

Importance of Being Earnest
by Oscar Wilde

Recommended for ages 14+ / Year 9 - 12

The production runs for approximately 120 minutes without an interval.

About the show

The *Importance of Being Earnest* 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.

Gender Swap

In this production, the following characters have been gender-swapped (names and text remain the same):

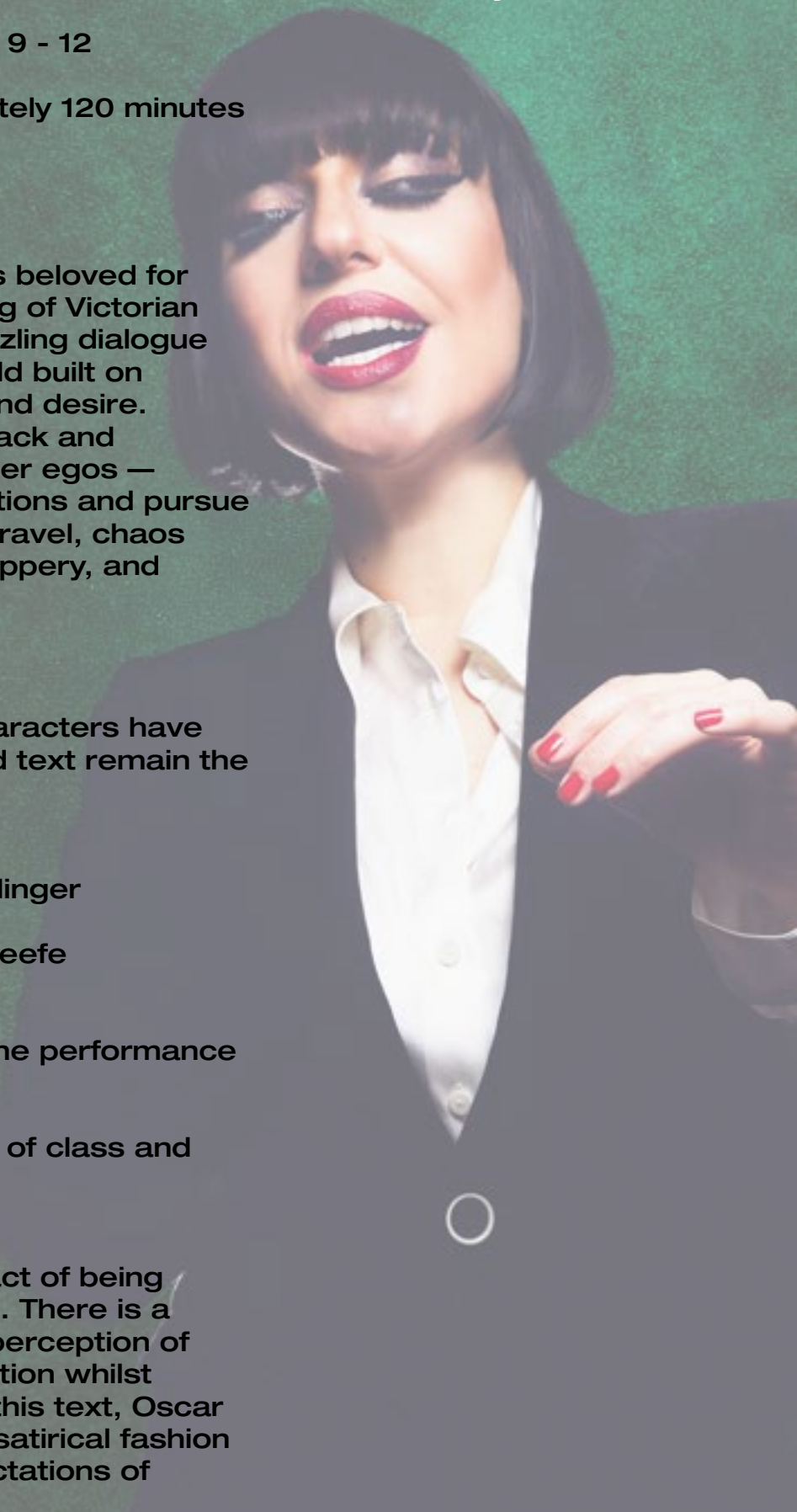
Algernon - played by Anna Lindner
Gwendolen - played by Connor Pullinger
Lane - played by Carla Lippis
Miss Prism - played by Nathan O’Keefe
Merriman - played by Carla Lippis


Key themes explored throughout the performance include:

Gender and Marriage, Discussions of class and References to Alcohol

Gender and marriage

The story fluctuates between the act of being a bachelor and the act of marriage. There is a juxtaposition between Algernon’s perception of marriage being a business transaction whilst Jack believes it to be romantic. In this text, Oscar Wilde plays with gender-roles in a satirical fashion by exaggerating the societal expectations of





women and men for comedic affect. This encourages a discussion of how perspectives of gender and equality have evolved over time. How we include and laugh with characters rather than at them.

Discussions of class

There is a division of class lingering in the air throughout the play. There are explicit conversations discussing customs and appropriate behaviour of the time for high-class folk. For example, Jack and Lady Brackwell share a conversation in which Lady Brackwell is interrogating Jack regarding his eligibility in marrying her daughter. Jack discusses his primary townhouse in Belgrave Square in which Lady Brackwell calls it the “unfashionable side” and exclaims that her daughter is “unspoiled” and “cannot reside in the country” at his second residence. She completes her conversation by telling Jack that if he were to marry her daughter, it would be although she were to “Marry into a cloak-room”.

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Having a servant or butler was a symbol of status and immense privilege. Characters such as Lane and Merriman are required to serve the upper-class and are working at the whim of their employers, sometimes unreasonable demands.

References of Alcohol

There are frequent references to alcohol throughout, including a champagne sequence at the beginning of the performance. The depiction of drinking is often a sign of over-indulgence and privilege amongst the wealthy.