

Welcome to Champion Theatre's production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. This is arguably Oscar Wilde's most well-produced play, and for good reason; it has beautiful language, sarcastic digs, and a very sassy old lady! This audition packet gives you a simple breakdown of the characters, important dates during the rehearsal process to be aware of, monologues to audition with, plus the scenes you will read from during the audition. Monologues should be memorized and prepared. The scenes do not need to be memorized, but it is a very good idea to be as familiar with them as possible. If you have questions please text me at (830) 481-7722 or email me at [israel.aviles@boerneisd.net](mailto:israel.aviles@boerneisd.net). I look forward to seeing you at auditions!



**When:** Saturday, July 31st 10am - 2pm

**What to do:** Perform one of the monologues below and be ready to cold read from the audition sides. Be memorized and well prepared with your chosen monologue, be familiar with them all in case I have you read another one. Feel free to use an aristocratic English accent - ONLY IF YOU WANT TO - it's not a requirement.

**Important Dates:** Publicity Day - July 31st; Move-In Day - Aug 14th; Tech Rehearsal - Aug 15th;  
Dress Rehearsal Aug 18th

**Performance Dates:** Thursday-Saturday, Aug 19-21 @ 7pm; Sunday, Aug 22 @ 3pm

**About the show:** The play is full of the kind of witty humor that Oscar Wilde is rightly famed for – there is word play, sarcasm and great farcical comedy. There are also serious issues underlying the humor – the theme of marriage, for love, for money and for social standing, is very strong. The idea of appearing respectable while living a secret, more hedonist life, is designed to critique Victorian morality. This play is a COMEDY. Remember this as you are auditioning. Use your imagination to perform the audition pieces as humorously as possible.

## Characters

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**John Worthing** - The play's protagonist. "Jack" Worthing is a seemingly responsible and respectable young man who leads a double life. In Hertfordshire, where he has a country estate, Jack is known as Jack. In London he is known as Ernest.

**Algernon Moncrieff** – A charming, idle, decorative bachelor, nephew of Lady Bracknell, cousin of Gwendolen Fairfax, and best friend of Jack Worthing, whom he has known for years as Ernest.

**Gwendolen Fairfax** - A model and arbiter of high fashion and society, Gwendolen speaks with unassailable authority on matters of taste and morality. She is sophisticated, intellectual, cosmopolitan, and utterly pretentious.

**Cecily Cardew** – 18 years old, ward of Jack Worthing, has fallen in love with Jack's brother Ernest in her imagination and invents an elaborate romance and courtship between them.

**Lady Bracknell** - Algernon's snobbish, mercenary, and domineering aunt and Gwendolen's mother.

**Miss Prism** - Cecily's governess. Miss Prism is an endless source of clichés. Puritan though she is, Miss Prism's severe pronouncements have a way of going so far over the top that they inspire laughter.

**Rev. Chasuble** - The rector on Jack's estate.

**Lane and Merriman**- Algernon's manservant / Butler on Jack's estate.

## FEMALE MONOLOGUES

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**MISS PRISM** - Cecily, Cecily! Your German grammar is on the table. Pray open it at page fifteen. We will repeat yesterday's lesson. Child, you know how anxious your guardian is that you should improve yourself in every way. He laid particular stress on your German, as he was leaving for town yesterday. Indeed, he always lays stress on your German when he is leaving town. Your guardian enjoys the best of health, and his gravity of demeanor is especially to be commended in one so comparatively young as he is. I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility. Idle merriment and triviality would be out of place in his conversation. Mr. Worthing has many troubles in his life. You must remember his constant anxiety about that unfortunate young man, his brother. I do not think that even I could produce any effect on the character that according to his own brother's admission is irretrievably weak and vacillating. Indeed, I am not sure that I would desire to reclaim him. I am not in favor of this modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice. As a man sows so let him reap.

**GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX** - Ernest, we may never be married. From the expression on Mamma's face I fear we never shall. Few parents nowadays pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out. Whatever influence I ever had over Mamma, I lost at the age of three. But although she may prevent us from becoming man and wife, and I may marry someone else, and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you. The story of your romantic origin, as related to me by Mamma, with unpleasing comments, has naturally stirred the deeper fibers of my nature. Your Christian name has an irresistible fascination. The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me. It may be necessary to do something desperate. That, of course, will require serious consideration.

**LADY AUGUSTA BRACKNELL** - You may take a seat, Mr. Worthing. I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke? You don't? I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you? Twenty-nine? A very good age to be married at. I have always held the opinion that a man should know everything or nothing. Which do you know? Nothing? I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit: touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately, in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square.

**CECILY CARDEW** - You silly boy! Of course I'll marry you. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months. Ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. I daresay it was foolish me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest. The engagement was settled on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear tree here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this little bangle with the true lovers knot I promised you always to wear. You've wonderful good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've always given you for leading such a leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters. I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener. The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

## MALE MONOLOGUES

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**JACK WORTHING** - I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Lady Bracknell, but this engagement is quite out of the question. I am Ms. Cardew's Guardian, and she cannot marry without my consent until she comes of age. That consent I absolutely declined to give. It pains me very much to have to speak frankly to you, Lady Bracknell, about your nephew, but the fact is that I do not approve at all of his moral character. I suspect him of being untruthful. I fear there can be no possible doubt about the matter. This afternoon, during my temporary absence in London on important question of romance, he obtained admission to my house by means of the false pretense of being my brother. Under an assumed name he drank, I've just been informed by my Butler, an entire pint bottle of my Apple Cider. Continuing his disgraceful deception, he succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of my only ward. He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every single muffin. And what makes his conduct all the more heartless is, that he was perfectly well aware from the first that I have no brother, that I have never had a brother, and that I don't intend to have a brother, not even of any kind. I distinctly told him so myself yesterday afternoon. My decision is unalterable. I declined to give my consent.

**ALGERNON MONCRIEFF** - Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I'm quite sure of it now. You have invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country if I choose. Bunbury is invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's. Tonight, I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week. I haven't the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind. To begin with, I dined there on Monday, and once a week is quite enough to dine with one's own relations. In the second place, whenever I do dine there I am always treated as a member of the family, and sit down with either no woman at all, or two. Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed bunburyist I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying. Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.

**REV. CHASUBLE** - Your brother Ernest dead? Mr. Worthing, I offer you my sincere condolences. You have at least the consolation of knowing that you were always the most generous and forgiving of brothers. Was the cause of death mentioned? I myself am peculiarly susceptible to draughts. Will the interment take place here? You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to tragic domestic affliction next Sunday. My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing. I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation and festal days. The last time I delivered it was in the Cathedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontent among the Upper Orders. The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogs I drew.

(For **LANE/MERIMAN** – use any of the three male monologues)

## **Cold Reading Audition Sides**

### **ALGERNON & JACK**

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ALGY: How are you, my dear Earnest? Where have you been since Thursday?

JACK: In the country.

ALGY: What on earth do you do there?

JACK: When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

ALGY: And who are the people you amuse?

JACK: (airily) Oh, neighbors, neighbors.

ALGY: Got nice neighbors in your part of Shropshire?

JACK: Perfectly horrid! Never speak to one of them.

ALGY: How immensely you must amuse them! By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?

JACK: Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea? ALGY: Oh! Merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

JACK: How perfectly delightful!

ALGY: Yes, that is all very well; but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't approve of your being here.

JACK: May I ask why?

ALGY: My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you.

JACK: I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her. ALGY: I thought you had come up for pleasure? ... I call that business.

JACK: How utterly unromantic you are!

### **MISS PRISM & CHASUBLE**

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PRISM: You are too much alone, Dr. Chasuble. You should get married. A misanthrope I can understand – a womanthrope, never!

CHAS: (with a scholar's shudder) Believe me, I do not deserve so neologistic a phrase. The precept as well as the practice of the Primitive Church was distinctly against matrimony.

PRISM: (sententiously) That is obviously the reason why the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day. And you do not seem to realize, dear Doctor, that by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. Men should be more careful; this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray.

CHAS: But is a man not equally attractive when married?

PRISM: No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.

CHAS: And often, I've been told, not even to her.

PRISM: That depends on the intellectual sympathies of the woman. Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness can be trusted. Young women are green. I spoke horticulturally. My metaphor was drawn from fruits. But where is Cecily?

CHAS: Perhaps she followed us to the schools.

## JACK & GWENDOLEN

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JACK: Charming day it has been, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN: Pray don't talk to me about the weather, Mr. Worthing. Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else.

JACK: I do mean something else.

GWENDOLEN: I thought so. In fact, I am never wrong.

JACK: And I would like to be allowed to take advantage of Lady Bracknell's temporary absence...

GWENDOLEN: I would certainly advise you to do so. Mamma has a way of coming back suddenly into a room that I have often had to speak to her about.

JACK: (*nervously*) Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl...I have ever met since ...I met you.

GWENDOLEN: Yes, I am quite aware of the fact. And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative. For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you. (*JACK looks at her in amazement*) We live, as I hope you know, Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and my ideal has always been to love someone of the name Earnest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Earnest, I knew I was destined to love you.

JACK: You really love me, Gwendolen?

GWENDOLEN: Passionately!

JACK: Darling! You don't know how happy you've made me.

GWENDOLEN: My own Earnest!

## GWENDOLEN & CECILY

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CECILY: (*rather shy & confidingly*) Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you. Our little county newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week. Mr. Earnest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

GWENDOLEN: (*quite politely*) My dearest Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr. Earnest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the *Morning Post* on Saturday at the latest.

CECILY: (*very politely*) I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Earnest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. (*shows diary*)

GWENDOLEN: (*examining diary carefully*) It is certainly very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday afternoon at five-thirty. If you would care to verify the incident, pray do so. (*produces a diary of her own*) I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid *I* have the prior claim.

CECILY: It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Earnest proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

GWENDOLEN: (*meditatively*) If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once, and with a firm hand. CECILY: (*thoughtfully & sadly*) Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

GWENDOLEN: Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

CECILY: Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Earnest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade, I call it a spade.

GWENDOLEN: (*satirically*) I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

## ALGERNON & CECILY

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CECILY: Oh, I merely came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.

ALGY: He's gone to order the dog-cart for me.

CECILY: Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

ALGY: He's going to send me away.

CECILY: Then have we got to part?

ALGY: I am afraid so. It's a very painful parting.

CECILY: It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time. The absence of old friends one can endure with equanimity. But even a momentary separation from anyone to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable.

ALGY: Thank you. I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I state quite frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection.

CECILY: I think your frankness does you great credit, Earnest. Uncle Jack will be very annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week, instead.

ALGY: Oh, I don't care about Jack. I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?

CECILY: You silly boy! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

ALGY: For the last three months?

CECILY: Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

ALGY: But how did we become engaged?

CECILY: Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Earnest.

ALGY: Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled? CECILY: On the 14 of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lovers' knot I promised you always to wear.

ALGY: Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

CECILY: Yes, you've wonderfully good taste, Earnest. It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life.