



AUDITION PACK – The Importance of Being Earnest

By Oscar Wilde

Directed by Leo Bradley

Third Mainhouse Production for 2024

Audition/Information Session
The Ron Hurley Theatre
11:00am Sunday 16th June 2024

If you are unable to make the audition, please fill out an expression of interest form
[Expression of Interest Form](#)

We can't wait to see you there!

SYNOPSIS

The play tells the story of two friends, Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff, who both assume the identity of a fictional man named Ernest, in order to win the affections of two young women, Gwendolen Fairfax and Cecily Cardew.

Production Notes

This hilarious comedy is by Oscar Wilde , and is perhaps his best known work.
“A Trivial comedy for serious people”.

This will be a very physical production, the actors will match the verbal sparring in the text with some actual sparring among themselves.

There’s a lot of food in the play, particularly a lot of tea. And expect these tea parties to be anything but civilized! It is amazing how much passion, animosity, jealousy can be expressed over a tea cake.
Or the lack of cucumber sandwiches.

These Characters may be larger than life but are still true to life. We’ve all met women like Gwendolen and Cecily who have an idealised version of the man they want to marry. And men like Jack and Algie who are quite prepared to become those idealised men, just to win their affection. And Gwendolen’s mother is the formidable Lady Bracknell, and who hasn’t met a school teacher, boss or perhaps their own Aunty just as intimidating?

This is the story of two couples negotiating the difficult waters from love and passion to marriage and social respectability.

It is a play about truth and lies, and the little lies that we tell to “get on” with other people, or to “fit in”.

It is a play about identities, both men win the affections of their partners by pretending to be someone else. And this leads to lots of hilarious moments of sheer farce as they try to hold on to their dignity as their deceptions are stripped away one at a time!

Can their passion survive the unmasking!

Or the intense gruelling interrogation of a future mother in law?

Or will they present an “insuperable barrier”.

It is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth!

As Miss Prism says “The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.”

(Oh and expect some fabulous costumes and outrageous hats!!)

Note:- because this production is a replacement for another production, some roles have already been cast.

ABOUT THE Director

Leo has directed several plays and musicals for companies in and around Brisbane.

Some of his favourite production include *As You Like It* and *Over the Top with Jim*, *The Gondoliers*, *Alone It Stands*, *The Importance of Being Earnest* for BTG, *I Love you you're perfect Now Change* for BTG, and *Seven Little Australians*, *Ladies in Black* and *The Venetian Twins*, *Jasper Jones* (BTG 2023) and *My Family and Other Animals* (VPs 2023).

Roles

Role	Description	Gender	Playing ages
John Worthing	Young man, slightly insecure, keen to get on in society, madly in love with Gwendolen	Male	20 - 35
Algernon Moncrieff	His best friend, a journalist, no insecurities whatsoever, Gwendolen's cousin, musical, overly educated, always eating. Falls unexpectedly for Cecily	Male	20-35
Rev. Canon Chasuble	Local clergyman, opinionated, lectures a lot, a sermon for every occasion (often the same one)	male	50 - 75
Lane, Manservant housekeeper or Cook	Much put upon butler to Algernon, a man with a past – could be a housekeeper and female	Male or female	Any age

Merriman, Butler or Housekeeper	Senior Servant at John's country estate, Exhausted trying to run after young Cecily	Male or female	Any age
Gwendolen Fairfax	John Worthing's intended romantic, always the centre of attention, enjoying the hunt for a husband but has her own list of desirable attributes deeply shallow. attracted to John, because she thinks his name is Earnest.	Female	18- 26
Cecily Cardew	John Worthing's exceptionally pretty ward Romantic and wild, passionate, imaginative overly educated in geometry and political economy. Devoted to pressing flowers and keeping her diary.	Female	18- 22
Servants	There are various servants needed for – at both houses. Especially need Moulton the gardener, valets, parlour maids etc. They will be involved in the physical comedy of scenes – and mopping up afterwards (apologies in advance) but do not have many lines.	Male and female	Any age
Lady Bracknell	Gwendolen's mother, Algernon's Aunt, formidable, intimidating keen to uphold standards and find a suitable match for Gwendolen	Already Cast	
Miss Prism	Cecily's governess, hopelessly devoted to Rev Chasuble, and her books, a woman with a past harbouring crushed dreams, easily manipulated by Cecily.	Already Cast	

Ages are the suggested playing ages, and genders are the playing genders.

Please note the roles of **Lady Bracknell** and **Mis Prism** are already cast.

Auditionees should prepare a short 1 to 2 minutes monologue, preferably comic.

Can be taken at any work, though we suggest works of Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw, Noel Coward, but really anything which shows off your voice. Some are attached at the end here.

There will then be a short reading of some scenes with the other auditionees.

A draft rehearsal schedule will be available at the audition – but generally we rehearse Tuesday, Thursday nights and Sunday during the day.

Dates

Auditions	Sunday, June 16, 2024	11:00am-12:30pm
Further Auditions (if needed)	Tuesday 18 June, 2024	7:30pm - 9:00pm
Call backs – if needed	Thursday 20 th June	7:30pm - 9:00pm
Rehearsals	Tuesday 25 th June – 22 th Aug	Tues, Thurs – 7:30 – 9:30pm Sundays - 11:00 -4:00pm
Season	23rd August - 1st September	

Season

Dates: 23rd August - 1st September

Eight Performances

Friday 23 August 2024 7:30 PM
Saturday 24 August 2024 2:00 PM
Saturday 24 August 2024 7:30 PM
Sunday 25 August 2024 2:00 PM
Friday 30 August 2024 7:30 PM
Saturday 31 August 2024 2:00 PM
Saturday 31 August 2024 7:30 PM
Sunday 1 September 2024 2:00 PM

Reading 1 – Lane and Algernon

Algernon. Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

Lane. I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

Algernon. I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—any one can play accurately— but I play with wonderful expression.
As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte.
I keep science for Life.

Lane. Yes, sir.

Algernon. And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

Lane. Yes, sir.*[Hands them on a salver.]*

Algernon. *[Inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa.]* Oh! . . . by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreman and Mr. Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

Lane. Yes, sir; eight bottles and a pint.

Algernon. Why is it that at a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne? I ask merely for information.

Lane. I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir.
I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

Algernon. Good heavens! Is marriage so demoralising as that?

Lane. I believe it *is* a very pleasant state, sir.
I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present. I have only been married once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young person.

Algernon. I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

Lane. No, sir; it is not a very interesting subject.
I never think of it myself.

Algernon. Very natural, I am sure. That will do, Lane, thank you.

Lane. Thank you, sir

Reading 2 - Female

Bracknell Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice . . . as far as any improvement in his ailment goes.

I should be much obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception, and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when everyone has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

Thank you, Algernon. It is very thoughtful of you. I'm sure the programme will be delightful, after a few expurgations. French songs I cannot possibly allow. People always seem to think that they are improper, and either look shocked, which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse. But German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and indeed, I believe is so. Gwendolen, you will accompany me

Reading 3 – Chasuble - Male

Chasuble. *[Raising his hand.]* Charity, dear Miss Prism, charity!

None of us are perfect.

I myself am peculiarly susceptible to draughts.

Will the interment take place here?

What! He expressed a desire to be buried in Paris!

In Paris! I fear that hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last.

You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to this tragic domestic affliction next Sunday.

My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful,

or, as in the present case, distressing.

I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation and festal days.

The last time I delivered it was in the Cathedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontent among the Upper Orders. The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogies I drew

Reading 2 – Merriman and Jack

Jack. You young scoundrel, Algy,
you must get out of this place as soon as possible.
I don't allow any Bunburying here.

[Enter Merriman.]

Merriman. I have put Mr. Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir.
I suppose that is all right?

Jack. What?

Merriman. Mr. Ernest's luggage, sir.
I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own.

Jack. His luggage?

Merriman. Yes, sir.
Three portmanteaus, a dressing-case, two hat-boxes,
and a large luncheon-basket.

Jack. Merriman, order the dog-cart at once.
Mr. Ernest has been suddenly called back to town.

Merriman. Yes, sir.

Reading 3 – Cecily - Female

Cecily. You silly boy! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months. Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him, after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest.

On the 14th of February last.

Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here.

The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lover's knot I promised you always to wear.

You've wonderfully good taste, Ernest.

It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life.

And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters.

[Opens box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon.]

I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener.

The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

Of course it was broken off. On the 22nd of last March.

You can see the entry if you like. *[Shows diary.]*

‘To-day I broke off my engagement with Ernest.

I feel it is better to do so.

The weather still continues charming.’

It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once.

But I forgave you before the week was out.

Reading 4 – Gwendolen - Female

Gwendolen. Perhaps this might be a favourable opportunity for my mentioning who I am.

My father is Lord Bracknell.

You have never heard of papa, I suppose?

Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown.

I think that is quite as it should be.

The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man.

And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not?

And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive.

Cecily, mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

Really? Your mother, no doubt, or some female relative of advanced years, resides here also?

Indeed?

Oh! It is strange he never mentioned to me that he had a ward.

How secretive of him! He grows more interesting hourly.

I am not sure, however, that the news inspires me with feelings of unmixed delight. I am very fond of you, Cecily;

I have liked you ever since I met you! But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr. Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were—well, just a little older than you seem to be—and not quite so very alluring in appearance.

In fact, if I may speak candidly—

Well, to speak with perfect candour, Cecily,

I wish that you were fully forty-two, and more than usually plain for your age.

Ernest has a strong upright nature.

He is the very soul of truth and honour.

Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception.

But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others..

Reading 5 – Jack - Male

Jack. This ghastly state of things is what you call Bunburying, I suppose?
Well, you've no right whatsoever to Bunbury here.

Good heavens!

Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded.

You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy.

And a very good thing too.

As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your taking in a sweet, simple, innocent girl like that is quite inexcusable.

To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all.

I love her.

There is certainly no chance of your marrying Miss Cardew.

How can you sit there, calmly eating muffins
when we are in this horrible trouble, I can't make out.
You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better.

I made arrangements this morning with Dr. Chasuble to be christened myself at 5.30, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest.

Gwendolen would wish it.

We can't both be christened Ernest. It's absurd.

Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like.

There is no evidence at all that I have ever been christened by anybody.

I should think it extremely probable

I never was, and so does Dr. Chasuble.

It is entirely different in your case.

You have been christened already.

Reading 6 – Jack - Male

Jack. It pains me very much to have to speak frankly to you,
Lady Bracknell, about your nephew,
but the fact is that I do not approve at all of his moral character.
I suspect him of being untruthful.

I fear there can be no possible doubt about the matter.
This afternoon during my temporary absence in London
on an important question of romance,
he obtained admission to my house by means of the false pretence of
being my brother.

Under an assumed name he drank, I've just been informed by my butler,
an entire pint bottle of my Perrier-Jouet, Brut, '89;
A wine I was specially reserving for myself.
Continuing his disgraceful deception,
he succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of
my only ward.
He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every single muffin.

And what makes his conduct all the more heartless is, that he was
perfectly well aware from the first
that I have no brother,
that I never had a brother,
and that I don't intend to have a brother,
not even of any kind.
I distinctly told him so myself yesterday afternoon.

Reading 7 – Algernon - Male

Algernon. Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle?

‘From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack.’
There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt,
but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be,
should call her own nephew her uncle, I can’t quite make out.
Besides, your name isn’t Jack at all; it is Ernest.

You have always told me it was Ernest.
I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest.
You answer to the name of Ernest.
You look as if your name was Ernest.
You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life.
It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn’t Ernest.
It’s on your cards. Here is one of them.

[Taking it from case.] ‘Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany.’

I’ll keep this as a proof that your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else.

[Puts the card in his pocket.]

but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle.
Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once.
Well, that is exactly what dentists always do.
Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I am quite sure of it now.
I’ll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.
Now produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable.

The truth? The truth is rarely pure and never simple.
Modern life would be very tedious if it were either,
and modern literature a complete impossibility!

Reading 8 – Algernon - Male

Algernon. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable.

If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's to-night, for I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week.

I know. You are absurdly careless about sending out invitations.

It is very foolish of you.

Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations.

I haven't the smallest intention of dining with Aunt Augusta

To begin with, I dined there on Monday, and once a week is quite enough to dine with one's own relations.

In the second place, whenever I do dine there I am always treated as a member of the family, and set down with either no woman at all, or two.

In the third place, I know perfectly well whom she will place me next to, to-night. She will place me next Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner-table. That is not very pleasant.

Indeed, it is not even decent .and that sort of thing is enormously on the increase. The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad.

It is simply washing one's clean linen in public.

Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist

I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying.

I want to tell you the rules.

Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, , you will be very glad to know Bunbury.

A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.

You don't seem to realise, that in married life three is company and two is none.

My dear fellow, it isn't easy to be cynical

it isn't easy to be anything nowadays.

There's such a lot of beastly competition about.

Now may I dine with you to-night at Willis's?

Yes, but you must be serious about it.

I hate people who are not serious about meals.

It is so shallow of them.

Reading 9 – Female

Mabel: Oh! is it a proposal?
I am so glad. That makes the second to-day.

Tommy Trafford, of course. It is one of Tommy's days for proposing. He always proposes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, during the Season.

I make it a rule never to accept Tommy. That is why he goes on proposing. Of course, as you didn't turn up this morning, I very nearly said yes. It would have been an excellent lesson both for him and for you if I had. It would have taught you both better manners.

You silly Arthur! If you knew anything about . . . anything, which you don't, you would know that I adore you.

Every one in London knows it except you.

It is a public scandal the way I adore you. I have been going about for the last six months telling the whole of society that I adore you.

I wonder you consent to have anything to say to me.

I have no character left at all.

At least, I feel so happy
that I am quite sure I have no character left at all.

But you never have been refused yet by anybody, have you, Arthur?
I can't imagine anyone refusing you.

Reading 10 – Female

Mabel. Well, Tommy has proposed to me again.
Tommy really does nothing but propose to me.
He proposed to me last night in the music-room, when I was quite unprotected, as there was an elaborate trio going on.
I didn't dare to make the smallest repartee, I need hardly tell you.
If I had, it would have stopped the music at once.

Musical people are so absurdly unreasonable.
They always want one to be perfectly dumb at the very moment when one is longing to be absolutely deaf.

Then he proposed to me in broad daylight this morning,
in front of that dreadful statue of Achilles.
Really, the things that go on in front of that work of art are quite appalling. The police should interfere.

At luncheon I saw by the glare in his eye that he was going to propose again, and I just managed to check him in time
by assuring him that I was a bimetallist.
Fortunately, I don't know what bimetallism means.
And I don't believe anybody else does either.
But that observation crushed Tommy for ten minutes.
He looked quite shocked.

And then Tommy is so annoying in the way he proposes.
If he proposed at the top of his voice, I should not mind so much.
That might produce some effect on the public.
But he does it in a horrid confidential way.
When Tommy wants to be romantic, he talks to one just like a doctor.
I am very fond of Tommy,
but his methods of proposing are quite out of date.

I wish you would speak to him, and tell him that once a week is quite often enough to propose to anyone, and that it should always be done in a manner that attracts some attention.

Reading 11 - Male

Basil: You don't understand me, Harry.
Of course I am not like him. I know that perfectly well.
Indeed, I should be sorry to look like him.
You shrug your shoulders? I am telling you the truth.

There is a fatality about all physical and intellectual distinction,
the sort of fatality that seems to dog through history
the faltering steps of kings.
It is better not to be different from one's fellows.
The ugly and the stupid have the best of it in this world.
They can sit quietly and gape at the play.
If they know nothing of victory,
they are at least spared the knowledge of defeat.
They live as we all should live, undisturbed, indifferent,
and without disquiet.
They neither bring ruin upon others nor ever receive it from alien hands.
Your rank and wealth, my brains, such as they are, my fame, whatever it
may be worth; Dorian Gray's good looks,
we will all suffer for what the gods have given us,
suffer terribly.

Oh, I didn't intend to tell you his name.

I can't explain.
When I like people immensely, I never tell their names to anyone.
It seems like surrendering a part of them.
You know how I love secrecy.
It is the only thing that can make modern life wonderful
or mysterious to us.
The commonest thing is delightful if one only hides it.
When I leave town, I never tell my people where I am going.
If I did, I would lose all my pleasure.

It is a silly habit, I dare say, but somehow
it seems to bring a great deal of romance into one's life.

I suppose you think me awfully foolish about it?