



Introductory Notes

1. Introductory information

Welcome to the audio introduction for *The Importance of Being Earnest* presented by the State Theatre Company of South Australia

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde is beloved for its wit, satire, and gleeful skewering of Victorian respectability. But beneath the dazzling dialogue lies something more radical: a world built on performance — of identity, class, and desire.

The play follows two young men, Jack and Algernon, who create elaborate alter egos — “Ernest” — to escape social obligations and pursue love. But when their deceptions unravel, chaos ensues in a world where truth is slippery, and appearances are everything.

This production is fast, furious and wickedly funny. With an entirely South Australian cast, we’re serving up the very best talent with teeth, sparkle, and a whole lot of nerve. Prepare yourself for a bold and joyful night at the theatre.

Runtime: 120 minutes without interval.

Content warnings: references to alcohol, period attitudes towards class, gender and marriage.

2. Abbreviated Director’s note – Petra Kalive

Oscar Wilde, a queer artist writing in a world obsessed with rigid boxes, didn’t just write a comedy of manners, he built a work designed to dismantle Victorian propriety.

In this production we aren’t dusting off a museum piece or forcing modern politics onto a classic, we are digging for the dangerous, radical spark Wilde buried beneath the epigrams and cucumber sandwiches.

Wilde was, in essence, ahead of his time. His comedy isn’t about preserving manners, its about the absurdity of the binary. Victorian society demanded fixed gender, fixed morality and fixed class. Wilde dismantled all three through ‘Bunburying’ the act of having a double life.

We are returning the play to its roots as a sophisticated, anarchic pantomime – built on disguise, role play and the joyful artifice of performance.....

2. Set description

Director's note – We have traded the static realism of the drawing room for a revolving platform – a platter serving up the story.

As the stage rotates, it reminds us that perspective is never static; it shifts and demands fresh interpretation.

The materials echo the friction between tradition and innovation, while a palette of bright saturated colours against a restrained backdrop mirrors the play's conflict; control versus freedom, structure versus disorder.

The set is not a backdrop, it is a participant, a physical manifestation of the idea that our world is a construct that can be spun to reveal new angles.

The theatre seats 590 people in three banks of tiered seats leading steeply down to the stage.

As the audience enters, a darkened set is lit by the soft glow of wall sconces and a standard lamp.

Act 1

The set is staged on a large 8 metre rotating circle set flush with the floor decorated with 30cm royal blue and cream square tiles in a chequerboard pattern, surrounded by a cream border. Across the diameter, stands 5 meter tall, teal blue, arched window frames, which include arched double French doors and small wall sections either side.

Through the windows, a grand piano is set with music and a floral throw, a circular piano stool beside it. And beyond the flower-festooned branches of a tree echo the curved window shapes.

On the left of the window frames, a narrow 'wall' displays two small framed paintings illuminated by a down light sconce. On the right, the matching sconce lights a bookcase. A three meter long, ten centimetre wide, teal blue fabric bellpull ending in a gold tassel, is hung on the wall between the bookcase and the windows.

Wine-red curtains, frame the French doors theatrically and provide a backdrop for the Morning-room in Algernon's London flat.

Luxuriously and artistically furnished, to the left, on either side of a round table set with a gold and buff china coffee pot service on a gold tray, are two stone coloured wing-back chairs. Large plush, tasselled, maroon cushions, in square lattice design, sit on the deeply buttoned upholstery. The comfortable seating is lit by a gold stemmed standard lamp with yellow shade.

On the floor a deep burgundy rectangular rug is set askew. To the right of the French doors facing us is a turquoise-sea-blue three-seater sofa with an midnight-blue velvet



throw and another dusky pink throw with very long fringing draped over the back and right arm. Two small stone coloured cushions sit either end of the sofa.

Behind the sofa is an umbrella stand and another higher, round wooden occasional table. On the table is a chinoiserie vase full of vivid lilies and bird of paradise and a silver salver of letters.

A gold velvet chaise lounge, with royal-blue velvet bolster cushion, sits partially off the circular floor.

The circular chequered floor is surrounded by a deep gray area, bordered with a repeat of the chequered tile. This delineates the patio area in Act 2. In this area six large terracotta urns are filled with cascading ferns and lush flowers in a symphony of pink shades, three on either side, framing the sitting areas.

Act 2

Magenta light floods the stage as the circular floor rotates to reveal the patio at Jack's country manor house.

The warm light of a summer's day floods the wider patio area revealing window frames painted deep cream. The curtains are drawn back and the French doors now provide entry into the morning room of the manor house. The scene looks light and airy.

A basket of roses sits on a small panelled half wall at right angles to the window on the right.

A huge arching stylized tree branch, painted deep cream and festooned with pink and white climbing roses, supports a simple wooden swing. More roses cascade ramble across the window and upper branches. The seven urns of ferns and roses flank the patio.

Two tan wicker chairs are set either side of a white wicker glass-topped table set with a selection of books.

More books fill the shelf underneath.

Act 3

Morning room at the Manor House

The circular floor rotates again to reveal the interior morning-room at the Manor House. The red curtains are gone, the room feels lighter and airy, windows and French doors open onto the patio of act 2. A cooler light changes the window-frame colour to a softer muted French blue.

The wingback chairs now sport soft blue cushions and the vase of flowers is on the round table between them. The gold chaise hidden behind them under the paintings. B

The bookshelves on the right, containing 4 shelves of leather bound books, are now better lit and are revealed to wrap around the window column. A round table is set with cut-crystal decanter and 2 glasses.

On the floor is a light beige neutral rug. The blue sofa with just one blue throw, is set diagonally angled toward the French doors, its back to the audience. The urns of flowers still adorn the far edges of the stage, framing the sitting areas.

3. Cast, Characters and Costumes

The cast wear lavish and highly detailed costumes, evoking the Victorian setting of the play with a slightly modern twist, amplified with bold colours, patterns and fabrics. Many characters are played throughout by an actor of a different gender.

Teddy Dunn, a white actor in his late 30s, plays John Worthing, J.P (Jack), a wealthy country gentleman. He is short with a pale, clean-shaven face, and short sandy hair combed back. Mr Worthing appears in a golden brown tail-coat, a tweed waistcoat, grey chinos and black modern-day sneakers. A large lime-green Chrysanthemum pokes out of his breast-pocket. Later, in the garden, he wears a formal black suit of mourning with a tall grey top-hat, and carries a black cane.

Anna Lindner, a white actress in her late 30s, plays Algernon Moncrieff, a broke, charming ner'do'well, and bachelor about town. Algernon's colourful attire sets him apart as a flamboyant dandy - his long orange curls are pinned up in a shaggy bouffant, and he sports a red velvet waistcoat over a white long-sleeved shirt, with pink-and-orange checkered trousers, and pink sports shoes. Later, in the garden, he wears a blazer to match his pink-and-orange trousers.

Carla Lippis, a white actress in her 40s, plays dual roles of Merriman, butler to John Worthing in the country, and Lane, Manservant to Algernon in London. She is of medium height with a shoulder-length black bob haircut with severe fringe, black cabaret eye make-up and red lipstick. She wears a grey 1940s-style pinstriped paint-suit and matching waistcoat, a large black necktie, and a pair of Victorian style black leather boots. Later, in the garden, she wears a grey apron around her waist.

Glenda Linscott, a white actress in her late 60s, plays Lady Bracknell, Gwendolyn's mother and Algernon's Aunt Augusta, a woman focused on social standing and Victorian standards. She has grey ringlets pinned atop her head, and wears pearl drop earrings and an opulent floor-length Victorian gown constructed with panels of white and deep green geometric patterned fabric. The shoulders are exaggerated with large leg-o'mutton sleeves. She carries a cane and occasionally thumps it with authority.

Connor Pullinger, a white actor in his mid 20s, plays Hon. Gwendolyn Fairfax the stylish daughter of Lady Bracknell. Gwendolyn has short curly brown hair, and wears a vivid blue floor-length Victorian gown, mirroring the design of her mother's, with panels of aquamarine and pale blue. Below her gown, she wears a pair of black and white high-heeled Converse sneakers.

Pia Gillings, a black actress in her early 20s, plays Cecily Cardew, Jack Worthing's young romantic ward. Short and slim, she has dark brown ringlets worn around her shoulders, and wears a tightly corseted white over-jacket with oversized legomutton sleeves and pink triangular collar, over a garish pink gingham skirt, with a bunched tulip calf length hem which bounces with her movements. She wears pink slippers with pink button-up spats over the top. She wears a bangle on her wrist and frequently takes a small diary and pencil from her pocket and makes notes.

Nathan O'Keefe, a white actor in his mid 40s, plays Miss Prism, Cecily's governess. Tall and slender, Miss Prism wears a brown floor-length skirt, a rust-coloured corset with white puffed legomutton sleeved shirt, a large black polka dot tie and a pair of serious half-moon spectacles. On her feet, a pair of black low-heeled lace-up Victorian boots. Her fluffy brown hair is partially tied back, with two wispy sections of hair poking out either side of her head like a koala.

Caroline Mignone, a white actress in her early 60s, plays Dr. Canon Chasuble, a country rector. Dr Chasuble wears a long brown coat over another thin salmon-pink button-up long tabbard,, loose grey trousers and a white priest's collar around his neck. His hair is short, brown and raggedly cut, always seeming slightly dishevelled, he wears a pair of modern red-rimmed spectacles.

4. Creatives

Director Petra Kalive

Assistant Director Maeve Mhairi MacGregor

Set & Costume Designer Kathryn Sproul

Lighting Designer Katie Sfetkidis

Composer Geoffrey Crowther

Accent Coach Jennifer Innes

Sound Designer Andrew Howard

5. Event details

At audio described performances, patrons receive an earpiece connected to a small radio receiver through which a specially trained describer explains the action that is happening onstage. The describer will deliver the description when there are breaks in the dialogue onstage so as not to disrupt the narrative for the audience.

Pre-show briefings are held one hour prior to audio described performances. The briefing allows patrons to take a tactile tour of the show with an opportunity to touch costumes and, where possible, to walk on the stage to get a sense of the set.

Participants also meet the actors and hear the voices they will be using for their characters. To participate in a pre-show briefing, meet in the foyer of the performance venue an hour before the show is due to begin.

Event date and time: Saturday 16th May 1.00pm arrive at 12.00pm for the touch tour.
Preshow notes commence at 1.40pm

Monday 18th 6.30 pm performance, arrive at 5.30pm for the touch tour. Preshow notes commence at 6.10pm The performance is followed by an audio described Q&A

RUN TIME 120 minutes no interval

Event location: Dunstan Playhouse, Festival Theatre.

Ticket information: Audio Described Performances, Wheelchair accessible seats, companion cards and other accessible bookings can be booked online, via phone on 08 8415 5353 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm), or via email at tickets@statetheatrecompany.com.au

6. Access information

Access information: easy access from Adelaide train station, Wheelchair parking and lift access from the Riverbank car park.

Assistance: offered by venue staff

Building facilities: Wheelchair accessible ramps, entrances and toilets