

Celebrating our 60th Anniversary
Actors Ensemble of Berkeley

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING
EARNEST

BY OSCAR WILDE



Directed by
Nicole Meñez

January 20th - February 11th
Live Oak Theater 1301 Shattuck, Berkeley

www.aeofberkeley.org

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Not many will dispute the wit behind this classic by Oscar Wilde. With a story as wily as this and an equally clever cast of characters, the most difficult part of my job was to find a team just as striking as the ones Mr. Wilde had lain before me on paper. Needless to say, it wasn't such a difficult task after all - you'll find that these players have unearthed a hunger for drama and status no matter what social standing dictates for them. I've delighted in seeing them dance around one another and their societal obligations through a world that our design team has crafted to be just as vibrant as the characters.

So why this play? Why now? I believe that, given our current political climate and the three-ring circus that have become of our social media platforms, all of us could use a good laugh at the hypocrisy of human behavior. The expectations impressed upon each of these characters by their societal roles can hardly contain the authenticity of their wants and needs, let alone the contrast between their beliefs and their actions. As our scintillating Algernon states, "The truth is rarely pure and never simple" and I think that holds true in the many ways in which the modern person is able to present themselves and, in a way, perform the best version of themselves to the world.

So please do sit back, relax, and - amidst the droll humor and sandwich crumbs - have a jolly chuckle at the utter humanity of these larger than life characters. Please enjoy *The Importance of Being Earnest!*

Nicole Meñez, January, 2017

About Actors Ensemble of Berkeley

Actors Ensemble (**AEB**) has been around the block (and just around the corner from you) since 1957, making us the longest-running stage company in Berkeley. Since 1965 we have performed primarily at Live Oak Theatre in North Berkeley. Recently we have also taken the opportunity to bring the magic of theatre to John Hinkel Park, the site of many wonderful performances from the forerunner of Cal Shakes, Shotgun Players, Women's Will, and others over the years. We hope you enjoy the show.

As Berkeley's only true community theatre company, we depend on our volunteers to bring their energy and creative vision to each play we produce. If you would like to volunteer in our theatre, give us a call or send us an email! We'd love for you to play a part in our next show!

Actors Ensemble of Berkeley
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Check out www.AeofBerkeley.Org and subscribe to our email list for

- Staged Readings
- Audition Notices
- Two-for-One Nights and Other Discounts – and More!

Board of Directors

Crystal Brown, Michael R. Cohen, Robert Estes, Linda Giron, Bob Gudmundsson, Terry Haley, Martha Luehrmann, Norah Foster, William Martinelli, Emmy Pierce, Vicki Siegel, Jerome Solberg, Jeff Trescott, Susannah Wood.

**Act I is approximately 45 minutes long:
15 minute intermission**

Act II is approximately 1 hour 15 minutes long

Actors Ensemble would like to thank the Civic Arts Commission of the City of Berkeley for the grant of \$5,200 in 2016 to Actors Ensemble, enabling us to continue to provide free or low cost opportunities for community members to participate in the life changing activities of theater arts.

***The Importance of Being Earnest
A Trivial Play for Serious People
by Oscar Wilde***

Cast in Order of Appearance

*Lane.....Laur Raag
Algernon.....Davern Wright
JackFrancis Serpa
Lady BracknellMarcia Kimmell
Gwendolen Laura Domingo Short
CecilyKirby Hoberg
Miss Prism.....Maxine Sattizahn
Chasuble.....Lee Vogt
Merriman.....Lee Angelo Gonzalez*

Staff

*DirectorNicole Meñez
Stage ManagerPolina Litvak
Costume Designer.....Gabriel Dominic Carlos
Set Designer Lisa Siegel Sullivan
Lighting DesignerMichael Sweeney
Sound Designer.....Ella Cooley
Producer/Assistant Director..... Michael R Cohen
Producer/Publicity..... Jerome Solberg
Set Construction/Technical Direction.....Bob Gudmundsson
Assistant Set Construction.....Michael R. Cohen,
.....Jerome Solberg, Lisa Siegel Sullivan, Laur Raag
Graphic Design/Photography.....Vicki Victoria
Props..... Polina Litvak, Victoria F. Siegel, Jerome Solberg
Program/Furniture.....Jerome Solberg
Light Board Operator.....Lucas Clarvoe*

SPECIAL THANKS TO: Jo Lusk, Heinz, and Laura Morgan and the rest of Masquers Playhouse in Point Richmond for their generous assistance with costumes, furniture, and props. Douglas Morrison Theatre for the use of furniture. Jon Tracy and the rest of TheatreFirst for their generosity and cooperation. Todd Leslie and Urban Mattress of Berkeley for their generously provision of rehearsal space. The City of Berkeley Arts Grant Commission. Terry Rucker for the use of sound equipment. Eric Phan, and Karina Chavarin.

Cast and Crew Biographies

In Alphabetical Order

Gabriel Dominic Carlos (Costumer) was born on a moonless night to a band of wandering Gypsies in the midst of the cork woodlands of central Portugal. As his head was laid to rest in the bosom of his mother, he caught the scent of her perfumed cashmere sweater. At that point he knew that his fate, and his vocation, would always be costumes.

Michael R. Cohen (Producer/Assistant Director) directed *Twelfth Night*, *Panhandle*, *The Talking Cure*, and *Fortinbras* for **AEB** and is board president. He also co-chairs the Ross Alternative Works (RAW) committee for the Ross Valley Players. For 25 years he served as Director of Performing Arts at Rosemead High School - a public high school east of Los Angeles. An AEA member, he was assistant stage manager for the Barn Theater in Augusta, Michigan, and stage manager for the Ensemble Studio Theater and the Bilingual Foundation of the Arts in Los Angeles.

Ella Cooley (Sound Design) is a musician and theatre-maker based in San Francisco. When she is not designing sound for the theatre, she is making fancy lattes for folks in San Francisco, singing in the Oakland-based neo-soul band Paper Void, and practicing yoga. This is her first production with **AEB**, and she is very happy to have been brought on to work with such a diverse and interesting group of artists!

Laura Domingo (Gwendolen) Previous **AEB** credits: *Pride and Prejudice* (Elizabeth Bennet), *Five Women Wearing the Same Dress* (Trisha). Other credits: *The Light in the Piazza*, *Crimes of the Heart*, *Man of La Mancha* (Altarena Playhouse), *The Life of Galileo*, *Hot Mikado* (Masquers Playhouse), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Curtain Theatre), *Of Serpents & Seaspray* (Custom Made Theatre Company), *Lend Me a Tenor* (Ross Valley Players - SFBATCC Award). Much love to Ryan!

Kirby Hoberg (Cecily) is delighted to be making her debut with Actors Ensemble of Berkeley. She has spent the past year training with the Berkeley Ballet Theater, and is returning to the stage after taking a break to have her two children. Favorite prior shows include *Picnic* (Madge), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Titania), and *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* (Ruth).

Lorenz Angelo Gonzalez (Merriman) is happy to be working with **AEB**. He was recently seen at Bindlestiff Studio's Tagalog Festival in

Si Maria Isabella at Ang Guryon ng Mga Tala. Other acting credits include *Timon: The Musical* (Theatre Rhinoceros), *Welga* (Greenhouse Festival), *Harpies* (SF Olympians Festival), *How the Horn Ended You* (The Bakla Show), and *A Midsummer Nights Dream* (UC Berkeley). Lorenz received a BA in Theatre & Performance Studies and Ethnic Studies from UC Berkeley. He is a resident artist at Bindlestiff Studio. When not on stage, Lorenz works in arts administration with Playwrights Foundation and as a freelance portrait/wedding photographer. Visit lorenzangelo.com

Bob Gudmundsson (Set Construction/Technical Coordinator) has been with Actors Ensemble since 1988, where he has worked on countless productions. He sends his love to Bird.

Marcia Kimmell's (Lady Bracknell) theater career spans over 40 years, playing character roles including LADY MACBETH, the COWARDLY LION, BEATRICE in *The Effect Of Gamma Rays On... Marigolds*, and WINNIE in Beckett's, "*Happy Days*." She cowrote and acted in *LEFTOVERS, the Ups & Downs of a Compulsive Eater*, playing to sold out houses on the West Coast and off-Broadway, NY. She founded The Next Stage Training Programs in 1979, dedicated to the development of human potential.

Polina Litvak (Stage Management) is very thankful **AEB** for letting her help put together one of her favorite plays. A recent graduate of UC Berkeley, she has appeared both onstage and backstage as a part of various Bay Area productions, including Actors Ensemble's *Twelfth Night* last summer. This spring, she will be stage managing *Caeneus and Poseidon* at Dragon Productions.

A Bay Area native, **Nicole Meñez** (Director) is a director, educator, and performer. Nicole currently works at New Conservatory Theatre Center as the Program Manager for their YouthAware Educational Theatre program and as a teaching artist. Outside of New Conservatory, she has also assistant directed with companies such as A.C.T. and TheatreWorks and directed with Custom Made Theatre Co. and 3Girls Theatre. Nicole has performed with theater companies around the Bay Area as well, this past summer having played Antonia in **AEB's** musical production of *Twelfth Night* and most recently performing in *The Last Christmas* at PianoFight.

Laur Raag (Lane) is a performing artist and the artistic director of Stray Dog Theater Co. in Oakland, CA. He most recently starred in Stray Dog's *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as well as working with various theater groups in the Bay Area including foolsFURY and Ragged Wing Ensemble.

Maxine Sattizahn (Miss Prism) is delighted to be working with **AEB** again after playing Lady Catherine de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice*. This fall she was thrilled to be an understudy for Berkeley Repertory Theater's *It Can't Happen Here*, which rivals dancing with Twyla

Tharp years ago as her claim to fame. Other favorite roles include Queen Elinor in *King John* at Marin Shakespeare Company and Queen Eleanor in *The Lion in Winter* at the Novato Theater Company. Whenever possible, she relaxes at home with her husband, Ed, an abbot with the San Francisco Zen Center.

Jerome Solberg (Producer) has been in and around **AEB** and helping to keep it going since 2005.

Laura Siegel Sullivan (Set Design) is delighted to collaborate on the scenery for Oscar Wilde's classic comedy for this show, and to work with **AEB** again. This is Sullivan's second set for the company after creating a dust bowl town for Panhandle in 2015. In addition to her work as a set designer, Sullivan runs a freelance design and communications firm in Oakland with a focus on the arts and architecture.

Michael Sweeney (Light Design) has thirty years experience in up to regional theater level (held staff positions at Berkeley Repertory Theater and The Magic Theater, designed mainstage productions at 2,500 seat houses -- Leshner Center and others). Really fond of small theater and very good at figuring out how to improvise, but technically solid; ten years Master Electrician maintaining gear at a mid-range theater. Also electronics geek and enjoy leveraging the new tools to solve theatrical problems.

Lee Vogt (Chasuble) is once again happy to be on the Live Oak Stage in another piece from the Shaw/Wilde period, the former being *The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet* and the latter the show you are about to see.

Davern Wright's (Algernon) acting credits include San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Marin Shakespeare Company, 42nd St. Moon, Golden Thread Productions, Ragged Wing Ensemble, and many others. Writing credits include *Cratchit* (Best of Playground SF 2015; Playground SF People's Choice Award) and *Would You Like the Can, Sir?* (Playground SF People's Choice Award). He has an M.F.A. in Film Production from the University of Southern California and a B.A. in Theatre from Williams College. Many thanks to his family and friends.

When not on stage, **Vicki Victoria** (Graphic Design) is a visual artist who indulges her creativity through photography, painting and graphic arts. You may have seen her at Hinkel Park in Inferno Theatre's *The Tempest*, or previous summers collaborating with **AEB** for *King Lear* and *Penthesilea*. Vicki has appeared in regional and community musical theatre productions, including PCT's *South Pacific* (Bloody Mary) and *Into the Woods* (Stepmother), TVRT & MST's *Avenue Q* (Christmas Eve) and *Les Mis*.



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Actors Ensemble especially thanks **Urban Mattress, Berkeley**, and their proprietor **Todd Leslie**, for generously providing rehearsal space. This is the second consecutive year **AEB** has partnered with **Urban Mattress**. **Urban Mattress** is a locally-owned provider of fine bedding products for all budgets, with quality products and a simple, honest, and fair buying process.

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The Wilde Life, curated and directed by Robert Estes, Readings from his plays, poetry, prose and essays, a celebration of the work of this giant of English Letters.

One night only, Monday January 30th, 2017

Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde

by Moises Kaufmann, directed by Laur Raag

"A dazzling coup de theatre, at once compelling history and chilling human drama." —Time Magazine.

One night only, Monday Feb. 6th, 2017

Check out our website www.aeofberkeley.org for exciting announcements about upcoming staged readings and our 2017 season in John Hinkel Park – Join our FB group! - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/67180033800>

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