THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

NOVEMBER 2017
Dear Friends,

We are delighted to bring you what is, in many ways, a quintessential Writers Theatre production: The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde. Since opening our new home, we have been eager to feature this classic on our stage and we are so pleased that you have decided to come along for the ride!

This comedic masterpiece was written by one of the greatest writers in the English language, and is filled with jocular wit, verbal fireworks and skewering social commentary. For all of his talent and acclaim, however, Wilde's life was not without adversity. In this issue of The Brief Chronicle, we will examine Wilde's tumultuous personal life, tracking his rise to fame and subsequent persecution. Breaking down the strict codes of conduct from that time period, we will explore how his work emerged out of a waning Victorian era, when societal norms and manners were in a period of transition.

In the back half of this magazine, we will attempt to decode the subtle hints and winks embedded in the text of The Importance of Being Earnest, offering you a peek into the subversive genius of this master of language and revealing the power of Wilde's razor-sharp satire.

Finally, we’ll check in with our Education Department, updating you on some exciting staff changes and offering you a glimpse at the wide variety of programming that our team offers to Chicago-area students—reaching more than 11,500 students each year. This vibrant programming is a core component of the Theatre's mission, and bringing the arts to young people continues to be one of the driving forces of the company.

We’re thrilled to have you with us as we revisit the classics in our new home. And as always, we deeply appreciate your support, your trust and your feedback. Watch your email inbox for a survey about your experiences with this production—your comments are invaluable to us as we assess how best to be in conversation with our community.

With sincerest thanks and gratitude,

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LOWERCASE, INC.
STATE OF THE ART
by Michael Halberstam, Artistic Director

I had the good fortune of attending the Stratford Festival a few weeks ago, where I saw Antoni Cimolino’s delicious production of Richard Sheridan’s The School for Scandal. In the fabric of Sheridan’s remarkable play I could clearly see the foundations of British masterpieces yet to come—the plays of George Bernard Shaw, Tom Stoppard, Joe Orton, Alan Ayckbourn, Noel Coward, Caryl Churchill and of course Oscar Wilde.

Oscar Wilde is considered by many to be one of the greatest writers in the English language and perhaps the apex of his artistry is The Importance of Being Earnest. Had the great man not found his societal criticism to sit just under the surface of the world that looked very much like the world in which we currently live. Wilde was satirizing a world that looked very much like the world in which we currently live.

It is fitting therefore that, as a company which revels in the written word, we should turn our sights to one of the greatest comedies ever written for the stage.

So why now? Why after 25 years do we finally turn to Wilde?

Back in 1997 I had the pleasure of collaborating with William Brown and Shannon Cochran when we took a fresh look at Noel Coward’s Private Lives. It was important to us that we should articulate a more natural delivery for lines that had often been declaimed in contemporary stagings. We sought to find a real relationship between Amanda and Victor and Elyot and Sybil, and worked to ground the emotional foundations of the play in a real and complex emotional setting. The effect of this was that the usual brittleness associated with the play was replaced by an effortless ease of delivery that drew the audience in and gave the Theatre one of its earliest significant successes. After our first performance, word of mouth spread and we very quickly sold out, aided in no small part by a rave review in the Chicago Tribune from then chief critic Richard Christiansen who called it a “mini marvel of a production.”

Yet, if Lady Bracknell is at the apex of London Society, wouldn’t she be archetypically feminine? Tough, yes but fiercely intelligent, beautiful, and commanding and filled with feminine strength.

Its that same ease that I want to find in this revival of Earnest.

There has been a long-time pattern of casting men in the role of the formidable Lady Bracknell—as if somehow a woman might not be capable of filling the needs of the role. Yet, if Lady Bracknell is at the apex of London Society, wouldn’t she be archetypically feminine? Tough, yes but also fiercely intelligent, beautiful and commanding and filled with feminine strength. Furthermore, Cecily and Gwendolen and Jack and Algernon are frequently played as almost interchangeable in type, and in the playing are so aware of their own cleverness that they often become insufferable and even monotonous. The audience is left holding on to an endless stream of aphorisms and Wildean quotes that titillate and amuse but fail to emotionally engage. As we approach first rehearsal I look forward to treating the text as though it were a new piece of writing and, with my superb cast, mining it for truth, human connection and emotional complexity.

Cecily and Jack stand on the outskirts of society, Jack having been found in unusual circumstances and adopted and raised outside of aristocratic regimens. Algernon and Gwendolen are products of a deep affiliation with London society but both are drawn to individuals who can surprise them and who do not conform to the norms they have been so rigidly raised within. And the aforementioned Lady Bracknell, one of Wilde’s greatest creations, is holding the reins tightly, but in need of the one thing that money cannot buy—that is to say: more money.

Finally, and not unimportantly, it is worth noting that Wilde was satirizing a world that looked very much like the world in which we currently live but he was smart enough to know that he needed to engage audiences emotionally, to make us laugh, give us a happy ending while allowing his societal criticism to sit just under the surface of the play. The consequence of this is a delicious evening of sparkling wit, spectacular language and superb artistry.

All we have to do is lean forward and engage!
If, as the author in question once said, ‘it is life that imitates art’ and not the other way around, we may recall a year in whose spring we hit the highest note, before everything tipped over and winter found us singing a few octaves lower. For Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde that fatal year was 1895. The year began for our playwright with lobster and champagne, rubbing shoulders with royalty, holding the arm of his beloved ‘Bosie’ (a.k.a. Lord Alfred Douglas), basking in prestige and glamour and premiering the very comedy which gathers us; it ended in jail (or gaol to be precise), convicted of the crime of “Gross Indecency,” and sentenced to two years of hard labor. Wilde was left eating cold porridge with murderers, deprived of seeing his children again, and firmly at the center of a homosexual scandal of Byronic proportions. Such a dramatic downfall took place over the course of a mere four months, after the author had spent the better part of twenty years reaching the peak of his fame.

The aspiring Irish author began to receive social and literary notoriety during his undergraduate days at Oxford in the 1870s. Despite his efforts to appear as an idle bon vivant, he excelled in every subject, particularly Ancient Greek. The geniality of his writing, the elegance of his verse and his sharp wit and glowing personality quickly brought him recognition within London’s highest artistic circles. However, he was also popular with the ‘average John,’ who would find Wilde mentioned in newspapers and often caricatured in Punch. A devout lover and studier of the Pre-Raphaelite and the Arts & Craft movements, he took their principles to new heights. After the mentorship of Walter Pater and John Ruskin, he became the main representative of the Aesthetic movement in England. 

On the one hand, Wilde had the natural ferocity of an Irishman on British soil; on the other, he epitomized English charm, cosmopolitanism, and their fin de siecle decadence. Apparently, that paradoxical quality which he masterfully spun out in his maxims also represented the nature of his relationship with Victorian society: he was the rebel and the socialite, simultaneously.

Gilbert and Sullivan included a character inspired by Wilde in the operetta Patience, and like most of their work, it was produced in the States. And so, in 1881 English impresario Richard D’Oyly Carte decided to bring Wilde to the United States before the operetta went to Broadway. The aesthete playwright came to America for a lecture tour which marked the start of his international fame. The tour was originally scheduled for four months but was soon extended for a year. Most of the most iconic photographs of the author were taken during this time.

Wilde arrived in New York harbor on January 2, 1882, upon the SS Arizona. After a night in quarantine the passengers were allowed into the country. Reportedly a customs officer overseeing the arrival was the original recipient of Wilde’s famous quip “I have nothing to declare, except my genius.” And that genius was impressed with America. No major city in the country went unvisited and more than 50 small towns also celebrated his three main lectures: The Decorative Arts, The House Beautiful, and The Philosophy of Dress, through which he introduced the States to the Pre-Raphaelite painters, as well as the Arts & Craft and Aesthetic movements—what he liked to call ‘The English Renaissance.’

Wilde visited Rockford, Aurora, Joliet, Peoria, Rock Island, and Decatur while in Illinois. However, his relationship with Chicago was not the smoothest. A Chicago Tribune headline read “The Esthetic Apostle was Received by an Immense Audience.” Indeed, his lectures sold out and people loved him. But when a reporter asked him about his impression of the iconic Water Tower, Wilde replied: “a castellated monstrosity with pepper boxes stuck all over it.” At the time, the Water Tower was to the city what “The Bean” is today: Chicago’s most popular emblem. And residents were just as proud then as today, so his remark naturally caused an unpleasant stir. Instead of leaving the matter alone, another reporter inquired:

“Mr. Wilde, are you aware that you wounded the pride of our best citizens by referring slightly to our Water Tower?”
I have spent in America with him. He is the grandest man I have ever seen. The simplest, most natural, and strongest character I have ever met in my life." He shared elderberry wine with the "gray good poet" in his small place in Camden. J.M. Stoddard, Wilde’s friend and publisher in Philadelphia, arranged the encounter. After picking him up, Stoddard witnessed Wilde in utter silence during the ferry ride back to the city. Imagine anything else in this world that could’ve rendered the genius speechless.

And so the Irish author returned to London only to find that his celebrity had increased many-fold. For the next twelve years he would capture success after success, publishing essays, short stories and his immortal novel The Picture of Dorian Gray. He would premiere three smashing plays, Lady Windemere’s Fan, A Woman of No Importance and An Ideal Husband. He would marry Constance Lloyd and have two beautiful boys. But neither celebrity, nor wealth, artistic glory nor family love were enough to quench the playwright’s ‘unknown wants.’

Wilde had been engaging in relationships with men since 1886. He met Lord Alfred Douglas (aka Bosie) in 1891 and the two began a relationship, which they publicly denied to avoid legal consequences and assuage the ire of Douglas’s father, the Marquis of Queensbury. Through his love affair with ‘Bosie’ he was introduced to the underworld of London’s “bell boys,” or male prostitutes.

When it seemed that things couldn’t possibly go better, along came February 1895, and they did. The premiere of The Importance of Being Earnest was to remain in the memory of actors and audience alike as THE theatrical triumph of the century. Even the police were on the artist’s side, as they denied entrance to Bosie’s father, who had to throw away a bouquet of rotten vegetables intended for the poet. The standing ovation, which included the Prince regent and other royalty, could be heard from afar.

Soon enough, however, everything would go astray. The Marquis sent Wilde a note calling him a “Sodonmite” [sic]. More concerned about protecting Bosie from his abusive father than avenging the slander, Wilde accused the Marquis of libel, which fatally backfired. In a matter of months, the most charming of English writers passed from accusing to accused, to convicted, sentenced, ripped from his children, and spat on by the very masses that had exalted him.

But for now, let us forget that. Let us freeze that Valentine’s night of 1895 and think of Wilde in his delightful prime, as he would appreciate it. For today, we will be enjoying his one-of-a-kind comedy, probably the most quoted piece of English theatre after Hamlet. It is only natural that we should ignore tragedy for a time and recall Oscar Wilde dressed in ‘florid sobriety,’ wearing his green carnation and smiling from backstage. And when the play is over, let us imagine the curtains opening before him, and the roaring crowd falling quiet as he prepares to speak.
When Queen Victoria ascended to the British throne in 1837, Europe had settled into a period of relative peace.

The Napoleonic Wars had concluded with the Congress of Vienna in 1815, and for the next 100 years almost no major military conflicts would occur between the great powers of the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Austria, Germany (unified in 1871) and the Ottoman Empire. Britain prospered immensely during this time, adding 10 million square miles and approximately 400 million people to the British Empire. The Royal Navy dominated the seas, imposing peace and prosperity for the major powers.

Culturally, the English-speaking world was mellowing as well. The turbulence of the Romantic era, epitomized by poets like Lord Byron (featured heavily in Tom Stoppard’s *Arcadia*, which played WT in 2016) was giving way to the stability of the Victorian era. The novel replaced poetry as the dominant form of literature. Charles Dickens was the preeminent writer of this era, publishing bestseller after bestseller between 1836 and 1865; he also managed to mix social commentary on industrialization and poverty into his incredibly entertaining narratives. The Bronte sisters, George Eliot and William Thackeray were also writing during this period and further exemplify the Victorian sensibility of contemplative narratives set against the backdrop of a modernizing world in which Britain remains on top.

Victoria’s loyal subjects demonstrated their superiority in accordance to a strict code of moral behavior and etiquette. Numerous rules governed with whom and when it was appropriate to interact with friends and acquaintances. Those who had entered into society kept calling cards to be distributed as a request for visitation or for well-wishing. A married woman was expected to leave a calling card for both herself and her husband. Different styles of card and folding treatments carried different meanings and cards were often kept or displayed as tokens of friendship. When visiting, men were expected to remain standing as long as any woman in the room also stood. On a formal visit, one should never remove their gloves, scratch one’s head or stare about the room. Prying or fiddling with trinkets were absolute breaches of etiquette.

Courtship had its own set of rules altogether. First, a potential couple must be introduced. If they were unequal in social rank, the lower ranked person must always be introduced to the person of higher rank once their permission had been granted. After an acquaintance had been made, it could be continued by walking together. These events allowed very little social contact other than the gentleman providing his hand for support over rough terrain. An unmarried woman was always accompanied by a chaperone even when being visited in her own home. To do otherwise would be improper. Once two single people became associated with one another, the negotiations for engagement were to be pursued. Men often endured interviews to prove they were capable of providing their brides the comfortable life they were accustomed to. On the other side, women had (sometimes large) dowries that enticed men into marriage. Financial information was supposed to be available to all parties at all times as the couple sorted out their prenuptial agreements. Once the pair was deemed acceptable for one another, they could become engaged. Permission from

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**The End of the Victorian Ideal**

By Bobby Kennedy, Director of New Work & Dramaturgy, and Liv Rigdon, Dramaturgy Intern

One of the best known paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites, an art movement in the Victorian era that Oscar Wilde was fond of and lectured about on his American tour. MILLAIS, John Everett. "Ophelia" (1851).
the lady's father was required for the engagement to be entered formally and the arrangement was sealed with a ring. Because engagement allowed the couple to visit one another without chaperones the engagement was not to be broken as it would be damaging to the lady's reputation.

This code of conduct was reinforced on stage and through literature. The work of Charles Dickens shows characters achieving prosperity and success by falling in line as upstanding citizens regardless of their class or status. Moral behavior was often met with reward in the end. Popular Victorian melodramas presented a clear division of good and evil and ensured that the morally righteous hero triumphed over the conniving villain. Some melodramas even justified the casualties of British Imperialism. Heroes showed how spreading British civilization to the East benefitted newly colonized places more than it hurt them. For much of the Victorian Era, a good piece of literature was one that taught morally and socially useful behaviors to its audience.

Despite the sense of order Victorian society sought to uphold, civilization was advancing in a way that would continue to undermine this stability. A second industrial revolution had begun in the 1870s. Europe was being transformed by infrastructural advances like sewage systems, and countries were becoming connected to one another via massive telegraph and railroad networks. With increased economic prosperity came additional education and income for the middle and lower classes. Advances in printing technology and increased literacy rates allowed the publishing business to boom. Ideas and goods could be shared and people could travel and communicate faster than ever before, which led to more and more conflict with "how things were always done." The world was entering the modern era while Europe's institutions were stuck in the past.

Henrik Ibsen, whose play *A Doll's House* had its celebrated London debut in 1889, pioneered a new style of modern drama in which a familiar form (the domestic "drawing room" narrative) could incisively critique contemporary society. Two Irish dramatists, Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, would use this innovation to revitalize English-language theatre, which hadn't had a play of any serious relevance in more than a hundred years. Both playwrights wrote plays that, for the most part, looked and felt like traditional Victorian fare, but neither was afraid to point out the failings and hypocrisies of their time. Shaw did so a bit more openly with his passionate advocacy for Socialism, but Wilde was also unafraid to use his biting wit to satirize the status quo.

The soon-to-be-imprisoned playwright of *The Importance of Being Earnest* knew first hand that the good, moral and prude public face of the Victorians was often just a mask covering their more private thoughts and behaviors. Earnestness is characteristically Victorian, but the only way for Algernon and Jack to have a bit of fun (or find love, for that matter) lays in the practice of Bunburying.

Wilde, Shaw and other writers of the late Victorian and Edwardian era highlighted this tension between modern sensibilities and traditional customs. 20 years after *Earnest* premiered and 100 years after the Congress of Vienna, Europe's period of peace shattered when 19th century alliances and politics drew 20th century militaries and populaces into the First World War.
Proudly part of your supporting cast.
E4. The Albany The Order of Chaeronea, a secret society for homosexuals. The name was inspired by the battle of Chaeronea in 338 BC, when the 300 members of the Sacred Band of Thebes (composed entirely of friends and lovers) were slaughtered by the army of Philip of Macedonia.

After leaving prison in 1897, Oscar Wilde was asked about his rise and fall, to which he responded, “I would say that my unique position was that I had taken the Drama, the most objective form known to art, and made it as personal a mode of expression as the Lyric or the Sonnet.”

Despite being subtitled “a trivial comedy for serious people,” The Importance of Being Earnest contains many personal details about Wilde’s life and sexuality that his friends (or “an audience of intimates,” as critic Regenia Gagnier coined it) would recognize. Here are some of these hidden gems:

In early drafts of the play, Algernon Moncrieff was instead named Lord Alfred—which was the name of Wilde’s lover, Lord Alfred Douglas (or “Bosie”).

The name Bracknell comes from a town in Berkshire, about thirty miles west of London. Bosie’s mother had a country home there.
WT EDUCATION IS GROWING!

Writers Theatre’s Education Department is thrilled to be evolving and growing.

Kelsey Chigas
Writers Theatre’s Education Outreach Coordinator has been promoted to Education Manager. Kelsey joined Writers Theatre in 2013 and served four seasons as Education Outreach Coordinator prior to her new role. In this new role, Kelsey will now administer the theatre’s Internship Program in addition to continuing to manage the touring educational program The MLK Project: The Fight for Civil Rights. She also serves as a Teaching Artist for Writers Theatre’s residency programs, The Novel Series, Write On!, and ACTIVATE.

Kelsey has worked creatively, educationally, and administratively with institutions across Chicago including Steppenwolf, Northlight Theatre, American Theatre Company, Mudlark Theatre Company, Genesis, Tympanic Theatre Company, Salonathon and the side project. Kelsey is an alumna of Cornell College where she double-majored in English & Creative Writing and Theatre with a concentration on performance and social justice.

Michele Stine
Michele Stine has been named Education Coordinator, coming to Writers Theatre as a freelance artist most recently working with Chicago Children’s Theatre. Michele will take over the administration of The Novel Series, WT Education’s pillar residency program. In this role, Michele will serve as the primary liaison between schools, teaching artists, and Writers Theatre to coordinate the smooth delivery of this program. In addition to coordinating the project, Michele will serve as a teaching artist in the classroom on The Novel Series, Write On!, and ACTIVATE.

Michele Stine has been a theater maker and educator in Chicago for over four years, after graduating with a B.S. in Acting and Political Science from Illinois State University. She co-wrote Collaboraction Theatre Company’s Forgotten Future: The Education Project, developed Hidden Resistance with The New Colony, and developed Options with Broken Nose Theatre Company as a part of their The Paper Trails program. She has taught with American Theater Company, Emerald City Theater Company, Chicago Children’s Theatre Company, Changing Worlds, and Dream Big Theatre Workshop.

In early drafts of the play, Jack’s calling card read that he lives at E4, The Albany, which was in reality the address of Wilde’s friend George Ives, founder of the secret homosexual society The Order of Chaeronea. The address was later changed to the far less outing B4, The Albany.

The poet John Gambril Nicholson published a collection of poems in 1892 entitled Love in Earnest, where he included a poem that references his male lover Ernest. As a result, the name Ernest had already been used as an allusion to same-sex love in some circles before Wilde’s play.

Of key importance is the plot point of an inscribed cigarette case. In the play, Jack has one from Cecily that sets off the whole narrative when Algernon discovers that Jack is not named Ernest, as he has led others to believe. Wilde used to give inscribed cigarette cases to young men he was fond of, and would later be questioned about this while on trial.

And most centrally, the whole concept of bunburying (or passing oneself off as another in order to engage in behavior that could be detrimental to one’s reputation) is of obvious relevance to homosexuals living in Victorian Britain where they could be tried and jailed for “gross indecency.” The term could have been contrived from slang terms, or it could be a wholly original invention of Wilde’s. As scholar Nicholas Frankl noted, “Ultimately, the origin of the term is less important than the activity it is intended to describe in the play, since bunburying not only means the pursuit of secret surreptitious pleasures but also suggests a form of behavior or way of life, undertaken with flagrant and self-conscious disregard for social rules and conventions.”

Cigarette cases were often shared as signs of affection from one man to another. Pictured is a case from Wilde given to Lord Alfred Douglas (aka “Bosie”).
In addition to a growing Education team, WT Education is excited to welcome five new teaching artists to our 2017/18 Teaching Artist Cohort.

**Peter Andersen**

Peter Andersen is a graduate of Emerson College where he obtained his B.F.A. in Acting. Since then he has gone on to work for Steppenwolf Theatre Company as the Steppenwolf For Young Adults Apprentice and Multicultural Fellow. As a teaching artist he has worked for Northlight, Actor’s Shakespeare Project, Company One, Steppenwolf and Shakespeare & Company. He has also worked at TimeLine Theatre, Huntington Theatre Company, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Yale Repertory Theatre as an assistant director. As an actor, Peter has performed professionally in Boston, the Berkshires and Chicago. For more information about his acting and directing work visit his webpage at www.petergandersen.com.

**Sean Garratt**

Sean Garratt graduated with a first in Contemporary Theatre and Acting from East 15 Acting School in 2008. As a performer Sean specializes in puppetry, voice and improvisation. Since graduating, Sean has taught acting around Central, East 15 and RADA. He has helped numerous companies devise work, and put ideas into practice. He was co-deviser and puppeteer on multi award-winning show The Table (Blind Summit) which has been touring for five years to over 25 different countries. His other work as a puppeteer includes: puppet consultant and ensemble member in Familia del a Noche’s 2016 production of Gulliver’s Travels, Le Rossignol—a puppet opera by Blind Summit, The Magic Flute with David Pountney at the world famous Bregenz Festival and the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony. In improvisation, he has worked alongside Ken Campbell, been a cast member of Improbale Theatre’s improvised show Animo in London and performed twice as a guest at the infamous Second City. His theatre work includes National Theatre Scotland’s A Christmas Carol directed by Graham McLaren, Henry V and King Lear in OP (Passion In Practice at The Globe) and The Glass Mountain (Trestle Theatre Company/Tour). His television work includes Professor Branestawm for the BBC, The Day They Came to Suck Out Our Brains and Timeless. Films include Cygnus, Drunk on Love, The Trap and Zumbo, for which Mr. Garratt received an acting award playing the lead in 2011.

**Kristin Hammargren**

Kristin Hammargren is a teaching artist and actor whose professional work includes the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, Door Shakespeare, Forward Theater, American Players Theatre, In Tandem Theatre and Optimist Theatre. More information about Kristin and her original one-woman show about Jane Austen, Discovering Austen, available at www.kristinhammargren.com.

**Will Quam**

Will Quam is a teaching artist, director and sound designer originally from Minnesota. He has directed for Mudlark Theatre, Northlight Performing Arts Camp, Mercy Street Theatre, and GreatWorks, among others. He has designed sound for many companies, including Jackalope Theatre and For Youth Inquiry. Will also teaches for Northlight Theatre and Mudlark Theatre, and has taught with American Theatre Company, NHSI “Cherubs,” and Adventure Stage Chicago. Will takes pictures of bricks as Brick of Chicago.

**Wilfredo Ramos Jr.**

Wilfredo (Freddie) Ramos Jr. is a Chicago-based playwright and educator. As an educator, Freddie collaborates and creates with youth at Writers Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, Northlight Theatre, American Theatre Company, Chicago Improv Productions and others. As a playwright, Freddie develops new work with El Semillero, an all-Latinx playwriting circle sponsored by the Chicago Alliance for Latinx Theatre Artists. Freddie’s play, Incorporate, was named as a Semifinalist for the 2017 O’Neill Theatre Center National Playwrights Conference and as an Honorable Mention for 50 Playwrights Project’s Best Unproduced Latin@ Plays 2017. Incorporate is the first play in a trilogy that explores how American consumer culture affects American politics. And vice versa. The second play in the trilogy, Insinuate, will receive a taste testing later this year.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**

EDUCATION
AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Join us for these exciting engagement events, tailored to enhance your WT experience! For more information and to RSVP visit writerstheatre.org/events.

SUNDAY SPOTLIGHT
Are you curious about the world that surrounds your favorite productions? Our Sunday Spotlight series offers you access to the finest speakers, academics and cultural leaders. Each event extends the conversation on our stages by featuring an expert in an area connected to the play. Past audiences have discussed ghost stories and their legacies for The Hunter and The Bear with Randall Colburn, culture writer for The AV Club and Consequence of Sound, and dug into the legacy of the Leo Frank case in Parade with Rabbi Steve Lowenstein from Am Shalom.

Save the date for the Sunday Spotlight for The Importance of Being Earnest on Sunday, December 3rd following the matinee performance.

THE MAKING OF …
Have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes? The Making of… series offers you an insider view of what goes into creating each production at WT. Enjoy a short and lively presentation by our designers and other experts, who will walk you through the process of preparing for and executing a show. Past events have featured the cast and authors of The Hunter and The Bear on their creative process, how the choreography of Company came together and what it was like for the cast of Arcadia to be the first performers in the Nichols Theatre.

Save the date for The Making of... The Importance of Being Earnest on Monday, December 11th at 6:30pm.

FROM PAGE TO STAGE
Writers Theatre and select North Shore libraries and community partners are proud to present this series of special events, lectures and workshops designed to enhance your appreciation of the art. From Page to Stage is generously sponsored by Randy L. and Melvin R. Berlin. For an up-to-date list of new events, visit writerstheatre.org/fpts.

WT FILM SERIES
Join us at The Wilmette Theatre for a special screening of An Ideal Husband. Tickets are available for purchase at wilmettetheatre.com/writers-theatre. This event is held at the Wilmette Theatre: 1122 Central Ave, Wilmette IL, 60091.

Save the date for An Ideal Husband on Sunday, November 12th at 2:00pm.

PRE-SHOW CONVERSATION: UP CLOSE
Join us at 6:45pm before every Thursday evening performance (excluding First Week and any extension weeks) of every production in the Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols Theatre for a 15-minute primer on the context and content of the play facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.

POST-SHOW CONVERSATION: THE WORD
Join us after every Tuesday evening performance (excluding First Week and any extension weeks) of every production in our 17/18 Season for a 15-minute discussion of the play facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.

POST-SHOW CONVERSATION: THE ARTIST
Join us after every Wednesday evening performance (excluding First Week and any extension weeks) of every production in our 17/18 Season for a 15-minute discussion with actors from the production facilitated by a member of the WT Artistic Team.

SOCIAL HOUR AT WT
Remember that our Concessions Center is open for an hour before and after our performances. You are welcome to enjoy a snack or beverage and discuss the play in the Litowitz Atrium, on our Grand Gallery Walk or on the Stephanie and Bill Sick Rooftop Terrace.
ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Writers Theatre is committed to making our Theatre accessible for everyone. We are proud to offer Access Subscriptions and the following services:

For People with Mobility Difficulties
- Accessible parking spaces outside each theatre venue.
- Accessible entrances to each theatre venue.
- Wheelchair accessible seating.

Depending on your preference, you may transfer into a theatre seat or request to have the theatre seat removed to remain in the wheelchair. When purchasing your tickets, let the Box Office know if you would like the theatre seat removed.

For People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
We are pleased to offer assistive listening devices in each of our performance spaces. Contact the Box Office with questions or for advance reservations. Assistive listening devices are offered free of charge.

In all performance venues in our new theatre center, we have t-coil induction loop technology. For anyone with a telecoil built into their hearing aid, by switching it on you will be able to hear our performances with additional amplification and clarity.

We are happy to connect you with scripts for our shows to read prior to your attendance. For details, review our Script Policy at writerstheatre.org/script-policy or contact the Box Office.

For People Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision
Large print programs are available by prior request. Contact the Box Office at least two weeks prior to your scheduled performance with this request.

Braille programs are available by prior request through the Box Office. Contact the Box Office at least two weeks prior to your scheduled performance with this request.

We can accommodate seating needs for guests with service animals. Contact the Box Office to request this accommodation.

Writers Theatre offers ASL-Interpreted and Open-Captioned performances on select dates for each production. A complete listing of dates for the current season can be viewed at writerstheatre.org/accessibility. For additional information on accessibility services and subscriptions, contact access@writerstheatre.org or 847-786-9334.

The Accessibility Fund is a gift of Doris Conant and the Conant Family Foundation.

Box Office: 847-242-6000
## CONCESSIONS CENTER

### WINE

**Red**
- Gainey Merlot ................................................................. $10
- Girasole Pinot Noir .......................................................... $12
- The Seventy Five Wines Cabernet Sauvignon .................. $14

**White**
- Terre Gaie Claris Pinot Grigio ........................................... $8
- Raymond Vineyards R Collection Chardonnay ................... $10
- Yorkville Cellars Sauvignon Blanc ................................... $12

**Sparkling**
- Charles de Fere Cuvée Jean Louis Blanc de Blancs
  (187ml—single serving) .................................................. $12
- L. Mawby Blanc de Blancs
  (375ml—half bottle) ........................................................ $27
- Joseph Perrier Cuvée Royale Brut
  (375ml—half bottle) ....................................................... $60

### LIQUOR

A selection of Koval and other premium liquors

### DESSERTS

- Chocolate Chunk Cookie .................................................. $4
- Oatmeal Cherry Cookie ................................................... $4
- Peanut Butter Cookies .................................................... $4
- Brownies ....................................................................... $5
- Coconut Macaroons ....................................................... $3
- Croissant ..................................................................... $4

### SNACKS

- Charcuterie & Cheese ....................................................... $7
- Nuts and Dried Fruit ....................................................... $6

### ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS

- Coffee (Regular, Decaf) ................................................... $3
- Rishi Hot Tea (Chamomile, Earl Grey, Peppermint) .......... $2
- Soda (Coke, Diet Coke, Sprite, Ginger Ale) ..................... $2
- Water ........................................................................... $2
CUSTOM COCKTAILS

Enjoy a custom cocktail from our Concessions Center—specially created for each of our productions by Mixed metaPours!

**Wilde Flower**

KOVAL Dry Gin
Elderflower Liqueur
Cucumber Soda
Lime Garnish

All of our signature cocktail creations are designed by WT Cocktail Consultant Cheryl Rich Heisler & Glencoe-based Mixed metaPours.

312-613-7499 | www.mixedmetapours.com

STAY IN TOUCH WITH WRITERS THEATRE
JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

Share your thoughts on the show!

- Take this survey about *The Importance of Being Earnest*: bit.ly/EarnestWT
- Write a review of your experience on Yelp: bit.ly/WTonYelp
- Find us on Facebook: facebook.com/writers-theatre
- Follow us on Twitter: @WritersTheatre
- Follow us on Instagram: @writers_theatre
- Check in to Writers Theatre on Swarm
- Sign up for our email list to receive news updates, backstage stories, photos, videos and more: writerstheatre.org/email
- Follow our company on LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/writers-theatre
- Join our circle on Google+

We look forward to hearing from you!
# The Importance of Being Earnest

## November

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- **Private Event**
- **Student Matinee**
- **Post-Show Conversation**
- **Pre-Show Conversation: Up Close**
- **The Making of...**
- **Sunday Spotlight**
Student tickets only $20 (with valid student ID).
Ticket discounts are available for groups of 10 or more.
Call 847-242-6005 for more details.