

*The Importance of Being Earnest* is a play by [Oscar Wilde](#). It premiered on [February 14, 1895](#) at the [St. James's Theatre](#) in London.

Set in England during the late [Victorian era](#), the play's humour derives in part from characters maintaining [fictitious identities](#) to escape unwelcome social obligations. It is replete with witty dialogue and satirizes some of the foibles and hypocrisy of late Victorian society. It has proved Wilde's most enduringly popular play.

The successful opening night marked the climax of Wilde's career but also heralded his impending downfall. [The Marquess of Queensberry](#), father of Wilde's male 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. Nonetheless, 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.



**Oscar Wilde**



Saam Theatre Company



This play was organised and performed by the Empty Space Theatre Company.

This company was established to pursue a performance style which strips down sets, props and costume to simple essentials in order to allow the play and the acting to take centre stage.

This is an approach which looks for drama and excitement to come from the text of the play, not from spectacle added from outside.

**This play was the last event was held in the Saam House in October 2005**