

The Maskers Theatre Company
Our next major production

HABEAS CORPUS

by Alan Bennett

at

The Theatre Royal, Winchester
Tuesday 25th — Saturday 29th October
(Matinee Saturday p.m.)

*Trousers drop quicker than you can say "Brian Rix"
in this slick and saucy production of Alan Bennett's
brilliant seaside postcard farce.*

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The Maskers Theatre Company

The IMPORTANCE of BEING EARNEST

at Mottisfont Abbey



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The Maskers Theatre Company

The IMPORTANCE of BEING EARNEST

at Mottisfont Abbey

THE MASKERS THEATRE Company welcome you on behalf of the National Trust to Mottisfont Abbey, given to the Trust in 1957 by Mrs Gilbert Russell. Originally a Priory of Austin Canons founded in 1201, the establishment gradually declined until its suppression during the Reformation in 1536. The Lord Chamberlain, Lord Sandys, then acquired the priory and its lands in exchange for the two villages of Chelsea and Paddington. Sandys undertook the conversion of the priory into a residence (dividing the nave into two floors, chopping off the tower at roof level and demolishing the north transept and east end of the church); and much further addition and adaption occurred in 1743 under the ownership of the Barker-Mills family.

OSCAR WILD and THE IMPORTANCE...

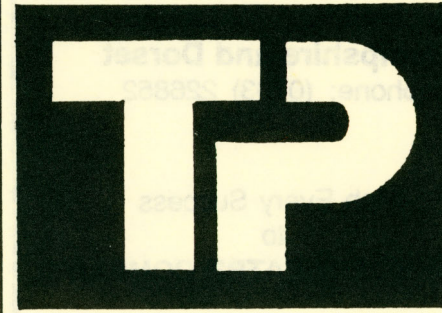
Some notes by the Director, Michael Patterson

The Importance of Being Earnest is undoubtedly regarded as Oscar Wilde's most celebrated play, and as so often happens with artistic creativity the play was conceived at a time of stress and distraction for its creator.

Wilde was virtually driven out of London in the summer of 1894 to obtain sufficient peace to be able to write a successor to Lady Windermere's Fan and A Woman of No Importance, both of which had been successfully premiard in London. His extravagant lifestyle had left him in debt, and he had already accepted an advance from the publisher for his new play. More disturbing to his charming and gregarious nature were the increasingly vehement attacks on him by the Marquess of Queensbury, father of Lord Alfred Douglas, ("With my own eyes I saw you both in the most loathing and disgusting relationship as expressed by your manner and expression"" Queensbury wrote). Oscar initiated libel proceedings against him, and fled to Worthing with his wife and family. The words flowed from his pen and the play was completed in less than three weeks....just 100 years ago from this Mottisfont production.

WHATS IN A NAME?

One of Oscar Wilde's ploys to point up the nonsense and deflating wit of the play was in his choice of names. Worthing, its birthplace, is commemorated in John Worthing, whereas Bracknell is the last place a real Lady would come from. The celibate but unfulfilled rector, Dr Chasuble, is a play on chase-able... but what of "Prism"? The two butlers were originally called Lane and Mathews to immortalise Wilde's displeasure with the publishers of that name, but magnaminously he relented. "Jack" Worthing ("There is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all. It does not thrill" says Gwendolen) pokes fun at Jack Bloxham, a would-be aesthete friend at Oxford whose publication "The Chameleon" survived only one



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The Maskers wish to thank, amongst many others, the following for their assistance in this production: Hilliers Nurseries; the Nuffield Theatre, Southampton; David Stone and Trevor Sacree of the National Trust; R.A.O.D.S; Strand Printing Services; Martin Caveney; Harry Tuffill; Albie Minns; Barbara Cavanagh; Rob Robinson.

edition. And is it too fanciful to suppose that (A1)gernon (Mon)crieff is derived from (A1)fred (Mon)tgomery, Bosie's family name? A list of names in a Military Directory at the end of the play includes "Maxbohm" - a private joke of Oscar's with Max Beerbohm (who proclaimed the play a masterpiece). Finally, it appears that Oscar noted with delight the anniversary of another bit of nonsense when Royal Assent had been given in 1794 to a Bill "exempting the poor from personal labour in the repair of the highways" - introduced by Sir Charles Bunbury.

Its all just the importance of being earnest, sorry, Earnest!

The Maskers Theatre Company was founded on 25 July 1968 to mount a touring production of "Much Ado About Northing". We were invited to fill an unplanned gap in the programme at the Nuffield Theatre, Southampton that November, and the group is now, 25 years later, firmly established as the leading amateur group in the area with over 200 productions large and small to its credit. New members are always welcome in any capacity: please phone our membership secretary, Betty Riggs, on (0703) 472619 for further information.

The Maskers Theatre Workshop Appeal was launched this February to pay for the freehold of a two storey building in Shirley, Southampton, which we plan to convert into a rehearsal studio, workshop, technical & costume store, office and clubroom. Your support in contributing this evening to our GRAND DRAW to win a Ford Fiesta motor car will boost the fund, and we are grateful to the National Trust for agreeing that all extra profits from our Gala Evening performance on Saturday 23rd July will go to the fund.

The Maskers are a Registered Charity.

The IMPORTANCE of BEING EARNEST

by OSCAR WILDE (1854-1900)

Cast in order of appearance

Algernon Moncreiff	Robbie Carnegie
Lane, his manservant	Harry Tuffill
Hon. John Worthing J.P	Alec Walters
Lady Bracknell	Marian Westbury
Gwendolen Fairfax	Belinda Drew
Cecily Cardew	Kate Atkinson
Miss Prism	Hazel Burrows
Rev Canon Chasuble D.D	Albie Minns
Merriman, the butler	Bruce Atkinson
Footman	John Lanasis
Pianist	Bruce A'Kinovitsch

For the Maskers

Produced & Directed By Michael Patterson

Set design	Ken Spencer
Set Construction	Geoff Cook
	Ken Spencer
	Chris Finbow
Lighting	Ron Tillyer
Sound	Lawrie Gee
Properties	Kirsten, Irene & Douglas Shiells
Wardrobe	Christine Baker
Stage Management	Angie Barks
	Julia Campone
	Louisa Booth & David Jupp
Electrical Installation	Clive Weekes

Front of House Manager: Ken Spencer

Bar Manager: Pam Cook

Poster Design: John Hamon

ACT I The terrace of Algernon Moncreiff's London House.

ACT II The garden of John Worthing's house.

ACT III The same, later.

There will be an Interval after Act I, and a shorter break between Acts II and III

ANNIVERSARIES.... this production marks a number of Anniversaries. It is firstly the 100th birthday of the play itself (its first performance was given on 14th February 1895). Secondly, this is The Maskers 25th season, and to celebrate our silver jubilee we have launched an appeal to purchase our own premises in Southampton. Monday, July 18th (our Dress Rehearsal night), was the 50th anniversary of the death in Normandy during the relief of Caen of Rex Whistler, the artist who painted the marvellous salon in the house... and lastly, we are on the threshold of the National Trust's 100th anniversary.

Before and during the production "Bunbury's Food Emporium" will be open under the celebrated Plane Tree, where an Edwardian style Buffet will be available, in a limited quantity, for those who wish to add to their enjoyment.

The Maskers Theatre Company announce, with pleasure that this facility comes to us by arrangement with Anderson's Fine Foods.

A selection of Main Courses and Desserts are on offer, as is a specially selected wine list to compliment the fare.

Anderson's Fine Foods may be contacted during or after the play for your special catering requirements by telephoning Kim Anderson on 0243 586401 or Anne Spencer on 0703 736032.