



GERALD BARRY

WIDE  
OPEN  
OPERA

# The Importance of Being Earnest

THE HILARIOUS NEW OPERA BASED ON OSCAR WILDE'S PLAY

October 26, 7.30pm - Millennium Forum, Derry~Londonderry

October 30, 7.30pm - Grand Opera House, Belfast

November 2, 8.00pm - Cork Opera House

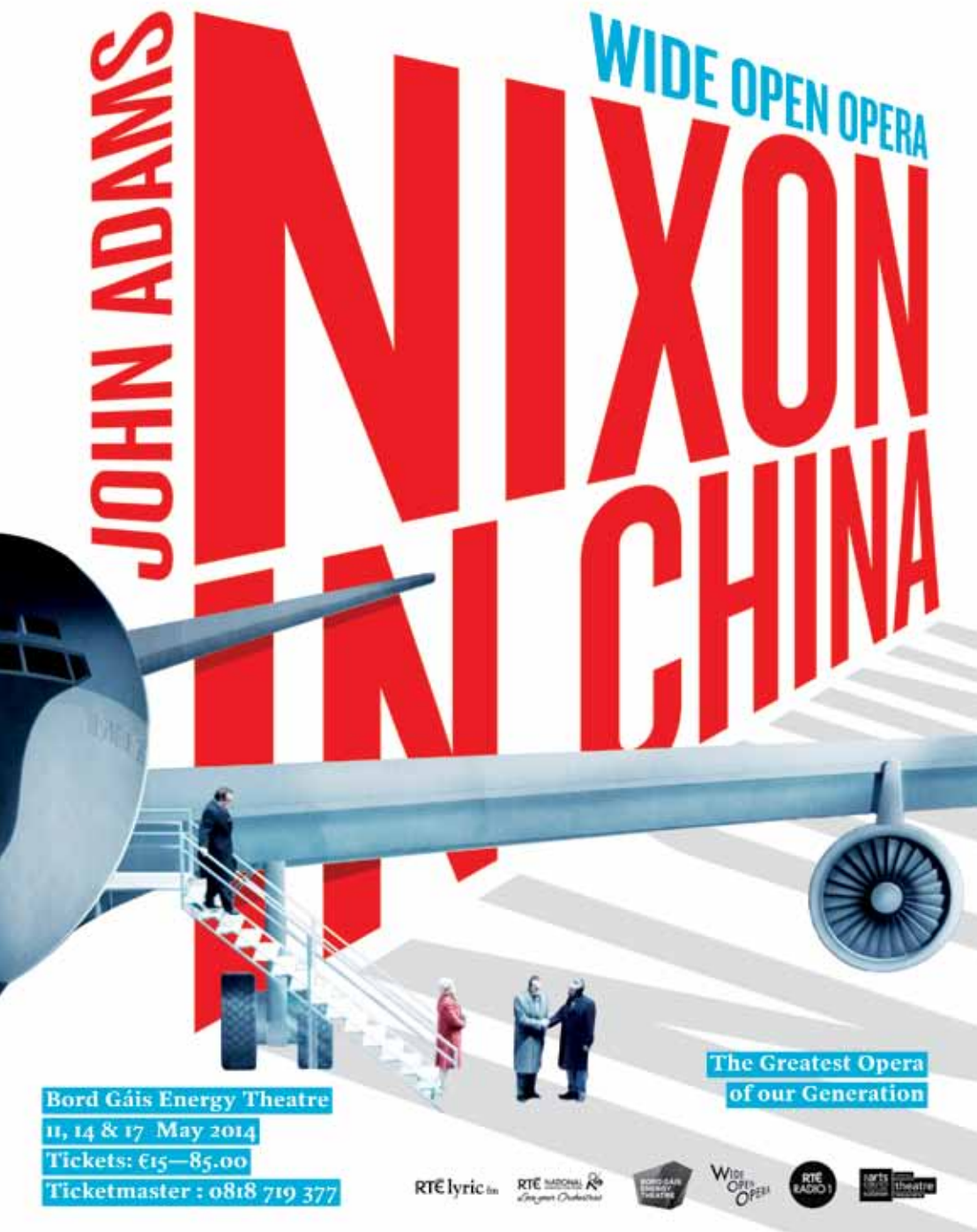
November 8 and 9, 8.00pm - Gaiety Theatre, Dublin



[www.niopera.com](http://www.niopera.com)  
[www.wideopenopera.com](http://www.wideopenopera.com)



Wide Open Opera in association with  
Bord Gáis Energy Theatre presents



## Welcome

It may feel strange to describe this production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* as a homecoming tour, particularly as this is only the third time the opera has been seen fully staged anywhere in the world, but in many ways this is exactly what it is. The first performances on the island of Ireland of an opera adapted from one of Oscar Wilde's most famous plays, written by one of Ireland's greatest living composers, and co-produced by young opera companies from either side of the border must surely be a cause for celebration. Add to this the involvement of local singers Aoife Miskelly and Christopher Cull, and Ireland's leading contemporary music group *Crash Ensemble*, and you have something very special indeed. To this celebration of Irish and Northern Irish culture we are delighted to welcome some of the very best international singers and creative talents, led by director / designer Antony McDonald and conductor Pierre-André Valade.

*Earnest* marks a significant milestone for both NI Opera and Wide Open Opera. Both companies have embraced contemporary opera recently (with NI Opera's *Opera Shorts* last year, and Wide Open Opera's production of *The Alma Fetish* in September) as well as more established grand opera (*The Flying Dutchman*, *Tristan und Isolde*), yet *Earnest* is something altogether different. A brand new opera with one of the most famous storylines in theatre. Contemporary music that is as playful and witty as it is modern and groundbreaking. A production that is genuinely "period contemporary" – stylish, original, yet capturing the spirit of Wilde perfectly. A modern classic in every sense.

On behalf of both companies we would like to thank everyone who has helped to bring this project to life. Special thanks go to the Arts Councils of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and to Sarasin & Partners for supporting the production. Thanks also to the organisers of the City of Culture in Derry~Londonderry for inviting us to stage the all-Ireland première of *The Importance of Being Earnest* in this wonderful city.

We hope you enjoy the show.

Oliver Mears  
Artistic Director, NI Opera

Fergus Sheil  
Artistic Director, Wide Open Opera

## In conversation with Antony McDonald, Director & Designer

### What drew you to this opera in the first place?

Well of course I love the play, but I've never worked on it, never designed it. I saw that Gerald had written this piece and so I went to the Barbican concert performance even before I knew I'd have anything to do with the opera, and just absolutely loved it. Weirdly, I designed a dance piece years ago for the Siobhan Davies Dance Company where Gerald had written the music, but this is my first Gerald Barry opera. It's such an amazing piece – so exciting – and once I'd heard it I was drawn to it completely. When I began to work on the production I just enjoyed it more and more as I came to realize and appreciate just how witty and clever Gerald's been. I think he's done an amazingly good job with the libretto, which is very difficult. It's very witty and very anarchic, and I think it's very much in the spirit of the play.

### Have you been surprised at the amount of excitement the opera has generated?

I haven't been surprised at all. Any contemporary opera tends to be quite difficult, and to have written one that is comic and truly funny is a major triumph. I remember saying to Gerald when I saw him at the Barbican that this should be his pension because it would be done everywhere! This is the third production of it already and I'm sure there will be many, many more.



### What inspired your setting of the opera?

The stage direction is 'period contemporary', and Gerald has repeated that, so I didn't want it to have a pastiche 1890s feel. I wouldn't do that with the play either. I've always thought that it should feel stylish and contemporary, and with this music there's no way you don't feel you're watching a contemporary event. There are certain elements of the design that will remind you of something from the past, but it's not set in one specific period. I'm not a great person for period correctness anyway – I think we'll leave that to the BBC!

### How challenging is it to be responsible for both directing and designing a show like this?

In a director / designer relationship, ideas can be thrown around between two people, and I suppose when you're both director and designer you're very much on your own. On the other hand if you've designed something you're also going to direct, you're much more prepared, because as a designer you need a very deep understanding of what needs to happen. One does miss out on there being someone to throw ideas around with but I do have other people behind the scenes!

### How different is it to direct a contemporary opera like this compared to an opera like Lohengrin?

Well for one thing, having just done Lohengrin with a chorus of 72 (for Welsh National Opera), it's a relief not to have a chorus! It's also the great length of Wagner's pieces – this is so concise in

comparison. I've really enjoyed that kind of contrast, although in some ways you approach everything in the same way, and of course with the same level of commitment. I have this amazing cast who are so exciting to work with, as indeed I also had on Lohengrin, so in a way I feel as though I've come from one really wonderful situation to another, with fantastic performers who know the music very well, and who are prepared to take risks. With this piece, of course, there is the anxiety of what the composer will think of what we've done, and that is at the back of my mind slightly, but I think one has to be truthful to oneself. I can't second-guess what Gerald would and wouldn't like – I just hope that he likes what we've done!





# A world of ideas at Sarasin & Partners



SARASIN  
& PARTNERS

## Leaders in global thematic investing

We look for companies that are the real winners  
from global trends and themes wherever they  
trade in world markets.

Please note that the value of shares and the income from them can fall as well as rise and you may not get back the amount originally invested. This can be as a result of market movements and also of variations in the exchange rates between currencies.

To find out more about investment opportunities please contact Fergus Crawford on 00 353 1 638 0850, email: [fergus.crawford@sarasin.ie](mailto:fergus.crawford@sarasin.ie) or visit [www.sarasin.ie](http://www.sarasin.ie)

Sarasin & Partners LLP, a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales with registered number OC329859, is authorised and regulated by the UK Financial Services Authority and passported to provide investment management services in the Republic of Ireland under MiFID . © 2012 Sarasin & Partners LLP – all rights reserved.

Warren Buffet famously remarked that it takes 20 years to build a reputation. Most of us, whatever our field of expertise, would agree. The development of NI Opera from a start-up to a serious player with an impressive international reputation in a little under three years is nothing less than extraordinary.

NI Opera's meteoric rise has been underpinned by three deceptively simple principles: an uncompromising focus on quality, a commitment to innovation and (carefully managed) risk taking, and a real sense of place and belonging. This is a Northern Irish opera company that reflects the virtues of today's Northern Ireland, and which provides a stage (literally and figuratively) for the cream of Irish operatic talent to develop and flourish. Much the same can be said for Wide Open Opera – an even younger company from the Irish Republic that has already shown its capabilities with a hugely successful *Tristan und Isolde* in Dublin last year.

The principles underpinning this philosophy have resulted in opera productions, festivals and performances that appeal to opera-lovers and critics in equal measure, but they are also principles that attract those of us in the corporate world. Quality, innovation, managed risk taking, and an offering that resonates with those around you are attributes as important to Sarasin & Partners as to NI Opera and Wide Open Opera. We're very proud to be associated with both companies, and with this production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* – surely one of the best examples of high quality, highly innovative opera that exists today.

Congratulations on behalf of everyone at Sarasin & Partners to those involved in the tour.

**Fergus Crawford**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Sarasin & Partners LLP Ireland



SARASIN  
& PARTNERS

This production of  
*The Importance of Being Earnest* is  
generously sponsored by  
Sarasin & Partners LLP



## Wilde Song

Time – to mention one of Gerald Barry’s operatic characters, one who sings in his 1991 piece *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit* and is rather unceremoniously dispatched there – encourages us to believe that what at first disturbs us as ‘unnatural’ will sooner or later be absorbed within the ever increasingly capacious realm of what we understand as normal. Perhaps Barry’s operas have not got there yet; they still seem edgy and strange, and perhaps they will for a while longer. But now that more than twenty years have passed since the first of them, *The Intelligence Park*, was staged, and now that this singular example has been joined by four others, two of them full-length, the Barryesque is beginning to feel like one of multifarious opera’s possible modes.

What distinguishes it? High definition, yes. Sound in a state of tension, sound stretched, yes. Insistent pulse, certainly. But opera is always chiefly about voices, and it is Barry’s vocal style that most surprises, even disconcerts. Our operatic tradition – and not only that but the tradition of western classical music generally – encourages us to believe, contrary though this may be to anything like good sense, that people mean what they sing. Singing, this repertory by and large insists, is expression. When a singing character hits a high note, this character is intent on conveying an excitement that he – or, more likely, she – feels. More than that, our long-established culture has all kinds of codes within which characters can proclaim their devotion, their grief, their desire for vengeance, or

whatever. And those codes have proved surprisingly resilient, capable of surviving through four centuries of operatic development, from Monteverdi to much that is happening now. Barry, however, sets them aside. A high note from one of his characters may indeed convey a moment of intense feeling, but it may just as well be where the vocal line seems to want to go at that point. His characters do not behave appropriately and express what they feel; they are, rather, subject to violent and hectic forces whose sources are elsewhere, in the music.

Time, again, is crucial here, for these characters do not exist in the kind of progressive time that is usual in western music and especially in opera, time as a gradual unfolding. In terms of scenario, they may. Each of Barry’s operas follows a fairly straightforward narrative course, with events presented in due order. But there is no attempt to substantiate this in the music, which will always be set to a steady pulse, often fast, with a good deal of rotation and repetition in the melodic material. We might have the impression of people caught on a merrygoround, speedy and brilliantly painted, from which they yell out as the pass. Decisively articulating melodies that whirl, stop or jump, these people are in a continuous present, a world adrift from memory and devoid of obligations, a world that offers us in some senses the acme of opera as essentially amoral, the playground of masquerade and desire – or, to mention two more Barry characters, *Deceit* and *Pleasure*.

To unmask masquerade and unclothe desire, however, is the act of a percipient and determined moralist – and one should regard Barry’s operas as moralities, too, not only in how they enlarge the scope of what can seem natural and push further the barriers of prejudice, but also in how they articulate the forces, represented by music, that compel people to do what they do. With the conventions of operatic vocalizing all unwrapped, Barry’s characters stand before us in a condition of nakedness that evokes not only shock and bewilderment but also pity. Being driven by the music’s relentless energy, these people find themselves pushed into positions – pushed, perhaps, also into revelations – they would prefer not to advance in public. The ground has gone from beneath their feet: the ground of rhythm and phrasing, of which the accompaniment in its intemperateness has taken command, and the ground of harmony, which may be the most crucial loss of all. Answering a question about this aspect of his music with regard to his second big opera, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (2005), Barry replied: ‘I would say every single bar in this opera can be related to a key centre.’ That does not mean, however, that his harmony is plain sailing, for he immediately felt bound to add: ‘Sometimes I had to agonize a lot to find out what the centre actually was.’ Poor hope for the characters, then, to understand the world in which they have to live.

Here is another aspect of Barry’s operatic morality, that the spectacle of characters caught in a world gone crazy may seem to

us not only bizarrely unsettling but also unsettlingly familiar – and all the more so for the characters’ seeming unawareness of how very odd their world is. When the Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax delivers her line ‘It has a music of its own. It produces vibrations’, we might feel her to be referring to Barry’s score for *The Importance of Being Earnest*, but it is doubtful if she realizes this. The opera does indeed have a music of its own: often fast, strongly pulsed, the words pattered out on regular beats as if from semi-automata, the accompaniment for a wind-heavy ensemble that generally sounds raw, strained or brusque and yet is tightly controlled. It is a bitter music, a raging music, a rude music, at times a hilarious music, and it certainly produces vibrations. To the people in it, though, it is just where they are – where they have to be.

They are jolted from their origins even by the libretto. While keeping so many famous lines, Barry cuts the text boldly, not only for the practical purpose of reducing it to workable length but also in order to estrange it. As he has pointed out, just dropping the invariable ‘sir’ from a servant’s lines immediately alters the relationship. ‘Did you hear what I was playing?’, the libretto begins, as the play does, but now Lane replies to Algernon with a simple, abrupt ‘No’. What is going on? These people are out of step – out of step with the play, out of step with themselves.

Barry has other kinds of fun as he wields his scissors. One example with notable repercussions comes in Miss Prism’s

examination of her long-lost handbag, where her line about a stain 'caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage' is stopped at 'explosion'. This brings back the shock-horror tritone in the orchestra that was heard when Bunbury was 'exploded', and the word 'explosion' is then repeated by the entire cast a further three times later in the act, when the Army Lists are being consulted, with the same debased musical gesture. As with much in the score, the effect is at once powerful and puzzling. This could be the explosion that brings to the surface the last and most vital link in the plot, or it could be a premonition on the characters' part of the explosion of their social world. Or perhaps they are at last becoming conscious, somehow, of what has happened to the perfectly fabricated dramatic construct in which they have been living their lives with so little trouble for well over a century.

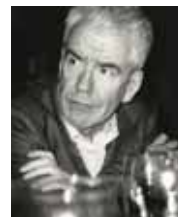
Meanwhile, of course, that original play will be playing in our minds. A swirling introduction to the last act seems to wipe away a couple of pages of text to leave just Cecily's 'They have been eating muffins' angelically intoned on a high A, after which all the orchestral players join the two women in shouting: 'Your Christian names are still an insuperable barrier. That is all!' There are other occasions, too, where the orchestra or a chorus (also pre-recorded) takes part, and where tiny fragments signal the disappearance of lengthy passages. There are also places where Barry adds to the text, not just by reiterating a single word but by shoving in a whole raft of Schiller. Both Lady Bracknell and Miss Prism,

we are to understand, are composers, and one after another, in the first act and the second, they rattle off their settings of the 'Ode to Joy'.

Yet, for all the verbal echoes that are inevitably summoned, whether of Wilde or of Beethoven, it is, as always, the music that steers, through whatever swerves it wants, shaking the characters off the page and sending them hurtling. Barry's alert zigzags, crazed colours and musical-dramatic underminings spring from various sources: opera seria (especially Handel's), the mechanical Stravinsky of *Les Noces*, the extreme intervals of Webern's songs. A keen operatic zest has taken this wonderfully off-centre composer to diverse situations: the eighteenth century in his first two stage works, *The Intelligence Park* and *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit*, both to librettos written for him, by Vincent Deane and Meredith Oakes respectively, then to a play by Rainer Werner Fassbinder (*Petra von Kant*), and from there to a monodrama by Strindberg (*La Plus Forte*), followed now by the classic comedy of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. He does all these differently, his settings as diverse as the original pieces. But we are everywhere in the same world, where emotion is all over the place and unplaceable, alien even to the characters who feel themselves to be feeling it.

Paul Griffiths

## Gerald Barry



© Betty Freeman

Gerald Barry was born in Ireland in 1952 and after attending University College Dublin went to Amsterdam and later Cologne to continue his studies. His time in Germany, where he studied with Stockhausen and Kagel, proved to be a liberating experience and he soon came to public attention in 1979 with radical ensemble works "\_\_\_\_\_" and Ø.

Barry has received numerous commissions by the BBC, including *Chevaux-de-frise* for the Ulster Orchestra at the 1988 Proms, given its Russian première by the Mariinsky Orchestra in 2007; *The Conquest of Ireland*, given its German première by the Bavarian RSO in 1998; *Day* for the BBC Symphony Orchestra; *The Eternal Recurrence*, a setting of Nietzsche for voice and orchestra; and *Hard D* for the Orkest de Volharding.

Barry's first opera *The Intelligence Park* (recorded on NMC), was commissioned by the ICA and first performed at the 1990 Almeida Festival. A second opera, *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit*, written for Channel 4 Television, opened the 2002 Aldeburgh Festival, followed by performances in London and the Berliner Festwochen conducted by Thomas Adés. A new staging took place earlier this year at the Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe. *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* was given in 2005 at English National Opera and in 2008 at the Basle Opera. *La Plus Forte*, a one-act opera on the Strindberg play, was commissioned by Radio France

for the 2007 Festival Présences. Sung by Barbara Hannigan, it toured to Amsterdam, London, Dublin, Miami and Toronto.

Barry has enjoyed a long association with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, for whom he wrote *Wiener Blut*, *Dead March* and *Beethoven. God Save The Queen* for choir and ensemble was commissioned for the London Sinfonietta by London's South Bank Centre on the fiftieth birthday of the Royal Festival Hall in 2001.

Recent chamber works include *Le Vieux Sourd* for piano, commissioned by Betty Freeman, *Feldmans Six-Penny Editions* for the London Sinfonietta and Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and *No people*. for Ensemble 7Bridges.

His most recent opera, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, was jointly commissioned by the LA Philharmonic and the Barbican in London, and received its world premiere staging at Opéra national de Lorraine – Nancy this year. A further production was staged at the Royal Opera House Linbury Theatre in June. *Earnest* received a 2013 RPS Award for Large-Scale Composition and a recording will be released on NMC.

Barry is currently working on a *Piano Concerto* co-commissioned by Musica Viva, Munich, and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra to be premiered in November.

His music has been recorded on the NMC, Largo, Black Box, Marco Polo, BVHaast and RTE labels.

## Synopsis

### ACT 1

Algernon Moncrieff is playing his own arrangement of *Auld Lang Syne* for solo piano off-stage while his manservant Lane lays out afternoon tea, including cucumber sandwiches and bread and butter for his master's expected guests: his Aunt Augusta, Lady Bracknell and his cousin Gwendolen.

Lane announces Algernon's friend Ernest, who is also known as Jack Worthing – and who is utterly besotted with Gwendolen. Algernon has come across Ernest's cigarette case inscribed with the message 'From little Cecily, with her fondest love to dear Uncle Jack'. He declares that Ernest may not marry Gwendolen until he reveals the true identities of Jack and Cecily. Ernest explains that he is Ernest in town and Jack in the country and that Cecily is his ward. As far as Cecily is concerned, Ernest is his ne'er-do-well younger brother who is always in some kind of trouble, so Jack is a Bunburyist, says Algernon, who also leads a double life by pretending to have an imaginary invalid friend called Bunbury who often requires his presence in the country.

Lady Bracknell and her daughter Gwendolen are announced. Lady Bracknell asks for cucumber sandwiches and declares her hatred of French

music before bursting into her own setting of *Freude schöner Götterfunken*.

With Lady Bracknell and Algernon safely out of the way, Jack proposes to Gwendolen and is accepted. How can she not love a man whose name is Ernest?

Having discovered her daughter has become engaged to Jack, Lady Bracknell quizzes her future son-in-law about his lineage. When she discovers that he knows nothing of his parents and that he was adopted, having been found in a handbag at Victoria Station, she refuses to countenance the match. Jack manages to give Gwendolen his address in the country, which is also noted by Algernon who scribbles it on his cuff. As his guests depart, he tells Lane to put out his country clothes as he will be visiting his friend Bunbury.

### ACT 2

In the country Cecily is studying German with her governess, Miss Prism. German grammar, she declares, makes her look plain. Miss Prism, a composer and an ardent Germanophile breaks into her own setting of *Freude schöner Götterfunken*.

Now Algernon, masquerading as her guardian's brother Ernest, arrives and quickly charms her. It is Cecily's dream to marry a man who is wicked and bad and called Ernest. Algernon quickly makes plans for Dr Chasuble, the rector, to rechristen him Ernest. Meanwhile, Jack arrives with the sad news that Ernest has passed away in Paris. But Ernest is here, says Cecily.

Never can the trains from London have been so busy. Hot on Algy's heels, Gwendolen arrives. As Cecily is giving her tea the two young women discover that they are both engaged to 'Ernest' and there is a violent storm over the tea cups. When Jack and Algy return they are exposed and Cecily and Gwendolen, united as sisters now, leave their two suitors to quarrel over Bunburying and a plate of muffins.

### ACT 3

Cecily and Gwendolen tell Jack and Algy that their Christian names are an insuperable bar to marriage. The men are agreed: Dr Chasuble will have to rechristen them both.

Lady Bracknell has also taken the train from London and on arriving in the country is shocked to discover that her nephew appears

to have become engaged to Cecily without her permission. But when she discovers that this is a young woman in possession of a fortune her doubts are banished. However, Jack – in his capacity as Cecily's guardian – refuses to give his consent to the marriage until Lady Bracknell permits him and Gwendolen to be united.

This social Gordian knot is unloosed when Miss Prism reappears. Twenty-eight years earlier, when working as a governess in the Bracknell household, she had inadvertently confused a three-volume novel that she had written with her young charge and left the boy in a bag at Victoria Station and put the novel in the perambulator she was wheeling. Discovering her error, she had fled.

Jack produces the handbag. He is Lady Bracknell's long-lost nephew and therefore Algernon's older brother. And his name? The same as that of his father General Moncrieff, says Lady Bracknell. A search of the army records solves the mystery. It is Ernest. Gwendolen is ecstatic. Now the two couples can be married and with them, Miss Prism and Dr Chasuble.

© Christopher Cook



Christopher Cull and Stephen Richardson in rehearsal



Peter Tantsits and Jessica Walker in rehearsal



Stephen Richardson in rehearsal



Christopher Cull, Joshua Bloom, Peter Tantsits, Jessica Walker, Stephen Richardson in rehearsal





## Creative Team

Conductor – Pierre-André Valade  
Director / Designer – Antony McDonald  
Lighting Designer – DM Wood  
Movement Director – Lucy Burge  
Assistant Director – Danielle Urbas  
Assistant Conductor – Ben Gernon  
Répétiteur – Chris Hopkins

## Production Team

Production Manager – Patrick McLaughlin  
Stage Manager – Kate Watkins  
Assistant Stage Manager – James Lye  
Props Mistress – Patsy Hughes  
Costume Supervisor – Ilona Karas  
Wardrobe Mistress – Melanie Carmichael  
Costumer Makers – Suzanne Parkinson,  
Jackie Hallat, Margaret Pescott,  
Christine Boyle  
Milliners – Simon Dawes, Janet Spriggs  
Hair & Make-up – Campbell Young  
Company, Henrik Torp,  
Scarlett McPherson  
Master Carpenter – Stephen Anderson  
Technical Manager – Alan McCracken  
Production Electrician – Hallam Knight  
Set Construction – Art for Art  
Scenic Artist – Paul Zündel  
Transport – Philip Goss

## Acknowledgements

Arts Council of Northern Ireland  
An Chomhairle Ealaíon  
Queen's University, Belfast  
Richard McBride  
John Gilhooly  
Katrina Black  
Mark Tilley  
Millennium Forum  
Grand Opera House  
Cork Opera House  
Gaiety Theatre  
Sarah Speers at Stag Head  
J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
Austins Department Store  
Lyric Theatre  
Tower Hotel, Derry~Londonderry  
City Hotel, Derry~Londonderry  
Void Gallery  
Waterstones Belfast  
Aideen Corr

## Cast

Cecily Cardew – Aoife Miskelly  
Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax – Jessica Walker  
John Worthing – Peter Tantsits  
Algernon Moncrieff – Joshua Bloom  
Lady Bracknell – Stephen Richardson  
Miss Prism – Hilary Summers  
Lane / Merriman – Christopher Cull  
Dr. Chasuble – Olwen Fouéré

## Orchestra

Flute – Susan Doyle  
Oboe – Jenny McGee  
Clarinet – Deirdre O'Leary  
Bass Clarinet – Macdara Ó Seireadáin  
Bassoon – Éanna Monaghan  
Bassoon 2 / Contrabassoon – Sinead Frost  
  
Horn 1 – Richard Wainwright  
Horn 2 – Liam Duffy  
Trumpet 1 – Cameron Todd  
Trumpet 2 – Patrick McCarthy  
Trombone – Roderick O'Keeffe  
Tuba – Alex Kidston

Percussion 1 – Alex Petcu  
Percussion 2 – Clare O'Keeffe  
Percussion 3 – Ronan Scarlett  
Piano / Celeste – David Quigley  
  
Violin 1 – Joanne Quigley  
Violin 2 – Emily Thyne  
Viola – Lisa Dowdall  
Cello – Kate Ellis  
Double Bass – Sarah Halpin





# The Importance of Being Earnest

## A Trivial Comedy for Serious People

### Opera in Three Acts

by **Gerald Barry based on the text by Oscar Wilde**  
by arrangement with **Schott Music Ltd.**

There will be a short pause between acts 1 and 2, and an interval between acts 2 and 3.

#### ACT I.

Algernon Moncrieff's Flat in Half-Moon Street.

*Morning-room in Algernon's flat in Half-Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of Auld Lang Syne is heard in the adjoining room. [Lane is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased, Algernon enters.]*

*Algernon.* Did you hear what I was playing?

*Lane.* No.

*Algernon.* I'm sorry. I don't play accurately. Sentiment is my forte, I keep science for Life.

*Lane.* Yes.

*Algernon.* Cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

*Lane.* Yes. [Hands them on a salver.]

*Algernon.* [Inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa.] [Lane goes out.]

[Enter Lane.]

*Lane.* Mr. Ernest Worthing.

[Enter Jack.]

[Lane goes out]

*Algernon.* Ernest? What brings you up to town?

*Jack.* Pleasure! Eating Algy?

*Algernon.* Slight refreshment at five o'clock.

*Jack.* Cups? Cucumber sandwiches? Who is coming?

*Algernon.* Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

*Jack.* I love Gwendolen. I want to marry her!

*Algernon.* If ever I marry, I'll try to forget it.

[Jack puts out his hand to take a sandwich.

Algernon at once interferes.]

*Algernon.* Don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are for Aunt Augusta.

[Takes one and eats it.]

*Jack.* YOU are eating.

*Algernon.* [Takes plate from below.] Have some bread and butter. The bread and butter is for Gwendolen. Gwendolen is devoted to bread and butter.

*Jack.* [Advancing to table and helping himself.] Very good bread and butter.

*Algernon.* Do not eat all. You cannot marry Gwendolen.

*Jack.* Why?

*Algernon.* Who is Cecily? [Rings bell.]

[Enter Lane.]

*Algernon.* Bring me that cigarette case.

*Lane.* Yes. [Lane goes out.]

[Enter Lane with the cigarette case on a salver.

Algernon takes it at once. Lane goes out.]

*Algernon.* [Opens case and examines it.] A present from Cecily.

*Jack.* Cecily is my aunt.

*Algernon* [Reading.] 'From little Cecily with her fondest love.' 'Little Cecily' your aunt??

*Jack.* [Moving to sofa and kneeling upon it.] Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall.

*Algernon.* [Follows Ernest round the room.] Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? 'From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack.' Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.

*Jack.* It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.

*Algernon.* You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to every one as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life. It is

perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. [Taking it from case.] 'Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany.' I'll keep this as a proof that your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to any one else. [Puts the card in his pocket.]

*Jack.* My name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country.

*Algernon.* You are a secret Bunburyist!

*Jack.* Bunburyist? What do you mean by Bunburyist?

*Algernon.* Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

*CHOIR:* Who is Cecily?!

*Jack.* Cecily is Mr. Thomas Cardew's granddaughter. I am her guardian. She lives at my place in the country under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

*Algernon.* Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

*Jack.* As Cecily's guardian I adopt a high moral tone, not good for health or happiness. In order to escape to town I pretend to have a younger brother called Ernest. That is the whole truth pure and simple.

#### CHORALE

*CHOIR:* The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!

*Algernon.* You are a Bunburyist. I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know.

*Jack.* What?

*Algernon.* Now that I know you to be a Bunburyist I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying. I want to tell you the rules.

*Jack.* I'm not a Bunburyist. If Gwendolen accepts me, I will kill my brother.

#### CHORALE

*CHOIR.* A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.

[The sound of an electric bell is heard.]

*Algernon.* Aunt Augusta!

[Enter Lane.]

*Lane.* Lady Bracknell and Miss Fairfax.

[Algernon goes forward to meet them. Enter Lady Bracknell and Gwendolen.]

*Lady Bracknell.* Good afternoon, dear Algernon.

[Sees Jack and bows to him with icy coldness.]

*Algernon.* I'm feeling very well, Aunt Augusta.

*Algernon.* [To Gwendolen.] You are smart!

*Gwendolen.* I am always smart! Mr. Worthing?

*Jack.* You're perfect, Miss Fairfax.

*Gwendolen.* Oh! I hope I am not that. It would leave no room for developments, and I intend to develop in many directions. [Gwendolen and Jack sit down together in the corner.]

*Lady Bracknell.* I'll have a cup of tea, and one of those cucumber sandwiches.

*Algernon.* [picking up empty plate in horror]: Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches?

*Lane.* There were no cucumbers in the market. I went down twice.

*Algernon.* No cucumbers!

*Lane.* No

*Algernon.* I am greatly distressed, Aunt Augusta, about there being no cucumbers.

*Lady Bracknell.* It really makes no matter, Algernon. I had some crumpets with Lady Harbury, who seems to be living entirely for pleasure now.

[Algernon crosses and hands tea.]

*Lady Bracknell.* Thank you.



*Algernon.* I am afraid, Aunt Augusta, I cannot dine with you tonight. My friend Bunbury is very ill again. [Exchanges glances with Jack.]

*Lady Bracknell.* Mr Bunbury seems to suffer from curiously bad health.

*Algernon.* Yes; poor Bunbury is a dreadful invalid.

*Lady Bracknell.* Mr Bunbury must decide whether to live or die. Health is the primary duty of life. Ask Mr Bunbury not to be ill on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception.

*Algernon.* I'll speak to Bunbury, Aunt Augusta, if he is still conscious.

*Lady Bracknell.* [Rising, and following Algernon.] French songs I cannot possibly allow. German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and indeed, I believe is so. Gwendolen, you will accompany me.

*Gwendolen.* Certainly, mamma.

[Lady Bracknell sings her own setting of Freude, schöner, Götterfunken, after which she and Algernon go into the music-room. Gwendolen remains behind.]

*Jack.* [Nervously.] Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl . . . I have ever met since . . . I met you.

*Gwendolen.* Yes. My ideal has always been to love some one of the name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

*Jack.* You really love me, Gwendolen?

*Gwendolen.* Passionately!

*Jack.* Darling!

*Gwendolen.* My own Ernest!

*Jack.* But you don't really mean to say that you couldn't love me if my name wasn't Ernest?

*Gwendolen.* But your name is Ernest.

*Jack.* Yes, I know it is. But supposing it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me then? Darling, I don't much care about

the name of Ernest . . . I don't think the name suits me at all.

*Gwendolen.* It suits you perfectly. It is a divine name. It has a music of its own. It produces vibrations.

*Jack.* But there are lots of other much nicer names. I think Jack, for instance, a charming name.

*Gwendolen.* Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations . . . I have known several Jacks. The only really safe name is Ernest

*Jack.* Gwendolen, I must get christened at once - I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.

*Gwendolen.* Married, Mr. Worthing?

*Jack.* [Astounded.] Well . . . surely. You know that I love you, Miss Fairfax.

*Gwendolen.* I adore you. But you haven't proposed yet.

*Jack.* Well . . . may I propose now?

*Gwendolen.* Yes, and Mr. Worthing, I am fully determined to accept you.

*Jack.* Gwendolen!

*Gwendolen.* Yes, Mr. Worthing?

*Jack.* You know what I have got to say to you.

*Gwendolen.* Yes, but you don't say it.

*Jack.* Gwendolen, will you marry me? [Goes on his knees.]

*Gwendolen.* Of course I will, darling. I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

*Jack.* My own one, I have never loved any one in the world but you.

*Gwendolen.* Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite, blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present. [Enter Lady Bracknell.]

*Lady Bracknell.* Mr. Worthing! Rise, sir!

*Gwendolen.* Mamma! [He tries to rise; she

restrains him.] Mr. Worthing has not quite finished yet.

*Lady Bracknell.* Finished what?

*Gwendolen.* I am engaged to Mr. Worthing, mamma. [They rise together.]

*Lady Bracknell.* Pardon me, you are not engaged to any one. When you do become engaged to some one, I will inform you of the fact. And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr. Worthing. You, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

*Gwendolen.* [Reproachfully.] Mamma!

*Lady Bracknell.* In the carriage, Gwendolen! [Gwendolen goes to the door. She and Jack blow kisses to each other behind Lady Bracknell's back. Lady Bracknell looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was. Finally turns round.] Gwendolen, the carriage!

*Gwendolen.* Mamma. [Goes out, looking back at Jack.]

*Lady Bracknell.* [Sitting down.] You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing.

[Looks in her pocket for note-book and pencil.]

*Jack.* Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

*Lady Bracknell.* [Pencil and note-book in hand.] I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. Do you smoke?

*Jack.* Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

*Lady Bracknell.* I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

*Jack.* Twenty-nine.

*Lady Bracknell.* A very good age to be married at. I have always been of the opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

*Jack.* [After some hesitation.] I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

*Lady Bracknell.* I am pleased to hear it. I do

not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. You have a town house, I hope?

*Jack.* Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square.

*Lady Bracknell.* What number in Belgrave Square?

*Jack.* 149.

*Lady Bracknell.* The unfashionable side! I thought there was something. Are your parents living?

*Jack.* I have lost both my parents.

*Lady Bracknell.* Both?... That looks like carelessness. Who was your father?

*Jack.* I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.

*Lady Bracknell.* Found!

*Jack.* The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

*Lady Bracknell.* Where did he find you?

*Jack.* [Gravely.] In a hand-bag.

*Lady Bracknell.* A hand-bag?

*Jack.* Yes, a hand-bag, Lady Bracknell. A large black leather hand-bag, with handles - an ordinary hand-bag in fact.

*Lady Bracknell.* In what locality did this Mr. Thomas, Cardew find this ordinary hand-bag?

*Jack.* The cloak-room at Victoria Station.

*Lady Bracknell.* The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

*Jack.* Yes. The Brighton line.

*Lady Bracknell.* The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat



bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution.

*Jack.* What should I do? I would do anything for Gwendolen's happiness.

*Lady Bracknell.* I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

*Jack.* How can I do that?? I can produce the hand-bag! I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

*Lady Bracknell.* Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr. Worthing!

[Lady Bracknell sweeps out in majestic indignation.]

*Jack.* Good morning! [Algernon, from the other room, strikes up the Wedding March. Jack looks furious, and goes to the door.] Will you stop!!

[The music stops and Algernon enters cheerily.] Might Gwendolen become like her mother?

*Algernon.* All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

*Jack.* Is that clever?

*Algernon.* It is perfectly phrased. Did you tell Gwendolen about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

*Jack.* [In a very patronising manner.] No. I'll say Ernest died in Paris of apoplexy.

*Algernon* (amazed). Paris!

[Enter Lane.]

*Lane.* Miss Fairfax.

[Enter Gwendolen. Lane goes out.]

*Algernon.* Gwendolen!

*Gwendolen.* Algy!

*Jack.* Darling!

*Gwendolen.* Ernest! We may never be married. Although mamma may prevent us from becoming man and wife, and I may marry someone else, and marry often, nothing can alter my eternal devotion to you.

*Jack.* Dear Gwendolen!

*Gwendolen.* Your Christian name has an irresistible fascination. The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me.

*Jack.* My own one!

*Gwendolen.* How long do you remain in town?

*Jack.* Till Monday.

*Gwendolen.* Good!

*Jack.* My own darling!

[To Lane, who now enters.] I will see Miss Fairfax out.

*Lane.* Yes. [Jack and Gwendolen go off.]

[Lane presents several letters on a salver to Algernon. It is to be surmised that they are bills, as Algernon, after looking at the envelopes, tears them up.]

*Algernon.* A glass of sherry.

*Lane.* Yes.

*Algernon.* To-morrow, I'm going Bunburying.

*Lane.* Yes.

*Algernon.* I shall probably not be back till Monday. You can put out all the Bunbury suits . . .

*Lane.* Yes. [Handing sherry.]

## ACT TWO

*Garden at the Manor House. A flight of grey stone steps leads up to the house. The garden, an old-fashioned one, full of roses. Time of year, July. Basket chairs, and a table covered with books, are set under a large yew-tree.*

[Miss Prism discovered seated at the table. Cecily is at the back watering flowers.]

*Miss Prism.* [Calling.] Cecily, Cecily! Your German grammar is on....

*Cecily.* [Coming over very slowly.] But I don't like German. I look quite plain after my German lesson.

*Miss Prism.* Your guardian laid particular stress on your German, as he was leaving for town. Indeed, he always lays stress on your German when he is leaving for town.

*Cecily.* Uncle Jack is so serious! He cannot be quite well.

*Miss Prism.* [Drawing herself up.] Cecily! You must remember his constant anxiety about that unfortunate young man his brother.

*Cecily.* I wish Uncle Jack would allow that unfortunate young man to come down here. You know German and geology Miss Prism, and things of that kind influence a man very much.

[Miss Prism sings her own setting of Freude, schöner, Götterfunken while Cecily writes in her diary.]

*Miss Prism.* Put away your diary, Cecily. Memory is the diary that we all carry about with us.

*Cecily.* Memory is responsible for nearly all three-volume novels.

*Miss Prism.* Do not speak slightly of the three-volume novel, Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days.

*Cecily.* I hope it did not end happily? I don't like novels that end happily.

*Miss Prism.* The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.

*Cecily.* Was it published?

*Miss Prism.* Ah no! The manuscript was lost. Cecily, you will read your Political Economy in my absence. The chapter on the Fall of the Rupee you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational. [Goes down the garden.]

*Cecily.* [Picks up books and throws them back on table.] Political Economy! Geography! German!

[Enter Merriman with a card on a salver.]

*Merriman.* Mr. Ernest Worthing.

*Cecily.* Mr. Ernest Worthing. Uncle Jack's brother!

[Merriman goes off.]

*Cecily.* I have never met a wicked person. I feel frightened. I am so afraid he will look just like every one else.

[Enter Algernon]

*Algernon.* You are my little cousin Cecily.

*Cecily.* I am not little. [Algernon is taken aback.] You are my wicked cousin Ernest.

*Algernon.* I am not wicked. You mustn't think that I am wicked.

*Cecily.* I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.

*Algernon.* [Looks at her in amazement.] Oh! I have been rather reckless.

*Cecily.* I am glad to hear it.

*Algernon.* I've been very bad.

*Cecily.* It must have been very pleasant. [Pause.] Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia.

*Algernon.* Australia! I'd sooner die.

*Cecily.* You have to choose between this world, the next world, and Australia.

*Algernon.* I am hungry.

[They pass into the house. Miss Prism and Dr Chasuble enter.]

Pause

[Enter Jack slowly from the back of the garden. He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crepe hatband and black gloves.]

*Miss Prism.* Mr. Worthing!

*Chasuble.* Mr. Worthing?

*Jack.* [Tragically] My brother.

*Chasuble.* Still leading his life of pleasure?

*Jack.* [Shaking his head.] Dead!

*Chasuble.* Your brother Ernest dead?

*Jack.* Dead. He died in Paris.

*Chasuble.* He will be buried here?

*Jack.* No. In Paris.

*Chasuble.* Paris! [Shakes his head. astonished.]

*Jack.* Dr Chasuble I would like to be christened this afternoon. Would half-past five do?



*Chasuble.* Admirably.

[Enter Cecily from the house.]

*Cecily.* Uncle Jack!

[Cecily goes forward to Jack; he kisses her in a melancholy manner.]

Your brother is in the dining-room!

*Jack.* Who?

*Cecily.* Your brother Ernest.

*Jack.* Nonsense! I haven't got a brother.

*Cecily.* Oh, don't say that.

[Runs back into the house. Miss Prism and Dr Chasuble are astonished. Enter Algernon and Cecily hand in hand. They come slowly up to Jack. Jack motions Algernon away.]

*Algernon.* Brother John, I am very sorry. I intend to lead a better life in the future.

[Jack glares at him and does not take his hand.]

*Cecily.* Uncle Jack, take your brother Earnest's hand!

*Jack.* No.

*Cecily.* Ernest has been telling me about his poor invalid friend Mr. Bunbury and his bed of pain.

*Jack.* Bunbury!

*Cecily.* Yes, Bunbury.

*Jack.* Bunbury! I won't have him talk to you about Bunbury!

*Algernon.* Brother John's coldness is peculiarly painful to me.

[They all go off except Jack and Algernon.]

*Jack.* I don't allow Bunburying here.

*Algernon.* Cecily is a darling.

*Jack.* You are not to talk of her like that. I don't like it.

*Algernon.* Well, I don't like your clothes.

*Jack.* This Bunburying has not been a great success for you.

[Goes into the house.]

*Algernon.* It has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily, and that is everything.

[Enter Cecily at the back of the garden. She picks

up the can and begins to water the flowers.]

*Algernon.* He's going to send me away.

*Cecily.* It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time.

*Algernon.* Thank you.

[Enter Merriman.]

*Merriman.* The dog-cart is at the door. [Algernon looks appealingly at Cecily.]

*Cecily.* It can wait, Merriman for . . . five minutes.

*Merriman.* Yes. [Exit Merriman.]

*Algernon.* Cecily, you are the visible personification of absolute perfection.

*Cecily.* Ernest, I will copy your remarks into my diary. [Goes over to table and begins writing in diary.]

*Algernon.* Do you really keep a diary? I'd give anything to look at it. May I?

*Cecily.* Oh no. [Puts her hand over it.] It is meant for publication. I have reached 'absolute perfection'. You can go on. I am ready for more.

*Algernon.* [Somewhat taken aback. Coughs.]

*Cecily.* Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is dictating one should speak fluently and not cough. [Writes as Algernon speaks.]

*Algernon.* [Speaking very rapidly.] Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.

*Cecily.* I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

*Algernon.* Cecily!

[Enter Merriman.]

*Merriman.* The dog-cart is waiting.

*Algernon.* Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour.

*Merriman.* [Looks at Cecily, who makes no sign.] Yes.

[Merriman retires.]

*Algernon.* I love you, Cecily. You will marry me,

won't you?

*Cecily.* Of course. Why, we've been engaged for the last three months.

*Algernon.* The last three months?!

*Cecily.* Yes.

*Algernon.* But how?

*Cecily.* Ever since Uncle Jack confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, I fell in love with you, Ernest.

*Algernon.* [crossing to her and kneeling.] Darling! [He kisses her, she puts her fingers through his hair.]

*Cecily.* I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?

*Algernon.* Yes, darling, with a little help from others.

*Cecily.* I am so glad. You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love some one whose name was Ernest. [Algernon rises, Cecily also.] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

*Algernon.* Do you mean to say you could not love me if I had some other name?

*Cecily.* But what name?

*Algernon.* Oh, any name you like - for instance - Algernon

*Cecily.* But I don't like the name of Algernon.

*Algernon.* Well, my own dear, sweet, loving little darling, I really can't see why you should object to the name of Algernon, Cecily . . . [Moving to her] . if my name was Algy, couldn't you love me?

*Cecily.* I might respect you, Ernest, I might admire your character, but I fear that I should not be able to give you my undivided attention.

*Algernon.* I must see Dr Chasuble on a most important christening.

[Kisses her and rushes down the garden.]

*Cecily.* I like his hair so much.

[Enter Merriman.]

*Merriman.* Miss Fairfax.

[Enter Gwendolen.]

[Exit Merriman.]

*Cecily.* [Advancing to meet her, takes megaphone and speaks through it.] My name is Cecily Cardew.

*Gwendolen.* [Takes her own megaphone and speaks through it.] Cecily Cardew? [Moving to her and shaking hands.] What a very sweet name! I may call you Cecily, may I not?

*Cecily.* With pleasure!

*Gwendolen.* And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you?

*Cecily.* If you wish.

*Gwendolen.* Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

*Cecily.* I hope so. [A pause. They both sit down together.]

*Gwendolen.* My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of papa, I suppose?

*Cecily.* I don't think so.

*Gwendolen.* The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive.

[After examining Cecily carefully through a lorgnette.]

You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

*Cecily.* Oh no! I live here.

*Gwendolen.* [Severely.] Really?

*Cecily.* My dear guardian, with the assistance of Miss Prism, has the arduous task of looking after me.

*Gwendolen.* Your guardian?

*Cecily.* Yes, I am Mr. Worthing's ward.

*Gwendolen.* Oh! How secretive of him! [Rising and going to her.] I have liked you ever since I met you! But now that I know that you are Mr. Worthing's ward, I wish you were forty-two, and plain. Ernest is extremely susceptible to the physical charms of others.

*Cecily.* Ernest?

*Gwendolen.* Yes.



*Cecily.* Oh, but it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his elder brother. Dearest Gwendolen, Mr. Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

*Gwendolen.* [Stung.] Mister Worthing is engaged to me.

*Cecily.* [Very politely, rising.] Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago.

[Shows diary.]

*Gwendolen.* [Examines diary through her lorgnette carefully.] He asked me to be his wife yesterday afternoon at 5.30. [Produces diary of her own.]

[Meditatively.] If the poor fellow has been entrapped...

*Cecily.* [Thoughtfully and sadly.] Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into...

*Gwendolen.* Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous.

*Cecily.* Miss Fairfax, when I see a spade I call it a spade.

*Gwendolen.* [Satirically.] I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade.

[Enter Merriman, followed by the footman. He carries a salver, table cloth, and plate stand. Cecily is about to retort. The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both girls chafe.]

*Merriman.* Shall I lay tea here as usual?

*Cecily.* [Sternly, in a calm voice.] Yes, as usual.

[Merriman begins to clear table and lay cloth. A long pause. Cecily and Gwendolen glare at each other and put aside megaphones.]

*Gwendolen.* I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

*Cecily.* May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

*Gwendolen.* [With elaborate politeness.] Thank you. [Aside.] Detestable girl! But I require tea!

*Cecily.* [Sweetly.] Sugar?

*Gwendolen.* [Superciliously.] No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more.

[Cecily looks angrily at her, takes up the tongs

and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup.]

*Cecily.* [Severely.] Cake or bread and butter?

*Gwendolen.* [In a bored manner.] Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays.

*Cecily.* [Cuts a very large slice of cake, and puts it on the tray.] Hand that to Miss Fairfax.

[Merriman does so, and goes out with footman. Gwendolen drinks the tea and makes a grimace. Puts down cup at once, reaches out her hand to the bread and butter, looks at it, and finds it is cake. Rises in indignation.]

*Gwendolen.* You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake.

[Enter Jack.]

*Gwendolen.* [Catching sight of him.] Ernest! My own Ernest!

*Jack.* Gwendolen! Darling! [Offers to kiss her.]

*Gwendolen.* [Draws back.] A moment! Are you engaged to be married to this young lady? [Points to Cecily.]

*Jack.* [Laughing.] To Cecily! Of course not!

*Gwendolen.* Thank you. You may! [Offers her cheek.]

*Cecily.* [Very sweetly.] I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. This is my guardian, Uncle Jack.

*Gwendolen.* [Receding.] Jack! Oh!

[Enter Algernon.]

*Cecily.* Here is Ernest.

*Algernon.* [Goes straight over to Cecily without noticing any one else.] My own love! [Offers to kiss her.]

*Cecily.* [Drawing back.] A moment, Ernest! Are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

*Algernon.* [Looking round.] Gwendolen!

[Laughing.] Of course not!

*Cecily.* Thank you. [Presenting her cheek to be kissed.] You may. [Algernon kisses her.]

*Gwendolen.* Miss Cardew. The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin, Algernon.

*Cecily.* [Breaking away from Algernon.]

*Algernon!* Oh! [The two girls move towards each other and put their arms round each other's waists as if for protection.]

*Cecily.* Are you called Algernon?

*Algernon.* Yes.

*Cecily.* Oh!

*Gwendolen.* Is your name really John?

*Jack.* [Standing rather proudly.] Yes.

*Cecily.* [To Gwendolen.] We have been deceived.

*Gwendolen.* My poor wounded Cecily!

*Cecily.* My sweet wronged Gwendolen!

*Gwendolen.* [Slowly and seriously.] You will call me sister, will you not? [They embrace. Jack and Algernon groan and walk up and down.]

*Gwendolen.* I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to any one. Let us go into the house. They will hardly venture to come after us there.

*Cecily.* No, men are so cowardly, aren't they?

[They retire into the house with scornful looks.]

*Jack.* And this is what you call Bunburying!?

*Algernon.* Yes, and a wonderful Bunbury it is. The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life.

*Jack.* Do not Bunbury here.

*Algernon.* Absurd. One can Bunbury anywhere. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.

*Jack.* Serious Bunburyist! I love Gwendolen.

*Algernon.* I adore Cecily.

*Jack.* You cannot marry Miss Cardew.

[Algernon begins to eat muffins.]

*Jack.* How can you calmly eat muffins now.

*Algernon.* Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

*Jack.* It's heartless eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

*Algernon.* When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. When I am in really

great trouble, I refuse everything except food and drink. I am eating muffins now because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins.

[Rising.]

*Jack.* [Rising.] Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way. [Takes muffins from Algernon.]

*Algernon.* [Offering tea-cake.] I wish you would have tea-cake instead. I don't like tea-cake.

*Jack.* I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

*Algernon.* But you just said it was heartless to eat muffins.

*Jack.* I said it was heartless of you, under the circumstances. I wish you would go. [He seizes the muffin dish from Jack.]

*Algernon.* I am being christened at a quarter to six.

*Jack.* I am being christened at 5.30. We can't both be christened *Ernest*. It's absurd. [Picking up the muffin-dish.]

*Algernon.* Jack, you are eating muffins again! I wish you wouldn't. There are only two left. [Takes them.] I told you I was fond of muffins.

*Jack.* But I hate tea-cake. Algernon! I don't want you here. Why don't you go!

*Algernon.* [Triumphantly] But there's still one muffin left.

[Jack groans, and sinks into a chair. Algernon still continues eating.]

### ACT THREE

[*Gwendolen and Cecily are at the window, looking out into the garden.*]

*Cecily.* They have been eating muffins.

[Enter Jack followed by Algernon. They whistle some dreadful popular air from a British Opera.]

*Gwendolen, Cecily and the Orchestral Players* [Speaking together.] Your Christian names are still an insuperable barrier. That is all!

*Jack and Algernon* [Speaking together.] Our Christian names! Is that all? But we are going to



be christened this afternoon.

*Gwendolen, Cecily, Orchestral Players.* [To Jack.] For my sake you are prepared to do this terrible thing?

*Jack.* I am.

*Gwendolen, Cecily, Orchestral Players.* [To Algernon.] To please me you are ready to face this fearful ordeal?

*Algernon.* I am!

*Gwendolen, Cecily, Orchestral Players.* How absurd to talk of the equality of the sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely superior.

*Jack.* We are. [Clasps hands with Algernon.]

*Gwendolen, Cecily, Orchestral Players.* They have moments of physical courage of which we women know absolutely nothing. Darling!

*Algernon.* Darling! [Cecily and Gwendolen fall into Jack and Algernon's arms.]

[Enter Merriman.]

*Merriman.* Lady Bracknell!

[Enter Lady Bracknell. The couples separate in alarm. Exit Merriman.]

*Lady Bracknell.* Gwendolen! What?

*Gwendolen.* I am engaged to be married to Mr. Worthing, mamma.

*Lady Bracknell.* [In a trance.] Come here. [Lady Bracknell is about to attend to Gwendolen when Jack intervenes.]

*Jack.* I am engaged to be married to Gwendolen Lady Bracknell!

*Lady Bracknell.* [Numbed, and then agitated.] Algernon!

*Algernon.* Yes, Aunt Augusta.

*Lady Bracknell.* Is it in this house Mr. Bunbury lives?

*Algernon.* Bunbury doesn't live here anymore. Bunbury is dead.

*Lady Bracknell.* Dead! When did Mr. Bunbury die? His death must have been extremely sudden.

*Algernon.* Oh! Poor Bunbury died this afternoon.

*Lady Bracknell.* What did he die of?

*Algernon.* Bunbury? Oh, he was exploded.

*Lady Bracknell.* Exploded! Was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage?

*Algernon.* Aunt Augusta, I mean he was found out! The doctors found out that Bunbury could not live, so Bunbury died.

*Lady Bracknell.* [Pointing at Cecily] Mr. Worthing. Who?

*Jack.* That lady is Miss Cecily Cardew, my ward. [Lady Bracknell bows coldly to Cecily.]

*Algernon.* I am engaged to be married to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

*Cecily.* Mr. Moncrieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

*Lady Bracknell.* [With a shiver, crossing to the sofa and sitting down.] Mr. Worthing, is Miss Cardew at all connected with any of the larger railway stations in London? I merely desire information. Until yesterday I had no idea that there were any families or persons whose origin was a terminus.

[Jack looks furious, but restrains himself.]

*Jack.* [In a clear, cold voice.] Miss Cardew is the grand-daughter of the late Mr. Thomas Cardew of 149 Belgrave Square, S.W.; Gervase Park, Dorking, Surrey; and the Sporrin, Fifeshire, N.B.

*Lady Bracknell.* Three addresses always inspire confidence. But what proof have I of their authenticity?

*Jack.* Miss Cardew's solicitors are Markby, Markby, and Markby.

*Lady Bracknell.* Markby, Markby, and Markby?

*Jack.* [Very irritably.] I have certificates of Miss Cardew's birth, baptism, whooping cough, registration, vaccination, confirmation, and the measles; both the German and the English variety.

*Lady Bracknell.* Ah! A life crowded with incident. I am not myself in favour of premature experiences. [Rises, looks at her watch.] Gwendolen! The time approaches for our departure. We have not a moment to lose. Mr. Worthing, has Miss Cardew any little fortune?

*Jack.* Oh! about a hundred and thirty thousand

pounds. That is all. Goodbye, Lady Bracknell. So pleased to have seen you.

*Lady Bracknell.* [Sitting down again.] A moment, Mr. Worthing. A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look at her. Few girls of the present day have any of the qualities that improve with time. We live, I regret to say, in an age of surfaces. [To Cecily.]

Come over here, dear. [Cecily goes across.] Pretty child! your dress is sadly simple, and your hair seems almost as Nature might have left it. But a thoroughly experienced French maid produces a really marvelous result in a very brief space of time.

[Bends, with a practised smile, to Cecily.] Kindly turn round, sweet child. [Cecily turns completely round.] No, the side view is what I want. [Cecily presents her profile.] Yes, quite as I expected. There are distinct social possibilities in your profile.

Die zwei Schwachen Punkte unseres Zeitalters sind sein Mangel an Prinzipien und sein Mangel an Profil. Das Kinn etwas höher, Kindschen. Stil beruht weitgehend auf der Art und Weise, wie das Kinn getragen wird. Zur Zeit wird es sehr hoch getragen. Algernon!

(The two weak points in our age are its want of principle and its want of profile. The chin a little higher, child. Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn. They are worn very high, just at present. Algernon!)

*Algernon.* Yes, Aunt Augusta!

*Lady Bracknell.* There are distinct social possibilities in Miss Cardew's profile.

*Algernon.* Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

*Lady Bracknell.* Cecily, you may kiss me!

*Cecily.* [Kisses her.] Thank you, Lady Bracknell.

*Lady Bracknell.* You may also address me as Aunt Augusta for the future.

*Cecily.* Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

*Lady Bracknell.* The marriage, I think, had better take place quite soon.

*Algernon.* Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

*Cecily.* Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

*Jack.* I am Miss Cardew's guardian, and she cannot marry without my consent.

*Lady Bracknell.* Upon what grounds?

*Jack.* His moral character. Untruthful! [Algernon and Cecily look at him in indignant amazement.]

*Lady Bracknell.* Untruthful! My nephew Algernon? Impossible! He is an Oxonian.

*Jack.* But my dear Lady Bracknell. The moment you consent to my marriage with Gwendolen, I will allow your nephew to marry my ward.

*Lady Bracknell.* [Rising and drawing herself up.] Impossible!

*Jack.* Then our future is one of passionate celibacy.

*Lady Bracknell.* That is not the destiny I propose for Gwendolen. [Pulls out her watch.] Come, dear, [Gwendolen rises] we have already missed five, if not six, trains. To miss any more might expose us to comment on the platform.

[Enter Dr. Chasuble.]

*Chasuble.* Everything is quite ready for the christenings.

[Vocal/Orchestral outburst.]

Am I to understand then that there are to be no christenings at all this afternoon?

[Vocal/Orchestral outburst.]

As your present mood seems to be one peculiarly secular, I will return to the church at once. Indeed, I have just been informed that Miss Prism has been waiting for me.

*Lady Bracknell.* [Starting.] Miss Prism! Did I hear you mention a Miss Prism?

*Chasuble.* Yes, Lady Bracknell.

*Lady Bracknell.* Is this Miss Prism a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education?

*Chasuble.* [Somewhat indignantly.] She is the most cultivated of ladies, and the very picture of respectability.

*Lady Bracknell.* It is obviously the same person.

May I ask what position she holds in your household?

*Chasuble.* [Severely.] I am a celibate, madam.

*Lady Bracknell.* I must see her at once. Let her be sent for.

*Chasuble.* [Looking off.] She approaches.

[Enter Miss Prism hurriedly. Catches sight of Lady Bracknell, who has fixed her with a stony glare. Miss Prism grows pale and quails. She looks anxiously round as if desirous to escape.]

*Lady Bracknell.* [Sweet and chilling.] Prism! [Miss Prism bows her head in shame.] Come here, Prism! [Miss Prism approaches in a humble manner.] Prism! Where is that baby!?

[General consternation. The Canon starts back in horror. Algernon and Jack pretend to be anxious to shield Cecily and Gwendolen from hearing the details of a terrible public scandal.]

*Lady Bracknell.* Twenty-eight years ago, Prism, you left Lord Bracknell's house, Number 104, Upper Grosvenor Street, in charge of a perambulator that contained a baby of the male sex. You never returned. A few weeks later, through the elaborate investigations of the Metropolitan police, the perambulator was discovered at midnight, standing by itself in a remote corner of Bayswater. It contained the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality. [Miss Prism starts in involuntary indignation.] But the baby was not there!

[Every one looks at Miss Prism.] [Shout] Prism! Where is that baby?

Orchestral Players shout: Where is that baby!?

*Miss Prism.* Lady Bracknell, I admit with shame that I do not know. I only wish I did. The plain facts of the case are these. On the morning of the day you mention, a day that is for ever branded on my memory, I prepared as usual to take the baby out in its perambulator. I had also with me a somewhat old, but capacious hand-bag in which I had intended to place the manuscript of a work of fiction that I had written during my few unoccupied hours. In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I never can forgive myself,

I deposited the manuscript in the basinette, and placed the baby in the hand-bag.

*Jack.* [Who has been listening attentively.] But where did you deposit the handbag?

*Miss Prism.* Do not ask me, Mr. Worthing.

*Jack.* Miss Prism, this is a matter of no small importance to me. I insist on knowing where you deposited the hand-bag that contained that infant.

*Miss Prism.* I left it in the cloak-room of one of the larger railway stations in London.

*Jack.* What railway station?

*Miss Prism.* [Cry Out] Victoria!

*Jack.* I must retire to my room for a moment. Gwendolen, wait here for me.

*Gwendolen.* If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life. [Exit Jack in great excitement.]

[Noises heard overhead as if some one was throwing trunks about. Every one looks up.]

*Chasuble.* What do you think this means, Lady Bracknell?

*Lady Bracknell.* I hardly dare suspect, Dr. Chasuble.

*Chasuble.* Your guardian has a very emotional nature.

*Lady Bracknell.* This noise is extremely unpleasant.

*Chasuble.* [Looking up.] It has stopped now. [The noise is redoubled.]

*Lady Bracknell.* I wish he would arrive at some conclusion!

[Enter Jack with a hand-bag of black leather in his hand.]

*Jack.* [Rushing over to Miss Prism.] Is this the hand-bag, Miss Prism? Examine it carefully before you speak.

*Miss Prism.* [Hums to herself while examining the handbag.] It seems to be mine. Yes, here is the injury it received through the upsetting of an omnibus in younger and happier days. Here is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion.

*Lady Bracknell.* Explosion!

*Miss Prism.* And here, on the lock, are my initials. I had forgotten that in an extravagant mood I had had them placed there. The bag is undoubtedly mine. I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me. It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years.

*Jack.* [In a pathetic voice.] Miss Prism, more is restored to you than this handbag. I was the baby you placed in it.

*Miss Prism.* [Amazed.] You!?

*Jack.* [Embracing her.] Yes . . . mother!

*Miss Prism.* [Recoiling in indignant astonishment.] Mr. Worthing! I am unmarried!

*Jack.* Unmarried! That is a serious blow. But cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly? Why should there be one law for men, and another for women? Mother, I forgive you. [Tries to embrace her again.]

*Miss Prism.* [Still more indignant.] Mr. Worthing, there is some error.

[Pointing to Lady Bracknell.] There is the lady who can tell you who you really are.

*Jack.* [After a pause.] Lady Bracknell, who am I?

*Lady Bracknell.* You are Algernon's elder brother.

*Jack.* Algy's elder brother! Then I have a brother after all. I knew I had a brother! I always said I had a brother! Cecily! How could you have ever doubted that I had a brother? [Seizes hold of Algernon.] Dr. Chasuble, my unfortunate brother. Miss Prism, my unfortunate brother. Gwendolen, my unfortunate brother. Algy, you have never behaved to me like a brother in all your life.

*Algernon.* I was out of practice.

[Shakes hands.]

*Gwendolen.* [To Jack.] But what is your name?!

*Jack.* Your decision on my name!

*Cecily.* Gwendolen!

*Jack.* Aunt Augusta! When Miss Prism left me in the hand-bag, what was my name?

*Lady Bracknell.* You had your father's name.

*Jack.* [Impatiently.] But what was my father's name?

*Lady Bracknell.* [Meditatively.] The General was a man of peace, except in his domestic life. His name would appear in the Army Lists.

*Jack.* These delightful records should have been my constant study. [Rushes to bookcase and tears the books out.] M. Generals . . .

ALL. Mallam, Maxbohm, Magley, Markby, Migsby, Mobbs, Moncrieff! Lieutenant 1840, Captain.

ALL. Explosion!

*Jack.* Lieutenant-Colonel, Colonel, General 1869, Christian names, Ernest. [Puts book quietly down.] I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well, it is Ernest after all. I mean it naturally is Ernest.

*Gwendolen.* Ernest! My own Ernest! I felt from the first that you could have no other name!

*Jack.* My own one!

*Chasuble.* [To Miss Prism.] Laetitia! [Embraces her]

*Miss Prism.* [Enthusiastically.] Frederick! At last!

*Algernon.* Cecily! [Embraces her.]

*Cecily.* At last!

*Jack.* Gwendolen! [Embraces her.]

*Gwendolen.* At last!

*Lady Bracknell.* My nephew, you seem to be displaying signs of triviality.

*Jack.* On the contrary, Aunt Augusta, I've now realised for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Earnest.



## Biographies



**Joshua Bloom,  
Algernon Moncrieff**

Joshua Bloom was born in Melbourne and completed his B.A. (History) at the

University of Melbourne. He was an Opera Foundation Australia Stipendiat at the Vienna State Opera and a member of the San Francisco Opera's Merola Programme.

For Opera Australia, roles include Dandini (*La Cenerentola*), Nick Shadow (*The Rake's Progress*) Schaunard (*La Bohème*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Figaro (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), Leporello (*Don Giovanni*) and Rodolfo (*La Sonnambula*). In San Francisco he sang Angelotti (*Tosca*), Garibaldi (*Rodelinda*) and Ribbing (*Un Ballo in Maschera*), and appeared in the U.S. premiere of Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre*. In the U.S. he has also sung Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) and Truffaldino (*Ariadne*) for the Metropolitan Opera, Gerald Barry's *The Importance of Being Earnest* in concert with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducted by Thomas Adès, and appeared with the Chicago Opera Theater and Santa Fe Opera. He sang Alidoro for Garsington Opera, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Teatro Petruzzelli, Bari, and Collatinus (*The Rape of Lucretia*) in Ravenna, Reggio Emilia and Ferrara.

Future engagements include Colline for Raymond Gubbay at the Royal Albert Hall, and a return to the Garsington Opera for both *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *Fidelio*.



**Lucy Burge,  
Movement Director**

Lucy was a principal dancer with Rambert 1970–85, creating major roles for many choreographers. During this time she also performed as a guest artist with Nureyev.

Lucy frequently collaborates with Antony McDonald and their work includes *Der Ring* and *Manon* (Nationale Reisopera); *Queen of Spades*, *Rusalka* and in 2015 *Fiddler on the Roof* (Grange Park Opera); *Maria Stuarda* (Opera North); *Tsarevitch*, (Passau); *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (Bolshoi). Lucy choreographed *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Katharina Thomas for Glyndebourne in the Spring 2013.

Collaborations with Richard Jones include *Billy Budd* and *The Makropulos Affair* (Frankfurt), *Die Meistersinger* (WNO and ENO 2015), *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and *Lohengrin* (Munich and ENO for *Hoffmann*); *Gloriana* (Hamburg and ROH), *L'Heure espagnole* and *Gianni Schicchi* (Royal Opera); *Carmen* (Opera North, Dir. Daniel Kramer). Next year Lucy choreographs *La Favourite* in Graz for Dir. Sam Brown and *Ariodante* with Richard Jones for the 2014 Aix en Provence Festival.



**Christopher Cull,  
Lane / Merriman**

Christopher is an alumnus of Queen's University Belfast and the Royal Irish Academy of Music. A current recipient of the BBC / Arts Council NI Young Musicians' Platform and a former Young Associate Artist with Ireland's national touring company, Opera Theatre Company, Christopher has worked with Wexford Festival Opera, Northern Ireland Opera, Lismore Festival, Opera Ireland and Grange Park Opera. Roles include Moralès (*Carmen*), Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), Malatesta (*Don Pasquale*), Angelotti (*Tosca*), Fabrizio (*La Pietra del Paragone*) and Le Geòlier (Dialogues des Carmélites). Future plans include engagements with the Ulster Orchestra, as part of the BBC / Arts Council NI Young Musicians' Platform, and a return to Grange Park Opera.



**Olwen Fouéré,  
Dr. Chasuble**

Recent stage credits include *riverrun* (adapted, performed and directed by Fouéré, Galway Arts Festival, Kilkenny Arts Festival and Dublin Theatre Festival 2013), *Maria de Buenos Aires* (Cork Opera House), *The Rite of Spring/Petrushka* with Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre (Sadler's Wells and Movimento Festival Wolfsburg 2013), *Sodome, my love* by Laurent Gaudé (Rough Magic / TheEmergencyRoom),

*Under Glass* (The Clod Ensemble), *Paula Spencer, La Femme Qui Se Cognait Dans Les Portes* (Bouffes du Nord Theatre, Paris), *The Bull* with Fabulous Beast (Dublin Theatre Festival/Barbican).

Recent film includes *The Wake* by Oonagh Kearney, *If Those Lips* by Pat McCabe (VIP/RTÉ), *Camillo's Idea* by Aurélien Froment (Venice Biennale 2013), *Cassandra: fragments of a playscript* by Anne Enright (directed by Fouéré and Kevin Abosch, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Feb 2013), *This Must Be The Place* by Paolo Sorrentino (Palme d'Or selection, Cannes 2011), *The Other Side of Sleep* by Rebecca Daly and *Yellow, the film* (JDIFF 2012).

Other work of note include the role of Hester Swane in *By the Bog of Cats* by Marina Carr (world premiere, Abbey Theatre), the title role in *Salomé*, directed by Steven Berkoff (Gate Theatre Dublin, Edinburgh and Spoleto Festival), *Life is a Dream* directed by Calixto Bieito (Edinburgh International Festival, Barbican, BAM), and her extensive performance work with Operating Theatre (1980-2008) which she co-founded with composer Roger Doyle.



**Ben Gernon,  
Assistant Conductor**

British conductor Ben Gernon studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Sian Edwards and Sir Colin Davis, where he held the Conducting Fellowship, graduating



in 2011. In May 2013 Ben conducted Camerata Salzburg to win the Nestlé and Salzburg Festival Young Conductors Award. He was recently announced as a Dudamel Fellow of the Los Angeles Philharmonic for the 13/14 season.

Recent highlights include conducting the Gustav Mahler Jugendorchester at the Salzburg Festival and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* with the Young Singers Academy in the same Festival, as well as his debut with the Ulster Orchestra (broadcast live on BBC Radio 3). Forthcoming engagements include London Philharmonic Future Firsts, London Symphony Orchestra (Discovery series), Bristol Ensemble and debuts with BBC Scottish Symphony, Nagoya Philharmonic, and Vancouver Symphony. Ben made his BBC Proms debut conducting Tansy Davies' *Composers Portrait* and has worked with London Symphony Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, London Philharmonic Future Firsts and Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the St Magnus Festival as well as being Assistant Conductor for the Discover Dudamel project at the Barbican in March 2013.



**Chris Hopkins,  
Répétiteur**

Conductor and pianist, Chris Hopkins has performed around the world, in the last

season appearing as song and instrumental accompanist, chamber and solo pianist in Japan, New York, Singapore, South

America, and throughout Europe and the UK, in venues including the Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw, Royal Festival Hall, as well as live and recorded on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM. He is Musical Director of the Orchestra of the City and has worked with numerous international soloists including Guy Johnston, Nicola Benedetti, Charlie Siem, Craig Ogden and Linda Lin. Recent solo appearances include concertos by Mozart, Schumann, Grieg, Shostakovich and Rachmaninoff.

In opera, he has worked as assistant to conductors including Sir Charles Mackerras, Jane Glover, Dominic Wheeler and Trevor Pinnock. Conducting at Sadler's Wells, he worked with the Pet Shop Boys with their ballet *The Most Incredible Thing* in 2011 and 2012. He has been a member of the music staff of both Welsh National Opera and English National Opera, as well as with Garsington Opera, Co-Opera company, Opera North, Clonter Opera and the Aldeburgh Festival, working with Sir Mark Elder, David Parry and Edward Gardner amongst others.



**Antony McDonald,  
Director & Designer**

Royal Designer for Industry. A member of the British Team of Designers who won

the Golden Triga at the 2003 Prague Quadrennale for *Ballo in Maschera*, Bregenz, and in 1991 for the 1989 RSC *Hamlet*. Winner of Set Design Award for Opera, International Opera Awards 2013.

Director/Designer: *Lohengrin* (Welsh National Opera and Polish National Opera); *The Ring Cycle*, 2009-2012, *Manon* and *King Priam* for the Nationale Reisopera Holland; *Wonderful Town*, *Rusalka*, *Queen of Spades*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, 2015 and *Boris Godunov* 2016 (Grange Park Opera); *Maria Stuarda* (Opera North); *The Knot Garden*, *Aida*, *Samson and Dalilah* (Scottish Opera); 2013 *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (Bolshoi, Moscow).

Current and Recent Opera designs:

*La Finta Giardiniera* (Glyndebourne 2014), Dir. Frederick Wake Walker; *Makropoulos Case*, (Frankfurt); *The Gambler* (ROH); *Cunning Little Vixen* (Amsterdam); *Billy Budd* (Frankfurt, Amsterdam); *Giulietta* (Paris, Geneva, ENO 2012, all Dir. Richard Jones); *Prima Donna* by Rufus Wainwright (Manchester International Festival, Sadlers Wells, Toronto and New York City Opera).

Collaboration with Richard Jones as directors and designers: *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *La bohème* (Bregenz), and *Der Zwerg* and *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, (Paris Opera).

Dance includes: *Alice*, *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Nutcracker*, *Fearful Symmetries*, *Cheating Lying Stealing* (Scottish Ballet), Chor. Ashley Page. In 2014 the world premiere of *Ein Reigen* for Vienna State Ballet, with Ashley Page.



**Aoife Miskelly,  
Cecily Cardew**

Northern Irish soprano Aoife Miskelly is an International Young Artist with Cologne

Opera. For the 2013/14 season, Aoife will play Gilda (*Rigoletto*) and Gretel for Cologne Opera and make her debut for La Monnaie, reprising the role of Thérèse in Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, which she first performed for Aix-en-Provence this Summer.

A Sickle Foundation Scholar and graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, Aoife was a finalist at the Kathleen Ferrier Awards, and the winner of the Hampshire National Singing Competition, the Bernadette Greevy Bursary and the BBC NI Young Artists Platform Award sponsored by the Arts Council of NI. A Samling Scholar, a Britten-Pears and Internationale Meistersinger Akademie Young Artist, Aoife was also a finalist for the Royal Overseas League, the Young Classical Artists Trust at the Wigmore Hall and the 2013 Veronica Dunne International Singing Competition at the National Concert Hall Dublin.

Previous roles include Sophie Scholl in the world premiere of *Kommilitonen!* by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Pamina, Despina, Servilia (*La Clemenza di Tito*), Sophie (*Werther*), The Governess (*The Turn of the Screw*) and covering Diana in *Diana and Acteon* by Jonathan Dove for the Royal Opera House Covent Garden.



**Stephen Richardson,  
Lady Bracknell**

Current plans include Ochs *Der Rosenkavalier* (Bolshoi, Moscow), Hobson *Peter Grimes* (La Scala, ROH, Opera North, Aldeburgh), Rocco *Die Fledermaus* (Garsington), Geronte *Manon Lescaut* (WNO) and Frank *Die Fledermaus* (Korean National Opera).

His many World Premieres include Adès's *The Tempest* (ROH); Tan Dun's *Orchestral Theatre II*, *Re*, and *Tea* (Suntory Hall, Tokyo); Barry's *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit*, *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *The Intelligence Park*; Tavener's *Eis Thanaton*, *Resurrection*, *The Apocalypse* and *Fall and Resurrection*; and the British premiere of Ruders' *The Handmaid's Tale* (ENO).

Recent engagements include Daland *The Flying Dutchman* (NI Opera), Flint *Billy Budd* (Amsterdam), Sir Joshua Cramer *The Intelligence Park* (Dublin), Lady Bracknell (Los Angeles Philharmonic, Adès Festival), Barry's *Schott and Sons*, Mainz (NCC of Ireland, Dublin), Commandant *From The House of The Dead* and *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Opera North), Ferrando *Il Trovatore* (Den Jyske Opera) and Stromminger *La Wally* (Opera Holland Park). Concerts include *The Second Mrs Kong* (Brabbins), *Hansel and Gretel* (BBC), *Messiah* (Carnegie Hall/ Pinnock), *Oedipus Rex* (Sir Andrew Davis), *Nixon in China* (LSO), *Where the Wild Things Are* and

*Higglety Pigglety Pop!* (Cleveland and London / Knussen).

Recordings include *Where the Wild Things Are*, title role in Goehr's *Death of Moses* (Unicorn Kanchana), Purcell's *Ode for the Birthday of Queen Mary* (DG Archiv), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (London Symphony / Sir Colin Davis, Philips), *Albert Herring* (Chandos) and Stravinsky's *The Flood*.



© Claire Newman-Williams

**Hilary Summers,  
Miss Prism**

Born in Newport, South Wales Hilary Summers studied at Reading University and the Royal Academy of Music.

Specialising in baroque and contemporary repertoire she has gained an international reputation in both spheres. In 2006 she won a Grammy award for her recording of Pierre Boulez' *Le Marteau sans maître*, a work she has performed worldwide with the composer. She premiered Elliot Carter's opera *What next?* conducted by Daniel Barenboim at the Staatsoper Berlin; also Peter Eotvos' *Le Balcon* at the Aix Festival, Michael Nyman's *Noises Sounds and Sweet Airs* and *Facing Goya*, George Benjamin's chamber opera *Into the little Hill* and Gerald Barry's *The Importance of Being Earnest* in Los Angeles. Hilary works regularly with the leading authentic instrument orchestras such as Les Arts Florissants with whom she has recorded Handel's *Orlando* and made a DVD of

Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (Sorceress). With Christian Curnyn and the early opera company she has recorded Handel's *Partenope*, *Semele*, *Flavio* and most recently *Serse*. One of Hilary's proudest boasts is that she sang backing vocals with the pop group The Divine Comedy on their award winning CD *Fin de Siecle*.



© Don Freeman

**Peter Tantsits,  
John Worthing**

Peter Tantsits first attracted international attention in his debut at Teatro alla Scala under Lorin Maazel, and trained as a violinist before entering his vocal studies at Yale University and the Oberlin Conservatory. His repertoire includes new works in addition to high tenor roles by Rameau, Mozart, Britten, Ravel, Janacek, Berg, Strauss and Ligeti, and he sings Rossini's *La Cenerentola* for the first time this season for the Stadttheater Bern. He has worked as a soloist with orchestras such as the London Symphony Orchestra, the Munich Philharmonic, the Leipzig MDR Symphony Orchestra, the China Philharmonic, the Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich, the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, the National Symphony Orchestra, the American Symphony Orchestra, and has appeared several times with the New York Philharmonic, most notably in the New York premiere of Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* under the direction of Alan Gilbert.

He was seen in London as John Worthing in *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the Barbican and as Beauty in *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit* at the Badischen Staatstheater Karlsruhe, both works of Gerald Barry. His most recent and upcoming engagements include performances at the Wiener Festwochen, the Händel-Festspiele Karlsruhe, the Glyndebourne Opera Festival, the Beijing International Music Festival, Cologne's ACHT BRÜCKEN Festival, Amsterdam's Holland Festival, BAM, the Barbican Centre and with New York City Opera.



**Danielle Urbas,  
Assistant Director**

Danielle trained as an actor at the Drama Centre London. Her acting credits include productions for stage, TV and film. She has previously assisted Oliver Mears on the following productions with Second Movement: *The Three Wishes* (Tete a Tete August 2010), *The Knife's Tears* (Brno and Prague October 2010), and with NI Opera: *The Medium* (Feb 2010), *Orpheus in the Underworld* (Scottish Opera and NI Opera 2011), *Turn of the Screw* (2012), and *The Flying Dutchman* (2013). She also assisted Daniel Slater on *Fortunio* for Grange Park Opera (2013)

In 2012 Danielle made her directorial debut with *Zatopek!*, a short opera as part of the New Music Festival 20x12 (Epstein theatre, Liverpool and The South Bank Centre, London)



## **Pierre-André Valade, Conductor**

A co-founder of the Ensemble Court-Circuit, Pierre-André is Chief Conductor with the *Athelas Sinfonietta Copenhagen* and Principal Guest Conductor with the *Ensemble Orchestral Contemporain* in Lyon.

He is especially well-known for his performances of repertoire from the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, and receives regular invitations from major festivals and orchestras all over the world. Of his many recordings, Grisey's *Les Espaces Acoustiques* has been singled out for particular praise and won both the Diapason d'or de l'année 1999 and the Grand Prix de l'Académie Charles Cros. His more recent recordings include works by Hugues Dufourt (also given a Diapason d'Or in 2008), and on Deutsche Grammophon Harrison Birtwistle's *Theseus Game*.

In the past few years he has conducted many different orchestras in a wide range of repertoire from Berlioz, Wagner, Verdi, Mahler, Ravel, Debussy, Saint-Saëns and Stravinsky to Berio, Birtwistle, Boulez, Carter, Lachenmann, Stockhausen, as well as numerous pieces by composers of the younger generation, notably composers of the French Spectralist school.

Highlights from his recent appearances include a concert with the Tokyo

Philharmonic in August 2008 which was singled out as one of the three best concerts of the year in Japan. In 2008 he again received the Grand-Prix de l'Académie Charles Cros for three recent recordings.

In January 2001 he was awarded Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture.



## **Jessica Walker, Gwendolen Fairfax**

Jessica Walker studied at the Guildhall School of Music and has made appearances for Opera

North, Flanders Opera, The Opera Group, Ravenna Festival, Glyndebourne, National Reisopera, Theatre du Chatelet and Finnish National Opera.

In 2010 she co-created her solo show *The Girl I Left Behind Me* with director Neil Bartlett. Commissioned and premiered at Opera North the show has had considerable critical and commercial success at venues throughout the UK, including a week-long residency at the Barbican's Pit Theatre in 2011 and a three-week run at the Brits Off Broadway Festival in New York. It was published as a play script by Oberon Press in November 2011 and will be released as a CD in 2014.

Her opera *An Eye for an Eye*, co-written with composer David Knotts, premiered at the 2013 Bath International Music Festival.

Regular concert programmes include *Songs of Love and other Disasters* based on the music of Kurt Weill and his contemporaries (released on Avid), *Mercy and Grand: The Tom Waits Project* with Opera North, which toured the UK (released on the Gavin Bryars label).

Current engagements include H.K. Gruber's *Gloria von Jaxtberg* for The Opera Group, and her solo show *Pat Kirkwood is Angry*, including performances at Royal Exchange Manchester and Brits off Broadway 2014.

## **DM Wood, Lighting Designer**

Recent designs include: *El Chico de Oz* (Teatro Municipal – Lima, Peru); *L'Importance d'être Constant* (world premiere: Opéra National de Lorraine – Nancy, France); *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (The Bolshoi), *Il trittico* (Royal Opera House, Covent Garden), *Wild Swans* (world premiere: Young Vic, London and American Repertory Theater), *Anna Nicole* (world premiere co-design: Royal Opera House, Covent Garden), *Anna Bolena*, *Werther*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and *Il trovatore* (Minnesota Opera), *Die Liebe der Danae* (Bard SummerScape), *Moskva*, *Cheremushki* and *The Sound of a Voice* (Hotel of Dreams (Long Beach Opera), *Roberto Devereux* (Opéra de Montréal), *Annie Get Your Gun* (co-design: Young Vic, London),

*La Cenerentola* (Glimmerglass Opera), *Die Zauberflöte* (Houston Grand Opera), *Die Zauberflöte* (Opera Colorado), *Les Misérables* (Copenhagen, Denmark), *Tosca* (Canadian Opera Company), *La Cleopatra* | *Oedipus Rex* (Oper Graz, Austria) and *Tristan und Isolde* (Savonlinna Opera, Finland).

Ms. Wood's work in theatre includes designs for Young Vic (London), American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.), Contemporary American Theater Festival (CATF), Primary Stages (NYC), NYSF – the Public Theatre, Children's Theatre Company – Minneapolis, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Baltimore CenterStage, Trinity Repertory Company and Philadelphia Theatre Company. Ms. Wood's design for *Suor Angelica* (part of *Il trittico* at the Royal Opera House) won the U.K.'s 2012 Knight of Illumination Opera Award.

Upcoming designs include: *Candide* (Opéra National de Lorraine), *La Favorite* (Oper Graz), *Salome* (Opera Philadelphia), *Euryanthe* (Bard SummerScape), *Anna Bolena* (Lyric Opera of Chicago) and *Norma* (San Francisco Opera)



*"There's a real buzz and sense of purpose about what this company is doing" – The Guardian*

Award-winning NI Opera was formed in 2010, with a mission to provide the highest quality opera to the widest possible audience, and to promote young Northern Irish talent. Generously supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, NI Opera has a philosophy of excellence and risk-taking underpinned by an imaginative programming policy and first-rate casting. NI Opera is committed to broadening the audience for this incredible art form that famously combines exciting stories, big spectacle, and great music.

**Artistic Director** - Oliver Mears

**General Manager** - Cliona Donnelly

**Marketing & Communications Director** - Simon Goldrick

**Interim Company Manager** - Aisling Sullivan

For further details,  
**see [www.niopera.com](http://www.niopera.com)**

#### PREVIOUS PRODUCTIONS

##### **L'Elisir d'Amore, September 2013**

*"A real tour de force" – Irish Times*

*"Among the most heart-warming and well-thought-out Elisirs you could hope for" – Opera Now*

##### **The Bear, March 2013**

*"A richly enjoyable and entertaining production" – Opera Magazine*

*"The quality of the singing and acting was excellent...an effervescently enjoyable evening" – Belfast Telegraph*

##### **The Flying Dutchman, February 2013**

*"An achievement of which Wagner himself would no doubt have been proud" – The Telegraph*

*"A thrilling Wagner debut" – The Independent on Sunday*

*"Electrifying" – The Observer*

##### **Noye's Fludde, August & October 2012**

*"An enchanting show" – The Sunday Times*

*"Simply gorgeous" – Irish Times*

##### **NI Opera Shorts, June 2012**

*"Remarkable...each opera was skillful, provoking laughter as well as sorrow" – The Observer*

*"(NI Opera's) most ambitious project so far, NI Opera Shorts was another resounding success" – Opera Journal*

##### **The Turn of the Screw, March & July 2012**

*"This is a first-rate cast...It's a Screw that any company would be proud to tour. From a company that is barely a year old, it's remarkable" – The Independent on Sunday*

*"An extraordinarily good cast...this was very impressive stuff" – Opera Now*

##### **Hansel and Gretel, November 2011, January & November 2012**

*"Lively, funny and provocatively gruesome" – The Sunday Times*

*"A feisty staging of Humperdinck's opera...Northern Ireland Opera continues to punch above its weight" – The Independent on Sunday*

##### **Orpheus in the Underworld, October 2011**

*"Flamboyantly irreverent" – The Guardian*

*"A raucously enjoyable affair, staged with energy and imagination" – The Daily Telegraph*

##### **Tosca (Best Opera winner at the 2011 Irish Times Theatre Awards), March 2011**

*"A remarkable achievement...the results breathed charisma and conviction" – The Times*

*"Remarkable...wonderful...the audience were on their feet and roaring their approval even before the curtain fell" – Opera Journal*

##### **The Medium, February 2011**

*"A spine-tingling tale of trickery and suspense" – Belfast Telegraph*



*Founded in 2012,  
Wide Open Opera's mission is to present new experiences for opera goers through the presentation of major works of the opera repertoire and the championing of new work in partnership with a range of Irish writers, composers and opera practitioners.*

**Artistic Director** - Fergus Sheil  
**Executive Producer** - Gavin O'Sullivan

PO Box 8602 Dublin 8  
[www.wideopenopera.com](http://www.wideopenopera.com)  
[www.facebook.com/wideopenopera](http://www.facebook.com/wideopenopera)  
Twitter: @wideopenopera

#### PREVIOUS PRODUCTIONS

Tristan und Isolde September 2012  
WOO's inaugural performance of Wagner's Tristan und Isolde took place at Dublin's Bord Gáis Energy Theatre.

*"A Tristan und Isolde to cherish" – Irish Times*

*"Oh, the power and the glory of it all! .... The power was soprano Miriam Murphy .....The glory was for Wide Open Opera" – Sunday Business Post*

The Alma Fetish September 2013  
A world premiere performance of The Alma Fetish by Raymond Deane (music) and Gavin Kostick (text) at the National Concert Hall, Dublin.

*"I suspect nothing on Ireland's opera stage this year will equal this remarkable achievement" – Sunday Business Post*

#### FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS

In May 2014, again in the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre, we present the Irish premiere of John Adams' opera Nixon in China, a seminal contemporary opera which has been seen the world over. This visually stunning production with high-tech sound and video has been staged in Vancouver and San Francisco in 2010 and 2012.

Next summer we will also be out on the streets with a Dublin City Council commission of 5 operas, each of five minutes duration, by Brian Irvine (music) and John McIllduff (text).

We have many further operas in development and we aim to continue to provide unique experiences for Irish audiences.

John Adams: Nixon in China  
11, 14, 17 May 2014  
Bord Gáis Energy Theatre  
[www.bordgaisenergytheatre.ie](http://www.bordgaisenergytheatre.ie)



# KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

THE MUSICAL

8-23 NOVEMBER

HALF MOON

From the writers of "Cabaret"  
and "Chicago"  
Winner of 7 Tony Awards,  
including Best Musical (1993)

Book by Terrence McNally  
Music by John Kander  
Lyrics by Fred Ebb  
Based on the Novel by Manuel Puig

Starring Michael Grennell,  
Michael Sands & Carolyn Goodwin

Directed by John O'Brien  
Designed by Lisa Zagone

Percussion: Caltriona Frost  
& Alex Petcu  
Bass: Deirdre Frost

Nightly from 8:30pm  
Tickets\* €25 | Preview\* €20  
[www.corkoperahouse.ie](http://www.corkoperahouse.ie)  
021 427 0022

\*Internet and telephone bookings  
are subject to a booking fee  
of €3.50 per ticket. All tickets  
include a €1 Restoration Levy.



From 12 December



# Aladdin

Directed by Bryan Flynn



Tickets: €15-€30\*  
Family Rates: €80-€100\*  
021 427 0022  
[www.corkoperahouse.ie](http://www.corkoperahouse.ie)  
\*Booking Fees Apply.



**Culturefox.ie** is the definitive online guide to Irish cultural events, giving you complete information about cultural activities both here and abroad.

To find out what's on near you right now, visit **Culturefox.ie** on your computer or mobile phone.



Download the **FREE App**  
available now for:

iPhone | Android | Blackberry





Open to the world since 1830

**Austins Department Store,**  
The Diamond,  
Derry / Londonderry,  
Northern Ireland  
BT48 6HR

Tel: +44 (0)28 7126 1817

[www.austinsstore.com](http://www.austinsstore.com)



© Bernard Ward derryphotos.com

The arts are very important to us;  
they weave through all our coverage  
- on radio, on television, online and  
on mobile.

And by supporting arts events  
nationwide, we can do our bit to  
keep arts at the centre of your  
community too.

Learn more:

[www.rte.ie/about/supportingthearts](http://www.rte.ie/about/supportingthearts)



*this event  
is supported  
by*

**RTE**   
**SUPPORTING THE**  
**arts**



Verdi  
**Macbeth**  
February 21 - 23, 2014

Grand Opera House, Belfast  
Tickets £18 - £40 Box office 028 9024 1919  
Book online at [www.goh.co.uk](http://www.goh.co.uk)



[www.niopera.com](http://www.niopera.com)

