation to address, but the majority of time was spent editing. On September 22nd, I began compiling information for my lobby display, which included costume designs as well as information on Oscar Wilde and Victorian society. I attended one final rehearsal to watch the cast run through the entire show. I took notes on items that were confusing, but refrained from any prescriptive criticism or commentary on the acting. Once the lobby display was approved and set up, my work as a production dramaturg was almost complete.

Opening night for The Importance of Being Earnest was October 2, 2007. On October 3rd, Debbie Swann conducted a Touch Tour for visually impaired audience members. Prior to the event, I assisted Debbie by providing research on other theatre companies in the state of Texas that have conducted similar programs for their audiences. I also worked with Debbie to organize ushers that would assist with the actual tour. On the day of the Touch Tour, Debbie introduced me as the dramaturg for the show, and I

gave a brief lecture on the background of the play. Following this presentation, Debbie and the ushers conducted the actual Touch Tour. This was an exciting opportunity because of the benefit it provided to the community. Production dramaturgs at professional theatres are regularly required to conduct educational and community outreach for a variety of audiences. The Touch Tour provided an important experience not only for the visually impaired audience members, but also for myself.

After the play closed, there were a few remaining post-production responsibilities to take care of. First, I had to take apart the lobby display and return all borrowed items. I had previously taken pictures of the display and saved them for my thesis. In addition to these pictures, I began collecting other show related materials for an archive of the production. Once these materials were compiled, they were organized and arranged to later be included as a part of this thesis.

CHAPTER II

OSCAR WILDE BIOGRAPHY

A. Process & Function

One of the primary responsibilities of the production dramaturg is to provide research to the director. In addition to specific topics or areas of focus, student dramaturgs working on productions for the Texas State Department of Theatre are traditionally expected to provide biographical information on the playwright. This information can be presented in a range of forms, with varying degrees of importance and practicality. Within an educational setting, any type of biographical information provided is valuable in that it enriches the overall experience for the students involved. Additionally, audience members attending the play will benefit from program notes and a lobby display that enhances their understanding and appreciation of the playwright and the play.

For our production of The Importance of Being Earnest, the director, Dr. Richard Sadders, asked me to provide biographical information on Oscar Wilde to compare with his own research and to use for the lobby display. The process of gathering and analyzing biographical research is not only required for production dramaturgs at Texas State, but it is also practical and helpful.

When I first began to gather biographical information, I made the mistake of searching for basic facts and short, succinct biographies. The majority of information that I found came from encyclopedias and textbooks on theatre history. I was surprised to find that some of the reference books included the exact same short paragraph on Oscar Wilde, written word-for-word. This should have been an immediate warning sign that I was not conducting scholarly research. I did find research from tertiary sources such as The Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre & Performance and The International Dictionary of Theatre that provided general information about Oscar Wilde and his work.

Unfortunately, the biographical summaries were not helpful in supplying details and information appropriate for a dramaturgical protocol and thesis. Although I used this information initially, these sources were not sufficient for later work. When I went back to the library, I found books and articles that contained sufficient and appropriate information. Some of these books, such as Oscar Wilde by Frank Harris and The Trials of Oscar Wilde by Michael Foldy, were helpful in providing historical, social, and cultural context, as well as biographical facts and details. As a result of my research, I learned how to look for biographical information and decide what was required and/or useful for the overall production.

B. Biography

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in Dublin, Ireland, on October 16, 1854. Most people today remember Oscar Wilde as a witty playwright and novelist. Although Wilde successfully wrote nine plays before his death at age forty-six, he also wrote various short stories and poems. In addition to his literary notoriety, Wilde was

also known for his talent as a conversationalist. Wilde proclaimed himself as a one-man movement, romanticized life, and characterized himself as an art critic and professor of aesthetics (Kronenberger 216). Along with his belief that art and literature should be appreciated for its beauty, Wilde critiqued Victorian society in a subtle manner, with characters that spoke in epigrams and paradoxes. His witty use of language has even lead to the publication of books that solely contain quotes from his plays and essays. Even though Wilde was a member of the society he criticized, his eloquent style amused and entertained audiences of his time, and continues to do so today.

As a child of affluence, Wilde was able to pursue his interests in art and writing. Wilde's father was a famous doctor and oculist, and his mother, known by her literary name, Speranza, was idolized for her passionate advocacy of Ireland's claim to self-government (Harris 1). The wealth and fame shared by Wilde's parents was not the only contribution that influenced Oscar Wilde. Wilde's parents both influenced his proclivity towards writing and public speaking, as well as his promiscuous behavior as an adult. Oscar's father, Dr. William Wilde, was a popular lecturer, published twenty books in addition to many articles, and had several illegitimate children (Kronenberger 4). Wilde was equally influenced by his mother's writing, and was quite possibly affected by her eccentricity. Speranza paid little attention to her husband's "boundless whoring," and was so compelled with a desire to have a daughter that she dressed and exhibited Oscar as a girl (Kronenberger 6-7). Whereas Wilde's parents undoubtedly influenced his behavior, the most important factor contributing to his ideals and beliefs was his education.

Oscar Wilde was fortunate to benefit from an upper class education, financed by his parents. When Oscar was ten years old, he entered Portora Royal School in Dublin.

As a schoolboy, Wilde had no particular friends, and spent his free time gathering flowers, reading, gazing at sunsets, and paying a great deal of attention to his clothes (Kronenberger 11). Wilde later entered Trinity College in Dublin, and went on to study at Magdalen College, Oxford. Wilde began his Oxford education later than most men, at twenty instead of eighteen, and was able to win high honors (Harris 25). During his college years, Wilde was not engaged in writing novels or plays. In fact, he was not at all concerned with theatre. Instead, Oscar Wilde studied classics and wrote poetry.

While studying at Trinity, Wilde was heavily influenced by professor J.P. Mahaffy. Under the tutelage of Mahaffy, Wilde became a scholar and developed a profound interest in Greek thought (Harris 24). While attending Oxford, Wilde was also influenced by two other men, Slade Professor of Art, John Ruskin, and Walter Pater. Ruskin was a renowned lecturer who shared his controversial ideas on art and economics with Wilde in private conversations (Kronenberger 20-1). Walter Pater's writing, especially his book Studies in the History of the Renaissance, equally influenced Wilde. This book encouraged people to "experience life and to experiment, to burn with a 'hard gemlike flame,' and to pursue 'the love of art for its own sake'" (Kronenberger 22). Sparked by the words and teaching of Ruskin and Pater, Oscar Wilde began to write poetry. In 1878, Wilde won the Newdigate prize for English verse at Oxford for his poem "Ravenna" (Harris 25-6). Wilde's interest in art and aesthetics led him not only to write poetry, but also to begin living as if he embodied the ideals he believed in and wrote about. Wilde's life experiences during college shaped and developed his ideas that would later affect his dramatic style as a playwright.

After earning a degree from Oxford, Wilde moved to London. As a member of London society, Wilde attempted to publish his poetry and promote himself as a great talker and art critic. Wilde's brother Willie, who worked as the editor for The World in London, helped by reporting on Oscar's clever sayings and eccentric behavior (Harris 32). With increasing notoriety, however, Wilde struggled for money. He eventually went into debt and was forced to borrow what little money his mother could spare to continue living an extravagant lifestyle (Harris 39). Eventually, Wilde was able to find work to help support himself. In the 1880s, he worked as the editor for a women's magazine, published books of poetry and children's stories, wrote reviews, and lectured around the world. In addition, Wilde was becoming a "one-man Aesthetic Movement" with elaborate dress, self-promotion, and a talent for conversation (Kronenberger 27-8). Unfortunately, Wilde's first attempts at writing plays were not favorable, and his work received bad reviews. Wilde continued to write, and his later work was better received.

Before the people of London began to enjoy and appreciate Wilde's writing, he first had to create interest in his work. After publishing papers which stirred up conflicting opinions and opened Wilde up to critique, he went on to publish his first novel in Lippincott's Magazine entitled, The Picture of Dorian Gray (Harris 69). The novel was later republished in book form in April of 1891 (Harris 70). Between 1891 and 1895, Oscar Wilde began writing plays exclusively that were produced in England as well as the United States. Although journalists from Truth and The Times were critical of Wilde's first major play, Lady Windermere's Fan, audiences cheered, laughed, and thoroughly enjoyed the play (Harris 83-4). This success established and propelled Wilde's career as a playwright in London. His other important works include A Woman

of No Importance (1893), Salome' (1893 in French, 1894 in English), An Ideal Husband (1895), and The Importance of Being Earnest (1895). When The Importance of Being Earnest opened on February 14th in 1895 at the St. James Theatre, it was an amazing success. Unfortunately, due to Wilde's arrest and later imprisonment, he was never able to achieve the same level of literary success.

Over a decade before he wrote The Importance of Being Earnest, Wilde married Constance Lloyd and had two sons with her. Sometime around the mid-1880s, it became apparent that Wilde not only began to lose interest in his wife, and women in general, but he also began to acquire new companions (Kronenberger 82). One of the young men that Wilde began seeing was Lord Alfred Douglas. Rumors concerning the relationship between Douglas and Wilde, along with scandalous stories concerning letters and blackmail, began to circulate in London (Harris 92-4). This relationship irritated and angered Douglas' father, the Marquis of Queensbury. On February 18th, 1895, Wilde received a letter from Queensbury, which read, "To Oscar Wilde, posing as somdomite [sic]" (Morley 105). Having received the note, Oscar Wilde sued Queensbury for libel. Even though Queensbury was tried, the prosecution spent the majority of the case defending evidence that came up against Wilde (Foldy 3). All of the evidence presented had the effect of making Wilde appear as if he actually were guilty of illicit behavior. Eventually, the case was dropped. Following the trial, a warrant was issued and Wilde was arrested on the charge of committing "acts of gross indecency" (Foldy 20-1). At the same time this was happening, Wilde's most famous play, The Importance of Being Earnest, was playing at the St. James Theatre. As a result of Wilde's arrest, actor-manager George Alexander had Wilde's name blacked out on the signboard in front of

the theatre (Kronenberger 160). Wilde was later tried for criminal behavior. The Star newspaper reported that the opinion in the courtroom was that Wilde might be set free, but he was found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment with hard labor for two years (Foldy 46-7). Sadly, due to the result of the trial, The Importance of Being Earnest closed to avoid further scandal and bad publicity. This tragedy forever changed the course of Oscar Wilde's life and ultimately led to his death.

Wilde served his sentence and continued to write while in prison. After being released, Wilde moved to Paris. Two years later, he died on November 30, 1900. Although his end was tragic, Oscar Wilde's contribution to the world of literature and theatre was significant. "Oscar Wilde was punished not for failing to amuse the high society audiences for which he wrote, but for offending the society's sexual attitudes" (Kaplan 318). Over time, audiences have been able to separate Wilde's writing from his personal life, or at least suspend their judgment long enough to enjoy one of his plays. He will forever be remembered as a writer of great wit and a man of extraordinary personality.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL & SOCIAL CONTEXT

The context surrounding Oscar Wilde's play The Importance of Being Earnest involves two separate worlds. The play is set in 1895, just a few years before the turn of the century, and near the end of the Victorian Era. This was a world changing due to the Industrial Revolution. Numerous problems faced the working class due to urbanization, and new scientific thought challenged previously held beliefs (Brockett 2-3). Oscar Wilde sat on the cusp of the modern era, but his plays did not reflect the change occurring in the world. Instead, Wilde chose to write farcical satire about another world: the upper class. This world stood in contrast to the realities affecting modern era. However, these two worlds coexisted at the same time and place. In order to understand how these two worlds are related, one must examine the historical and social context of Victorian England at the turn of the century.

Queen Victoria's reign was from 1837 to 1901. Victoria became the Queen of England at the age of eighteen, and her reign was the longest in English history (Matthew 121). During this time, Queen Victoria heavily influenced many changes in politics, as well as the role of the monarchy. Previous to her accession, Victoria's uncle, King William IV, attempted to install a Tory government led by Sir Robert Peel, but Lord Melbourne, a Whig politician, won the election in 1835 (Matthew 121). After William IV

died and Victoria became the Queen, there were several shifts in political power. The first came when Sir Robert Peel became Prime Minister in 1841. Victoria initially associated herself with the Whig political party and declined to replace Whig courtiers with Tories, an event referred to as the “Bedchamber Crisis” (Matthew 121). During the majority of Queen Victoria’s reign, political power shifted between the Tories, or Conservatives, and the Liberals.

Even more significant than Victoria’s personal politics was her role as a monarch. In 1840, Queen Victoria married her first cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (Matthew 121). For years, Victoria and Albert were actively involved in the social and political affairs of England. When Albert died in 1861, Victoria became more isolated (Matthew 122). Pictures of Queen Victoria after Albert’s death show her in all black, forever mourning her husband. Victoria’s reclusive behavior led some to believe that she had decided to take on a purely symbolic role, rather than remain active in politics. Even though she made a minimal number of public appearances after Albert’s death, Victoria remained very much involved in the public and private lives of her children, as well as with the work of her cabinet members (Arnstein 109). In the last few years of her reign, Queen Victoria also heavily influenced foreign and domestic affairs.

Near the end of the nineteenth century, Victoria was concerned with her growing empire. By the mid-nineteenth century, Britain controlled one fifth of the world’s land surface and had interests in much of the remainder (Kennedy 17). Within this massive empire, Victoria paid special attention to interests in Africa and India. Victoria promoted colonization in Africa, but explicitly stated that it was only justified if it promoted the abolition of slavery where it existed, and only if it bettered the lives of subject people

(Arnstein 181). Victoria's sense of humanity and government included promotion of religious tolerance. Although she never traveled to India, Victoria insisted that those governing the Crown Colony should not interfere with religious practices, whether Muslim or Hindu (Arnstein 182). In addition to foreign politics, Victoria was also concerned with domestic issues affecting women.

The nineties were a time when women began to feel a greater sense of social freedom. Even though Victoria accepted the belief that men and women occupied "separate spheres" in society, her very presence as a female ruler in a patriarchal society strengthened the modern women's movement (Arnstein 202). Additionally, there were specific laws and changes made during her reign that affected positive change for women. The Married Women's Property Act of 1882 and legal cases, which ruled that a husband could not detain his wife in his house, positively affected women from all social classes (Ensor 339). These events set the stage for the suffrage movement and had tremendous effects on twentieth-century feminist politics. Queen Victoria approved some of these changes, but ultimately she opposed equality, believing that men and women should remain each in their own position (Arnstein 203). Although some felt that Queen Victoria's ideas were somewhat prudish, others developed an impression of her as a devoted mother and confident ruler.

In addition to being viewed as a sovereign or protector, Queen Victoria had a lighter side that enjoyed theatre and music. At Windsor Castle, Pietro Mascagni conducted his new opera, Cavalleria Rusticana, and the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company staged the play The Gondoliers (Arnstein 184). There were also numerous concerts that took place at Windsor. Singers Emma Albani and Emma Calve, distinguished pianists

Franz Liszt and Ignaz Paderewski, and Spanish cellist Pablo Casals all played for Victoria at Windsor (Arnstein 184). Within Victorian society, members of the upper class enjoyed dancing and other forms of paid entertainment. In London, people could pay a fee at pleasure gardens such as Vauxhall and Cremorne to stroll through carefully planted vistas listening to outdoor bands and singers (Mitchell 227).

Fashion was another popular trend that experienced major changes during the late Victorian Era. Women's fashions, especially in London, became brighter and lighter, and men began wearing suits and bowler hats instead of morning coats and top hats (Matthew 294). These and other trends continued to change and develop over time. Still, the British culture was heavily influenced by strict codes of behavior. These specific rules and manners are observable within Oscar Wilde's play The Importance of Being Earnest.

A. Victorian Manners & Movement

For any production set in the Victorian Era, it is important to consider how men and women moved and behaved. Manners and daily rituals can help actors develop their character and create physical action on stage. For our production of The Importance of Being Earnest, it was crucial that I compile practical and specific information concerning how people moved and behaved during the Victorian Era. Books on etiquette and everyday life were consulted, in addition to videos on period movement training for actors. One of the videos was directed by Judith Chafee, an Associate Professor of Movement at Boston University. Her instruction provided clear and detailed information on Victorian movement. The other video, put together by the Utah State University

Department of Theatre, focused on manners as well as movement from Victorian England.

For my production protocol and presentation that I gave to the cast, I took notes from the two videos and selected movement and manners that would be helpful and practical for the show. Both sources stressed the fact that period acting requires specific movement and sound, but should not replace techniques and skills involved with realistic acting. My notes were meant to suggest how upper class Victorian society might possibly move. Notes gained from books on etiquette and Victorian life also provided valuable information.

Most Victorian movement was gender specific, dictated by the fashions for men and women. For men, dignity and formality were stressed, and emotional restraint was considered a particularly male characteristic. Rather than employing broad gestures, male body position remained stiff. Overall, dignity was displayed at all times, even while sitting. As in the Restoration, men would sit with their backs straight and control the descent and ascent into a chair with their legs. In relaxed company, such as when men had a cigar with other gentlemen, it was customary to cross one's legs or simply cross ankles. This type of informality would never occur in the presence of women.

One further note worth mentioning involved whether or not men would tug at their pants while sitting. In the Utah State video, I did not observe any men perform this gesture, but it was never mentioned whether or not tugging at one's pants was considered inappropriate. I assumed it was not, but when I told this to Dr. Sodders, he informed me that he had found research to support this action. In this case, I discovered that making assumptions based on observation or omission is never advisable.

Movement for women in Victorian England was much different than for men, due to the fashion of wearing corsets and other garments that would force erect posture. Like men, however, poise and dignity were displayed with all movement. Proper manners required that when a lady entered a room, she should look for the mistress of the house, smile, and speak to her first. To climb stairs, women had to lift the edge of their skirts. While sitting, it was acceptable to cross ankles in mixed company.

Manners such as bowing were still applicable, but simplified from the Restoration Era. For our production, the issue of bowing was not nearly as important as holding or kissing of the hand. If a lady offered her hand, a gentleman would place his hand under the lady's and touch his lips to the back of her hand. I found that some of these manners were unusual and worth pointing out to the cast. For example, if you were a man and you met a lady whom you knew slightly, you must wait until she bowed to you before stopping to talk. A man would not stop to speak to a lady until she first stopped to speak to him. Men and women did shake hands, but only if they were friends. Also, it was customary for a man to "lead a lady" by offering his arm when leaving a room. Overall, it is important to remember that the upper class in Victorian England moved and behaved with restraint of action and the repression of emotion. Of course, in Oscar Wilde's plays, there is an irreverence for attitudes of superiority, which often indicates that actors may bend certain rules, just as Wilde himself might have done.

Finally, it is important to mention the use of props during the Victorian Era. When a gentleman removed his hat, it was held in the left hand from the back of the brim with the open end against the body. When removing gloves, the right glove was removed first and then the left, but would remain on if a visit was unexpected or hurried. Normally,

when entering a room, properties were set aside, unless, for example, a lady needed to reach into her purse for something. Parasols were carried top down without the tip touching the floor, and would be placed on a side table or left at the door when entering a room. Smoking was part of the social custom for men, but men would never smoke in the presence of a lady, unless to be rude. It was considered improper to smoke in the street in daylight, to smoke in the dining room, or to smoke on a train. Cigars were popular, but many gentlemen also smoked cigarettes. Overall, these rules or codes of behavior are essential to consider when rehearsing a Victorian play.

B. The Art of Afternoon Tea

In the second act of The Importance of Being Earnest, Cecily Cardew and Gwendolen Fairfax engage in the English tradition of having afternoon tea. In order to understand and appreciate this English tradition, various sources were consulted. Books concerning the history of tea, the origins of “afternoon tea,” and individual manners and etiquette provided a context for this understanding. The habit or ritual of taking afternoon tea, however, did not come about until the mid-nineteenth century. Up until then, drinking tea was an informal activity. Around 1840, the seventh Duchess of Bedford developed the habit of ordering tea around four o’clock; when she invited friends to join her, afternoon tea was born (Clark 40). This habit gained popularity because it allowed ladies to enjoy a light snack in between meals and provided an excuse for social visits.

As the trend of afternoon tea caught on, various customs or manners developed to accommodate this ritual. The ceremony grew more lavish as ladies tried to outdo their society friends (Clark 40). There was a standard light menu provided at an afternoon tea,

but as time went on the custom became a full meal. By the twentieth century, a standard menu might include “tea, bread and butter, five kinds of sandwiches, oyster vol au vents, chicken cutlets, two creams, four jellies, several cakes, and a claret cup” (Clark 41). In addition to the menu, an afternoon tea might involve some form of entertainment.

Whereas instrumental music might be provided, it was proper to keep each piece short, with breaks to allow for conversation (Smith 19). As the afternoon tea tradition developed, so did the rules of etiquette necessary for enjoying tea.

At the time when Oscar Wilde was writing plays, afternoon tea was a commonplace ritual among all social classes. However, the upper class of society felt the need to establish rules concerning afternoon tea. In Victorian England, books were written on etiquette that were aimed at helping the lower class (Burton 160). Books such as Mrs. Beeton’s Cookery and Household Management, written by Isabella Mary Beeton, were popular and influential in shaping manners and etiquette. Mrs. Beeton’s advice first appeared as a regular magazine feature in the 1860s, and her columns were later collected and published as a book (Burton 128). Along with manners, there were rules for how and where tea should be served. According to Sally Mitchell’s Daily Life in Victorian England, the lady of the house made the tea, poured it out, and servants handed the cups to guests (126). Michael Smith’s The Afternoon Tea Book, however, indicates that servants did the work of pouring and serving ladies, unless gentlemen were present to serve (19). The list of manners was extensive, and sometimes contradictory. There were rules for where tea should be served, and when or how introductions should be made (Smith 19). Rules were also invented for what constituted “bad manners.” Eating food with a knife when a fork was provided, drinking wine in one gulp, and allowing

silverware to clatter were all considered vulgar and offensive (Mitchell 160). Overall, these rules and manners established a dignified, and somewhat pretentious, context for understanding the ritual of afternoon tea in Victorian England.

C. Origins of the Text

In the summer of 1894, Oscar Wilde wrote a letter to actor-manager George Alexander stating, “there is nothing more to tell you about the comedy beyond what I said already” (Raby 139). This letter is the first document we have suggesting the initial idea for The Importance of Being Earnest. Unfortunately, while writing the play in the town of Worthing, England, in 1894, Wilde was desperate for money. Wilde’s financial problems grew worse with a delay in the production of An Ideal Husband, and it is documented that Wilde was in correspondence with producers in 1894 over the rights to his plays (Raby 140). Wilde sold the rights to The Importance of Being Earnest to be produced in England and the United States at the same time. It is possible that Wilde completed his best-known work, perhaps with the goal of earning money to support himself, rather than for the sole purpose of creating a beautiful work of art.

During the autumn months of 1894, Wilde wrote and revised the first draft of The Importance of Being Earnest. Wilde sent Alexander an early copy of a four-act version, referring to it as “farcical comedy” with the working title, The Guardian (Raby 142). From this early copy, there would later be two published versions, one with four acts and one with three. Wilde’s revisions involved “shortening” instead of adding to the text; he changed meanings by taking out words and sentences from the original text (Thienpont 246). At the read-through rehearsal for our production, I sat with both versions, compared

material as the actors read, and took notes. Wilde made small omissions throughout the play and in each act. The only significant omission was at the end of the second act. The character, Mr. Gribbsby, only appears in the four-act version. Also, there were more lines omitted throughout the third act compared to the first. Although rarely produced, the four-act version does survive, and offers a perspective on Oscar Wilde's original ideas for the play.

Perhaps the most interesting commentary regarding ideas and origins involves speculation about where Oscar Wilde came up with the ideas for names and places. From Wilde's manuscript notebook in the Clark Library, one may find that the names of characters, excluding Miss Prism, were changed: Lady Maud Rufford became Lady Gwendolen and, more importantly, Bertram/George Ashton became Mr. Worthing (Raby 142-3). The latter name change is crucial because of the dramatic irony utilized with *Ernest and Ernest*. Also in Wilde's notes, there was a brief mention of Mr. Bunbury. Evidence suggests that Wilde wrote this play "with great rapidity," incorporating names and places from his surroundings into the text (Raby 143). We know that Wilde was staying in the town of Worthing while writing this play, and Worthing shows up as the protagonist's name. The origin of Bunbury remains more of a mystery.

In the first act of the play, Algernon reveals to Jack that he pretends to have an invalid friend, Bunbury. The amount of speculation about the source of this odd name is somewhat surprising. The earliest assumption was that Wilde took the name from the English village of Bunbury; scholar William Green later argued that the name is "a composite" of two figures, classical scholar Edward Herbert Bunbury and Wilde's friend as a youth, Henry Shirley Bunbury (Mackie 327-8). Kerry Powell argues that Bunbury

was suggested to Wilde from the play Godpapa, a farce from 1891 which included a character named Bunbury (Raby 145). However, regardless of speculation, there is little proof for any of these concepts. Wilde could have found the name Bunbury from the Times or the Pall Mall Gazette; the name Bunbury appears in various marriages and obituaries from the summer of 1894 (Mackie 328-9). The only sure way to know exactly where, how, and from what Wilde took his ideas would be to discover primary sources such as a personal notebook or journal. Until then, scholars are open to suggest their own opinions and ideas.

CHAPTER IV

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The Importance of Being Earnest was written and performed for the first time over a hundred years ago. Since then, professional, educational, and amateur theatre companies have produced this play countless times. Documenting every single production is almost impossible, but many of the productions over the years stand out from the rest. In order to compile documentation indicative of the major productions, a variety of sources were consulted. Archives and databases provided articles, advertisements, and criticism that shed light on which productions were more or less important. This type of information is practical because it supplies a director with an appreciation for past productions, an understanding of how other directors developed their own concept, and provides ideas that a director may or may not consider for their own vision of the play. The following is a sample of the production history for The Importance of Being Earnest, in chronological order from oldest to most recent.

The first performance of The Importance of Being Earnest was on Valentine's Day at the St. James Theatre in London, England. On February 15th, 1895, the New York Times printed a notice reading, "'The Importance of Being Earnest' is an excellent, refined farce. It was received with almost incessant laughter" ("Oscar"). Despite Wilde's arrest on April 5th, the play ran in London until May 8th for a total of eighty-six

performances (Beckson 15). The Importance of Being Earnest opened for the first time in the United States at the Empire Theatre on April 22, 1895 (“New”). According to an article in the New York Times from April 28, 1895, the show closed later that week after only a few performances (“Theatrical”). Both the London and New York productions closed at relatively the same time, likely because of the scandal surrounding Wilde’s upcoming trial. The last day of the trial was on May 25, 1895 (Foldy 45). By the time Wilde was convicted, both productions had been closed for over two weeks.

In 1902, manager George Alexander decided to revive The Importance of Being Earnest. Following a regional tour and a preliminary run at the Coronet in Notting Hill Gate, the play ran for fifty-five nights at the St. James Theatre (Kaplan 319). The show was a success, and was also the first time that one of Oscar Wilde’s plays had been produced since his trial (“Play”). In 1909, Alexander revived the play and put Wilde’s name back onto the bill, as well as onto souvenir copies of the text distributed to commemorate Alexander’s twentieth year in theatre management (Kaplan 319). In addition, George Alexander actually appeared in the production in the role of John Worthing (“St. James”). The show ran for 316 performances and prepared the way for additional revivals in 1911 and 1914 (Kaplan 319). Even though both the 1902 and 1909 productions had successful runs, not every production in the following years would achieve the same level of success.

During the first forty years of the twentieth century, there were hundreds of performances of this play, but only a few of them were truly noteworthy. In 1923, Alan Aynesworth produced a revival of the play at the Haymarket Theatre. Aynesworth, who had played Algernon Moncrieff in the 1895 premiere, staged this production in a post-

war era of flappers, motor-bikes, and birth control – with corresponding adjustments to Wilde’s text (Kaplan 328). Although the concept was intriguing, there was mixed criticism concerning the production. An article in The Times praised John Deverell’s performance of Algernon, said that Louise Hampton’s portrayal of Miss Prism “struck the very note of fantastic absurdity,” but claimed that Margaret Scudamore’s Lady Bracknell should have been more Victorian (“Haymarket”). Critics from The Evening Standard and The Sunday Herald were disappointed that the costumes were not from the 1890s, and felt that the modern style was confusing and disorienting (Kaplan 328). Regardless of the criticism this production received, it showed that Wilde’s work could effectively be appropriated for a modern audience in the 1920s.

For the thirtieth reunion in 1925, the play was produced again at the Empire Theatre on Broadway. Unfortunately, this production was a disappointment for audiences. The actress Mrs. John Barrymore, also a novelist known by her pen name Michael Strange, missed two rehearsals the week before opening night due to illness (“Mrs. John”). This production was particularly interesting because of the frustrating events that occurred when the show opened. Barrymore’s first leading stage performance was delayed an hour because she claimed that she was unable to perform; she eventually consented to act in a “dress rehearsal,” making frequent use of the prompter (“Mrs. John”). Although the performance was less than satisfactory, it is worth noting that not all productions of The Importance of Being Earnest failed because of negative reviews from the critics.

In 1930, Nigel R. Playfair directed a production at the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith, England, with Mr. John Gielgud in the role of John Worthing. Critics

wrote that Playfair's production, done all in black and white, was pleasing to the eye, but artificial and more often at war with the play than in accord with it ("Lyric"). The same critic went on to mention that although Gielgud discovered "the music of this astonishing artificiality," he allowed the "burden of farce to slacken the pace of comedy" ("Lyric"). Nine years later, John Gielgud performed the role of John Worthing again, but this time he also directed the play for the Globe Theatre in London. Gielgud set the play in 1906, which allowed audiences to laugh at the whole system of Victorian life with official proposals of marriage, the ceremony of meals, and the exaggerated values of birth, rank, and fashion (Kaplan 330). The show played for only eight matinees, but received positive reviews. One critic wrote that Gielgud had "the special naturalism proper to the part - a naturalism that delights the audiences, but not with the extravagance of farce" ("Globe"). John Gielgud would later go on to direct the play twice more, in 1946 and 1947.

In the mid-forties, Gielgud directed the play in London as well as in New York. Appearing once again as John Worthing, Gielgud's Broadway production in 1947 at the Royale Theatre had a successful run of 81 performances. Critic Brooks Atkinson wrote favorably of the entire cast, which included Robert Fleming as Algernon Moncrieff and Margaret Rutherford as Lady Bracknell. Of Gielgud's performance, Atkinson wrote "no play could ever match the sustained perfection of his stylized acting" (30). Specifically, Atkinson commented on how all the actors, including Gielgud, held their heads high as though they were elevating themselves above vulgarity, greeted each other with dainty touches, and spoke in a dry fashion, instead of hammering away at the jokes (Atkinson 30). Not only was this production noteworthy because of John Gielgud's reputation as an

actor and producer, but reviews of the show indicate the type of style and technique that was valued at the time.

Ten years later, Michael Benthall directed a production of The Importance of Being Earnest at the Old Vic in London. This 1959 revival featured a young Judi Dench as Cecily Cardew and Fay Compton as Lady Bracknell (“Importance”). These two remarkable actors received excellent reviews for their performances. One critic wrote that Compton was successful in impressing her own personality on the part, rather than repeating Dame Edith Evans’ vocal mannerisms, and that Miss Dench seemed to gain in aplomb in her scene with Barbara Jefford as Gwendolen (“Importance”). This production, however, would not be the last time that Judi Dench would appear in The Importance of Being Earnest.

In the 1970s, many productions utilized choices that were rather unconventional. In 1975, Robin Phillips directed a production in which he cast a man, William Hutt, in the role of Lady Bracknell for the Stratford Festival in Canada (Gussow C14). This attempt at gender bending set a precedent for casting that was later repeated. In the same year, Jonathan Miller directed a production in which Irene Handl played Lady Bracknell with a German accent. Her performance, however, received a particularly negative review. Critic Charles Lewsen felt that despite her comic ability, it was clear that “Miss Handl had decided she was not up to playing an English aristocrat” (G9). His critique went on to say that if Miss Handle intended to offer a satire on Queen Victoria, it came across as a desperate attempt (Lewsen G9). Whereas some productions are enhanced with the use of non-traditional choices, others simply fall short of expectations.

In 1982, Sir Peter Hall directed a well-received production at the National Theatre in London. Having already played the part of Cecily Cardew, Judi Dench once again appeared in the play, this time as Lady Bracknell. Critic Irving Wardle praised Dench's performance, as well as the fact that the show established a total contrast of movement, tempo, and looks between Jack and Algy, instead of having them look alike (9). Not only did this production receive an excellent review, but it was the first production of this play at the National Theatre. The show was particularly noteworthy because of the collaboration of many talented and famous English artists. Additionally, this has been the only production of The Importance of Being Earnest staged at the National Theatre to this day.

The following year, at the John Drew Theatre in East Hampton, New York, Ellis Rabb directed a production in which he cast himself as Lady Bracknell. Critic Mel Gussow panned the show, commenting that Rabb did not "offer as persuasive a performance as Mr. Hutt did eight years before," referring to the 1975 Robin Phillips production (C14). Ellis Rabb's depiction of Lady Bracknell was not a serious commentary on gender roles or Victorian sexual politics. Instead, Rabb utilized his deep voice and over-exaggerated pauses for a comic effect that critic Mel Gussow felt was amusing but did not measure up to the standards set by previous performances from Rabb (C14). Except for Rabb's poor performance, Gussow gave the show a positive critique, offering special credit to the other actors in the cast. Both Robin Phillips' and Ellis Rabb's productions of The Importance of Being Earnest are significant in that they questioned traditional ideas concerning gender and casting.

In 1984, Garland Wright directed the play at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis. In addition to the lavish, all-white setting that Wright co-designed with Michael Miller, the show embarked on an eight-week tour after playing for six weeks at the Guthrie (Klein CN20). Klein reported that this design concept was created to “dust off the cobwebs of Victorian life” (CN20). In 1989, Mark Lamos directed a production at the Hartford Stage in Connecticut. Like many directors before him, Lamos cast himself as John Worthing and chose not to stray from text or create unusual interpretations. Critic Laurie Winer praised the performance of Mary-Louise Parker in the role of Cecily Cardew. Winer felt that Parker’s performances was “the standard for the spirit of Wilde” (C15). As many times as this play had been done in almost a century, directors such as Wright and Lamos illustrate that both traditional and alternative concepts for this show continue to be produced successfully.

In 2004, Charles Newell directed The Importance of Being Earnest, paired with Tom Stoppard’s play Travesties, at The Court Theatre in Chicago. In the play Travesties, the character Henry Carr recounts a fictitious meeting between Lenin, Tristan Tzara, and James Joyce in Zurich during World War I. In addition to numerous similarities between both plays, Henry Carr was an actual man who played the part of Algernon in James Joyce’s production of The Importance Of Being Earnest in Zurich (Orlich 371). “Newell positioned the two productions to speak to each other, using the same cast for both shows, and staging parallel sequences in each show” (Freeman 356). This unique concept of pairing and staging opened up fresh, new ways for actors to think about the play and its characters, and gave unique perspectives to audiences who came to both productions.

Actor Stuart Baker played the part of Algernon in The Importance of Being Earnest as well as the part of Carr in Travesties. Audiences might have noticed that when Baker played the role of Carr, he repeated blocking patterns and stage positions performed while playing Algernon (Freeman 356). This technique allowed audiences to visualize similarities in the text and create new understanding about ideas and themes related to both shows. Hopefully, in the future, artists will continue to create and develop interesting perspectives and productions of The Importance of Being Earnest.

CHAPTER V

CRITICAL COMMENTARY

Early in the research process, I collected articles from scholarly journals that offered commentary on the play. These articles provided critique on the actual text, rather than on performances of the play. After reading and taking notes over each article, I incorporated this information into the production protocol, and later used my notes for the lobby display. The following is an analysis of textual criticism involving the elements of character and dialogue. In addition, an essay on Oscar Wilde's aesthetic beliefs was included to highlight applicable theory and criticism. Even though my research on critical commentary may not have been directly applicable in rehearsals, it was practical in creating a foundation and framework to further research.

A. Character & Dialogue

In addition to commentary on the origins of the play, scholars have provided a great deal of structural or textual criticism of The Importance of Being Earnest. Analysis of the major characters in the play reveals important similarities and differences.

Algernon and Jack are both deceivers in that Algernon pretends to have a sick friend, Bunbury, and Jack pretends to be another man, Ernest. However, the behavior of these two men is quite different. Algernon is not earnest, has no money, and is irresponsible,

whereas Jack is earnest about being Ernest in order to marry Gwendolen (Sale 477-8). Both men lie to get what they want, but their dispositions and methods are distinct and diverse. In the cigarette case scene, Jack is adamant about guarding his secrets and his feelings, but Algy is playfully nosy and jokes about how modern society depends on what one should not read. Algernon's speeches are all jokes, and most have subtexts, whereas Jack tells no jokes because he is earnest (Sale 478). In many ways, Algernon is the witty voice of Oscar Wilde, commenting on the mendacity of the upper class, represented by Jack. Later in the play, Algernon experiences a shift, and though he maintains his witty, foppish manner, he becomes happily earnest about marrying Cecily.

Ultimately, both men attempt to marry the women they have chosen to pursue. These two ladies, Gwendolen and Cecily, share many similarities and differences as well. Gwendolen is treated as representative of her class or as a city mouse that contrasts with Cecily's country mouse (Sale 478). When the two ladies first meet, however, much of the humor is derived from the fact that the audience recognizes their similarities. Both women share a desire to marry men named Ernest, keep journals of their "sensational" lives, and possess a self-centered yet polite demeanor. Before both women come together to unite against the men who deceived them, they equally share a ruthless, yet civil, determination to outdo each other. While we watch Gwendolen and Cecily drinking tea, we see "tigers pretending to be cats in contrast to the 'strong drama' the play relates to" (Stone 35). In addition, Gwendolen possesses a more sophisticated, or earnest, approach to marrying an Ernest, whereas Cecily indulges a young girl's fascination with an imaginary Ernest, now real in the form of Algernon's pretext.

Comparing the use of dialogue in the play reveals other similarities in character. When Gwendolen and Cecily meet, the dramatic conflict emerges in dialogue with a neat structure and rising complexity (Stone 33-4). After being introduced, both ladies compliment each other, and decide to become great friends. Gwendolen then proceeds to question Cecily about who she is and what she is doing at Jack's country home, much in the same way her mother, Lady Bracknell, interrogated Jack concerning his family in the first act. When Gwendolen speaks candidly about wishing Ernest's ward were older and less attractive, Cecily informs her that Ernest is her guardian's older brother. The confusion over identity builds until the two ladies are using dialogue that involves name-calling, insulting comments, and arguing over the man they believe is Ernest. Gwendolen's speech about rescuing Ernest from a foolish promise and Cecily's metaphorical allusion to Gwendolen as an entanglement are out of character for both ladies (Stone 34). Later, once it is revealed that Ernest does not exist, both ladies return to using dialogue that is more characteristic. Cecily asks Algernon in a surprised tone, "No brother at all?" and Gwendolen questions Jack severely, "Had you never a brother of any kind?" (Wilde 40). Even though both women pledge to unite as sisters following this revelation, Cecily is still overcome by the beauty of Algernon's explanation, and Gwendolen forgives Jack because of the truthfulness in his words. In addition to revealing comparisons between characters, the use of dialogue in this play fulfills other complex functions.

Oscar Wilde was famous for writing beautiful poetry and fantastic scenes with witty dialogue full of epigrams, irony, metaphors, and paradox. More importantly, in plays such as The Importance of Being Earnest, Wilde uses dialogue that is not really

conventional because it is meant to stand all by itself, unanswerable (Sale 480). Certain lines of text can easily be pulled out, examined, and appreciated outside the context of the play, and it is remarkable just how many quotes from dialogue stand alone. For example, in the first act of the play, Algernon informs Jack that “the truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility” (Wilde 6). This one speech can be analyzed within the context of the play, but it also exists on its own as Wilde’s indirect opinion that literature in general, as well as this very play, would not be possible, except for the fact that the truth is complex and open to interpretation. Wilde comments on the fact that this play would not be possible because it is about the importance of truthful behavior. Likewise, this speech can be interpreted literally, as a critique on literature and society, or even as a philosophical argument for debate.

In the first act, Algernon once again delivers a line of dialogue that stands on its own. Following Gwendolen and Lady Bracknell’s exit, Algy says, “all women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That’s his” (Wilde 15). Although this speech is less open to interpretation, it exists on its own as both Algernon and Wilde’s view on gender roles and parental relationships. Not only is this speech followed by a complex, self-reflective commentary on the “cleverness” of Algy’s previous line and a bit of dramatic irony, which implies that Jack and Algy, among others, are fools for their behavior, it is Algernon who actually speaks as the voice for Oscar Wilde. Wilde uses Algy’s character to freely comment and critique whatever or whomever he wishes, without appearing to directly criticize. In addition, Wilde uses Algernon’s speeches to foreshadow future events. Near the end of the second act, Jack says that he is certain

Gwendolen and Cecily will be great friends, and predicts that they will call each other sister. Algernon replies, “women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first” (Wilde 17). The joke later pays off when Gwendolen and Cecily agree to call each other sister, having just insulted each other over tea.

In addition to these humorous moments, the dialogue in the play is full of jokes and one-liners. Much of this humorous dialogue comments on distinctions between social classes, but some of the actual jokes are lost on the audience because they reference specific information. Lady Bracknell’s comments while quizzing Jack as a prospective son-in-law and the flirting between Miss Prism and the Reverend Chasuble seem more ludicrous than funny (Sale 480). Regardless, many jokes are understood and enjoyed because they relate to universal themes, such as marriage and courtship. One moment that is particularly funny involves Lady Bracknell abruptly changing her mind about Algernon marrying Cecily the moment she realizes that Cecily has a hundred and thirty pounds...and in the Funds! Earlier, Lady Bracknell refuses to allow Gwendolen to marry Jack by stating “a girl should be brought up with the utmost care—to marry into a cloakroom, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr. Worthing” (Wilde 15). The rhetorical question posed is humorous because Lady Bracknell takes Jack literally when he admits to having been found in a handbag. Also, this comment is a perfect verbal formulation of the upper order’s habit of treating people as things, in accordance with Lady Bracknell’s highly material mode of existence (Stone 36). In fact, almost all of the dialogue from Lady Bracknell is delivered with the understanding that she is indeed a member of the upper class and very concerned about maintaining her position in high society.

B. Wilde on Wilde

In 1889, Oscar Wilde wrote The Decay of Lying, a dialectic between two characters, Cyril and Vivian, in which Wilde discussed his ideas concerning the relationship between art and nature. Wilde's article also outlines the doctrines of a new aesthetics. Later, in 1890, Wilde wrote a preface for his novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray, that listed a series of short quotes about art. Both critical works are important in providing an understanding of Oscar Wilde's beliefs concerning aestheticism and the idea of "art for art's sake."

Building upon other romantic theorists, Wilde offers ideas that seem paradoxical but actually help to clarify his beliefs. For example, Wilde writes that "Life imitates Art, that Life is in fact the mirror, and Art the reality" (Wilde 627). Wilde explains why this seeming paradox makes sense, but in order to understand this doctrine, it is important to clarify that Wilde uses the terms "Life" and "Nature" interchangeably. His rationale that Life imitates Art is explained by the fact that "the self-conscious aim of Life is to find expression, and that Art offers it certain beautiful forms through which it may realize that energy" (Wilde 628). Because life and nature are based in reality, and the purpose of life is to express that which is beautiful, or comes from the imagination, art is the ideal that life attempts to imitate.

Wilde's ideas were diametrically opposed to the theories of realism and naturalism. In his opinion, "all bad art comes from returning to Life and Nature, and elevating them into ideals" (Wilde 627). Wilde believed that nature could be used as the raw material for art, or at least a starting point for artistic creation. "The moment Art

surrenders its imaginative medium it surrenders everything” (Wilde 627). By incorporating imagination, art goes beyond reality. Art is the expression of emotion and beauty that are not visible in life or nature, because life and nature are limited by that which is real.

In his preface to The Picture of Dorian Gray, Wilde continued to offer support for his ideas and clarify the principles of aestheticism. Wilde suggests that an artist is concerned with expression, rather than proving something to be true, and that the artist is the creator of beautiful things (Wilde 628-9). One particular quote, however, raises an interesting paradox. Wilde writes that “the nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass. The nineteenth century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in the glass” (Wilde 629). At first, this quote does not seem to make much sense, but when closely analyzed, it reveals an interesting distinction between realism and romanticism. If Caliban, Prospero’s ugly slave from Shakespeare’s The Tempest, would be angered at seeing his own face as it is in reality, he would become angry that his is not beautiful. Likewise, Caliban might also be angered at seeing an image that is not his real face, because he does not recognize himself and desires to see an accurate “mirror” image. Anyone who desires to see the world as it is in reality would dislike romanticism because it aims to represent that which is beautiful, that which comes from the imagination, and that which cannot be understood by the limitations of nature and reality.

From these two critical writings, one can begin to understand Wilde’s perspective on romantic theory and his desire to create art for its own sake. Oscar Wilde believed that

the purpose of art lies within the object of art itself. Because art does not need to accomplish anything, it can exist for its own sake.

CHAPTER VI

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

Before the rehearsal process can begin, it is essential that all the artists involved on a production develop an intimate understanding of the play's text. Typically, a director will complete his/her own structural analysis of the play. However, in order to serve the vision of the director, a production dramaturg must analyze the play as well, and be open to discussion before and during the rehearsal process. This process involves reading the text numerous times and charting the action of the play. The following is intended to elucidate the salient structural elements in The Importance of Being Earnest. Using a copy of the play, David Ball's book Backwards and Forwards, and Dramatic Construction: An Outline of Basic Principles by Edward Mabley, I was able to construct this structural analysis.

A. Shape of the Play

i. Stasis and Intrusion – According to Backwards and Forwards, the dramatic stasis in a play is described as a situation where things would go on the same forever if something did not come along and happen (Ball 23). In other words, the stasis is a set of given circumstances that exist before the play begins. Ball also defines dramatic intrusion as the

thing that comes along and happens, setting free the irresistible forces that run a play from that point on (23).

The moment of intrusion in The Importance of Being Earnest occurs when Algernon begins questioning Jack about Cecily and the engraving on Jack's cigarette case. This moment sparks a series of questions concerning Jack's true identity and his desire to marry Gwendolen. Immediately following this moment of intrusion, expository details concerning the stasis are revealed. We learn that Jack and Algy are bachelor friends and upper class members of London society. Both men are guilty of concealing their true identities for various reasons. Algy has been pretending to have a sick friend, Bunbury, to avoid his Aunt Augusta (Lady Bracknell) and escape to the country. Jack has been pretending to be another man, Ernest, in order to escape from the country to the city, visit with Algy, and pursue his love, Gwendolen. Stasis also involves our understanding that the play is set in Algernon's London flat in the year 1895, that Jack intends to propose to Gwendolen and has a ward named Cecily who lives in the country, and that Aunt Augusta is planning on arriving soon for a visit with Gwendolen.

ii. Protagonist/Antagonist - The protagonist in the play is John (Jack) Worthing, and his objective is to marry Gwendolen Fairfax. Some scholars suggest that a play's protagonist is the character who changes over the course of the play. Rather than consider which character changes, the protagonist can also be identified according to the specific actions they perform. The actions that drive the play forward and keep the audience guessing about what will happen next revolve around Jack.

The antagonist is the one character that stands in conflict with the protagonist. Even though Algernon causes complications for Jack, it is Lady Bracknell who is the play's true antagonist. In order for Jack to marry Gwendolen, he must resolve the conflict that Lady Bracknell places in front of him. He must produce evidence of his true identity. This issue stands in the way of Jack achieving his objective. It is Lady Bracknell's approval that resolves the major conflict in the play.

iii. Obstacle and Conflict – Obstacles and conflict are essential for the action in a play to move forward. An obstacle is anything that prevents a character from getting what they want. According to David Ball, dramatic conflict is created when “what a character wants” and “what resists the character having it” work against each other (28). The major conflict in this play can be understood as Jack against Lady Bracknell. The main obstacle that prevents Jack from marrying Gwendolen involves his identity, but it is Lady Bracknell who will not allow the marriage. Because Jack does not know who his parents were, he cannot verify his place in society. The dramatic conflict is created because Jack wants to marry Gwendolen, but Lady Bracknell prevents him from doing so until he can prove to her that he is worthy. In order to do this he must come to terms with his true identity and either end the pretension of being Ernest, or actually become Ernest.

At first, Jack feels that he can only resolve the issue of his name by “killing off” his imaginary brother. When Algernon arrives, posing as his brother Ernest in order to meet and marry Cecily, Jack must regroup. This obstacle forces Jack to realize that he must get rid of Algernon. Later, when both men recognize that their hopes of a successful proposal rely on their each being named Ernest, both men decide to have their names

changed. Before this can happen, Gwendolen and Cecily meet and learn that they have been deceived. This obstacle causes the men to adopt a new strategy. They come clean and admit that they lied in order to win the affection of the women, and Gwendolen forgives Jack's deception. The major conflict in the play is resolved when we learn that Jack is actually named Ernest and is Algernon's older brother, thus making Jack/Ernest acceptable to Lady Bracknell.

iv. Basic Dramatic Question – This play is about two English gentlemen who must abandon their habit of leading double lives in order to marry the women they love. The basic dramatic question posed at the moment of intrusion is: Will John Worthing's true identity be revealed so that he might be able to marry his love interest, Gwendolen Fairfax?

B. Methods & Tricks of the Trade

i. Exposition – At the beginning of a play, the audience is introduced to the world as it exists in stasis. Information about the characters, the time and period, the situation, and other details are revealed during the exposition. There are two kinds of exposition: information known to everyone on stage, and information known only by some of the characters (Ball 39). At the very beginning, everyone on stage realizes that we are in London, the year is 1895, and Algernon and John Worthing are upper class bachelors who lead double lives. There is also information that only the characters on stage are aware of. Lane and Algy are aware that Aunt Augusta is on her way over to Algernon's flat, and that last Thursday John Worthing dined with Algernon. We also learn when

Jack arrives that he is in love with Gwendolen and has come to the city to propose to her. When Algy questions Jack about a cigarette case, we learn that Jack has been calling himself Ernest in order to escape from his responsibilities at his country home. We also learn that Algy pretends to visit a sick man, Bunbury, in order to visit the country. Finally, when Algy questions Jack about the engraving on the cigarette case that states “dearest Cecily,” we learn that Jack has “an excessively pretty ward” Cecily Cardew, that Algernon is determined to meet.

ii. Climax – The climax in this play occurs immediately after the major crisis. This crisis occurs when we learn that Miss Prism accidentally misplaced a child in a handbag at Victoria Station, the Brighton line. Earlier, Jack explains to Lady Bracknell that he was a foundling, discovered in the cloakroom at Victorian Station, the Brighton line, in a handbag. When Jack produces the handbag in which he was found, and Miss Prism recognizes it as her own, Lady Bracknell informs Jack that he is actually her sister’s son, which makes him Algernon’s older brother. More importantly, now that Lady Bracknell knows that Jack has a family, it is assumed that she will consent to the marriage, despite the fact that this revelation means Jack and Gwendolen are actually cousins.

When Jack learns from the Army Lists that his name was originally Ernest, there are no longer any obstacles to prevent Jack (Ernest) from marrying Gwendolen. At this point, a new stasis is achieved and the play ends. The final line of the play sums up the resolution by offering a triple pun that embraces the title of the play, the factual denouement of the plot, and a satirical comment on contemporary mores (Mabley 134).

Everything is tied up neatly when Jack, now Ernest, states that he has realized for the first time the importance of being earnest.

iii. Title - The title of the play has three meanings. Jack's final line incorporates the title to indicate that he has learned a lesson. On one hand, Jack is aware of how important it is to always be honest and tell the truth. His comment also references the importance of living with a serious demeanor, rather than living a careless or carefree lifestyle. Finally, Jack's comment can be taken literally. He realizes how important it is that his actual name is Ernest, so that he can marry Gwendolen with approval.

iv. Theme – Oscar Wilde may have thought his play was a “trivial comedy for serious people,” but it was very well written. Although themes do not reveal the meaning of a play, there are a few important concepts worth identifying. Marriage is a major theme in the play. At the beginning, both Jack and Algernon are unmarried, but Jack is ready to propose to Gwendolen. Algernon, on the other hand, talks about marriage being more like a business arrangement that lacks romance. In the second act, when Algernon meets Cecily, he changes his mind and wants to be a married man. Also, the title of the play involves a major theme: what is the importance of being earnest? This question brings to mind the importance of being both truthful as well as being serious or moral. Overall, this play can be read as a critique of the pretentiousness and moral hypocrisy of the late Victorian upper class of society. In the end, Wilde leaves the question open as to whether or not Jack really has learned the importance of being earnest.

CHAPTER VII

PRODUCTION LOG

7/25 – This afternoon, I read the play to refresh my memory about the plot. I went through the play a second time and asked questions as I read, jotting down notes and thoughts as they occurred to me. I also noted details that may require additional research. One thing that I remember from my dramaturgy course is that a dramaturg must know the play so well that he/she can anticipate questions that the director may ask. In my case, I made notes on a legal pad and then found online research to answer my questions. I have to admit that I am not sure what I need to do exactly before rehearsals for the show begin, but I do want to have an understanding of the play beyond the plot and characters. So far all of my research has been done online. What I really need to do is plan a day and go to the library.

8/7 – I found some books on Oscar Wilde and Victorian society that I think will help with my research. I also made copies of some articles on the origins of the play and other aspects of criticism and analysis. What I need to do now is read through everything to get an idea of what can go in my production protocol. I also checked out a copy of the 1952 movie directed by Anthony Asquith, and a DVD on Victorian period movement. Some of

the research I found references the 1952 film, and I wanted to find out specific information on movement for Dr. Soddors.

8/11 – I went to a coffee shop today to review all the research I had found. I looked at my notes from my second reading of the play and thought about some of the questions I had written down. Specifically, I made notes about customs related to afternoon tea, Victorian attitudes concerning homosexuality, proposal customs, critical commentary of Oscar Wilde's writing, the origin and meaning of Bunbury, Wagner, the age of ideals, the ritual of christening, gender roles in Victorian England, smoking customs, the Liberal Unionist party (Tories?), what is a gorgon, what is apoplexy, what is Evensong, what is a perambulator, and other questions concerning the extended family tree of the play's characters. I realized that Jack/Ernest is actually Gwendolen's first cousin. The play ends with an understanding that they are to be married anyway. Was it acceptable at this time for cousins to marry? These are the questions that further research will hopefully answer.

8/17 – Today I went to the library to renew my books and DVDs and find some research on production history. I spent a few hours looking through databases of newspaper articles and reviews of the play from 1895 to present day. This was difficult because this play has been produced so many times that it is nearly impossible to document every single production in history. I decided that my best bet was to find a few important or significant productions and gather a random sample from each decade since 1895. I did discover some interesting information. In fact, I found that the play was produced in the United States on Broadway in 1895, which contradicts information that I had found in a

theatre textbook, The Bedford Introduction to Theatre, which states that the first US production was in 1902. Luckily, my problem with production history research has been that there is more than enough information out there. Deciding what is important is the difficult task.

8/20 – Earlier today, I watched the movement DVD and took notes on specific manners. What I need to do now is compile my research and complete the production protocol. I finished the Oscar Wilde biography and typed up the notes I took on manners and movement from the DVD. I do not think that I need more research at this point, but I do need time to synthesize everything into a nice, neat package. I remember Dr. Charlton telling us that it is never a good idea to present a director with a pile of research, which is why a protocol is helpful. I have scheduled a meeting with Dr. Sodders for Wednesday. I am hoping that I can share with him what I have been working on so far and give him my notes on period movement for Victorian England. In the meantime, I will continue to work on the protocol.

8/22 – I just met with Dr. Sodders. He was very open and friendly, and I was glad that he was excited about the information I had researched on Victorian movement and manners. Dr. Sodders asked me to continue looking for specific information and details about customs, behavior, manners, and movement. He also asked me to find information on smoking and sitting. He asked whether or not gentlemen tugged at their pants when they sat down, and how or what gentlemen smoked (cigars, cigarettes, etc.). We discussed the Touch Tour being organized by Debbie Swann and considered the final dress rehearsal

on October 1st as a possible date for the tour. We talked about the lobby display, and Dr. Sodders said that information about Oscar Wilde's life and work would be appropriate. I was surprised when he asked me to bring my research to rehearsals and work with the actors if there were questions. I told him that I could give all my research to him, but he wanted me to bring it to rehearsal and make myself available. We agreed that if anything came up, or if he wanted me to research something specific he could call or e-mail me at any time. He kept the DVD on Victorian movement that I brought, and told me that he did not have much time to look at images today. He asked if we could meet again next week so that I could show him a formal protocol of information regarding Oscar Wilde, the play, and Victorian movement. Overall, I left the meeting feeling confident about what I need to work on and prepare, and I also felt relieved that what I had to show was received well. I have to admit that I did have a bit of anxiety going into the meeting because I was not sure about what I should or should not have prepared and/or be ready to show at our meeting. It is very important to me that I not only do a good job but also perform my responsibilities in a way that fosters positive relationships between myself as a dramaturg and the other members of the production team, especially the director!

About an hour after my meeting, I ran into Dr. Charlton outside of the box office. She asked to see my research sometime next week. In addition, she mentioned that I need to type up a formal graduate thesis proposal. It is going to be a busy weekend, but luckily I have all my research completed. John Davenport, the stage manager, came by and informed me that we have a production meeting today at 4:00 pm. I went to the meeting and found that I had nothing to say. In reality, it was a design meeting, so I sat quietly

until it was over. I did find out that regular production meetings would probably be on Wednesdays.

8/27 – We had our first rehearsal/read-through tonight. I was able to find a copy of the original four-act version from the library beforehand, and compared it to the version we were using for the play while the actors read their parts. I found that small sections of the four-act text were omitted, rather than large sections. For the most part, a sentence here and there was missing. The only significant omission was at the end of Act II. There was a character, Mr. Gribsby, in the original text that no longer appears. Also, there were more lines omitted throughout the third act compared to the first. Overall, I am not sure how this information might help the production, but I felt that it was important for me to at least check in case someone asked about it later.

8/29 – This morning I e-mailed Dr. Sodders about a time to meet and go over my protocol. I later ran into him at the Theatre building and he informed me that he could not meet today, but asked to meet tomorrow at some time. I need to e-mail him again tonight! I did meet with Dr. Charlton and received lots of important information regarding my thesis. Also, I was reminded that I need to fill out the press release and have it approved. I need to check typos on my protocol and ask Dr. Sodders if I may schedule a dramaturgical presentation soon. I need to work out a system with him for communicating with actors, such as the notecard idea suggested by Dr. Charlton. If an actor discusses something with me, or if I tell an actor anything with or without Dr. Sodders hearing or being aware of what was said, I absolutely must write down what was

said and document it in case someone wants to know specifics about my communication with actors. I also need to begin working on the lobby display. It is important that I write a glossary for my protocol when I edit it and write a detailed index of terms with definitions for the actors. Finally, I need to find out about what kind of product men placed in their hair during the 1890s or 1900s.

Before the rehearsal, one of the actors asked me what a portmanteaus was. I went to the computer lab and did some research. I also looked for information about what a Marechal Neil was and what kind of hair products Victorian men used. I found the information, put it on note cards, and gave it to Dr. Sodders before the rehearsal began. He passed them out and I sat down to watch and take notes. During the rehearsal, I was surprised that Dr. Sodders asked me to get up and work with the actors. Luckily, when he and the actors asked me questions about how to hold a hat or remove their gloves, I remembered what I had learned from my research and demonstrated the correct movement. I guess I was just surprised because I expected to simply sit quietly in the back and observe. As it turned out, Dr. Sodders was comfortable with the actors asking me questions about manners and movement. There were a few questions that I did not know how to answer, such as requests for explanations of the text. Some of these included references to women being green and a metaphor being “taken from bees.” I had one actor ask me after the rehearsal what was the difference between a manservant and a butler. All that I did was explain that I did not know but would find out and give the information to Dr. Sodders. I gave Dr. Sodders a copy of my protocol and told him that we could discuss it if he wanted to at a later time. He specifically asked me to find out

what Algernon means when he says, “I leave the Science for life” in the opening scene. I have some new dramaturgy homework.

8/30 - I continued to research information for the questions that were posed last night. I found answers to all the questions and shared my findings with Dr. Soddors during a break. At one point an actress came up to me and asked a question about how close she should get to another actor and how appropriate it was to touch other people in Victorian England. For this question, I told her to ask Dr. Soddors. I explained that I would probably be giving a presentation on movement and manners soon, but that a question concerning an actor's choice on stage is something to ask the director. As it turned out, over the course of the rehearsal, I was asked quite a few questions that I knew the answers to because I had the research in my protocol. In fact, Dr. Soddors was referring to it and asking me questions at various points during the rehearsal. He did ask about one detail in my protocol that he believed contradicted his own research, and I had to explain that I had written information down based on my interpretation of the video on movement. This concerned the “tugging” on men's trousers when a gentleman sat down. I agreed that if Dr. Soddors had research confirming that men would do this, then it was probably correct. I had mentioned that men would sit without touching their legs in any way, simply because it was the movement demonstrated on the video. After rehearsal, there was nothing new to research, but I did ask Dr. Soddors if we could discuss the program notes, lobby display, and dramaturgy presentation sometime next week. We agreed to meet next week on Wednesday.

8/31 – Today we had our first real production meeting. John Davenport did not ask if there was any dramaturgy business, so I just sat quietly. I did need to ask about props for my presentation. After the meeting was over, I asked Michelle about using teacups and other props and she introduced me to the props designer, Kelsey Boutte. I told Kelsey that I might need some props for my dramaturgy presentation and she said that should be fine. She asked me if I had any information on manners, and I told her I would e-mail her what I had when I got home. All I have to do now is continue my work for Dr. Sodders and plan my presentation. I am thinking about having an afternoon tea for the entire cast and giving a formal demonstration on movement from the DVD. Dr. Sodders and I will be meeting to discuss this more next week.

9/5 – Dr. Sodders and I met briefly at 2:00 today to discuss some upcoming dramaturgy business. I asked him about the program notes and he gave me some general ideas about what I might want to include. I will try to have something to show Dr. Sodders and Dr. Charlton by the end of the week. We talked about the lobby display, and decided that along with information about Oscar Wilde and the show's production history, I would also include costume and set design pictures, famous "Wilde" quotes, and other related pictures and images (if there are no problems with copyright). The most important issue we discussed was the dramaturgical presentation for the Sunday rehearsal. I told Dr. Sodders that I planned on showing clips from the video on Victorian movement by Judith Chaffe from Boston University, and then move to the stage for a presentation on "afternoon tea." The presentation would involve a brief description of manners and behaviors associated with the ritual of afternoon tea. Then, the cast and crew would be

invited to enjoy an afternoon tea, allowing them to play and practice with the new information. Dr. Soddors felt that the presentation would be fine, and we agreed to meet later on if there were any problems.

9/10 – Today is the day after my afternoon tea presentation. I spent Saturday morning and all day Sunday getting ready. The majority of my time was spent actually cooking and preparing the food involved with afternoon tea. In addition to the actual tea, I provided various cookies, English muffins, two kinds of teacake, and two types of cucumber sandwiches - one from a recipe in a modern cookbook, and one from an actual Victorian recipe. Luckily, everyone enjoyed the food and very little was left uneaten. Setting up the table took about two hours, because I had to find all the teacups and other utensils in the prop loft. Kelsey came up to the theatre and helped me wash the props before we used them, move and arrange set pieces, and decorate the table. I went with the “buffet” style for afternoon tea, due to the fact that I was providing for more than a few guests.

Originally, I was not going to say much beforehand, but Dr. Charlton reminded me last Friday that I should research and provide very detailed information regarding drinking tea, napkins, silverware, and other manners. I found the necessary research and condensed it all into a four-page packet and made copies for the cast. Using the information, but not reciting it, I gave a presentation on my findings. Not all of my research was collected from traditional or intentional means. While in HEB, I found myself asking for various ingredients for my recipes, because I could not find the items. At one point, while asking an HEB employee about where to find clotted cream, another customer approached me and informed me that she was from England and that I would

not find clotted cream anywhere in the United States, especially in San Marcos, Texas. She told me that to make it, I should use one tablespoon of unsalted butter and two quarts of heavy cream, and whip them together for two hours. I thanked her but ultimately decided not to include clotted cream with the afternoon tea.

As a side note, I completed the program notes and gave copies to Dr. Charlton and Dr. Sodders for approval. Dr. Charlton and I discussed the press release, and I need to make some changes before it goes to Lori with publicity.

9/11 – There were a few questions asked during the afternoon tea presentation that I did not know how to answer at the time. This afternoon, before rehearsal, I did some research and wrote the answers to two of the questions on note cards for Dr. Sodders. The questions were as follows: What would be the proper way to ask for seconds at an afternoon tea, and if a person was left handed, would they still hold the tea cup in their right hand? Also, I noticed from a previous rehearsal report that Dr. Sodders had asked about the popularity and use of fans in the 1890s, and what the writing utensils of the period looked like. I was able to get Dr. Sodders research that confirmed the popularity of fans, and added some web links about communicating with fans. Dr. Sodders said that he already had plenty of information on “fan language,” but took the other notes to give to the actors. Unfortunately, I found out that John Davenport had already learned about the writing utensils from Kelsey. I felt awful about being too late with information that I was asked to find. Even though I feel very busy, my primary job is to help and support the director when questions are asked. That is the last time I will go a single day without

checking rehearsal reports the night before and making sure my notes are delivered in less than a day. I guess it is good that I am having this learning experience, but I would much rather just do a perfect job and not miss things.

9/17 – There has not been a whole lot going on since my last log entry, but I do want to catch up on a few things. I do not have any new notes to give Dr. Sodders or the actors. Last week I spent my time making sure that the press release and program notes were good to go. I mentioned to Sheila that I would like some pictures for the lobby display. I need to e-mail Michelle to see if she might be able to give design images for the display as well. I am planning on attending the rehearsal tomorrow night, and watching a run-through the following week as an outside “audience” member. I will type a copy of the notes taken from my observations in the next logged entry.

9/22 – After the production meeting this week I went by Sheila’s office to look at the costume designs. I e-mailed her earlier in the week and we agreed to talk later about possibly using some designs in the lobby display. I also e-mailed Michelle, but all she had that I could display is a set model, which is currently being used. I may or may not use that. Other than preparations for the lobby display, all I have had to do is edit my program note. This next week I will probably go to one rehearsal and watch as an audience member, taking note of anything that seems confusing. We are almost there, and the show is looking very good!

CHAPTER VIII

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

A. Lobby Display

The following pictures were taken a few hours before the show opened on October 2, 2007. The first picture is of the lobby display from a distance.



Figure 1. Lobby Display

The next two photos show the contents of the display case, which was located immediately to the right of the lobby display.

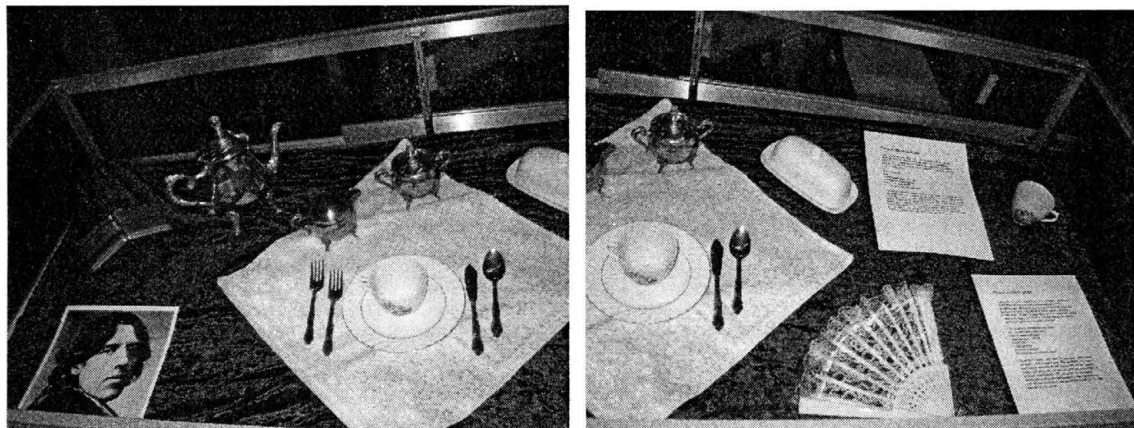


Figure 2. Glass Case Display

B. Program Notes & Show Program

The program notes and actual program are provided here. The note inside the program was revised numerous times before being approved for the final copy. Originally, the program note was based on the concept or idea of “earnestness,” but the draft was scrapped in favor of a note on Victorian codes of behavior.

Program Note #1: The Idea of Earnestness -

In the summer of 1894, Oscar Wilde wrote a letter to actor/producer George Alexander, describing the outline for a play that would eventually become The Importance of Being Earnest. Originally titled The Guardian, Wilde’s comedic masterpiece would be the last play he would ever write. Earnest premiered at the St. James Theatre in London the following year on Valentine’s Day. Wilde also uses the 14th of February as the date on which the character Cecily imagines and decides that

Algernon “aka Ernest” proposed to her. Like Cecily, many of the characters have a tendency to imagine, pretend, and deceive those around them. In fact, one of the big jokes in the play centers on the pun between earnest and Ernest. The two men who actually claim their name is Ernest are in fact two of the least earnest characters in the play. In the end, Jack Worthing states that he finally learns the importance of being earnest, but that question still remains to be answered by the audience.

The play ends with the question of whether or not Jack will be able to fly straight and give up his “Bunburying” days for good, or continue to deceive people. This strange word, “Bunbury,” is coined by Jack’s friend Algernon, referring to the act of leading a double life in order to escape back and forth between the city and the country at any time for pleasure. In addition, we are still left wondering what it means to be earnest in the first place. Most people today may understand the importance of telling the truth or doing the right thing, but the word “earnest” actually implies serious intention or sincerity of feeling. It also brings to mind a sense of self-righteous, boring solemnity. Indeed the message Oscar Wilde was trying to communicate had little to do with conveying the real importance of earnestness, but instead he meant for us to see that earnestness, in all its forms, is simply an object for satire.

The idea of earnestness can be seen as either being truthful or being moral. In the opening act of The Importance of Being Earnest, Algernon Moncrieff points out “more than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn’t read.” Rather than be taken literally, Algernon’s comment is an example of how Wilde uses witty epigrams and paradoxes such as this one to poke fun at the Victorian idea of morality and the serious nature of Victorian manners and behavior. For Oscar Wilde, the idea of earnestness has

nothing to do with what one should or should not do. Originally, the play was written with the subtitle, “A Trivial Play for Serious People,” suggesting that even the value of being earnest is something trivial. It seems that irreverence for the strict codes of behavior in Victorian society, rather than serious, earnest behavior, is held to be important. The character Jack eventually admits the horrible feeling he experiences when he realizes that he has actually been telling the truth. Jack exists as a testament to the paradox created when a person is and is not Ernest/earnest. In the end, we are left to decide what to make of the importance of earnest behavior as well as the importance of actually being Ernest. Regardless of the conclusion, critics and audiences around the world will agree that *The Importance of Being Earnest* is one of the wittiest plays in the English language.

Program Note #2: Victorian Codes of Behavior -

In the summer of 1894, Oscar Wilde began writing *The Importance of Being Earnest*. When the original first draft was completed, it contained the subtitle, “A Trivial Play for Serious People,” suggesting an irreverence for the strict and earnest codes of behavior in Victorian society. Some of the play’s characters express Wilde’s criticism of Victorian manners through witty epigrams and paradoxes, while others exist as examples of the ridiculousness and hypocrisy involved with Victorian codes of behavior. It is important to note, however, that Oscar Wilde was not trying to preach to his audience about what people should and should not do. His concern was less focused on social morality and more on mocking Victorian behavior through his satirical plays.

The Victorian era, named for England's Queen Victoria, lasted between 1837 and 1901. At this time in history, specific manners were developed and displayed, primarily among the upper class of society. Oscar Wilde's plays have often been described as belonging to the comedy of manners genre, due to the fact that his characters poke fun at specific Victorian codes of behavior. When the play was first produced in 1895, some critics were offended and felt that Wilde's language ridiculed Victorian virtues. It was not until decades later that audiences could watch his plays and feel dissociated from the characters on stage. Audiences could now laugh at the jokes, knowing that it was an older generation being made fun of and not their own.

In order to create an accurate period performance on stage, actors must fully understand the specific codes and manners associated with Victorian England. By the late Victorian era, there were countless manners for a variety of social situations. In addition to specific manners for various events, there were detailed rules for social introductions involving bowing or shaking hands. Actors practice period movement and etiquette in order to accurately enjoy their afternoon tea, carry a parasol, or escort a young lady out of a room. Overall, members of the upper class carried themselves with an attitude that implied superiority. This attitude informed their behavior, which typically involved an elevated sense of dignity, the restraint of action, and the repression of emotion.

Oscar Wilde was not only a famous playwright, but he was also a member of the very social order that he satirized in his plays. Beneath the surface, this play comments on a society that judges things merely by appearances. The characters do not possess a strictly good or evil moral tone, but desire to live according to prescribed codes for

behavior. In the final act, Gwendolen Fairfax says, "In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity is the vital thing." This attitude is the reflection of a playwright who believed in writing plays that showed his own feelings and style, and poked fun at the manners and behavior of a society that he was a part of. Not only is The Importance of Being Earnest a satire of Victorian behavior, but critics and audiences around the world agree that it is one of the wittiest plays in the English language.

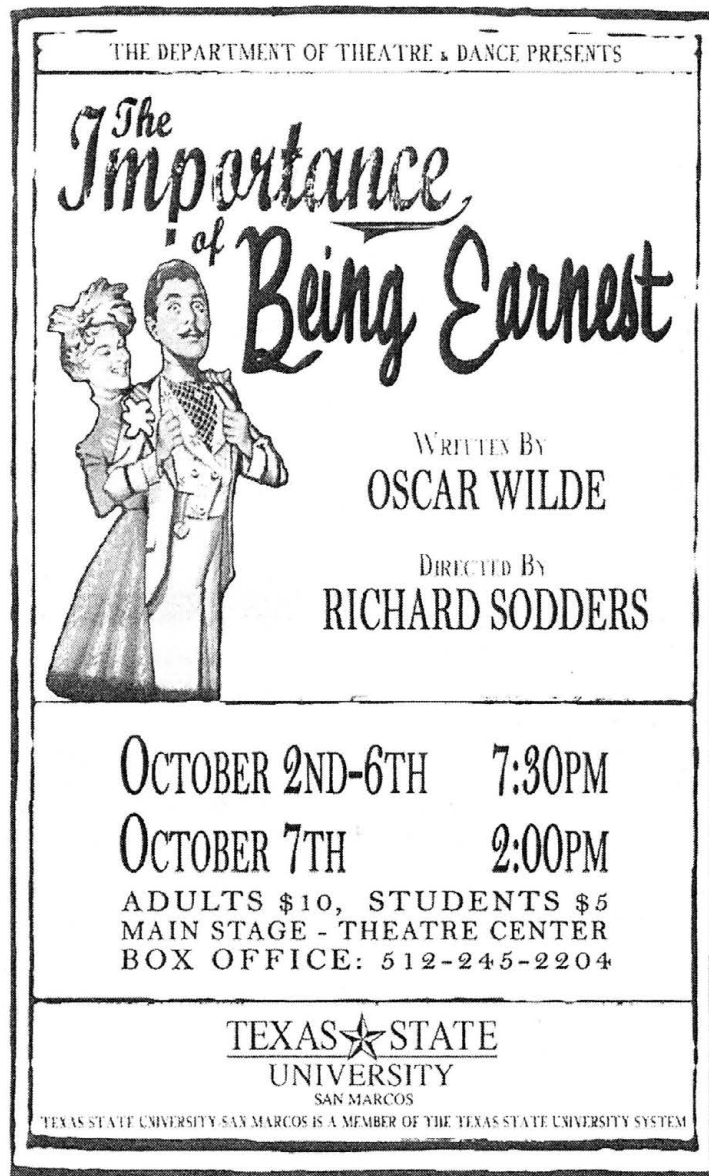


Figure 3. Poster & Program Cover

Texas State Department of Theatre and Dance

Welcome to our 2007-2008 Season of productions. We are presenting what we believe will be an exciting array of classical and contemporary shows. We are a robust department with approximately 325 theatre majors, 20 graduate students, and 125 dance majors. We are proud of the accomplishments of our faculty and students.

The Theatre and Dance faculty continues to earn both national and international acclaim. In recent years, faculty have had their designs displayed at the Prague Quadrennial, the most prestigious competition for university designers, and they have won an international playwrighting competition in Belgium. Within the U.S., faculty members have recently worked at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Utah Shakespeare Festival, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Texas Shakespeare Festival, Austin Shakespeare Festival, Zachary Scott Theatre, Austin Lyric Opera, Alliance Theatre, Asolo Theatre, Berkeley Rep, Cleveland Play House, and the Colony Theatre in Los Angeles. In addition, Dance faculty have choreographed or performed in Athens, Paris, Costa Rica, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and New York.

Faculty have also been active in scholarly endeavors, as their articles have graced the cover of *American Theatre*, their books have been nominated for awards, and they have been asked to be featured speakers at national conferences. Likewise, graduate students have increasingly presented their research at both national and international conferences.

Our undergraduate students have also been extremely successful. Each year, multiple students have earned honors at the state and regional levels of the American College Theatre Festival and American College Dance Festival. For each of the past seven years our department has been recognized at the Kennedy Center. Individual students have been National finalists in the areas of scene design, lighting design, costume design, and acting. In 2005, a Texas State student won the costume design competition. In addition, since 2003 the department has offered a summer study abroad in collaboration with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon, England.

We have a track record of success, and we hope you will join us for what we expect to be another exciting season of theatre and dance performances. Thank you for your interest and support.



The rising STAR of Texas™

Figure 4. Show Program

Texas State University-San Marcos
Department of Theatre and Dance

Presents

The Importance of Being
Earnest
by Oscar Wilde

Directed by Richard Sodders

Scene Design
Karen Arredondo

Costume Design
Glenda Barnes

Lighting Design
David Nancarrow

Text, Voice & Dialect Coach
Melissa Grogan

Stage Manager
John Davenport

Dramaturg
John Boyd

Victorian Codes of Behavior

In the summer of 1894, Oscar Wilde began writing The Importance of Being Earnest. When the original first draft was completed, it contained the subtitle, "A Trivial Play for Serious People," suggesting an irreverence for the strict and earnest codes of behavior in Victorian society. Some of the play's characters express Wilde's criticism of Victorian manners through witty epigrams and paradoxes, while others exist as examples of the ridiculousness and hypocrisy involved with Victorian codes of behavior. It is important to note, however, that Oscar Wilde was not trying to preach to his audience about what people should and should not do. His concern was less focused on social morality and more on mocking Victorian behavior through his satirical plays.

The Victorian era, named for England's Queen Victoria, lasted between 1837 and 1901. At this time in history, specific manners were developed and displayed, primarily among the upper class of society. Oscar Wilde's plays have often been described as belonging to the comedy of manners genre, due to the fact that his characters poke fun at specific Victorian codes of behavior. In its era audiences laughed at their own pretentiousness, and ever since audiences have enjoyed Wilde's gentle satire on Victorian society. In order to create an accurate period performance on stage, actors must fully understand the specific codes and manners associated with Victorian England. By the late Victorian era, there were countless manners for a variety of social situations. In addition to specific manners for various events, there were detailed rules for social introductions involving bowing or shaking hands. Thus, actors must practice period movement and etiquette in order to accurately enjoy their afternoon tea, carry a parasol, or escort a young lady out of a room. Overall, members of the upper class carried themselves with an attitude that implied superiority. This attitude informed their behavior, which typically involved an elevated sense of dignity, the restraint of action, and the repression of emotion.

Oscar Wilde was not only a famous playwright, but he was also a member of the very social order that he satirized in his plays. Beneath the surface, this play comments on a society that judges things merely by appearances. The characters do not possess a strictly good or evil moral tone, but desire to live according to prescribed codes for behavior. In the final act, Gwendolen Fairfax says, "In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity is the vital thing." This attitude is the reflection of a playwright who believed in writing plays that showed his own feelings and style, and poked fun at the manners and behavior of a society of which he was a part. Not only is The Importance of Being Earnest a satire of Victorian behavior, but critics and audiences around the world agree that it is one of the wittiest plays in the English language.

- John Boyd, Dramaturg

The Cast

Lane.....	Travis Hackett
Algernon Moncrieff.....	Mark Zavaleta Fowler
Jack Worthing, J.P.....	Michael Amendola
Lady Bracknell.....	Meghan Grantom
Gwendolen Fairfax.....	Jillian Krametbauer
Miss Prism.....	Stephanie Morris
Cecily Cardew.....	Lindsay Hicks
Rev. Cannon Chasuble.....	Robert Bridget
Merriman.....	Jordan Smith

Time: July 1895

**Place: Act I: Algernon Moncrieff's London flat in Half
Moon Street**

Act II: The garden at the Manor House, Woolton

**The play will be performed with one 15 minute intermission.
Please turn off all cell phones, pagers, and electronic watches.
Please no flash photography or recording devices.**

About the Company

Richard Soddors (Director) is Professor of Theatre at Texas State, where he teaches directing for stage and film. He earned his Ph. D. at Louisiana State University, attended Film School at New York University, and has taught at Texas A&M as well as Midwestern State University. In addition, he was Managing Director of the Shakespeare Festival of Dallas. For six years, he served as Chair of the Department of Theatre & Dance at Texas State. He has directed many university and professional productions, including (at Texas State) Cabaret, The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Noises Off, Masterpieces, The Art of Dining, and Move Over Mrs. Markham. A winner of several directing awards, Dr. Soddors' most valued award is the Amoco Medal for National Excellence in Directing. He received the medal when his production of Who's Happy Now? was selected to perform at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D. C. as part of the National American College Theatre Festival. He also holds the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Medal of Achievement for his work with the American College Theatre Festival, having served as state chair and as a member of the regional selection committee.

Michael Amendola (Jack Worthing, J.P.) is a junior B.F.A. Acting major from San Antonio. This three-time Irene Ryan nominee is a member of Alpha Psi Omega and serves as the Production Advisor for the Texas State At-Random Theatre program. He has been seen on the Texas State Mainstage as Dogberry in Much Ado About Nothing, the Narrator in The Rocky Horror Show, and Cal in The Art of Dining.

Karen Rose Arredondo (Set Designer) is a senior B.F.A. Technology and Design student. After transferring to Texas State from San Antonio College, she acted as the Props Designer for numerous Mainstage productions such as Move Over Mrs. Markham, The Rocky Horror Show, and The Night of the Iguana. Karen received the award for Best Scene Shop Assistant at the 2007 Ramsey Awards and was given an American College Theatre Festival Honorable Mention for her Night of the Iguana props design.

Glenda Barnes (Costume Designer) is a senior B.F.A. costume design student from Kerrville. She has worked for the Smith-Rich Point and the Illinois Shakespeare Festival. Glenda transferred from Angelo State University where she was seen in productions of A Midsummer Night's Dream, Jesus Christ Superstar, and Fahrenheit 451. She assisted with costumes for last year's Texas State Mainstage productions of The Rocky Horror Show and Much Ado About Nothing.

Kelsey S. Boutte (Props Designer) is a junior from Houston, Texas. Kelsey previously attended Cyfair Community College. Previously, she designed makeup for the Mainstage production of Move Over Mrs. Markham.

Robert Bridget (Rev. Cannon Chasuble) is a senior transfer student from San Antonio College. This B.F.A. Theatre Teacher Certification major has appeared in the Mainstage productions of The Night of the Iguana as Jake Latta and The Next Amendment as We The People.

John Davenport (Stage Manager) is a transfer student from Tarrant County College in Ft. Worth, where he received his Associates Degree. He is working on his B.F.A. with an emphasis in Stage Management. He has been seen in the Northeast Players' productions of Godspell as Jesus, and Cabaret as the Emcee. His Stage Management credits include Frame 312, The Laramie Project, Neville's Island, and last year's Texas State Mainstage production of Much Ado About Nothing. John recently returned from an internship with the Illinois Shakespeare Festival this summer. He has also received the Charlotte Harding Memorial Award and the Best Stage Manager Award at the 2007 Ramsey Awards.

Mark Zavaleta Fowler (Algernon Moncrieff) is a senior B.F.A. Acting major from Galveston. Mark has been seen on the Mainstage as Borachio in Much Ado About Nothing and as Don Antonio in The Rover. In 2002, he was awarded Best Actor and the Samuel French Award for his portrayal of Christy Mahon in the UIL One Act Play production of The Playboy of the Western World.

Meghan Grantom (Lady Bracknell) is a B.F.A. Musical Theatre junior from Pasadena, Texas. Meghan was seen on the Mainstage last year in The Rocky Horror Show as an Usherette. In 2005, Meghan was a Velma in the production of Chicago, which won an award for Best Musical at Deer Park High School.

Melissa Grogan (Text, Voice & Dialect Coach) works as an Assistant Professor of Voice at Texas State University. In addition to her teaching duties, she also serves as the Vocal / Text/ Dialect Coach for all of Texas State's Mainstage Theatre productions. She received her M.F.A. in Acting from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and is certified as an Associate Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework. She worked as Vocal/Text Assistant at the Tony Award Winning Utah Shakespeare Festival in the summer of 2007. She had the pleasure of working on their productions of King Lear, Coriolanus and Twelfth Night. A few more of her vocal and dialect coaching credits at the collegiate and professional level include A Piece of My Heart, Going after Cacciato, A Little Night Music, Con Mis Manos, King Lear, The Rocky Horror Show, Present Laughter, and Take Me Out. She also stays involved in theatre as an actress, being seen around Austin in productions for Capital City Mystery Players, and in the summer of 2005 she played the role of Kathy in Paradox Players' production of Vanities. Her favorite venture was when she directed a production of Sylvia by A.R. Gurney in the summer of 2003. Melissa has portrayed a variety of characters, her favorites including Ma Joad in Grapes of Wrath, Daisy in The Adding Machine, Charlotte in The Real Thing, and her M.F.A. thesis role Claire Zachannasian in Durrenmatt's The Visit.

Travis Hackett (Lane) is a junior transfer from Austin Community College studying theatre with an emphasis on Directing. Travis has appeared in the Buda Dessert Theatre Players' productions of Her Majesty, Miss Jones, The Musical Comedy Murders of the 1940s, and The Last Night at Ballyhoo. He was also awarded Best Actor in 2004 for the UIL One Act Play, The Rag-picker.

Lindsay Hicks (Cecily Cardew) is a native of Montgomery, Texas and a junior transfer student from the University of North Texas. After coming to Texas State, Lindsay was accepted into the B.F.A. Acting program and promptly made her way onto the Mainstage in the Night of the Iguana as Hilda and in Move Over Mrs. Markham as Sylvie Hauser.

Jillian Krametbauer (Gwendolen Fairfax) is a senior B.F.A. Acting major from Houston. Jillian has been seen in the children's theatre production of Candlestein, and in the 2005 Black & Latino Playwrights Conference. Her portrayal of the Nun in Much Ado About Nothing won her the award for Best Actress in a Minor Role at the 2007 Ramsey Awards.

Stephanie Morris (Mrs. Prism) is a B.F.A. Acting senior from Sugar Land, Texas. Stephanie was recently seen in the Mainstage production of The Night of the Iguana, and the At-Random Theatre production of The Children's Hour.

David Nancarrow (Lighting Designer) was born and raised in England. As a young man he came to the United States to attend college. He earned degrees from the University of Virginia, Yale University, and the Shakespeare Institute of the University of Birmingham [England]. During the past five decades Nancarrow has designed lighting and scenery for dozens of plays, dance works, musicals, and operas. He has been the resident Lighting Designer for the Austin Lyric Opera since 1987 and has designed fifty-one of their productions, most recently productions of Puccini's Madam Butterfly and Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro. This past summer he designed the lighting for the world premiere of the latest Jaston Williams and Joe Sears production: Tuna Does Vegas at The Grand 1894 Opera House on Galveston Island. He has designed for Ballet Austin, the Vancouver Opera Company, the Actor's Repertory of Texas, the State Theatre, the Cleveland Play House, and the Austin Theatre Alliance.

Jordan Smith (Merriman) is a sophomore B.F.A. Theatre Teacher Certification major from Cedar Park. After running tech for The Catfish Prince here at Texas State, Jordan is now making his Mainstage debut.

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Costumes

Costume Faculty Supervisor:Sheila Hargett

Cutter/Draper.....Homa Khosh-Khui

Costume Shop Manager.....Lindsay D. Jones

Costume Shop Manager.....	Sherry D. Jones
Costume Design Assistant.....	Rachel Brown

Graduate Student Assistant.....Lela Holt

Costume Shop Assistants..... Glenda Barnes, Staci Bell, Rachel Brown,

Diana Dearman, Erin Dodd, Caitlin Hales

Fumiyo Hamada, Tiffany April Martin,

Amanda Mendoza, Claudia Pinon,

Samantha Saucedo

Wardrobe Supervisor..... Rachel Brown

Wardrobe Running Crew.....TH 3344 Class

Lighting

Lighting Faculty Supervisor.....Darren McCroom

Assistant to the Lighting Designer.....Aki Abe

Master Electrician.....Carley Brock

Lighting Assistants.....Jan-Allen Bowley, David Gibson,

Carley Brock, Robert Peterson

Light Board Operator.....Bryan Stinnett

Lighting Crew.....TH 2338 Class

Props

Properties Designer.....Kelsey Boutte

Properties Running Crew.....TH 2111 Class

Scenery

Set Design Faculty Supervisor.....Michelle Ney

Technical Director.....Shane K. Smith

Scene Shop Supervisor Dwight Markus

Assistant Technical Director..... Kyle Moore

Scene Shop Assistants..... Joshua Austin, Ashley Frith,

Vanessa Velasquez, Karen Arredondo,

Kyle Moore, Bobb Nelson, Jade White

Scenic Artists..... Vanessa Velasquez, Rojelio Hernandez,

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2007–2008 Mainstage Season

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde

Directed by Richard Soddors

October 2–6 at 7:30 pm, October 7 at 2:00 pm

A Chorus Line

A musical by Michael Bennett, Music by Marvin Hamlisch

Directed by Robert Ball

November 13–18 at 7:30 pm, November 17, 18 at 2:00 pm

The Piano Lesson by August Wilson

Directed by Christine Menzies

February 19–23 at 7:30 pm, February 24 at 2:00 pm

The Caucasian Chalk Circle by Bertolt Brecht

Directed by Michael Costello

April 8–12 at 7:30 pm, April 13 at 2:00 pm

Backyard Story by Charles Pascoe

Directed by Charles Pascoe

April 22–26 at 7:30 pm, April 27 at 2:00 pm

2007–2008 PSH Foundation Studio Theatre Season

Texas State Black and Latino Playwrights Conference

Sept. 14 at 7:30 pm, Sept. 15 at 2:00 pm & 7:30 pm, Sept. 16 at 2:00 pm

Fuddy Meers by David Lindsay-Abaire

Directed by Eleisa Jordan

October 18–21 at 7:30 pm, October 22 at 2:00 pm

Suburbia by Eric Bogosian

Directed by Mandi Tapia

October 25–27 at 7:30 pm, October 28 at 2:00 pm

Low in the Dark by Marina Carr

Directed by Richie Wilcox

January 31–February 1 at 7:30 pm, February 2 at 2:00 pm

The Memory of Water by Shelagh Stephenson

Directed by Debbie Swann

February 7–9 at 7:30 pm, February 10 at 2:00 pm

For more information call the Box Office at 512-245-2204

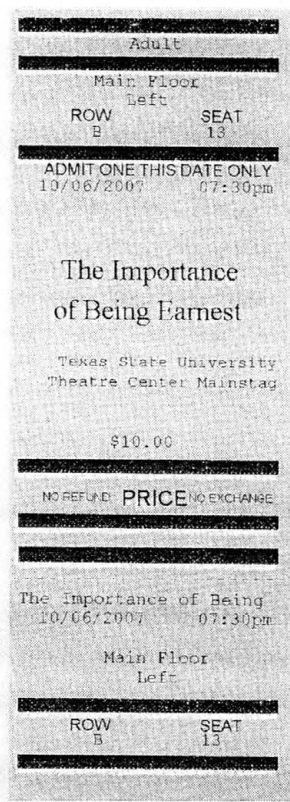


Figure 5. Ticket Stub & Program Back Cover

C. Press Release

Texas State University
Department of Theatre and Dance
Production Press Release Form

Title:	The Importance of Being Earnest
Production Company:	Texas State Department of Theatre & Dance
Description (6-8 word description):	Victorian era comedy of manners by Oscar Wilde
Dates:	October 2 nd – October 6 th at 7:30 pm, and October 7 th at 2:00 pm
Theatre Space:	Main Stage Theatre, Theatre Building, Texas State University
Address:	601 University Dr., San Marcos, Texas
Ticket Prices:	\$10 general, \$5 students
<p>For Release: (2-3 sentence description of the show) Oscar Wilde's comedic masterpiece is a witty satire of English society in the late Victorian era. The plot follows the exploits of two wealthy young men who pretend their names are Ernest in order to impress their beloveds. Audiences have loved this play since it premiered in 1895, and many critics consider it the wittiest play in the English language.</p>	
<p>Additional Information: Is there any newsworthy aspect of the show (ex. Is it tied to some other event? Is it a premiere? Etc.?) This play is the first main stage production of the 2007-2008 theatre season, and will feature a guided "touch tour" for visually impaired audience members on Wednesday, October 3rd, at 7:30. Any important information about the playwright? This was the last play ever written by Oscar Wilde, but critics consider it to be his greatest success. Many people remember Wilde for his famous novel, <u>The Picture of Dorian Gray</u>, as well as his other plays.</p>	

Figure 6. Press Release

D. Production Photos

The following photographs were taken on October 3, 2007 by Anders Photography. These pictures were provided by Lori Smith and are included here with the permission of Texas State.

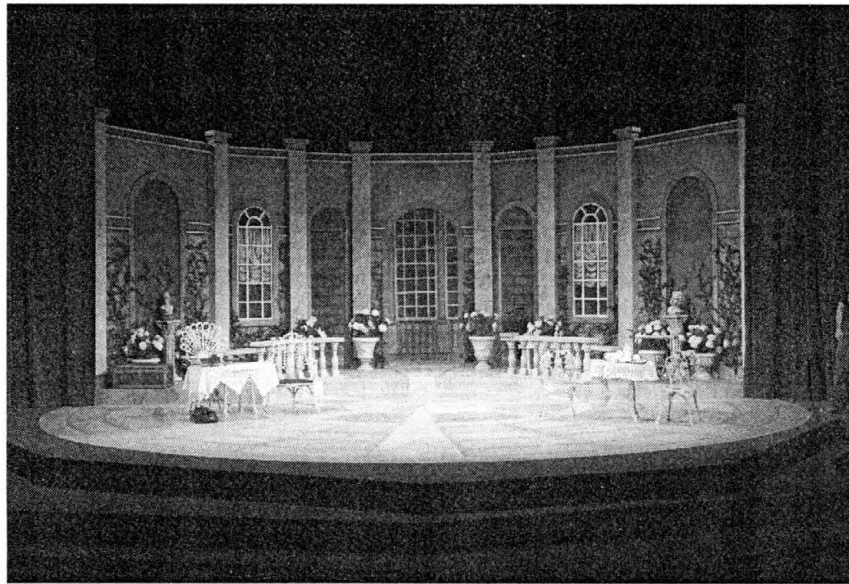


Figure 7. Set Design for Act II and Act III



Figure 8. Jillian Krametbauer (Gwendolen), Michael Amendola (Jack), Meghan Grantom (Lady Bracknell), Lindsay Hicks (Cecily), and Mark Fowler (Algernon)



Figure 9. Lindsay Hicks (Cecily Cardew) and Jillian Krametbauer (Gwendolen Fairfax)



Figure 10. Mark Fowler, Jordan Smith as Merriman, and Lindsay Hicks (Left)



Figure 11. Mark Fowler (Algernon) and Michael Amendola (Jack) (Right)



Figure 12. Lindsay Hicks (Cecily) and Mark Fowler (Algernon)



Figure 13. Jillian Krametbauer (Gwendolen) and Lindsay Hicks (Cecily)

CHAPTER IX

SELF-EVALUATION

Looking back at the work completed as a production dramaturg for The Importance of Being Earnest at Texas State, I believe that I performed fairly well. That is not to say that my work was perfect. There were positive aspects as well as areas that I have learned from and will continue to improve upon in the future. Currently, I have completed work as a production dramaturg for another Texas State production of August Wilson's The Piano Lesson. As it turned out, many of the mistakes I made during The Importance of Being Earnest were corrected. At the same time, there were new lessons to be learned. My personal goal for the future is to minimize areas that require improvement in favor of competent work that is beneficial and worthwhile.

Before getting to the positive aspects, I feel it is important to highlight key areas that required improvement. Overall, my greatest weakness was a lack of effective and appropriate communication. This single factor led to a series of mistakes that could easily have been avoided. Specifically, I am referring to communication with my director and graduate advisor. During the process I had many questions concerning my function as a production dramaturg and the process needed to fulfill my function. Having already taken a course in dramaturgy and worked with Dr. Charlton as an assistant dramaturg, I felt capable of doing the work. Unfortunately, I had never actually performed the role of

a production dramaturg. I recall feeling like I was not sure what to do, but I did not want to ask a question and appear obtuse or incompetent. This is definitely something I must face and overcome in order to facilitate communication in the future.

When I was originally told to gather research on Victorian manners and movement for this production, I latched on to the idea that all I had to do was get some information and present it. My desire to deliver a product overwhelmed my logic, and the result was that I compiled a great deal of research that included tertiary sources. Instead, I should have taken three steps in order to insure my success. First of all, I should have organized a schedule to allow for plenty of time to read. Many of the books and articles I found initially did not present material in a short, concise manner that I mistakenly believed was necessary. I was so consumed with practical information that I neglected my responsibility to conduct scholarly research. I should have taken the sources I found initially and spent time simply reading them. Knowing that this process does take a while, a schedule would have provided organization and a realistic time frame to complete my research. Second, I would have communicated with my advisor and director concerning the information I was reading, just to inform them of my process and clarify whether I was on the right track. I believe that I was too concerned that I would bother them with unnecessary news. Finally, I would have spent more time searching for primary and secondary sources on related topics other than those requested by my director. I was so fixated on just Victorian manners and movement that I forgot an important role of a dramaturg. I should have been researching historical and social context, production history, critical commentary, etc. As it turned out, much of the research that I gathered

for the chapters in this thesis happened after the production was over. Timing really is a key factor, and allowing an appropriate amount of time before rehearsals begin is crucial.

I have regrets about this process, mainly because I knew beforehand how important it was to spend time gathering research. Not only was I told in class about structuring my time efficiently, but I was reminded the summer before our production began that I needed to start researching. I truly feel that I did not realize just how much time I needed to dedicate to research. Also, I was unsure of the extent that my initial research needed to cover.

Other areas for improvement involve my notes to the cast and my materials for publicity. Although I feel my notes were informative, practical, and ultimately well written, I took too much time to complete them. A good production dramaturg will be able to answer a question or provide written notes within twenty-four hours of being asked. Again, with better organization and time management, this problem is easily solved. I am confident that my experience has effectively helped me to learn this important lesson about working as a production dramaturg.

Not all of my work was negative, however. In fact, I really do feel that much of my work was very effective. When gathering research, I feel that one of my strengths is knowing where to look, or how to ask in order to find what I need. Once I realized that I needed more scholarly sources, it was not a problem locating them. Also, I believe that during the rehearsal process I developed an appropriate and positive relationship with my director and the cast. During production meetings and actual rehearsals, I conducted myself professionally according to proper etiquette for my position. I feel that my presentation to the cast was effective and very well received, and overall provided an

informative and beneficial insight that really did help the actors. Finally, I was proud of my work on the lobby display. This was one area in which I gave myself enough time to correct any mistakes before the opening of the show.

Overall, when I consider my work as a production dramaturg for this show, there are two main feelings that strike me. I feel that I effectively served the needs of the production, but at the same time, I consider this process to have been a meaningful learning experience.

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VITA

Johnathon Douglas Boyd was born in San Antonio, Texas, on April 21, 1978, the son of Johnathon Yates Boyd, Jr. and Lynnelle Benold Boyd. After completing his Bachelor of Arts degree at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, Johnathon spent three years teaching Theatre Arts in Houston and San Antonio. In January of 2006, he entered the Graduate College of Texas State University-San Marcos to begin work on his Master of Arts degree.

Permanent Address: 1219 Weeping Willow
San Antonio, TX 78232

This thesis was typed by Johnathon Douglas Boyd.