

Actors Ensemble of Berkeley
**The Importance
of Being Earnest**

A Trivial Comedy for Serious People

by **Oscar Wilde**

Directed by Jay Manley with Jane Goodwin

**Live Oak Theater,
Berkeley**

featuring...



Oct. 2-18

Fri./Sat - 7:30pm

Sundays - 2pm

Tickets: www.aeofberkeley.org



The Importance of Being Earnest

A Trivial Comedy for Serious People

By Oscar Wilde

1895

Directed by Jay Manley with Jane Goodwin

Cast

(in order of appearance)

<i>Algernon Moncrief</i>	<i>Moshe Quinn</i>
<i>Lane</i>	<i>Jeffrey Trescott</i>
<i>John “Jack” Worthing</i>	<i>Nikolas Greene</i>
<i>Lady Bracknell</i>	<i>Paulette Herring</i>
<i>Gwendolen Fairfax</i>	<i>Bri Hunter</i>
<i>Miss Prism</i>	<i>Linda Scaparotti</i>
<i>Cecily Cardew</i>	<i>Sophie Ruf</i>
<i>Rev. Chasuble</i>	<i>Mark Shepard</i>
<i>Merriman</i>	<i>Jeff Trescott</i>

Staff

<i>Director</i>	<i>Jay Manley</i>
<i>Associate Director</i>	<i>Jane Goodwin</i>
<i>Stage Manager</i>	<i>Jose Garcia</i>
<i>Costume Design</i>	<i>Lyre Alston</i>
<i>Scenic Design</i>	<i>Jay Manley and Vance Martin</i>
<i>Properties Design</i>	<i>Susan Dunn</i>
<i>Graphic Design</i>	<i>Sophie Ruf</i>
<i>Website</i>	<i>Jonathan Gordon</i>
<i>Producer & Many Other Things</i>	<i>Jerome Solberg</i>

The Setting

Algernon Moncrieff’s flat in Half-Moon Street, London

*Later, the garden of John Worthing’s Manor House,
Woolton, Hertfordshire*

The Time: The 1930’s

*The Performance is around 2 hours long plus one approximately
fifteen-minute intermission*

A Note from the Director

The Importance of Being Earnest is one of the most popular and resilient plays in the English language, but in its time, might it also have been subversive? Algernon and Jack both have “alter-egos,” as they engage in “bunburying,” to find the essential pleasures their stuffy and stultifying upper class world denies them. While the play satirizes the hypocrisy of Victorian high society, Wilde’s wit and wonderfully upside-down logic had those same people laughing at themselves. And the lads’ shenanigans definitely work as farcical plot devices.

But the subversive part? By 1885, British criminal law labeled homosexuality as “gross indecency” and punishable by long prison terms. Wilde’s infatuation with a much younger Lord Douglas led the young man’s father to sue Wilde, ultimately resulting in Wilde’s imprisonment at Redding Gaol, where his treatment there destroyed his health. Traveling to Paris after his release, he there, and the theatre world lost one of its greatest voices.

Some scholars maintain that in Victorian England, “bunbury” was a code word that might have been known by homosexual men for maintaining an alternate, secret life to pursue their forbidden desires. A friend of Wilde’s claimed that “bunbury” was a portmanteau word: According to his account, Wilde had met a young man on a train to Banbury and arranged a later liaison in Sunbury; put the two together and you get “bunbury!” And “earnest” may have been Victorian slang for gay. “Is he “earnest?” Gay Victorian theatregoers might have appreciated these elements, as they would have sailed over the heads of heterosexual attendees.

In contemporary theatre, where homosexuality is now a common theme, it is hard to realize that only a few decades have passed since a time when authors like Tennessee Williams had to hide their true instincts with the same kind of coded references that Wilde may have employed over a hundred years ago.

While our production makes no attempt to parallel these scholarly imaginings, it is a fascinating connection, and perhaps even a further tribute to Wilde’s genius.

However we think about Wilde’s work, *Earnest*... is one of the most quoted plays in the cannon: “Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken.” “I can resist anything, except temptation.” Words to live by! Supposedly, even on his death bed his wit prevailed, “My wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death. One or the other of us has to go.”

Enjoy *The Importance of Being Earnest*!

Cast Biographies

In Alphabetical Order



Nikolas Greene (*John/Jack Worthing*) is thrilled to join this talented cast for his first time on stage with **Actors Ensemble**. Since beginning acting three years ago, he has performed with San Leandro Players and the Orinda Starlight Village Players. Most recently he played Parker in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* with Orinda Starlight Village Players. He thanks his family, especially his wife, Nicole, for their support, and hopes the audience enjoys a night of triviality!



Paulette Herring (*Lady Bracknell*) is thrilled to be back at **AE**, which she considers her theatre home-away-from-home. Some of her favorite roles for **AE** have been Gladys Antrobus in *The Skin of our Teeth*, Bernice in *Member of the Wedding* and Alison Dubois in *Lady in the Dark*. Paulette would like to thank Jay Manley, Jane Goodwin and the entire cast for the extraordinary experience of appearing in this extraordinary show.



Bri Hunter (*Gwendolen Fairfax*) is delighted to perform with **Actors Ensemble** doing what she loves with such talented people! Her recent credits include: *Richard III* (Vallejo Shakespeare), *The Cherry Orchard* (Los Altos Stage Company), *The Other Place* (Limelight Theater), *Emma* (Silicon Valley Shakespeare), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Theatricum Botanicum), *Mortal Illusions* (Santa Monica Playhouse), and *A Tough Shell* (14/48 Hollywood Festival). She would like to thank her partner, family and friends for their support.



Moshe Quinn (*Algernon Moncrieff*) first appeared on stage at age five with a solo from *Annie*, a performance which “simply brought the house down” (said his grandparents). Notable roles since include Garry Lejeune in *Noises Off* (Missoula, Montana), Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot* (Salt Lake City), Benvolio in *Romeo and Juliet* (Kenyon College), Reverend Hale in *The Crucible* (Cambridge, England), Matthew Cuthbert in *Anne of Green Gables* (Japan) and Peter in *The Zoo Story* (San Francisco). He is thrilled to make his East Bay debut with **Actors Ensemble**.



Sophie Ruf, she/her (*Cecily Cardew*) is an Oakland-based theater fanatic. She has performed, written, or designed for staged readings and mainstage productions with **Actors Ensemble** (yay!!), SF Eagle Players, Shotgun Players, Theatre Lunatico, and more. She is a Playground SF alum, a member of the 2026 Writers' Pool and a 2026 Playground Resident Playwright. By day, she is an architect and origami enthusiast.



Linda Scaparotti (*Miss Prism*) Linda Scap, a former trial attorney of many years, is thrilled to be working with the amazing **AE** team on this brilliant classic! She has performed in many mediums-drama, comedy, solo shows, street theater, improv. Notable shows: *The Cemetery Club*, *And Then There Were None*, *Rumors*, *The Odd Couple*, *Bamboozled*, *Glass Menagerie*, *Hamlet*, *Our Town*, *Waiting in the Wings*, *Crimes of the Heart*, *My Father My Self*, *Lucille The Crow*. Her play, *Old Growth New Growth*, was selected for a staged reading at Berkeley Rep's Bakers Theater.

Professional training: Smith College, Jean Shelton's School of Acting, A.C.T., Berkeley Rep.



Mark Shepard (*Rev. Chasuble*) is thrilled to be working with the **Actors Ensemble** for the first time. In the last 21 years he has performed in comedy, commedia dell'arte, musicals, modern and classical drama and Shakespeare all over the Bay Area. In addition to his work as a freelance graphic designer, Mark enjoys genealogy, jewelry design, camping, photography and being a grandfather.



Jeff Trescott (*Lane, Merriman*) has worked on hundreds of productions, both onstage and backstage. One favorite role is the ghost of John Barrymore in *I Hate Hamlet*. He is also Treasurer of **Actors Ensemble**.

Staff Biographics

In Alphabetical Order

Lyre Alston, he/him/she/her (*Costume Designer*) is a freelance contractor working within the bay area, specializing in costume construction and design, wig/hair construction, styling, and design, and makeup artistry and design. Lyre prefers to hop from place to place, always on the lookout for opportunities to further her skills as an artisan, to seek out new inspiration and education, and to work with all kinds of artists in both performative and design worlds. To Lyre, art is the most important thing second only to education, and it is with great joy that we can invite you to enjoy ***The Importance of Being Earnest*** here today to watch, support the arts, and maybe learn something new. Previous credits include *Cats: The Musical* at Berkeley Playhouse, *Antony and Cleopatra* with SF Shakespeare: Free Shakes in the Park, and *Alice in Wonderland* with **Actors Ensemble**.

Kimily Conkle (*Dialect Coach*) is delighted to debut with Actors Ensemble of Berkeley. She has coached dialects for 100+ Bay Area productions, including the world premieres of *Memphis* and *Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean*, the *Musical for TheatreWorks*. Regional credits include SF Playhouse, Marin Theatre Co., CenterREP, San Jose Stage, Sierra Rep, Mountain Play, and Stanford. Kimily is an AEA member and received training at RADA, ACT, PCPA, and holds a BS from Georgia Tech.

Susan Dunn (*Properties Design*) is ecstatic to be working on ***Earnest*** – one of her most revered plays – with **AE**. A performance of ***Earnest*** in Alameda launched Susan's theater mania in 2002, and she has not stopped working various theater and opera company positions since. She has participated in all sides of theater from Board positions to Props, Stage Management and set design. She is in her element with new and exciting challenges to bring a production to a happy audience. This is Susan's seventh show with **Actors Ensemble**.

Jose Garcia (*Stage Manager*) is glad to be back with **Actors Ensemble** for the second time this year. He has worked on stage and behind the stage many times. He previously worked as an actor at the San Francisco Dungeon and is currently working as a standardized patient at UCSF. He enjoys salsa dancing and taking long hikes

Jane Goodwin (*Associate Director*) has been involved in theater in some form or another all her life, including acting in a couple of shows with **Actors Ensemble** long ago, three seasons with Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, and 30 years on the staff of Cal Performances. She's happy to be collaborating again in her third show with her drama teacher from Berkeley High - the incomparable Jay Manley and glad to be back in Live Oak Theater sharing these wonderful actors with you. Thanks for helping to keep **Actors Ensemble** alive!

Jay Manley (*Director*) - With ***Earnest***, Jay is directing his third production for **AE**, having helmed *The Imaginary Invalid* and *The Taming of the Shrew* at John Hinkel Park. He is also a member of **AE's** Board. Jay directed six productions for The Mountain Play on Mount Tamalpais and several productions for Ross Valley Players, following a long career as an award-winning director at Foothill Music Theatre. He thanks his husband, Vance Martin, for invaluable support with the scenic design for *Earnest*. And big kudos to a fabulous, diligent, creative and fun cast of actors and artistic staff.

Vance Martin (*Scenic Design*) has been a successful artist and art dealer in the San Francisco Bay area for many years. As an artist, his work has been seen in one-person and group shows, and he has provided multi-media art direction for Lyric Opera of Chicago and New York City Opera, as well as for film. With his husband, director Jay Manley, he leads regular theatre tours to New York City and Ashland with their company, New York Theatre Tour

Jerome Solberg (*Producer*) has been in and around **Actors Ensemble** since 2005. Thanks to everyone involved for once more building the magic of theater through community, and to you, the audience, for helping to keep the theater flame burning by your presence, and thanks to Hitomi for your support.

Michael Sweeney (*Lighting Designer*) Mike is excited to get back to theater and to **Actors Ensemble**. He's been around the Bay Area for a while but always behind the scenes: Cal Shakes back when they were still Berkeley Shakespeare Festival The Magic, Berkeley Rep, the sadly missed Bay Area Children's Theatre and more. Hey, it beats being found in a handbag!

The Music

We are setting our ***Earnest***... in the 1930's, a period as elegant but perhaps less stuffy than the play's Victorian setting. In keeping with this adjustment, we are using Noël Coward's music for our interludes. Over many years, Jay and Jane have maintained contact with Berkeley-born pianist, Peter Mintun. Self-taught from age three, Peter played for nearly 20 years at San Francisco's *L'Etoile*, before moving to New York. He has played in countless cabarets, symphonic concert halls, and for film and television, specializing in the popular music of the 1920's, '30's and '40's. Peter has graciously permitted us to use his keyboard artistry for our production.

Acknowledgments

Glen Epperson, technical direction, Live Oak Theater for Korsa Musical Theater Company; Kim Murphy and Lisa Browning, Douglas Morrisson Theater; Shay Oglesby-Smith & Masquers Theater, Tom Modic and Mitch Kopelman.

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Performance Schedule:

7:30 pm Fridays & Saturdays, 2 pm Sundays

October 2nd through October 18th, 2026

Live Oak Theater

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*Thank you to our supporters, especially Ruth Giron Wong, the estate of
Gina De Sousa, Carol Strand, Kevin Karplus, Lisa Wang and Martha
Luehrmann.*



*Actors Ensemble is supported in part
by a grant from The City of Berkeley
Civic Arts Commission*

