

THE  
**PLAYGOER**

A MAGAZINE FOR THE THEATRE

FEBRUARY/MARCH 1935

THE IMPORTANCE  
OF BEING  
*Earnest*

By Oscar Wilde  
Directed by Jaki Demarest



*Algernon Moncrieff*

'DON Q SON OF ZORRO'



## THE CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

LANE.....	DELL PENDERGRAST
ALGERNON MONCRIEFF.....	PAUL DAVIS
	ARTHUR ROWAN
JACK WORTHING.....	JOSHUA ENGEL
AUGUST BRACKNELL.....	DONALD COOK
GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX.....	AMY RAUCH
EDWARD MOULTON.....	IAN HALL
LAETITIA PRISM.....	KELLI BIGGS
CECILY CARDEW.....	HEATHER WHITPAW
DR. FREDERICK CHASUBLE.....	MICHAEL GALIZIA
TRIXIE MERRIMAN.....	LAUREN JULIEN

## THE CREW

DIRECTOR.....	JAKI DEMAREST
PRODUCERS.....	JOSHUA ENGEL
	JAKI DEMAREST
TECHNICAL DIRECTORS.....	KRIS ANDERSEN
	LIANA OLEAR
	ERIC GASIOR
SOUND.....	KRIS ANDERSEN
SET DESIGN.....	JAKI DEMAREST
SET PAINTING.....	KRIS ANDERSEN
COSTUMER.....	HOPI AUERBACH
PHOTOGRAPHER.....	REBECCA HAMILTON
GRAPHIC DESIGN/PUBLICITY.....	JAKI DEMAREST
GRAPHIC PRODUCTION.....	EVAN HAAG

## ABOUT THE CAST (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)



**Kelli Biggs (*Lactitia Prism*)** last appeared with the RMs as Hippolyta in *Midsummer*. Since then, she has played Vivian Bearing in *Wit* with Nobleheart Rep, Boyet in *Love's Labors Lost* with the Chesapeake Shakespeare Company, Dr. Gray in *Dimly Perceived Threats to the System* at Silver Spring Stage, and Keisha Boone in *Stone Goddess* at the DC Fringe Festival. Kelli recently completed work on the western film, *One-Eyed Horse*, playing the knife-wielding assassin, Sarah Parker. She studied Theatre at the University of Maryland.



**Donald Cook (*August Bracknell*):** August Bracknell's monocle sees and judges all it can survey and while it has looked into Donald's pants, path and past with cruel-to-be-kind wit... it reveals earnestly in his second sortie with the Rudes. The previous outing was his being good and evil, old and a lush in last year's *Faustus*. Later he would be the glam rock boy king of Scotland wielding a two-dimensional Birnam Wood of tropical origin in *MacBeth: Life on the Heath* at Greenbelt's Labor Day festival. He is happy to be here in Bracknell's steely gaze and skin and wants to thank Jaki and everyone else in this fab cast for allowing him to be melted by the spotlights amplified through Bracknell's convex glass.



**Paul M. Davis (*Algernon Moncrieff, Saturdays*)** has a BA in Drama from Washington College, and has enjoyed roles with the Rude Mechanicals since 2003 including Enobarbus in *Antony & Cleopatra* under Miss Demarest's careful and dedicated eye. He would like to thank his family and the cast and crew for putting up with his interesting work and rehearsal schedule. Enjoy the show!



**Joshua Engel (*Jack Worthing*)** has been with the Rude Mechanicals since their inception. He has previously been seen as Aufidius in *Coriolanus*, Canidius in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Horatio in *Hamlet*, Demetrius in *Midsummer*, and the Bastard in *King John*, as well as many others.



**Michael Galizia (*Dr. Frederick Chasuble*):** His other rude outings were, Falstaff/*Merry Wives of Windsor*, Mephistopheles/*Dr. Faustus* and Menenius/*Coriolanus*. Michael has performed with Victorian Lyric Opera Company, Forgotten Opera Company, Washington Savoyards, Annapolis Opera, Damascus Theater Company, Rockville Little Theater and Light Opera of Southern Maryland. He's also performed with opera and theater companies in Hawaii, San Francisco, New York, Connecticut and Florida - but what use is that information to you? Why are you reading this? Are you here alone? Are you mad at the person you came to the show with and you're trying to avoid them? When not performing Michael works for the Federal Gov't conducting unspeakable experiments on aliens that crashed on earth looking for a good sushi bar.



**Ian Hall (*Edward Moulton*)** is simply delighted to be making his second appearance with the Rudes. His recent role in *Faust* involved donning a muumuu and consuming grapes at a breakneck pace -- is it any wonder he's come back for more?! When not mulling around on stage, he sings with local synth-rockers, Boole, co-captains an ice hockey team, and hosts a weekly music event in Washington, D.C. He dedicates this performance to his pet mice, Gerald and Owsley, and sends love to Lauren, his family, and friends. And blimps!



**Lauren Julien (Merriman)** is thrilled to be involved with her fourth [fifth? Sixth? They started blurring together after she took up residence beneath the Sellers stage] Rude Mechanicals production. You may recall her starring as 'that girl who kissed that other girl' in *Much Ado About Nothing*, or 'That chick with the crutches' in *Faust* or perhaps even as 'The lass with the badass boots and even bad-asser sword' in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Fun Facts: when not on stage Lauren is, most vitally, a writer - as you can no doubt tell from the mad third-person-perspective skills she is currently displaying. Lauren would like to thank her lovely boyfriend Andy for diving bravely into the Shakespeare-meets-LSD dreamsicle sideshow that is The Rude Mechanicals with her, The Rudes themselves for being so wonderfully embracing, and Syd Barrett for starting the best band in the history of music.



**Dell Pendergrast (Lane)** is delighted to join the Rude Mechanicals for the first time. A retired Foreign Service Officer and former Director of the George Mitchell Scholarships program, he studied theater at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. His recent appearances include *Born Yesterday* (Great Falls Players), *Life With Father* (McLean Community Players) and *Kin: The Trial of Carrie Buck* (Sundial Theater Company). Dell is very grateful to his wife, Tula, for her unflagging patience and support of his return to the stage.



**Amy Rauch (Gwendolen Fairfax)** is honored to perform once again with the Rude Mechanicals. Previous roles with the troupe include Borachio in the all-female version of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and most recently Brutus in the political satire *Coriolanus* (being reprised in July at the 2008 Captiol Fringe Festival). Amy also believes it only right that she have a publicist follow her every move and only wishes that everyone else felt so, too.



**Arthur Rowan (Algernon Moncrieff, Fridays)**: This is Arthur's third production with the Rudes. He has just returned to the DC area after performing for a season at the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire, where he was able to put his training in Shakespearean theater, stage combat, and general tomfoolery to good use. Arthur's other interests include martial arts, music, literature, armchair theology, network maintenance, quantum mechanics, and horsies, because they are pretty. More info at [arthurrowan.com](http://arthurrowan.com).



**Heather Whitpan (Cecily Cardew)** has recently been seen as Carol in *The Glory of Living* with Didactic Theatre Company. Some other favorite roles include playing Eeyore and The Mad Hatter at Adventure Theatre, performing Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* in Treadwell Theatre Co. Fringe festival production of *Promenading with Lunatics* and understudying Louanne & Ginger for *Book of Days* at Arena Stage. Heather holds a BA in Theatre from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and studies with Studio Theatre Acting Conservatory.



## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

*The Importance of Being Earnest* was the last and greatest of Wilde's finished plays, a triumph produced a few short months before he was put on the most sensational and humiliating trial of the Victorian Era, and convicted of Gross Indecency. *Earnest* remains, just over a hundred years later, one of the greatest comedies in the English language, a darkly and deliciously subversive little piece, flooded with all the homoerotic imagery and subtext you'd expect from the last and best of the Aesthetic and Decadent writers.

It exists like a secret code, within and between the words, sharp and teasing and seductive, for the enjoyment of the gay society that had to remain so carefully concealed in the margins. Cecily, for example, the name of Jack Worthing's ward, was a contemporary term for a young male prostitute. Jack and Algy fight over buttered muffins, apparently blissfully unaware of all the double entendres for buttocks and lubrication or the fact that food is such a very obvious symbolic substitute for sex. And the silver cigarette case they fight over in Act 1 was a gift Oscar Wilde was known to have given several of his lovers. One imagines that in the darkness of the audience seats, there were secret smiles, whispers, the thrill of all things secret and forbidden, the love that dared not speak its name.

Nor is all of the subversive imagery given over to the homoerotic. *Earnest*, for all its surface simplicity, the meringue lightness of its romantic plots, is a sharp satire of the strictures of upper class Victorian society, as they could only have been written by a man who moved in it with seamless charm, but preferred the earthy company of rent boys and day laborers. If it is 'an age of ideals,' as Gwendolen Fairfax describes it, it is also an age of seeming, an age of fundamental insincerity in which appearances are everything. "He has nothing, but he looks everything," Bracknell raves of Algy, in defense of his eligibility to marry. "What more can one desire?" Indeed, in a society where style is everything and substance is discounted as unimportant, Algy is quite the perfect husband.

It became unbearably tempting to lift the play from its Victorian surroundings and replant it in lavish, decadent 1935 Hollywood, the one place the Haves still Had in a nation gripped by the Great Depression. Another age of seeming, in which style was king and glamour was queen. The hectic heyday of Piet Mondrian, Busby Berkeley, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, Merle Oberon, Katherine Hepburn, Clark Gable, Bette Davis, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Charlie Chaplin, Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, Gertrude Stein and, of course, the omnipresent threat of grinding poverty just beneath that glittering surface. Everyone looked to the movies, for entertainment, for a glimpse of a beautiful world without bread lines, a world of wealth, escape, adventure, true love, song, dance, sound, and increasingly, color. And the American aristocracy entrenching itself in the bright lights, glitter and glamour of Tinseltown had its own strict and bizarre rules to follow, social mores to be upheld, indentured studio servitude, and, no doubt, 'Bunburying' to be done when the pressure of towing the line simply got to be too much.

"In matters of great importance, style, not substance, is the vital thing." *Earnest* is Oscar Wilde at his finest; dry, sparkling, engaging, charming, wooing the audience with impossibly sharp wit and the secret underlying sentiment of a not-so-closet romantic.

