Season 2012
THE IMPORTANCE
OF BEING EARNEST
The Artspace Exhibition

This year the Artspace celebrates the 60th Anniversary of the Heidelberg Theatre Company, featuring archival posters, programmes, photos and newspaper articles, mapping the history of the theatre and highlighting the wonderful plays presented over the years - as well as a display of interesting and beautiful costumes on the Mezzanine. The display, including costumes, has attracted great interest and comment.

The displays for our third play of 2012 covers the fourth decade of the Company, the 1980s. These documents have been collected by various members of the theatre over many years and we thank them for being aware of the importance of preserving our history.

We hope you enjoy the journey with us through the sixty memorable years of Heidelberg Theatre Company.

HTC is a member of the Victorian Drama League.
HTC acknowledges financial assistance from the City of Banyule.
The Importance of Being Earnest

by Oscar Wilde

12 Jul - 28 Jul 2012
About the author and the play
excerpt from introduction by Vyvyan Holland, Oscar Wilde’s son, to Wilde’s Collected Works

Oscar Wilde was born on 16 October 1854. His education began at in Enniskillen, then Trinity College, Dublin and from there to Oxford where he was influenced by Walter Pater who preached love of Art for Art’s sake. Oscar, going one step further, set out to idolise beauty for beauty’s sake.

In 1879 he came to London and started to make his living by his pen. True to his doctrine of beauty he established himself as the ‘Apostle of Aestheticism’ and drew attention by the eccentricity of his dress. At this time the clothing of the British upper middle classes was rigidly conventional, and the sight of Oscar in the evening in a velvet coat, knee-breeches, black silk stockings, and a large flowing tie, was bound to arouse indignant curiosity.

At the same time he was writing poems, and in 1880 wrote ‘Vera’, which ran for one week in New York in 1883 and never reached London. In 1882, being short of money, he was persuaded to go on a lecture tour to America. This proved to be a brilliant success and he returned to England in 1883, covered, if not with glory, at least with considerable notoriety.

On his return to Europe, he wrote ‘The Duchess of Padua’, for American actress Mary Anderson; but when she received the play, she turned it down flatly. This was really a disaster for Oscar, and he returned to England and went on a series of lecture tours in the provinces. However, this nomadic life soon palled and he returned to London where, in 1884, he married Constance Mary, daughter of a distinguished Irish barrister. Oscar was romantically in love with his beautiful young wife and for some years he was ideally happy. He had two sons by his wife - Cyril, born in 1885, and myself in 1886. Oddly enough, although his literary activities had been almost entirely confined to writing poetry until his marriage, he now turned largely to prose.

Wilde’s first memorable work as author was The Happy Prince, in 1888. The stories in The Happy Prince are really poems in prose more than tales for children; and yet the remarkable thing is that they appeal equally to children and adults.

In 1891 he produced a volume of 4 stories called ‘Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime and Other Stories’; the other three tales being ‘The Canterville Ghost’, ‘The Sphinx without a Secret’ and ‘The Model Millionaire’. The first two of these have been dramatised; they possess the light-hearted gaiety and insouciance that find their fullest expression in ‘The Importance of Being Earnest,’ and show the buoyancy of my father’s spirit at that time.

In 1891 Oscar Wilde’s only novel, ‘The Picture of Dorian Gray’, also appeared. The idea had come to my father some years before. Hesketh Pearson tells the story in his Life of Oscar Wilde; ‘In the year 1884 Wilde used to drop in at the studio of painter, Basil Ward, one of whose sitters was a young man of exceptional beauty...When the portrait was done and the youth had gone, Wilde happened to say, “What a pity that such a glorious creature should ever grow old!” The artist agreed, adding, “How delightful it would be if he could remain exactly as he is, while the portrait aged and withered in his stead!”’.

By far the most interesting and entertaining book of essays that Oscar Wilde wrote was ‘Intentions’. Its sub-title ‘with some remarks upon the importance of doing nothing’ shows the curious charm the word ‘importance’ had for him; it occurs in the titles of two of his plays, and is constantly cropping up in his essays. It is almost as though the word held a strange sonorosity for him and that he liked to roll it, if not round his tongue, then round his mind.
Oscar Wilde now entered into his final stage, the one for which he was destined, that of a dramatist. In 1891 he wrote ‘Lady Windermere’s Fan’ which was produced in February, 1892.

When Wilde had finished ‘Lady Windermere’s Fan’ he wrote his Biblical play ‘Salome’ in French. Sarah Bernhardt was immensely attracted to this play, and put it into rehearsal, with herself in the title-role. However, the Lord Chamberlain refused to grant it a licence, on the ground that no play which contained Biblical characters was allowed to be performed on the English stage. This so annoyed Wilde that he announced his intentions of renouncing his British nationality and becoming a Frenchman, there being no such restrictions in France. As matters turned out, it is a pity that he did not carry out his threat.

In the summer of 1892 he wrote ‘A Woman of No Importance’, which was produced with immediate success in 1893. Once again the audience rose to its feet and called for the author. This time remembering the bad impression he had made on the first night of ‘Lady Windermere’s Fan’, he got up in the box in which he was sitting and announced: ‘Ladies and Gentlemen, I regret to inform you that Mr Oscar Wilde is not in the house.’

On 3 January 1895, Oscar Wilde’s third important play ‘An Ideal Husband’ was produced. The Prince of Wales was present at the first night. It was almost unprecedented for Royalty to be present at a first night, and it seemed now that Wilde’s future was assured. George Bernard Shaw commented on the play: ‘Mr Oscar Wilde’s new play at the Haymarket is a dangerous subject, because he has the property of making his critics dull… He plays with everything; with wit, with philosophy, with drama, with actors and audience, with the whole theatre.’

And so we come to Oscar Wilde’s last, and his most brilliant play, ‘The Importance of Being Earnest’. Wilde originally wrote the play in four acts, as he had written his other three major plays. He submitted it in this form to George Alexander who, with the object of making room for a ‘curtain raiser’, as was usual in those days, asked Wilde to cut it to three acts. When, four years later, Leonard Smithers published the play in book form, it was this three-act version that he had printed, and each subsequent edition has followed this pattern. ‘The Importance of Being Earnest’ was produced at the St James’s Theatre on 14 February 1895. Wilde had now reached the pinnacle of his success. Two plays of his were drawing crowded audiences in the West End, and actor-managers were falling over one another to beg him to write for them.

Then the Marquess of Queensberry, with the object of attacking his son, Lord Alfred Douglas, because of his friendship with Wilde, launched a campaign of ungovernable fury on Wilde. The story has been told often enough; Alfred Douglas, whose only object was to see his father in the dock, persuaded Oscar Wilde to bring a prosecution for criminal libel against him. Lord Queensberry was triumphantly acquitted and his place in the dock was taken by Oscar Wilde, who was sentenced to two years imprisonment.

While in prison, Wilde wrote the letter to Lord Alfred Douglas, part of which was published in 1905 by Robert Ross, under the title of ‘De Profundis’. The manuscript was not revised by Wilde, although he intended to do this, as is shown by the letter he wrote to Robert Ross: ‘As soon as you have read it, I want you to have it copied for me.’ A copy of De Profundis was made and sent to Alfred Douglas; but after reading the first few pages, he destroyed it, Douglas strenuously denied ever having received the letter, and he could not go back on this without contradicting himself.

All his life, my father had an intense leaning towards religious mysticism and was strongly attracted to the Catholic Church, into which he was received on his death bed in 1900. His remains now lie in the French National Cemetery of Pere Lachaise.
The Importance
of Being Earnest

John Worthing.............. Ian McGregor
Algernon Moncrieff .... James Jackson
Gwendolen Fairfax........ Aimee Sanderson
Cecily Cardew............... Taryn Eva
Lady Bracknell............. Frances Hutson
Miss Prism.................. Judi Clark
Reverend Chasuble......... John Cheshire
Lane.......................... Tom Hall
Merriman.................... Ian Robertson

ACT I: Algernon Moncrieff’s flat in Half-Moon Street, London
ACT II: The garden at the Manor House, Woolton
ACT III: Drawing-room at the Manor House, Woolton

TIME: July, 1895.

Refreshments are available in the interval following Act I.

There is a brief interval after Act II;
no refreshments will be served.
Production Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTOR</td>
<td>Wendy Drowley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTOR’S ASSISANT</td>
<td>Melanie Belcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE MANAGER</td>
<td>Melanie Belcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE ASSISTANTS</td>
<td>Bobbie Parish, Sheelagh Belton, Dana Drage, Laura Cortis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET DESIGN</td>
<td>Wendy Drowley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET DECOR</td>
<td>Marie Mackrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSTUMES</td>
<td>Dianne Brennan &amp; HTC Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPERTIES</td>
<td>Bronwyn Parker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIGHTING DESIGN</td>
<td>Deryk Hartwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIGHTING OPERATION</td>
<td>Eugene Dolgikh &amp; Bruce Moorehouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUND DESIGN</td>
<td>George Bissett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUND OPERATION</td>
<td>Christian Dell’Olio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET REALISATION</td>
<td>Owen Evans, Dennis Pain, Neville Wilkie, Malcolm Cother, Doug McNaughton, Paddy Moriarty, Des Harris, Christian Dell’Olio &amp; HTC Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REHEARSAL PROMPT</td>
<td>Basileia Paras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHOTOGRAPHY</td>
<td>Patricia Tyler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROGRAMME &amp; POSTER</td>
<td>Chris McLean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLICITY</td>
<td>Bruce Akers, Toni Tyers, Chris McLean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX OFFICE</td>
<td>Toni Tyers, June Cherrey, Linda Coutts, Jenni Purdey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRONT OF HOUSE</td>
<td>Patricia Tyler and HTC members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The Company wishes to thank: Anne Smith, Maureen McInerney, HTC Working Bee participants
**Director: Wendy Drowley**

Wendy has been involved with HTC since 1953, through all its name and address changes. At the 2003 Annual General Meeting the Company congratulated Wendy on her 50th Anniversary as a member of HTC. Forty of those years have been spent as a Committee Member, and during that time Wendy has also taken leading roles on stage and behind the scenes.

Wendy returned to directing in 1998 with ‘Dancing At Lughnasa’ and directed a show for the Company each year until 2004. Her direction that year of ‘Rough Crossing’ by Tom Stoppard was her last... until now. Wendy has been lured out of retirement as a director to bring this classic piece of theatre to our audiences in the Company’s 60th Anniversary Year.

**IAN McGregor** (John Worthing) This is Ian’s first production with HTC. He brings a repertoire of experience to the play, from such diverse performances as Mercutio in ‘Romeo and Juliet’, cutting edge devised work in HAZCHEM for the Biennale of NSW and Biggles in the one-man show ‘Curtains for Biggles’. Ian’s television credits include ‘Home and Away’, ‘Water Rats’ and ‘The Bill’. His work has also extended into producing and direction for the 10x10 play festival at the Darlinghurst Theatre and has developed new Australian scripts with Parnassus Den. Ian lives in Rosanna and is delighted to be part of the local theatre community.

**James Jackson** (Algernon Moncrieff) From time immemorial, James has attempted to propel his expensive and conceited artistic career through the medium of the stage. This has resulted in his involvement within a plethora of productions, averaging about seven a year. Fortunately, this year, James has decided to search for quality rather than quantity in his work and, after a few months of intensive performance research into Butoh dance and devised theatre, he has come running back to the scripted theatre (and back into ‘reality’). James is currently studying Performing Arts and Literature at Monash University.
AIMEE SANDERSON (Gwendolen Fairfax) This is Aimee’s third play with Heidelberg Theatre. Previous roles include Tracy Lord in ‘Philadelphia Story’ (2009) and Caitlin in ‘Over the River and Through the Woods’ (2008). In 2008 she also won Best Supporting Actress at Malvern Theatre’s in-house awards for her role as the feisty French girlfriend, Vera, in ‘Doctor in the House’. Other plays in Melbourne and Perth have included ‘Man Alive’ (Malvern 2012), ‘The Underpants’ (Mordialloc 2010), ‘Butterflies are Free’ (Malvern 2007), ‘Midsummer Nights Dream’ (2006) and ‘Play it Again Sam’ (2005). She is thrilled to be playing Gwendolen and hopes you enjoy the show.

TARYN EVA (Cecily Cardew) Taryn studied theatre throughout her schooling years, culminating in a place in the 2006 VCE Top Class Drama Showcase. Moving into film and television, Taryn has appeared in television shows such as ‘Neighbours’ and ‘The Pacific’, and was a main cast member in the Australian slasher film ‘Damned By Dawn’ (2006). Her short film credits include ‘Todd’s Story’ and the film adaptation of Lally Katz’s ‘Apocalypse Bear Trilogy’. In 2012 Taryn returned to theatre, appearing as Marian Almond in Mordialloc Theatre Company’s production of ‘The Heiress’. This is Taryn’s first role with The Heidelberg Theatre Company, one which she has thoroughly enjoyed taking on.

FRANCES HUTSON (Lady Bracknell) This is Frances’ first play with Heidelberg, but she has been singing and acting since childhood, in Sydney and Melbourne, except for a 25-year hiatus, spent child-rearing. Since 1986, she has performed in many plays with Bayside companies, some favourites being ‘Arsenic and Old Lace’ (Beaumaris), ‘The Shaughraun’ (Brighton), and Melba (Adelphi). More recently, she has been involved with Fringe Theatre. Plays include ‘Dolly’ at Carlton Courthouse, and ‘The Last Days of Judas Iscariot’ at 45 Downstairs. Frances can occasionally be glimpsed on film and TV. She has narrated talking books, and is a presenter on Vision Australia Radio. She also participates in reading for the Shakespeare Society, and the Dickens Fellowship.
JUDI CLARK (Miss Prism) Judi is happy to be back on HTC’s stage, previously appearing in ‘Good Works’ and ‘Equus’. Judi came to Australia in 1972 for 2 years and, 40 years later, is still here. She has worked with the Basin Theatre, Williamstown Little Theatre, Lilydale Athenaeum, Pumpkin Players in Richmond, amongst others, and has been involved in all aspects of theatre from performing to directing, stage managing to set building, adjudicating and, as part of committee duties, compiling and editing newsletters. Recently retired, Judi hopes to find more plum roles like Miss Prism to keep herself busy.

JOHN CHERSHIRE (Reverend Chasuble) After graduating in Performing Arts at Deakin Uni, John worked professionally at Arena Theatre for three years, making twelve plays and touring them to schools and festivals in Australia and Canada. Leaving a career in the arts for social work, John took to amateur theatre to keep sane (well, it was worth a try). John has worked with Malvern, Williamstown and Strathmore theatre companies, but is particularly fond of HTC – ‘Noises Off’, ‘Dinner’, ‘Philadelphia Story’, ‘Dinner Game’ and ‘The Pain Killer’ – and is therefore delighted to be back.

IAN ROBERTSON (Merriman) Ian is a recent graduate of the Melbourne Acting Academy. He has recently been cast as a Supporting Role in a short film entitled ‘Matrimony’. He has appeared in a production of ‘A Midsummer’s Night Dream’ as Snug. He’s obtained a Diploma in Screen & Media from RMIT and is currently obtaining an Advanced Diploma in Hospitality at William Angliss. This is Ian’s first performance with HTC and he looks forward to working with here again in the future.
TOM HALL (Lane) A passing traveller who saw the warm glow of the spotlights and welcomed the opportunity to revisit his favourite play and tread the boards once more, as well as enjoying the free tea and biscuits! Having trained at Bretton Hall in England and always loved Oscar Wilde he promises to do his best to give satisfaction.

September 13 - September 29