

British Theatre Guide

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The Importance of Being Earnest

Oscar Wilde

Theatr Clwyd

Anthony Hopkins Theatre, Mold

4–27 May 2017

The 'Merry Month of May' has seen Theatr Clwyd transformed into the drawing rooms and gardens of the Late-Victorian aristocracy with this wonderful production of the Oscar Wilde "Trivial Comedy for Serious People".

The play is notable both for being probably Wilde's finest work, but also for being the catalyst for the trial that led to his ultimate downfall. However, it stands forever as a brilliant parody of the social etiquette and inherent contradictions of the idle rich at the end of the nineteenth century and director Richard Fitch has presented a sumptuous representation of the times as seen through the wicked wit of Wilde.

In many ways, Hilary Maclean's wonderful Lady Bracknell captures the essence of the plot when she says to her louche nephew Algernon, "never speak disrespectfully of Society, Algernon. Only people who can't get into it do that." Here we see the disconnect between the rigidly prim matriarch and her pleasure-seeking nephew who, alongside his chum John Worthing, is intent on using fake identities to avoid any burdensome responsibility.

The twists and turns of Wilde's brilliantly farcical intrigue unfold with some superb rapid-fire dialogue on a stunning set which is a testament to the design and lighting skills of Lee Newby and Emma Chapman respectively. However, equally impressive is the outstanding performance turned in by the entire cast, working as a team to deliver a production of the highest quality.

The interplay between the raffish pairing of James Backway's Algernon and Matt Jessup's John is sparkling but matched by the performances of Robyn Cara as Cecily Cardew (the moment when she informs John, AKA Earnest, that he got engaged to her weeks ago is priceless), and Emma Denly manages to find the perfect balance between flirtation and an engaging snobbery as Gwendoline Fairfax.

A special mention too for Nick Harris whose time onstage as both Algernon's manservant Lane, and Merriman, the butler at Jack's country house, is an absolute treat.

This production is an invigorating and at times uproarious revival of Wilde's finest work. It is a perfect slice of escapism and "something sensational"; the perfect excuse for a little "Bunburying".

Reviewer: [Dave Jennings](#)