

A SOUTHPORT DRAMATIC CLUB PRODUCTION

Oscar Wilde's

AN IDEAL HUSBAND



Directed by John Sharp

24th September - 2nd October 2010 7.45pm





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AN IDEAL HUSBAND

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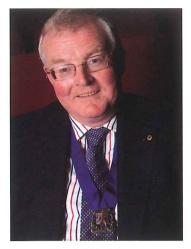
Welcome to the SDC Season 2010/11

A tremendous lot of work has been going on since our latest audience graced the seats. You will already have seen, indeed it is difficult to miss our grand new box office facilities, and we hope you find the new lavatories convenient. I recommend you "pay a call" - but please don't forget to return for the second half.

We extend a warm welcome to new patrons and sponsors and thank sincerely the loyal supporters who return to us year after year. Since becoming Chairman in June we have suffered the loss of several well loved members, whom we will long remember either for performing in, directing our shows, or simply for their support over many years.

Our Youth Theatre productions, however, remind us of the old adage "the show must go on." This theatre is privileged to have the abundance of talent and energy which these young people provide. The shows they appear in are a breath of fresh air and fun for our audience.

Following the variety of weather we have experienced this summer, at the end of last season we were in drought conditions; July came and dampened our spirits somewhat, so we are all ready for an exciting season of drama to distract us from the elements.



David Bolshaw Chairman

The Play Selection and Casting Committee has spent many hours putting our season together for us, across many different facets to delight members and subscribers alike.

We embrace the new season with optimism based on the experience of last year which proved a rip-roaring success.

Our season begins with Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* directed by John Sharp. Our opener is a dazzling blend of farce and morality, human frailty and social hypocrisy: I am confident you will enjoy it.

Our second production is *Humble Boy* by Charlotte Jones; first presented at the Royal National Theatre in 2001. Under the direction of James Hughes-Alty - it subtly explores the relationship between a mother and her

son following the death of her husband.

On late November cooler nights we are to be warmed with *Going Straight* by Richard Harris, first shown at the Theatre Royal Windsor in 2004, to be directed by Michele Martin this play of intrigue is one not to be missed.

Next stop Christmas HO! HO! HO! HO! And our glittering Family Pantomime under the direction of Tracey Batchelor is *Babes in the Wood*, with the first tranche of the season behind you (oh yes it is!)we look forward to New Year and fresh excitement to come in the second half of the season.

On a personal note it is my great pleasure to be Chairman of such a talented society which is so well able to support our "Little" gem of a theatre - I raise a glass to our continuing success.

David Bolshaw Chairman



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Oscar Wilde

A true original in life, it is almost impossible to write anything original about Oscar Wilde.

Born Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde in Dublin on 16th October 1854 to Sir William Wilde and his wife Jane, who was a successful poet and journalist writing patriotic Irish verse under the pseudonym "Speranza".

Sir William was a leading ear and eye surgeon, a renowned philanthropist and a gifted writer, mostly about archaeology and folklore. Wilde was educated at Portora Royal School Enniskillen, Trinity College Dublin and Magdalen College Oxford, where he received his first literary recognition, the 1878 Newdigate Prize for his poem *Ravenna*.

Wilde then moved to Chelsea where he was admired as a writer within his prudish Victorian society, at the same time acquiring a reputation as a scandal author.

He married Constance Lloyd in 1884, later having Two sons Cyril and Vyvyan and to support them he accepted a job as editor of Women's World magazine.

A labour of love was his 1888 publication of *The Happy Prince and other tales* written for his sons.

Many famous works followed. *The Picture of*



Oscar Wilde

Dorian Gray 1891; Lady Windermer's Fan 1892; A Woman of No Importance 1893; An Ideal Husband 1894 and The Importance of being Ernest 1895, this last piece satirizing the upper classes and considered his best work.

1895 was a traumatic year for Wilde. In 1891 he had began an affair with Lord Alfred Douglas, nicknamed "Bosie", who became the love of his life and his downfall.

In 1895 Oscar sued Bosie's father as the Marquis of Oueensberry had accused him of consorting with rent boys. The libel trial became a "cause célèbre" as salacious details of Wilde's private life began to appear in the press. A team of private detectives had directed Queensberry's lawyers (led by Edward Carson QC) to the world of the Victorian underground, Wilde's association with blackmailers and male

prostitutes, cross-dressers and homosexual brothels. Wilde was unsuccessful and was himself arrested for gross indecency, later being sentenced to two years hard labour for the crime of sodomy.

Whilst in Reading jail he wrote *De Profundis*, a dramatic monologue and autobiography addressed to Bosie about the inhuman conditions, child prisoners and child labour.

In very poor health and after his release he went to Paris, living his lonely and penniless last three years under the name Sebastian Melmoth.

Oscar Wilde died on November 30th 1900 at the Hotel d'Alsace in Paris, his last words reputedly being "My wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death. One or the other of us has got to go".

Wilde was initially buried in the Cimetiere de Bagneux outside Paris; in 1909 his remains were disinterred to Cementiere du Pere-Lachaise, inside the city.





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About the Play

An Ideal Husband premiered in London at The Haymarket Theatre on January 2, 1895, and was published in 1896. It was the third of Wilde's four Comedy plays to be staged, (the three other being: The Importance of Being Ernest, Lady Windermere's Fan, A Woman of no Importance).

When the Prince of Wales sent for Wilde on the opening night, the flattered playwright remarked that he would have to cut some of the scenes. "Pray do not take out a single word," said the Prince, and Wilde was more than happy to leave the play as it was. While modern audience is likely to be more critical, it cannot be denied that An Ideal Husband is much better crafted than either of Wilde's earlier comedies. Indeed, no less a judge than George Bernhard Shaw was moved by his work to pronounce Wilde "Our only thorough playwright."

In many respects it is Wilde's most serious comedy as the play was unusual at the time for its cynical view of political life which some critics found hard to accept. Political treachery,



Theatre Royal Haymarket At the time when *An Ideal Husband* was premiered

blackmail, theft, and above all, self-interest abound in the essential hypocritical world of English high society. Lord Goring, the character who expresses Wilde's own views in stylish epigram, apparently defeats Mrs. Chevely in her original purpose, but she receives no public censure, and leaves the stage free to prey on society elsewhere.

The play has a sense of ambivalence that recurs in much of Wilde's work, symbolized here by the piece of jewellery that appears to be a brooch but is actually a bracelet. Neither people nor

things are what they appear to be. The plot relies on a series of sudden reversals which are engendered by corny or improbable devices such as the convenience of kleptomania. This has elements of farce, but as always in Wilde's comedies, grace and wit override imperfections or cliches in the action, and the play is very funny.

The play was a big success with the audience. However, critics of the time were not as appreciative as audiences, which was the case for all of Wilde's social comedies. Critics thought these plays more flippant than substantive; audiences were delighted by the wonderful wit of the dramas. Numerous choice "one-liners" and other pithy witticisms that Wilde's dramatic characters deliver are still quoted by people today.





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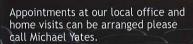
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The Suez Canal

The Suez Canal is an artificial sea-level waterway in Egypt, connecting the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. Opened in November 1869, it allows water transportation between Europe and Asia without navigating around Africa.

The Canal is owned and maintained by the Suez Canal Authority of the Arab Republic of Egypt. Under international treaty, it may be used "in time of war as in time of peace, by every vessel of commerce or of war, without distinction of flag."

In 1854 and 1856 Ferdinand de Lesseps obtained concession from Sa'id Pasha, the Viceroy of Egypt, to create a company to construct a canal open to ships of all nations.

The excavation took 10 years using forced labour of Egyptian workers during a certain period. Some sources estimate that over 30,000 people were working on the canal at any given period, and that more than 1,5 million people from various countries were employed. Thousands of labourers died on the project. Initially international opinion was sceptical and Suez Canal company shares did not sell well overseas. Britain, USA, Austria and Russia did not buy any significant number of shares. All French shares were quickly sold in France.



The Suez Canal seen from space

A contemporary British sceptic claimed: "One thing is sure ... our local merchant community doesn't pay practical attention to all this grand work, and it is legitimate to doubt that the canal's receipts could ever be sufficient to recover its maintenance fee. It will never become a large ships accessible way in any case."

The canal opened to shipping on November 17th 1869. Although numerous technical, political and financial problems had been overcome, the final cost was more than double the original estimate. The opening was performed by French Empress Eugenie in the Imperial yacht Aigle. The first ship to follow the vacht through the canal was the British P&O liner Delta. After the opening of the canal, the Suez Canal Company was in financial difficulties. The remaining

work was competed in 1871. and traffic was below expectation in the first two years. However, the canal had an immediate and dramatic effect on world trade. Combined with the American transcontinental railroad completed six months earlier, it allowed the entire world to be circled in record time. It played an important role in increasing European colonisation of Africa. External debt forced Sa'id Pasha's successor. Isma'il Pasha, to sell his country's share in the canal for £400,000,000 to the United Kingdom in 1875, but French shareholders still held the majority. (This was when Robert Chiltern made the start of his fortune). Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli was accused by William Gladstone of undermining Britain's constitutional System, due to his lack of reference or consent from Parliament when purchasing the shares with funding from the Rothschilds.





Helen Bennett Lady Chiltern



Sandra Unsworth Mrs Cheveley



The Earl of



Helene Porter Mabel Chiltern



Margaret Mann Lady Markby



Di



Laura Jones Countess of Basildon



Emilia Scott Mrs. Marchmont

AN IDEAL by Osc

takes place in London. The time is 1895. Act 1 Act 2 Act 3 Act 4

The action of the play is completed within 24 hours and

The Octagon Room in Sir Robert Chiltern's house Morning Room in Sir Robert

The Library in Lord Goring's Chiltern's house house in Curzon Street

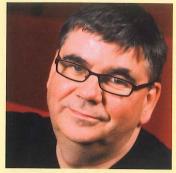
Morning Room in Sir Robert Chiltern's house

There is an interval of 20 Why not beat the rush and bar prior to tl

Designated premises Su



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Alistair Hewitt Sir Robert Chiltern

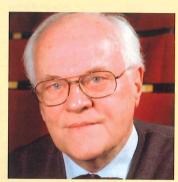


Robert Jones Mason





Adrian Roberts Viscount Goring



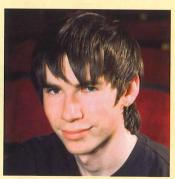
David Charters Phipps



HUSBAND Wilde

utes between Acts 2 & 3 order your drinks in the rformance?

isor, ALAN NEWPORT



John Delahunty Mr. Montford



Jon Russell Vicomte de Nanjac

Music used during the production:

Sir Charles Villiers Standord's String Quartet No2 and Fantasy for Horn Quintet, Robert Schumann's String Quartet No. 3.

Staging

Stage Manager		Pete Beswick
A.S.M. (Book)		Jean Watkinson
Set Design		Syd Coley
Lighting Design		Mike Clarke
Lighting Design		Roy Carr
Sound Design		Brian Hodge
Properties	•••••	Ceri Powell
		Beth Hill
Flowers		Joan Hardwick
Wardrobe		SDC Wardrobe Department
Costumes	•••••	Royal Exchange, Manchester
Set Constuction	•••••	The SDC Construction Team
Scenic Artist	•••••	Bob Jessamine
Stage Crew		Mike Clarke, Nick Evans,
		Colin Haynes,
		Sabrina Regazzoni
Photographs	•••••	Fletcherhill Photography
Programme Editor		Jorgen Petersen

Cameras and recording equipment may not be operated during performances Kindly ensure that your Mobile phone is switched off. Thank you.

Programme Layout & Design Mitchell & Wright

The Little Theatre - Home of the Southport Dramatic Club.

The SDC wishes to ensure that all our patrons enjoy a comfortable, enjoyable and safe visit to our theatre. We should be grateful for your cooperation in helping us to achieve this. Please note the following:

- Should you arrive after the performance has started, you will be guided to your seats when a suitable opportunity occurs.
- At the end of the performance, exits will be open at both the front and back of the auditorium.
- First Aid assistance is regularly provided by volunteers from the St. John Ambulance Brigade. Should you require help, please advise our stewards on duty in the Foyer.
- Patrons with hearing impairments should note that the auditorium has an Induction Loop System for your assistance. Hearing wands are also available from our stewards.

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An Ideal Husband as a reflection on Wilde

Sir Robert Chiltern's fear of public ruin might well be Wilde's own. The play was written only a year before its author found himself in court. a time when Wilde was afflicted with strong sense of his own impending doom. Describing An Ideal Husband in a letter to a friend Wilde observed: "It reads rather well, and some of its passages seem prophetic of tragedy to come". But while Wilde clearly identified with Sir Robert, it would be a mistake to see that character as the sole voice of Wilde's point of view within the play.

If as a public figure hovering on the brink of disgrace Sir Robert finds himself in a position that was analogous to Wilde's, Lord Goring represents the way Wilde



Oscar Wilde

liked to see himself. Of all Wilde's dandies, Goring is far the most interesting. Although he chooses to show himself as shallow to those who do not interest him, he is, as we are allows to see, both wise and kind.

In Lord Goring, Wilde created a character very much like himself. Like Wilde, Goring lies about his age, claims to worship youth, is easily bored. and appears to be selfish. But Goring is also a kind of providence who settles all troubles by quick brainwork and utter detachment. Outwardly a dandy and an idler, he is inwardly a philosopher, even a man of action and decision if need be. All Wilde's friends remarked that in spite of his frivolous attitude towards life... his advice in mundane affairs was singularly shrewd, and each of these characteristics is given to Goring.

The philosopher would not be possible without the dandy. It is the seemingly idle life that leaves the dandy free to observe his fellow men, and observation is the beginning of wisdom.

The Dandy in Historical context

Dandies, of which there are many in Wilde's plays, are a phenomenon of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe. Dandies were men that were known for their commitment to fashion usually extravagant fashion and for their love of all thing beautiful in general. Nineteenth-century dandies in the new mega cities such as Paris, London and New York, would stroll elegantly down pedestrian boulevards and frequent fashionable places. It is said that their exquisite nature and distaste for all thing rough and vulgar stemmed from their dismay over a



A typical Dandy

changing world. Specifically, these city dandies were witnessing the industrialization of their environment. This involved a change from a world where rural living was dominant to a world where factories in new urban centres

were being rapidly built - with all their belching, polluting coal smoke, as well as their horribly exploited and impoverished workers (ten-twelve hour or more workdays, pitiful inadequate pay, and six, sometimes seven-day work weeks). What they saw was ugliness and the worship of money no matter the environmental and human cost, so they rejected the practical and spoke for the value of the ephemeral, the delicate, and the beautiful. It was a way of insisting that the creation of wealth was evil if the quality of people's lives was the price.





















Political Scandals

Scandal has been a recurrent theme in politics and many careers have been destroyed by it. The resignation of David Laws after only a few days in office unsettled the establishment of the coalition government, and the outery over MPs' expenses occupied the headlines for several weeks prior to the run-up to the latest election. "Sleaze" became the key word in the 1990s and in the first decade of the twenty-first century ministers were regularly forced out of office for one alleged misdemeanour or another.

None of this is, of course, new. Many will remember John Stonehouse, the Profumo affair, the resignation of Reginald Maudling and other sensations of the 1960s and 70s. Earlier there were the Marconi and Honours Scandals. Even Churchill was accused of accepting cash for political purposes in 1923

When Oscar Wilde wrote An Ideal Husband he will have been conscious of the affair of Jabez Balfour, an MP, who in 1892 set up a bogus building society, which ruined many house-holders and resulted in Balfour being sent to prison for 14 years. An event of even greater political significance was the O'Shea divorce scandal which broke the power of the great Irish politician Charles Parnell in 1860.

Scandal and politics seem to go together, and perhaps it is not surprising. Those who are ambitious and seek power are by definition those who are most prone to risk and temptation. At the same time by putting themselves in a position in which they tell other people what to do, they are easily exposed to enthusiastic vilification from the press once they are shown to be less than perfect.

Oscar Wilde was touching on a recognisable theme in his exploration of the case of Robert Chiltern, though his resolution of the problem is not one we would expect in the world today. From his own life he was fully aware of human imperfection, which he saw as requiring generosity and sympathy rather than denunciation.

J.S.

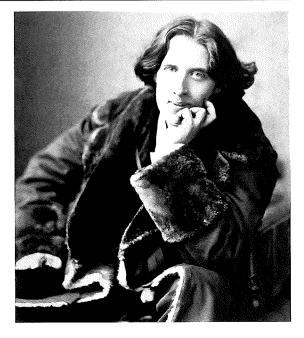
Brain Teaser

Which one of the following quotations is not by Oscar Wilde:

- 1. "I have a very simple taste I only prefer the best"
- 2. "The only thing I cannot resist is temptation".
- 3. "Religion is only taken seriously by old maids and fanatics".

Answer on page 19

SDC
1920-2010





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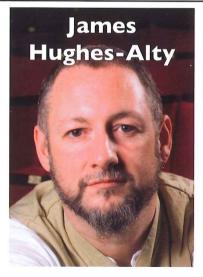
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directed by James Hughes-Alty

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An SDC Production



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Going Straight

by Richard Harris

directed by Michéle Martin

An SDC Production



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Babes in the Wood

directed by Tracey Batchelor

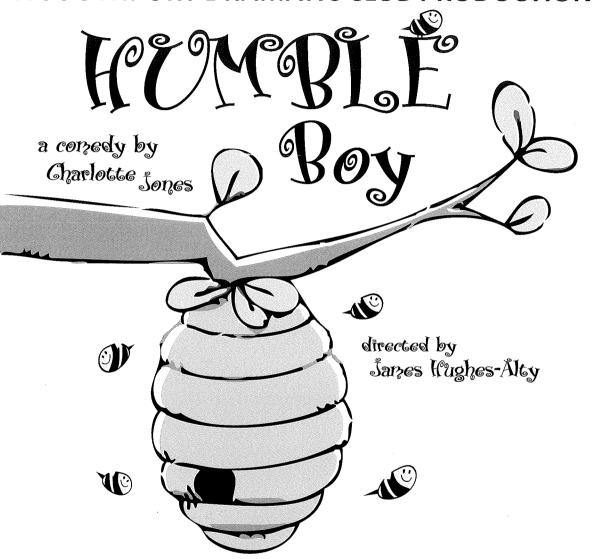


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A SOUTHPORT DRAMATIC CLUB PRODUCTION



29th October - 6th November 2010 7.45pm



Box Office Opens: 22nd October 2010 at 11am

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