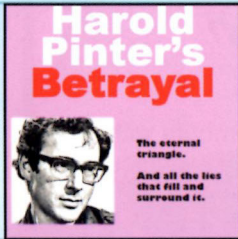


FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS



Betrayal

by Harold Pinter

Tautly written throughout, a play of hidden emotions, one-upmanship and deceptions.

MASKERS STUDIO THEATRE, Southampton

9 - 13 September 2014

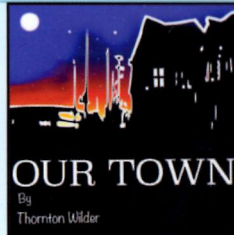
OUR TOWN

by Thornton Wilder

Pulitzer Prize winning drama of life in the fictitious village of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, in the early 1900s.

MASKERS STUDIO THEATRE, Southampton

21 - 25 October 2014



A Christmas Show

Our ever popular Christmas show served with a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie.

MASKERS STUDIO THEATRE, Southampton

9 - 13 December 2014

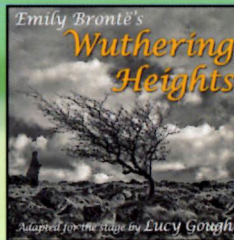
Wuthering Heights

by Emily Brontë (adapted for the stage by Lucy Gough)

Emily Brontë's gothic tale of tortured love is brought to the stage in all its turbulent, passionate glory.

NUFFIELD THEATRE, Southampton

27 - 31 January 2015

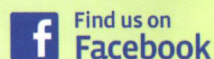
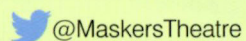


Join our email list and help us save £1,000!

As the cost of stamps continues to rise, we're keen to save £1,000 we spend on postage (not to mention supporting a greener environment). We'd like to invite you to join our growing list of supporters who have elected to receive information via email only. All it takes is three small steps and 5 minutes to update your information:

1. Go to our website: maskers.org.uk
2. Click on the yellow box that says **Receive Email Updates**
3. Complete and save your information

Alternatively give your details to our Front of House staff this evening - Thank You!



The Importance of being Earnest

A Trivial Comedy for Serious People

by Oscar Wilde



£1

PROGRAMME

Wednesday 16 to Saturday 26 July 2014

HAMPTWORTH LODGE

maskers.org.uk

Registered charity no 900067

The Maskers at Hamptworth Lodge

Welcome to the Maskers Theatre Company's open air production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

This is our seventh year at this beautiful location and we think you'll agree that the Archery Lawn and its terraces are the perfect place in which to perform. We are very grateful to Richard and Charlotte Everett, the new owners of Hamptworth Lodge, for allowing us to perform here and for all their help in ensuring that the preparations for this year's show went smoothly.

The Maskers Theatre is now in its 46th year and aims to continue to bring award winning quality theatre to its audiences for many, many years to come. We hope you enjoy the performance and your visit to this lovely house and its gardens and grounds.

We respectfully request that you take all your picnic leftovers and empties home. You may remain to finish your picnics at the end of the play but we ask that you vacate the grounds by 11pm (5.45pm for matinée). Thank you!!

We look forward to seeing you again next year.

Details of other Maskers productions are on the back page of this programme – why not come and see us at The Nuffield Theatre or at our very own cosy Studio in Shirley, Southampton? See our website for full details www.maskers.org.uk



Please take care when moving around the grounds as steps and paths may be uneven and slippery if wet.

Provision for smoking has been made in the parkland below the Archery Lawn – please use the sand buckets provided. We ask that you don't smoke in the grounds of the house – thank you!

Ramblings from the Director

First and foremost, I would like to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to the new owners of Hamptworth Lodge for agreeing to host our summer production and for their help and support. I sincerely hope that our production does credit to their generosity.



When I put forward my proposal to direct this year's summer production, I suggested *The Importance of Being Earnest*, as the perfect piece for a beautiful country garden. It is also a piece that I have long harboured a desire to direct, mainly because I am fascinated by the author, Oscar Wilde. He gets a head start in my gallery of heroes simply because of his "Irishness" – I love all things Irish and you don't get much more Irish than someone with a name like Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde.

It is his wit, however, that really won me over – those one line epigrams that scythe through pretension in a remarkably incisive and clever way.

Then there is the rebel who pushed life to the limits. Wilde seemed to take great pleasure in pricking pomposity, ridiculing slavish adherence to fashion and challenging the rules imposed by an arrogant establishment, though whether these actions were driven by a desire for change in society or merely to advance his own notoriety is a moot point. After the success of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Oscar was certainly courted by the very London society that he satirised. Possibly, it was elements of both motives that drove him.

One aspect of Oscar's make-up that had a major impact on his later life was his sexuality. After his conviction and prison sentence for gross indecency, his life took a huge turn for the worse and probably contributed indirectly to his early death, in near poverty, in Paris in 1900. If he had not been vilified, viciously punished, for something which today would be no crime at all, and had he not died so tragically young, who knows what other works of genius he might have given us?

On the subject of sexuality, however, one of the issues that tend to divide academics is the extent to which *The Importance of Being Earnest* contains a homosexual subtext. Some believe that "earnest" was a code word for homosexual, much as the word "gay" is today. It is said that a "Cecily" was a Victorian term for an attractive rent boy and the term "bunburying" is also cited as having a sexual meaning. I do not know if any of this is true, but once the idea is planted in one's mind, it has the potential to make one view many more of the lines in the play as having a double meaning. I'll leave it to you to form a view on that, but I do love the idea that, on the opening night of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, there was a small section of the audience that was in stitches at some of the lines, whilst the rest of the audience looked on with polite amusement and utter bafflement at why others were laughing themselves insensible!!! All power to your elbow Oscar.

I have thoroughly enjoyed directing this show and am determined to continue my reading of Wilde's complete works when it is over. I hope you enjoy it too.

Brian

Oscar Wilde

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in Dublin on 16 October 1854. His father was a successful surgeon and his mother a writer and literary hostess. Wilde was educated at Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford and after he graduated, he moved to London to pursue a literary career.



Wilde was a proponent of the Aesthetic movement, which promoted the idea that the Arts should provide refined sensuous pleasure rather than convey moral or social themes or sentimental messages. This doctrine is most clearly summarized in the phrase 'art for art's sake'. Wilde's adoption of this ideology reflects a disdain for social mores which is made clear in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, to great comic and satirical effect.

In 1884, Oscar married Constance Lloyd, the daughter of a wealthy QC. They had two sons, Cyril and Vyvyan. To support his family, Oscar accepted a job as the editor of *Woman's World* magazine, where he worked from 1887-1889. Under Wilde, the magazine positioned itself towards an emerging class of educated women. He used the magazine to challenge rampant bourgeois snobbery in the British Establishment and to reflect his advanced views on female emancipation. This was part of a wider strategy of focusing more on what women "think and feel" and not exclusively on what they wear. Wilde soon tired of his editorial work, often failing to turn up for work or attend meetings. As a result he was dropped as editor. The magazine was unable to continue without him.

In 1888, he published *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, fairy-stories written for his two sons. His only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, was published in 1891 and received quite a negative response. This had much to do with the novel's homoerotic overtones, which caused something of a sensation amongst Victorian critics. In 1891, Wilde began an affair with Lord Alfred Douglas, nicknamed 'Bosie', who became both the love of his life and his downfall. Wilde's marriage ended in 1893.

Wilde's greatest talent was for writing plays. He produced a string of extremely popular comedies including, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, (1892) *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895), and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). These plays were all highly acclaimed and firmly established Oscar as a playwright. *Salome* was performed in Paris in 1896.

In April 1895, Oscar sued Bosie's father for libel as the Marquis of Queensberry (after whom the rules of Boxing are named) had accused him of homosexuality. Oscar's case was unsuccessful and he was himself arrested and tried for gross indecency. He was sentenced to two years of hard labour. During his time in prison he wrote *De Profundis*, a dramatic monologue and autobiography, which was addressed to Bosie.

An edition of *The Importance Of Being Earnest* was recently sold for £55,000. Wilde sent the book, one of 100 special copies, to Major James Nelson who was the governor of Reading Gaol during the time of his incarceration for gross indecency and allowed his famous prisoner access to books. The book was inscribed: "To Major Nelson: from the author. A trivial recognition of a great and noble kindness. Feb, 99." Major Ingram allowed Wilde not only to read but also to begin writing once more. He also gave him back the

manuscript of *De Profundis* on his release which ordinarily would have been retained by the prison.

Upon his release in 1897, he wrote *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, revealing his concern for inhumane prison conditions. He spent the rest of his life wandering Europe, staying with friends and living in cheap hotels. He died of cerebral meningitis on November 30, 1900, penniless, in a Paris hotel. Amongst his often reported famous last witticisms are "My wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death. One or other of us has got to go," "I am dying beyond my means," and, "I can't even afford to die."

More Wit & Wisdom from Oscar Wilde

- ❖ Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much
- ❖ America had often been discovered before Columbus, but it had always been hushed up
- ❖ Anyone who lives within their means suffers from a lack of imagination
- ❖ Some cause happiness wherever they go; others whenever they go
- ❖ I don't want to go to heaven. None of my friends are there
- ❖ I was working on the proof of one of my poems all the morning, and took out a comma. In the afternoon I put it back again
- ❖ The old believe everything, the middle-aged suspect everything, and the young know everything
- ❖ Work is the curse of the drinking classes
- ❖ I can resist anything but temptation
- ❖ We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars
- ❖ To recommend thrift to the poor is both grotesque and insulting. It is like advising a man who is starving to eat less
- ❖ You don't love someone for their looks, or their clothes, or for their fancy car, but because they sing a song only you can hear
- ❖ Experience is merely the name men gave to their mistakes
- ❖ I think God, in creating man, somewhat overestimated his ability
- ❖ A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything, and the value of nothing

And, of course.....

- ❖ **I have nothing to declare except my genius!**

THE CAST

In order of appearance:

<i>Lane</i>	<i>Alan Watson</i>
<i>Algernon Moncrieff</i>	<i>William Baggs</i>
<i>Jack Worthing</i>	<i>Steve Clark</i>
<i>Lady Bracknell</i>	<i>Hazel Burrows</i>
<i>Gwendolen Fairfax</i>	<i>Jo Fox</i>
<i>Cecily Cardew</i>	<i>Katherine Evans</i>
<i>Miss Prism</i>	<i>Angela Stansbridge</i>
<i>Canon Chasuble</i>	<i>Paul Baker</i>
<i>Merriman</i>	<i>Marcus Kinsella</i>
<i>Footman</i>	<i>Adam Taussik</i>

The Scenes of the Play

ACT I -	Tea Time in the Garden of Algernon Moncrieff's Residence in Half Moon Street, London
ACT II Scene 1 -	Afternoon, the following day, in the Garden at the Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire
INTERVAL	
ACT II Scene 2 -	A few minutes later - The Garden at the Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire
ACT III -	Early evening, the same day - The Garden at the Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire

***There will be an interval of 20 minutes
Refreshments may be ordered in advance
Toilet facilities are located in the parkland below the Archery Lawn***

Evening performances will finish at approximately 10.15pm
Matinee performance at 5.15pm

THE PRODUCTION TEAM

<i>Director</i>	<i>Brian Stansbridge</i>
<i>Production Manager</i>	<i>Christine Baker</i>
<i>Technical Director</i>	<i>Jamie McCarthy</i>
<i>Stage Manager</i>	<i>Meri Mackney</i>
<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i>	<i>Tom Foyle</i>
<i>Lighting Design</i>	<i>Clive Weeks</i>
<i>Sound</i>	<i>Jamie McCarthy</i>
<i>Technical Team</i>	<i>David Cowley, Mike Matthias, Nick Lawther, Martyn Welch, Gail Blues, Bob Gibson, Nathan Weeks</i>
<i>Costume Design</i>	<i>Serena Brown</i>
<i>Costume team</i>	<i>Janet Scott, Susan Wilson, Marie McDade, Adam Taussik</i>
<i>Props</i>	<i>John Hamon</i>
<i>Set Design</i>	<i>John Hamon, Roger Lockett, Geoff Cook, Graham Buchanan, Kenn Hann</i>
<i>Set Construction</i>	<i>Angela Stansbridge</i>
<i>Set Dressing</i>	<i>Molly Martinson, Robert Osborne</i>
<i>Stage Crew</i>	<i>Mike Matkowski, Jenni Watson</i>
<i>Front of House Managers</i>	<i>Geoff Cook, Pam Cook</i>
<i>Box Office Manager</i>	<i>Christine Baker</i>
<i>Marketing Team</i>	<i>Sarah Russell, Angela Stansbridge, Jo Welch, Zannah Lawther, Greg Parr</i>
<i>Photography</i>	<i>Clive Weeks</i>
<i>Front of House Display</i>	<i>Sarah Russell</i>

Acknowledgements.

Maskers Theatre Company are grateful for the support of:

Richard and Charlotte Everett
Dave Stephens Design
Emphasis Event Productions
Southampton University Players
Studio 28 Interiors

Jo Iacovou
Rachael Courage
Andy Longley
SUSUPA

Meet the Cast:

Brian Stansbridge Director



Brian has been a Masker for over 40 years and has played many major roles, including Long John Silver in *Treasure Island*, at Hamptworth Lodge. His directing credits include *The Man in the Iron Mask*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Servant of Two Masters*. He also plays in an occasional Rock Band, contributing on guitar, keyboard and vocals.

William Baggs *Algernon Moncrieff*



This will be William's third Maskers' summer production. He was Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; then last year a change of tack as King James I in *Anne Boleyn*. This year will be different again. He loves Wilde, having played Lord Goring in *An Ideal Husband*. And now it's Algernon. He is really looking forward to it.

Paul Baker *Canon Chasuble*



Paul has been in every Maskers Open air show since 1996. He won a Daily Echo Curtain Call award playing Weasel Norman in *Wind In The Willows*. Last year in *Anne Boleyn*, he played the foul mouthed Thomas Cromwell who brought about the separation of the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church and is looking forward to playing a man of the cloth in this year's production.

Hazel Burrows *Lady Bracknell*



Hazel has been a Masker since the early seventies, enjoying performing in a huge variety of plays. She is equally at home playing comic or dramatic characters from the pig with a wiggly tail in the *'Owl and the Pussycat'* to Mrs Ford in the *'Merry Wives of Windsor'*. In recent years Hazel has been directing, most recently with *'Sitting Pretty'* at the Nuffield Theatre.

Steve Clark *Jack Worthing*



Steve last appeared at Maskers' studio theatre as Jim, in *The Weir*. He's enjoyed a wide variety of roles over 24 years as a Masker - including Danforth in *The Crucible*, Frank in *Educating Rita*, Dominic in *Amy's View* and Lopakhin in *The Cherry Orchard*. This is Steve's first outdoor production – and first Wilde!

Katherine Evans *Cecily Cardew*



This is Katherine's first performance with Maskers, having previously played a wide range of roles with other local companies. A keen singer, her credits include Yum-Yum (*The Mikado*), Miss Hannigan (*Annie*) and Belle (*Beauty and the Beast*), for which she won a Daily Echo Curtain Call Award. She recently made her directorial debut with Pocket Theatre's production of *Sweeney Todd*.

Jo fox *Gwendolen Fairfax*



Jo played a few small roles in her early years with the company, including a first appearance at Hamptworth Lodge in *The Comedy of Errors*. Her first major role was the part of Lady Jane Rochford, in last year's production of *Anne Boleyn* at Hamptworth. Afterwards she appeared as Josie, in *Sitting Pretty*, at the Nuffield Theatre. *The Importance of Being Earnest* is one of her absolute favourite plays and she's excited to be playing the part of Gwendolen.

Marcus Kinsella *Merriman*



Marcus will be playing a butler in his 3rd consecutive "Maskers" outdoor production. This will be his 7th Maskers' production in the last 2½ years alone and 20th play in a hectic 7 year period! He's looking forward to having fun in the sun (hopefully!) with the rest of the cast and the great Hamptworth audiences!

Angela Stansbridge *Miss Prism*



Angela is delighted to be returning to Hamptworth Lodge where she was last seen as a whacky Mustard Seed in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and as drunken Captain Flint in *Treasure Island* when she was required to throw herself overboard every night! Angela has been an active member of Maskers for 40 years – she is rarely seen without bundles of publicity flyers as she is part of the hard working marketing team!

Adam Taussik *Footman*



Adam is playing the Footman, who, for various reasons (presumably known only to himself), dear Oscar neglected to name - I think we'll call him George. Since I was the King of England last year in *Anne Boleyn*, I've been demoted to the lower classes again, but hard work and dedication (and fortunate casting) may bring me back to the nobility eventually. When not in livery, I have another life in Student Services at the University of Southampton.

Alan Watson *Lane*



Alan has been a Masker for nearly forty years and has been involved in over thirty productions ranging from *Journey's End* to *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and from *Ladies' Day* to *King Lear*. In this production his main challenge is the cucumber sandwiches.

Rehearsing in Earnest!



Why Not Join The Maskers?

The Maskers are keen to welcome new members with an interest in any aspect of theatre – all things technical, directing, costumes, props, set design and construction, helping front of house, marketing or acting, of course!!

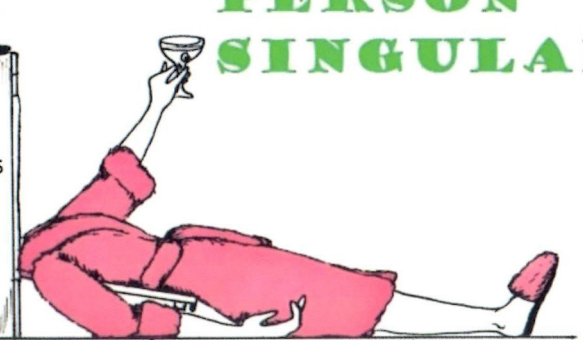
Enjoy the challenge of 'making theatre happen'.

To find out more about The Maskers Theatre Company, go to www.maskers.org.uk



ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR

20-24th January 2015
Nuffield Theatre
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Tickets £13
£10 concessions
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www.nuffieldtheatre.co.uk



BY ALAN AYCKBOURN *Alan Ayckbourn* A Southampton University Players amateur production