

A cluster of green orchid flowers with yellow centers is positioned at the top of the page, partially overlapping the title.

the **IMPORTANCE**

of being  
**Earnest**

by Oscar Wilde



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## Welcome

**Oscar Wilde subtitled THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST “a trivial comedy for serious people”. This “trivial” comedy has proved Wilde’s most enduring popular play.**

Sexy, sophisticated, satirical and subversive EARNEST is fiendishly clever work; a confection of delicious language that so effortlessly and so effectively lampoons the artifice, pretensions and hypocrisies of the leisured classes to whom “in matters of great importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing”. Part farce, part comedy of manners and all fun EARNEST is a glorious mix of slick social commentary and almost Alice in Wonderland absurdity.

That the motives, morals and mores of its characters are still recognisable to us and still make us laugh 115 years after the play was written is testimony to Wilde’s huge talent to amuse, shock, provoke, challenge and delight.

It’s been a great pleasure to rediscover EARNEST with actors of this calibre;

experienced hands like Elizabeth Hawthorne, Lisa Chappell, Catherine Wilkin, Adam Gardiner, Glen Pickering and Cameron Rhodes (who as a bright eyed and bushy haired drama school graduate played Algernon in my 1990 production) together with newcomers, Ash Jones and Laurel Devenie who both make their Auckland Theatre Company debut in this production. My thanks to them all for their comic talent, intelligence, energy and enthusiasm.

Big thanks too to my stellar design team and to everyone who has contributed to bringing this EARNEST to the stage tonight.

Enjoy the madness!

*Colin*  
Colin McColl

# the **IMPORTANCE** of being **Earnest**

## CAST

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Jack Worthing—**Adam Gardiner**  
Algernon Moncrieff—**Ash Jones**  
Lady Bracknell—**Elizabeth Hawthorne**  
Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax—**Lisa Chappell**  
Miss Prism—**Catherine Wilkin**  
Cecily Cardew—**Laurel Devenie**  
Dr. Canon Chasuble—**Cameron Rhodes**  
Lane / Merriman—**Glen Pickering**

## CREATIVE

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Direction—**Colin McColl**  
Set Design—**John Parker**  
Costume Design—**Elizabeth Whiting**  
Lighting Design—**Tony Rabbit**  
Sound Design—**Eden Mulholland**

## PRODUCTION

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Production Manager—**Mark Gosling**  
Technical Manager—**Bonnie Burrill**  
Senior Stage Manager—**Fern Christie**  
Stage Manager—**Nicola Blackman**  
Operator—**Sarah Briggs**  
Wardrobe Technician—**Sophie Ham**  
Properties Master—**Bec Ehlers**  
Set Construction—**2 Construct**

**AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR HELP WITH THIS PRODUCTION: Purfex Mannequins and Forms ([www.purfex.com](http://www.purfex.com)), Amber McWilliams, MusicWorks.**

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST is the second Auckland Theatre Company production for 2010 and opened on March 11th.  
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST is approximately 125 minutes long including an interval.  
Please remember to switch off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms.

## Synopsis

In London, Algernon Moncrieff discovers that his good friend "Ernest" is really Jack Worthing, and that Jack has invented a badly behaved younger brother called Ernest so that he can come to the city and get up to mischief

Algernon has a similar excuse to escape his responsibilities – and calls the strategy 'Bunburying'. Jack (as Ernest) proposes to Algernon's cousin Gwendolen and is accepted because she is in love with the name "Ernest". Her mother, Lady Bracknell, interviews Jack and when he reveals that he was found as a baby in a handbag in Victoria station she immediately refuses to condone the marriage.

At Jack's manor house in the country Algernon arrives claiming to be Ernest and declares his love for Jack's pretty young ward, Cecily. She tells him she could only love a man called "Ernest". Gwendolen arrives and the women discover that they are both engaged to "Mr. Ernest Worthing." Jack and Algernon are confronted by the ladies and eventually charm them by declaring that they are both to be re-christened as "Ernest" that afternoon. However before they can celebrate their happiness Lady Bracknell arrives, and with the help of Cecily's governess Miss Prism the truth of Jack's parentage is finally revealed.





## Wilde in the World

By Arthur Meek

**As a person, Oscar Wilde was just as comfortable cracking gags with moneyed Victorian socialites as he was lecturing dishevelled American miners on the finer points of aestheticism. As a writer, he was as proficient at writing for children as he was for theatregoers and bookworms, as attested to by a compact but glittering output, the highlights of which are surely THE HAPPY PRINCE AND OTHER TALES, this play and his lone novel, THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY.**

During his all-to-brief stay at the crease, Oscar managed to simultaneously define and defy social and artistic convention. He drew inspiration and form from the deep well of his classical education and used it to shape and inspire a modernity that still lives up to its name.

It is in his spirit of cherishing rather than discarding the past that I set aside my repeated contention that the ATC should be staging my plays and not classical retreads. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST is a gift to the theatre and we shouldn't feel shy about rewrapping it and passing it on to new generations of playgoers.

As a writer who often deals in comedy, I'm constantly reminded of humour's tendency to tarnish with age. Oscar sets a very high comedic bar for the simple and easily neglected reason that he rather likes people. Lesser comedians mock and scoff, rolling their superior eyes at the shortcomings of the dropkicks they're forced to live amongst. In another writer's hands, Lady Bracknell could easily be a raving saw-

toothed badger, sinking into obscurity under the weight of her own pomposity. In stark contrast, Oscar loved the ways of the aunt, while wryly acknowledging that, in her desire to do good by her nephew, she is often required to inconvenience him, even to the point of ruining his day.

If, as an audience member you spend tonight rippling with laughter, then it's a success. If you then demand this kind of wit and heart from writers like myself, then that is a challenge and a success. And if, in the quality of Oscar's humour, you see a direct line of influence to the work of Dave Armstrong and Ken Duncum, who stand side by side with him in the ATC programme, then it's a triumph.

*Arthur Meek is the writer of 'On the Conditions and Possibilities of Helen Clark Taking Me as Her Young Lover', 'Collapsing Creation' and the upcoming TVNZ comedy 'Feedback'.*



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**oscarthewildest**

**@ColinMcColl** If all the world's a stage the play is badly cast. Except for yours of course. Good luck to you all.

7.55pm 11 March

My quotes follow me everywhere RT **@ladygaga**: @NZCustoms 'I have nothing to declare except my genius'

8am 11 March

I am so clever that sometimes I don't understand a single word of what I am saying. My excuse, not yours Sarah Palin.

9.47am 9 March

Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months... and every award season **#oscars**

3.50pm 8 March

Budget cuts and tips for surviving the recession? Anyone who lives within their means suffers from a lack of imagination.

2.19pm 5 March

**@BLACKCAPS** A triumph over the Australians. But Mr Styris should remember one should always play fairly when one has the winning cards.

11.00pm 4 March

'Campbell 'now more popular' with 7pm viewers' one can now live down everything except a good reputation **@JohnJCampbell**

7.12pm March 4

I applaud the nude cyclist. Beauty is a form of genius that needs no explanation.

2.07pm March 4

Woke early this morning and turned on the television. Was reminded that only dull people are brilliant at breakfast.

7.30am March 1

Name Oscar Wilde  
Bio Writer, poet, aesthete.  
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AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

# Popular misconceptions about Oscar Wilde

## 'Oscar' is the best-known 'Wilde'

True, but unfairly so. His father, Sir William, was a remarkable Dublin doctor whose medical work on the 1851 and 1861 censuses earned him his knighthood, and is still referred to today as essential source material for 19th century Irish history. Sir William also published important contributions to the study of Celtic antiquities and Irish folklore. Oscar's mother, Jane, was a prominent Irish Nationalist and poet who was nearly imprisoned for her inflammatory anti-English writing in 1848. As Oscar would write from prison in 1897: "She and my father had bequeathed me a name they had made noble and honoured not merely in literature, art, archaeology and science, but in the public history of my own country in its evolution as a nation."

*Scandal is gossip made tedious by morality.*

—LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN

## He coasted through university, with a reputation for languorousness and a love of lilies

Oscar was certainly influenced by the aesthetic theories of John Ruskin and Walter Pater while at Oxford, and he adopted the pose of an effete young man, but he went up as a scholar to Magdalen and came down with a double first in classics and the Newdigate prize for poetry. This took considerable application as his contemporaries later testified and his surviving Oxford notebooks demonstrate.

## Apart from writing a couple of plays, a few children's stories, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* he doesn't seem to have done much

Oscar's 'serious' side is often overlooked. He spent a year in the US in 1882 lecturing about the decorative arts; he edited a high-profile woman's magazine for two years; he wrote thought-provoking and controversial critical essays as well as many art exhibition, theatre and book reviews. He also applied twice,



1

unsuccessfully, to become an Inspector of Schools; his effect on English education could have been startling.

## Being Irish was just an accident of birth; he was an English author, surely?

In the sense that *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* are archetypically 'English' plays — perhaps; but there is a profound Irishness underlying much of what Oscar wrote and thought, especially in his correspondence. He may have remarked that the first thing he forgot at Oxford was his Irish accent, but when his play *Salomé* was banned he openly accused the English of being narrow-minded saying, "I am not English; I'm Irish which is quite another thing."

## 'Earnest' was a code-word for 'gay' and wearing a green carnation was a 'secret' sign of homosexuality

Both explanations seem to have been conveniently invented years later with little or no foundation in fact. 'Earnest' was supposedly a corruption of 'Uraniste' or one who practices Uranian or homosexual love,



2

and the green carnation was said to be the badge of Parisian pederasts. If either had been true, Edward Carson, the Marquess of Queensberry's defence lawyer in the libel trial, would certainly have pinpointed them, as he did the overtly gay passages in the magazine publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (which were later suppressed in the book.)

## Oscar Wilde's arrest was delayed by several hours to allow him to catch the last boat-train and escape to the continent

When Oscar's libel action against Queensberry collapsed, Queensberry's lawyers sent all their papers to the director of public prosecutions, who consulted the solicitor-general and the home secretary and then immediately applied to the magistrates for a warrant. Oscar was arrested at 6.20pm, though there were still four more trains to Paris that night. He was then twice prosecuted by the crown. The jury failed to agree on the first occasion, and the crown, though not obliged to do so, tried him again - hardly the action of a government anxious to see him escape.



3

## Once Oscar Wilde was arrested, tried and imprisoned, Lord Alfred Douglas, who essentially got him into the mess, abandoned him

'Bosie' Douglas, in a devoted but often muddle-headed way, was remarkably supportive when the crash came. He visited Oscar on remand in Holloway every day and only went to France before the first trial at the insistence of his brother and Oscar's lawyers. After Oscar's conviction he wrote a defence of their love for a French journal, which would have done more harm than good, and was never published. He also helped Oscar financially after his release from prison.

## Oscar Wilde died of syphilis

This is an old canard which has been doing the rounds for nearly a century, and was lately championed on the flimsiest of evidence by his best modern biographer, Richard Ellmann. Killing Oscar off with the classic 'disease of the decadents' has always seemed a suitably sensational way of rounding off a sensational life, but modern medical opinion agrees almost universally that it was an ear

*One should absorb the colour of life, but one should never remember its details. Details are always vulgar.*

—THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

infection and meningitis which did for him in the end.

## Oscar Wilde was merely a hedonist who, as he admitted, put his genius into his life but only his talent into his works

At his trial Wilde said that his aim in life had been self-realisation through pleasure rather than suffering. Later, in his long prison letter to Douglas, *De Profundis*, he recants and admits that only through pain and sorrow can true nobility of soul be achieved. He was undeniably a first-rate funny-man, but the jury is still out on whether Wilde belongs in the top division of literature, a paradox which is part of his enduring appeal.

1. Sir William Wilde
2. Marquess of Queensberry
3. Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas

*One's real life is often the life that one does not lead.*

—L'ENVOI

*The secret of life is to appreciate the pleasure of being terribly, terribly deceived.*

—A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE



## LISA CHAPPELL

**“It’s been a wonderful opportunity to work with the wordsmith Oscar Wilde – what a wit! What struck me about Gwendolen when I first read the play was what a rebel she was. Despite her age and the position women held in that time, she basically does whatever she wants. So the juxtaposition between that and the social conformity of the time is fun to explore. Wilde’s use of language is so exquisite and challenges the modern actor to rise to it and make it seem effortless. Colin’s modern/hybrid take and Elizabeth’s daring costume have all assisted in creating, as Colin puts it, ‘a very modern little miss’. She’s smart, she’s funny, she lives in a bubble and everything is trivial to her except bread and butter and, of course, the name Ernest. Her lightness is my challenge I think.”**

Recent works for Auckland Theatre Company include DESIGN FOR LIVING and THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS. Lisa also featured as the playwright of DON’T HOLD YOUR BREATH in the 2009 Next Stage Season.

Growing up in Auckland, Lisa first came to prominence as Chelsea Redfern in GLOSS. Roles in SHARK IN THE PARK, CITY LIFE and HERCULES, THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS followed, as well as in feature films JACK BROWN, GENIUS and DESPERATE REMEDIES.

Lisa moved to Sydney and received an Advanced Diploma in Acting from The Actors Center. Soon after, she won the role of Claire McLeod in the internationally popular television series MCLEOD’S DAUGHTERS. From many award nominations for the role, Lisa won Most Popular New Female Talent at the 2002 Australian Logie Awards and the Silver Logie for Most Popular Actress in 2004.

After three years, Lisa left MCLEOD’S DAUGHTERS looking for a new challenge. She has since recorded and released an album, WHEN

THEN IS NOW and returned regularly to the theatre, including playing roles in EDUCATING RITA and THE HOMECOMING. Continuing to work on both sides of the Tasman, she recently starred in the Australian feature COFFIN ROCK and as a cult deprogrammer in the local series THE CULT. She is busy with a diverse schedule which includes emcee appearances, voiceovers, and script-writing. Lisa is a proud member of NZ Actors Equity.



## LAUREL DEVENIE

**“According to Jack, Cecily has a ‘capital appetite, goes for long walks and pays no attention at all in her lessons’. Pragmatic, extravagant and openly joyous, I hope I will find her to be a rollicking good time. I suspect she laughs a lot and has a knack for doing exactly what she wants – anyone who can conjure up an entire engagement single handedly must have a rigorous and fierce grip on their own reality and power – or at least have the ability to make it up whenever they so desire. I am looking forward to her love of the outrageous and her intrigue with the wicked.”**

Laurel graduated from Toi Whaakari: New Zealand Drama School, in 2006. After appearing in FLAGONS AND FOXTROTS, THE GRADUATE and OTHELLO at Downstage in 2007, she became heavily involved in various independent productions, mainly with Peripeteia in Auckland, performing in THE TEMPEST and THREE SISTERS in 2008. In the last

year she has worked from one end of the country to the other, touring with Capital E: National Theatre for Children in STEALING GAMES, directing for Northland Youth Theatre in Whangarei, performing in Northland’s Pohutukawa Company production of YOURS TRULY, and working with a community theatre group in Wanaka.

## Cast



## ADAM GARDINER

**“Those who do not know the guilty pleasures of Bunburying have certainly not lived a life, let alone the pleasure of a double one just like Jack Worthing. Next time you put the kids to bed, sneak out of the house and get back just in time to make them breakfast. Go on. They’d want you to.”**

Adam’s theatre credits include THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES, THE HOLLOW MEN, ANGELS WITH DIRTY FEET, THE OCEAN STAR, A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, MR KOLPERT, LADIES NIGHT and NEW GOLD DREAM.

Film and television credits include EAGLE VS SHARK, POWER RANGERS, RIVER QUEEN, HEAR NO EVIL, THE LOST ONE, OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE, FOR GOOD, LOVEBITES and HOPELESS.

Apart from acting, Adam’s work for Auckland Theatre Company has included the audio visual design for EQUUS, the sound design for THE TUTOR, and tour management for HATCH OR THE PLIGHT OF THE

PENGUINS.

In 2005, Adam narrowly beat a dog and a sock puppet to win the coveted Best Actor Award at the Auckland 48hr Film Festival. Recently he performed in Raewyn Hill’s dance theatre work FINDERS KEEPERS (which toured to the Wanaka and Christchurch Festivals). He also toured throughout Australia with Queensland based dance company DanceNorth in NIGHTCAFE. He is a proud member of Actors’ Equity.



## ELIZABETH HAWTHORNE

**“As Lady Bracknell I am both daunted and delighted to be entering into the, for me, formerly uncharted waters of the glorious, inglorious Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde. Mr. Wilde’s own life reads more like the relentless unfolding of a Greek tragedy as opposed to the brilliantly subversive THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST that so delights both players and audience. Working with Colin McColl is always a wonderful experience, and this production with all its accompanying subversive challenges to sacred social conventions and heightened by fabulous costume, lighting and set design, will make for a sparkling cocktail of glorious theatricality.”**

Elizabeth Hawthorne is one of New Zealand’s most talented and respected actors. Her Auckland Theatre Company credits include THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES,

DOUBT, UP FOR GRABS, SERIAL KILLERS, VITA AND VIRGINIA, THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY, THE BELLBIRD, A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE, MASTERCLASS and THE GRADUATE. Other theatre highlights include AS YOU LIKE IT and THREE SISTERS.

Amongst Elizabeth’s many film credits are 30 DAYS OF NIGHT, UNDERWORLD 3, JUBILEE, THE FRIGHTENERS, SAVAGE HONEYMOON, THE LAST TATOO, ALEX and THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE.

Television experience includes SHORTLAND STREET, SPIN DOCTORS and OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE. Elizabeth’s film and television accolades include a Nokia Film Best Supporting Actress Award for her role in SAVAGE HONEYMOON (2000) and an AFTA Award for Best Comedy Performance for SPIN DOCTORS (2003).

In 2001, Elizabeth received an ONZM for Services to The Theatre in the Queen’s Birthday List.



## ASH JONES

**“It is an absolute pleasure to take on the deliciously naughty role that is Algernon Moncrieff. The way he interacts with all the other characters, with such playfulness, wit and arrogance has been a joy to discover. Algernon is a real embodiment of the Aesthetic and Dandy qualities that Oscar was so famous for personally. My Algernon certainly took some playing to discover but really that’s all Algernon is: the absolute delight in play!”**

This is Ash’s debut performance with Auckland Theatre Company and he is thrilled to be working alongside such an inspirational cast and director.

Recent theatre highlights include performances in the SHORT+SWEET FESTIVAL, TITUS (Auckland Fringe Festival), THE LAST TANIWHA, and GREEN ROOM (which Ash co-devised and performed). With Massive Theatre Company, Ash starred in UP CLOSE OUT LOUD which toured New Zealand

and to Manchester, England.

Film credits include PRINCE CASPIAN, the Disney Production SKYRUNNERS and THE WARRIOR’S WAY, alongside Geoffrey Rush and Kate Bosworth. Ash’s television credits include appearances on THE CULT and SHORTLAND STREET.

*Only dull people are brilliant at breakfast.*

—AN IDEAL HUSBAND



*A man cannot be too careful  
in the choice of his enemies.*

—THE PICTURE OF  
DORIAN GRAY

## GLEN PICKERING

**“An aging rocker and a dim country lad. Not what you would normally associate with Oscar Wilde. His language is so alive, full of wit, humour, honesty and insight that you can’t help but fall in love with the play. It is a pleasure to create and play such wonderful characters in this seriously absurd world. Wilde himself once said, ‘Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else’s opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation.’”**

This is Glen’s second appearance for Auckland Theatre Company following last year’s production of OLIVER. His other performance highlights include ENSEMBLE PROJECT (Silo Theatre), THE GLASS MENAGERIE (Peach Theatre Company) and OBSERVE THE SONS OF ULSTER (A Lethal Set).

Glen is the Artistic Director of The National Youth Theatre Company, a coach in corporate presentations, acting tutor and co-creator of Toi Trade Theatre Company which devised and toured their first show last year.

Glen graduated from the UNITEC School of Performing and Screen Arts in 2004. During this time he worked with Raymond Hawthorne on THE CRUCIBLE, and played in MACBETH, MEASURE FOR MEASURE and VICTORY. Glen is a proud member of Actors’ Equity.



## CAMERON RHODES

**“Twenty years ago I played Algernon in a wonderful production directed by Colin McColl at Downstage. Robyn Malcolm was Cecily, and Tony Rabbit designed the set and lights. Now in 2010 I have the chance to be in the play again, with a fantastic cast, and Colin at the helm. Dr Chasuble is a great part, I get to relish Wilde’s witty delicious dialogue, and be part of this exciting team!”**

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST is Cameron’s tenth appearance with the Auckland Theatre Company.

Over an acting career that spans twenty-one years and more than seventy productions, Cameron’s theatre credits include SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER, THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS and DESIGN FOR LIVING (ATC), THE THREEPENNY OPERA, LOOT and A CLOCKWORK ORANGE (Silo Theatre), A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM and A WAY OF LIFE (New Zealand Actors’ Company), SWEENEY TODD,

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER and LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES (Downstage Theatre) and Kafka’s THE TRIAL (THE EDGE®).

He directed the Basement Theatre’s I HEART CAMPING, and recent Christmas hit CHRIST ALMIGHTY and won best director in the 2010 SHORT+SWEET ten minute theatre festival competition.

Film and television appearances include the Qantas Film Award nominated performances in I’M NOT HARRY JENSON, BRAVE DONKEY (short film). Other work for the screen includes SPIES AND LIES, JINX SISTER, WE’RE HERE TO HELP, LORD OF THE RINGS and BREAD AND ROSES.

Cameron’s busy schedule includes voice-overs, working as an acting teacher at UNITEC and in the corporate world as a voice/presenting coach. He is a graduate of Toi Whaakari: New Zealand Drama School and a proud member of New Zealand Actors’ Equity.



## CATHERINE WILKIN

**“Having played Cecily Cardew twice in much earlier days—once in the hilarious TRAVESTIES by Tom Stoppard at the Melbourne Theatre Company, I am delighted to be revisiting the play as her governess the ‘ripe’ and ‘mature’ Miss Prism.”**

Catherine’s extensive career in theatre, film and television has seen her perform throughout New Zealand, Australia and Europe.

Theatre credits include HEDDA GABLER, THE GRADUATE (Downstage Theatre), THE MISANTHROPE, BURNT PIANO, SHARK FIN SOUP (Melbourne Theatre Company), DINNER, LADY WINDERMERE’S FAN (Circa Theatre), ARCADIA, GHOSTS (The Court Theatre), THE RAFT (Centrepoint Theatre), MIDDLE AGE SPREAD, UP FOR GRABS, EQUUS, WHO WANTS TO BE 100? and, most recently, THE POHUTUKAWA TREE (ATC).

Catherine’s television credits include the Australian series

MCCLEOD’S DAUGHTERS, THE SADDLE CLUB, BLUE HEELERS, EMBASSY, HALIFAX, RAFFERTY’S RULES (for which she won a Silver Logie) and FLYING DOCTORS (for which she won a Penguin Award). In New Zealand, she has appeared in OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE, CHILDREN OF THE DOGSTAR, GLOSS, MARLIN BAY, THE CHOSEN, DUGGAN and SWIMMING LESSONS (for which she won a New Zealand Film and TV Award). Her film work includes THE CASE OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD, THE JOKER, SMALL TOWN BLUES and BRILLIANT LIES.

*A little sincerity is a dangerous thing, and a great deal of it is absolutely fatal.*

—THE CRITIC AS AN ARTIST



## Creative

### OSCAR WILDE PLAYWRIGHT

Born in Ireland, Oscar Fingal O’Fahlerthie Wills Wilde was one of the most successful playwrights of the late Victorian era and one of the greatest celebrities of his day. His plays LADY WINDERMERE’S FAN, AN IDEAL HUSBAND and A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE are still widely performed but it is THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST which is most commonly revived.

Wilde studied classics at Trinity College, Dublin, and was awarded a scholarship to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he became a part of the Aesthetic movement, its chief tenet being to make an art of life. His paradoxes and witty observations were widely quoted. His relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas (“Bosie”) led to Wilde’s downfall at the height of his fame in 1895. After two gruelling trials – the jury was unable to reach a verdict in the first – Wilde was convicted and sentenced to

two years’ hard labour.

During his time in prison, he wrote a 50,000-word letter to Douglas which was later published as DE PROFUNDIS. His poem BALLAD OF READING GAOL was written after his release. Wilde, by now in poor health, spent his last years, penniless, in self-imposed exile at the Hotel d’Alsace in Paris.

A month before his death he is quoted as saying “My wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death. One of us has to go.”



### COLIN MCCOLL DIRECTOR

One of New Zealand’s leading theatre directors, Colin co-founded Taki Rua Theatre in 1983 and was Artistic Director of Downstage Theatre in Wellington, 1984-1992. He has led Auckland Theatre Company as Artistic Director since July 2003.

Colin has directed for the Norwegian National Theatre and the Dutch National Theatre, as well as most leading New Zealand and Australian theatre companies.

In November 2007, Colin was honoured for his artistic achievements and excellence at the eighth annual Arts Foundation of New Zealand Laureate Awards.

Previous achievements include Best Director for Auckland Theatre Company’s 2001 production of ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD.

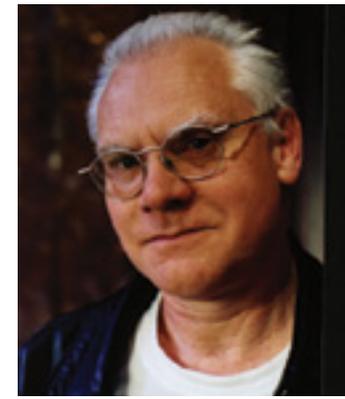
Colin has also won Best Director at the Chapman Tripp Theatre Awards several times - including for his 2002 production of WHO’S AFRAID

OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?.

His many productions for Auckland Theatre Company include THE POHUTUKAWA TREE, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES, WHERE WE ONCE BELONGED, END OF THE RAINBOW, THE CRUCIBLE, HATCH OR THE PLIGHT OF THE PENGUINS, DOUBT, DISGRACE, THE DUCHESS OF MALFI, EQUUS, GOLDIE, WAITING FOR GODOT, SERIAL KILLERS, THE SEAGULL and UNCLE VANYA.

Opera directing credits include QUARTET (New Zealand International Arts Festival 2004), LA BOHEME (Wellington City Opera), THE ITALIAN GIRL IN ALGIERS, THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO and THE PRODIGAL CHILD for the NBR New Zealand Opera.

Late last year he re-staged his production of THE ITALIAN GIRL IN ALGIERS for Scottish National Opera.



### JOHN PARKER SET DESIGNER

**“The world of Wilde, and of the play, is one of artifice. Everyone is someone other than they appear.**

**A loosely sixties-referenced environment allows us to explore the ideas of class breakdown and illusion. It was the era where a rock musician could mingle effortlessly with royalty, paint a Rolls Royce in psychedelic colours and be more famous than Jesus.**

**The Photographer, epitomized by David Bailey, created internationally famous faces from kids with working-class backgrounds, so the photographic backdrop idea provides a metaphor for a place where you can be anyone you say you are.**

**At the premiere of the play, the audience was filled with Wilde’s fan base, who understood the esoteric code within the wit of the language. The set aims to trigger contemporary esoteric codes.”**



John Parker is an award winning set designer and is as well respected in the world of ceramics as he is in set design. He has a long history of designing for Auckland Theatre Company.

His set designs include THE WIFE WHO SPOKE JAPANESE IN HER SLEEP, THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE, END OF THE RAINBOW, SWEET CHARITY, DOUBT, MUM'S CHOIR, TAKING OFF, EQUUS, CALIGULA, THE BACH, MIDDLE AGE SPREAD, THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW, NOISES OFF, WAITING FOR GODOT, ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTEN ARE DEAD and INTO THE WOODS.

Other works include THE SCENE, CREDITORS, IL TROVATORE, TRUE WEST, THE THREEPENNY OPERA, CHESS, ROMEO AND JULIET, TITUS ANDRONICUS, TWELFTH NIGHT, F.I.L.T.H, ASSASSINS, WAIORA, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, DECADENCE, ON THE RAZZLE, CHICAGO, THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO, BARBER OF SEVILLE, COSI

FAN TUTTE, EVITA and TRASH TO FASHION.

John has also designed for The Louis Vuitton Ball and The America's Cup Ball, Bendon's Next To Nothing, Bellsouth Pharaohs, Precious Legacy and Peru: Gold and Sacrifice for the Auckland Museum. He was awarded a Waitakere City Millennium Medal for services to the Community.

## ELIZABETH WHITING COSTUME DESIGNER

**“Oscar Wilde’s THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST delights in turning the world upside down. Those things which are important are dismissed and those which are unimportant are given great significance.**

**With the design for this new production we wanted to do something similar, so the audience sees the work with fresh eyes. We wanted to give the play a contemporary edge, while referencing Oscar’s world, to delight the audience with its daring in much the same way the play did when it was first performed.**

**Oscar Wilde was very interested in dress reform and designed his own wife’s wardrobe. He would no doubt have expected contemporary styling in his own production of the play. In the costume area I have updated the period in which the costumes are set to a contemporary world with 60’s overtones. I have also used Oscar Wilde’s dress motifs—the green carnation, the formal jacket styling and the knickerbockers, to reflect in my own way his own daring style.”**

Currently working for NBR NZ Opera in the MARRIAGE OF FIGARO, Elizabeth’s previous costume designs for Auckland Theatre Company include SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER, THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS, DESIGN FOR LIVING, MY NAME IS GARY COOPER, THE PILLOWMAN, SWEET CHARITY, TWELFTH NIGHT, DOUBT, THE DUCHESS OF MALFI, EQUUS and WAITING FOR GODOT. The costume design for EQUUS was accepted for the Prague Design Quadrennial 2007 as part of the New Zealand exhibit BLOW – the

second time her work has been shown internationally. Recently, her work was seen in AK09’s THE ARRIVAL.

Elizabeth has had an illustrious career designing for a wide range of performing arts organisations throughout New Zealand. Recent highlights include LA BOHEME, FALSTAFF, FAUST, THE BARBER OF SEVILLE and COSI FAN TUTTE (NBR New Zealand Opera), LA CAGE AUX FOLLES and THE COUNTRY WIFE (Court Theatre), THREE DAYS OF RAIN, THE MYSTERY OF IRMA VEP, THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED (Silo Theatre), as well as productions for the Auckland Festival and Southern Opera. Her work has also been seen in VERGE and SMASHING SWEET VIXEN (Royal New Zealand Ballet), AMATA (Black Grace Dance Company), TENT (Michael Parmenter Dance Company) and TAMA MA (Okareka Dance Company).



## TONY RABBIT LIGHTING DESIGNER

Tony Rabbit has designed sets and/or lighting for theatre, opera, television and film and even, according to one reporter, the radio.

His work was last seen by Auckland Theatre Company audiences in THE POHUTUKAWA TREE, CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, WHERE WE ONCE BELONGED, END OF THE RAINBOW, HATCH OR THE PLIGHT OF THE PENGUINS, DISGRACE and THE DUCHESS OF MALFI.



## EDEN MULHOLLAND SOUND DESIGNER

**“Working alongside Colin, we have explored popular music of the 60's era. An age of free love, flower power and the massive upheaval of social responsibility, freedom of expression and breaking rules. The music is meant to reflect the themes of escapism, avoidance of unwelcome social obligations and Wilde's hilarious characters that satirise all things Victorian.”**

Eden has been composing music for theatre and contemporary dance since 2000. For Auckland Theatre Company, his recent sound design credits include SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER, THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS, FEMALE OF THE SPECIES, DESIGN FOR LIVING, MY NAME IS GARY COOPER and THE PILLOWMAN. Other compositions for live theatre include TENT by Michael Parmenter, MINIATURES by Malia Johnston, CARNIVAL HOUND by Maria Dabrowska to name a few.

Eden is the founding member of Mulholland Sound, a company dedicated to providing comprehensive, cutting edge music for radio, television, film, theatre and the web. Currently, he is working on a handful of commercial projects and recording his Motocade's sophomore album.

*I can resist anything but temptation.*

—LADY  
WINDERMERE'S FAN

# Bet you didn't know

The successful opening night of this play marked the climax of Wilde's career but also heralded his impending downfall. The Marquess of Queensberry, father of Wilde's lover Lord Alfred Douglas, attempted to enter the theatre, intending to throw vegetables at the playwright when he took his bow at the end of the show. Wilde was tipped off and Queensberry was refused admission. However, Queensberry's hostility to Wilde was soon to trigger the latter's legal travails and eventual imprisonment. Wilde's notoriety caused the play, despite its success, to be closed after only 83 performances. He never wrote another play.

When Wilde handed his final draft of the play over to theatrical impresario George Alexander it was complete in four acts. The actor manager of the St. James' Theatre soon began a reworking of the play (whether to provide space for a 'warmer' or for a musical interlude, as was often the bill, is not entirely clear). Wilde agreed to the cuts and various elements of the second and third acts were combined. The ensuing three act play is the version that opened in London and also the version usually performed and published ever since.

In Germany the play is called Ernst sein ist alles ("Being Ernst is everything", Ernst being both a first name and the German word for serious). In French, the play is commonly known as De l'importance d'être Constant, Constant being both a (mildly uncommon) first name and also the quality of steadfastness.



Early in his relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas, Wilde and his wife visited Douglas' mother, Lady Queensberry, who wanted to talk to them about her son's lack of academic achievements (he left Oxford without a degree) and extravagant habits. Lady Queensberry lived in Bracknell.

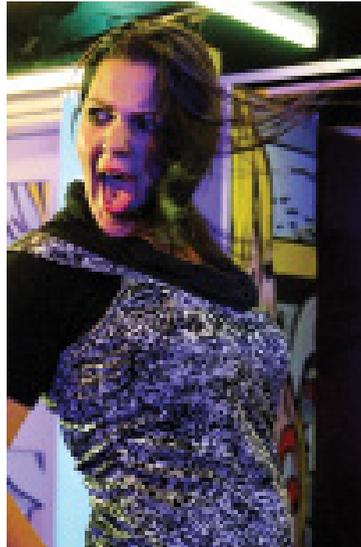


Wilde's plays had reached a pinnacle of success, and anything new from the playwright was eagerly awaited. The press were always hungry for details and would pursue stories about new plots and characters with a vengeance. To combat this Wilde gave the play a working title, LADY LANCING.

The words bunbury and bunburying, meanwhile, are used to imply double lives and as excuses for absences, are—according to a letter from Aleister Crowley to Sir R.H. Bruce Lockhart—an inside joke that came about after Wilde boarded a train at Banbury on which he met a schoolboy. They got into conversation and subsequently arranged to meet again at Sunbury.v



On 19 October 2007, a rare first edition of the play was discovered in a branch of Oxfam in Nantwich, Cheshire, coincidentally in a handbag; ironically mimicking the discovery of Jack Worthing as an infant. Staff at the shop said they had no idea who donated the items. The book has a mark on the inside cover stating that it was numbered 349 out of 1,000 copies and was sold for £650.



All photos from the 2009 festival by Michael Smith

OYSTER by Vivienne Plumb, directed by Julie Nolan

SIT ON IT by Georgina Titheridge, directed by Ben Crowder

URBAN HYMNS by Miria George, directed by Michelle Johansson

# Y&H

## YOUNG AND HUNGRY FESTIVAL OF NEW THEATRE

By popular demand this exciting festival is back!

Showcasing three new New Zealand plays written specifically for 15 - 25 year olds, **YOUNG AND HUNGRY** offers theatre-obsessed young Aucklanders the opportunity to be actors, designers, stage managers, publicists and backstage crew whilst being mentored by professional theatre practitioners.

Local audiences have the chance to see this fresh new work up close in an exclusive season at The Basement. You can spread your viewing across the season or do the marathon by seeing all three plays in one night.

Produced in association with the Young and Hungry Arts Trust (Wellington), the festival takes place simultaneously in both cities. Discover Auckland's exciting young talent and tomorrow's stars!

*"It is possibly the best way to break into the theatre circuit professionally as a young person, with roles tailored to our age group, the professional appeal of well regarded playwrights, cast, venue and crew. And of course recognition with the prestigious Auckland Theatre Company."*

— Chye-Ling Huang Assistant Director, OYSTER, Young & Hungry 2009

**EXCHANGE**  
written and directed by  
Lauren Jackson  
6.30pm

**THINNING**  
by Eli Kent  
directed by Laurel Devenie  
8.00pm

**FITZ BUNNY LUST  
FOR GLORY**  
by Grant Buist  
directed by Simon Coleman  
9.30pm

The Basement  
9 - 24 July  
Tuesdays - Saturdays





**Martin Smith from Dawsons shares his thoughts on the rise of the Modern High Tea and two of their most popular teatime recipes.**

Catering is theatre; a true performance which requires dedication, attention to detail and plenty of rehearsal! Dawsons are experts at this.

We love to take old customs like the 'High Tea' and cast a modern wand over the presentation and content of the menu.

The modern high tea is more closely related to the afternoon tea: dainty sandwiches, scones with cream and jam and tea sipped from fine bone china. There is something quite special about sitting down to a traditional afternoon tea.

Afternoon tea may well have gained a reputation as being the preserve of the elderly, but lately the number of people rediscovering this nostalgic treat has been growing noticeably.

More and more events are following this theme: social gatherings, product launches and family celebrations. These events take people out of the normal function environments and place them in relaxed and calm surroundings like a sculpture garden or an ornamental rooftop terrace.

Displaying a delightful selection of 'teatime items' on an array of eclectic service trays, positioned on overflowing colourful central buffets really entices your guests to peruse what is being offered and



interact with each other

Our venues with outdoor spaces like The Kelliher Estate and the Grand Lawn at Old Government House have seen a significant increase in activity with clients wanting to combine a fantastic afternoon tea menu with the versatility of an outside area.

I adore simple pleasures. They are the last refuge of the complex.

—THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

# ENTERTAIN LIKE WILDE

## RASPBERRY AND WHITE CHOCOLATE LAMINGTONS

### Ingredients (MAKES 10 PORTIONS)

- White chocolate curvature ..... 300g
- Butter..... 200g
- Eggs ..... 5
- Sugar ..... ½ cup
- Flour..... 1 cup
- Baking powder..... 1 tsp
- Raspberry jelly..... 200g
- Desiccated coconut... 200g

### Method:

1. Line a baking tray (say 180 x 180mm) with baking paper
2. Melt white chocolate and butter in bain-marie
3. Whisk eggs and sugar in mixer until light and creamy
4. Mix together the melted chocolate and egg mixture
5. Fold in sifted flour
6. Pour cake mixture into a baking tray and bake at 160 degrees for 40mins
7. Once the cake is cool, cut into 30 x 30mm cubes
8. Melt jelly in a cup of boiling water
9. Dip cubes (30 seconds) into the raspberry jelly whilst jelly is warm
10. Coat the cubes with the desiccated coconut, cool and serve

## SMOKED CHEDDAR, OREGANO AND SUNDRIED TOMATO SCONES

### Ingredients (MAKES 12 PORTIONS)

- Flour..... 3 cups
- Baking Powder ..... ½ tsp
- Butter..... 150g
- Eggs ..... 2
- Buttermilk ..... 300ml
- Smoked cheddar ..... 200g (grated)
- Sundried tomatoes ..... 150g (sliced)
- Oregano ..... 3 tsp

### Method:

1. Cut butter into small cubes and work into sifted flour
2. Add in eggs and buttermilk and knead into dough
3. Fold in half of the smoked cheddar, tomatoes and oregano
4. Flour surface and divide into 12 portions
5. Egg wash top and sprinkle remainder of cheddar and oregano on top
6. Bake scones at 180 degrees for 15mins on oiled baking tray

# WHAT'S ON IN THEATRES AROUND THE COUNTRY?

## AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

### THE NEW ZEALAND POST SEASON OF HORSEPLAY

By Ken Duncum

Maidment Theatre  
6 May – 29 May

Come and watch two of our most eccentric men of letters as they clash over booze, horses, women and the nature of the creative act. Duncum's hilarious imagining of a meeting between James K Baxter and Ronald Hugh Morrieson is full of witty and rambunctious language and is a cock-eyed salute to literary genius.

Presented as part of the Auckland Writers and Readers Festival

## SILO THEATRE

Auckland

### THAT FACE

By Polly Stenham

Herald Theatre  
19 Mar – 10 Apr

When children are forced to act like parents, and parents ignore their duties, who has the right to dictate the future? Written with youthful swagger, tremendous heart and a dark, mischievous sense of humour, Stenham explores the strains of neglect and active abuse.

## CENTREPOINT THEATRE

Palmerston North

### FOUR FLAT WHITES IN ITALY

By Roger Hall  
10 Apr – 29 May

With a copy of "Lonely Planet" in one hand and an Italian phrase book in the other, recently retired librarians Adrian and Alison feel prepared to face the excitement of la bella Italia. But when their best friends suddenly drop out of the trip, are they really ready to share their precious holiday with their new neighbours?

## BATS THEATRE

Wellington

### THE SECOND TEST

Presented by  
Aunty Mavis Productions  
16 Mar – 27 Mar

Based on a true event THE SECOND TEST tells the stories of New Zealand's 1953 underdog cricket team as they embark on their maiden tour to South Africa. After a long sea voyage the team reaches its destination and their campaign commences in earnest. Then suddenly back home tragedy strikes as the Tangiwai disaster unfolds.

## CIRCA THEATRE

Wellington

### THE LETTER WRITER

By Juliet O'Brien  
7 Mar – 21 Mar

A young exile engages the services of a letter-writer to send love letters to the wife he has left behind. Fascinated by the energy and idealism of the young exile, the letter-writer finds both a new lease of life and the son he never had. But soon the arrival of a letter will change everything.

## DOWNSTAGE THEATRE

Wellington

### BIOGRAPHY OF MY SKIN

By Miranda Harcourt  
8 Apr – 24 Apr

In this hilarious and often outrageous autobiographical show, Miranda Harcourt gets caught in a script written by her husband Stuart McKenzie. The ongoing conflict unveils a surprisingly moving portrait of a marriage as well as an entertaining social history of the last forty years.

## THE COURT THEATRE

Christchurch

### THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES

By Joanna Murray-Smith  
27 Mar – 8 May

Fashionably famous feminist author Margot Mason has always been deadlier and cleverer than any male she has ever encountered. So when she's held hostage in her comfortable country home Margot's indignity knows no bounds.

## FORTUNE THEATRE

Dunedin

### BUBBLEWRAP AND BOXES

Presented by  
Asking For Trouble  
18 Mar – 20 Mar 2010

Asking for Trouble presents their award winning, delightful and high-energy family show. This little story about how to live bravely in a big world is told using acrobatics, clowning and a whole lot of cardboard boxes.

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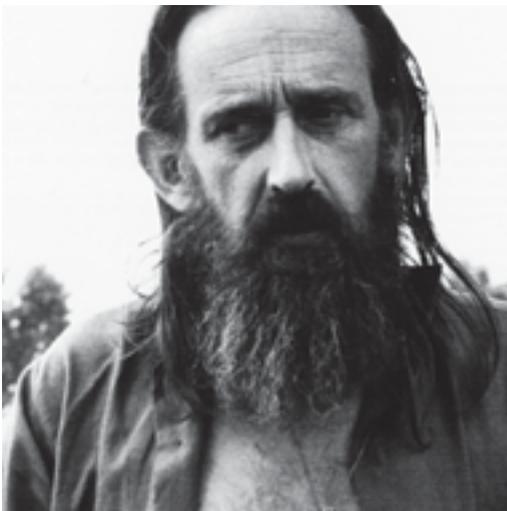
To find out what else is going on in Auckland be sure to read the latest copy of

# Metro

*It is absurd to divide people into good and bad. People are either charming or tedious.*

—LADY  
WINDERMERE'S FAN

# HORSEPLAY



by Ken Duncum

Starring Tim Balme  
Toni Potter  
Elizabeth McRae  
John Leigh



James K Baxter and Ronald Hugh Morrieson were two great mavericks of New Zealand literature. These wildly different but equally eccentric men of letters never crossed paths — or if they did, they kept it quiet. Until now...

In HORSEPLAY, Ken Duncum's hilarious imagining of a meeting between the two in Hawera, 1972, the absurdities pile up as Baxter and Morrieson find themselves sharing the stage with the back end of a horse and enduring the interruptions of a dotty aunt and would-be girlfriend Wilma.

Full of witty and rambunctious language, HORSEPLAY is a cockeyed salute to literary genius and the nature of the creative act.

Presented as part of the Auckland Writers and Readers Festival.

**Maidment Theatre**  
**May 6 — May 29**  
**Book on 308 2383**  
**[www.atc.co.nz](http://www.atc.co.nz)**

## AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

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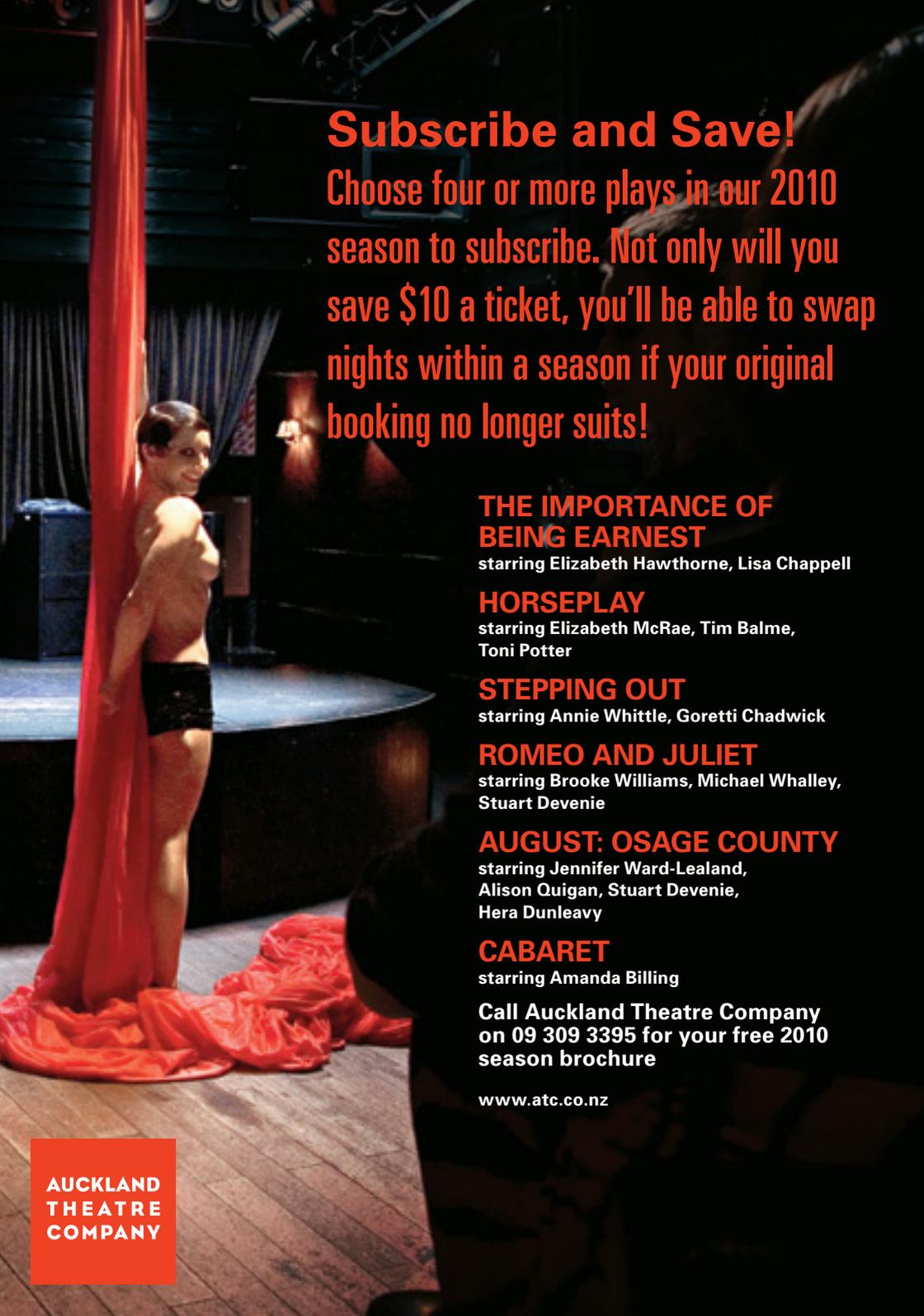
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Betsy and Mike Benjamin  
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For more information about how you can support Auckland Theatre Company visit [www.atc.co.nz/partnerships](http://www.atc.co.nz/partnerships) or call Anna Connell, 09 309 0390 ext. 72



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starring Jennifer Ward-Lealand, Alison Quigan, Stuart Devenie, Hera Dunleavy

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