



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
DATE: 19 October 2023



University
of Victoria

2023-24 Season

PERFORMANCES:

Preview:

November 8 at 7:30 p.m.

Evenings:

November 9-11, 14-18, 21-24 at 8 p.m.

Matinees:

November 18 & 25 at 2 p.m.

Streaming:

November 23 & 24 at 7 p.m.

November 25 at 3 p.m.

*Pre-show lecture with director Alistair Newton
at 7 p.m. on Friday, November 10.

Tickets:

\$17–\$32 | 250-721-8000

Director:

Alistair Newton

Set Designer:

Zoe Bechtold

Lighting Designer:

Rebekah Johnson

Sound Designer:

Theo Falkiner

Costume Designer:

Carmen Alatorre

Intimacy Director:

Treena Stubel

Stream Director:

R. Davey

Accompanist/Musical Director:

Emilie Shjarback

Stage Manager:

Taylor Cormack

Media Contact:

Bernadette McKelvey, Marketing &
Communications Manager, Dept. of
Theatre
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www.phoenixtheatres.ca

Box Office: 250-721-8000

***The Importance of Being Earnest*: A Timeless Delight at UVic**

Phoenix Theatre's production breaks free from tradition, unravelling the hidden layers and challenging conventions in this classic masterpiece.

Oscar Wilde's comic masterpiece takes the stage at UVic for the first time. This renowned classic, celebrated for its sharp humour and daring social commentary, remains one of the most adored and frequently revived comedies in the theatre world. Join us for an uproarious evening where identity, transition, & transformation collide in Wilde's brilliant play. While Victorian Britain might have found Wilde too daring, modern audiences can't get enough of the timeless humour.

The Importance of Being Earnest is a witty and satirical comedy that explores the absurdities of social conventions and the complexities of mistaken identities. Set in the elegant society of 19th-century England, the play follows the exploits of two bachelors, John Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff, who lead double lives and invent fictitious relatives to escape their respective responsibilities. As they vie for the affection of two ladies, Gwendolen and Cecily, their lies unravel, leading to hilarious consequences. Wilde's razor-sharp wit and clever dialogue keep the audience in stitches from start to finish.

Breaking free from tradition

"In this reimagining, we delve into the subtext of Wilde's work, unveiling its hidden layers and the remarkable queerness that underscores the characters' interactions. Traditionally, productions of *The Importance of Being Earnest* have often been accompanied by heavy curtains, floral wallpaper, and lace doilies, drawing inspiration from received ideas about the late Victorian period. However, Wilde's plays have the potential to illuminate and challenge conventional associations and usher audiences into a dramatic universe that embraces melodrama, transgressive queerness of the music hall, secret codes, hidden symbols, double entendres, and delightful paradoxes.

From Shakespearian boy players in Elizabethan London, to the dame in a Christmas panto, through the sketches of Monty Python and pop stars like Boy George and Marilyn, drag has always been a mainstay of British popular culture. In this production, I have added two historical drag artistes (Lady Stella Clinton and Vesta Tilley) who achieved fame in Wilde's cultural milieu. I have tried to stay true to Wilde in both his populism and his subversion; as Gilbert says to Ernest in Wilde's *The Critic as Artist*: 'The one duty we owe to history is to re-write it.'" —Alistair Newton, director

About the director

Alistair Newton is a director of theatre and opera, as well as a dramaturge, educator, and playwright. They are an alumnus of the Directors' Lab of Lincoln Centre Theater, hold a BFA from UVic, an MFA through Canadian Stage and York University's joint program in stage direction, and have created productions for George Brown College, Toronto Metropolitan University, and Dalhousie University. Next up, Alistair will be directing Agatha Christie's *Witness for the Prosecution* for the Shaw Festival.

The production runs **November 9–25, 2023** and will feature both live and streamed performances.

High-resolution images are available one to two days before the opening night performance.

Reviewing tickets are available. Please contact Bernadette McKelvey to request reviewing tickets.