

Audition Information

Beechworth Theatre Company is casting for *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde. Probably the most famous of Wilde's plays, *Earnest* was first performed in London in 1895. The full title of the play is *The Importance of Being Earnest: A Trivial Comedy for Serious People*, and it tells the story of two young men about town (Jack and Algernon) who lead double lives to evade unwanted social obligations, both assuming the name Ernest while wooing the two young women of their affections (Gwendolen and Cecily). The play, celebrated for its wit and repartee, parodies contemporary dramatic norms, gently satirises late Victorian manners, and introduces – in addition to the two pairs of young lovers – the formidable Lady Bracknell, the fussy governess Miss Prism and the benign and scholarly Canon Chasuble.

Characters of the play:

John (Jack) Worthing – Upper class English man of 27, Jack was adopted as a baby when found abandoned in a handbag at a railway station in London. Jack has a country property where he lives during the week with his ward, Cecily Mayhew. When Jack visits London, he assumes the name Ernest, however he tells his ward and servants that he is visiting his (non-existent) brother called Ernest. Jack spends a lot of time with Algernon and the two of them are 'men about town' – bachelors who live the high life in late Victorian London society. Jack is in love with Gwendolen Fairfax, the daughter of Lady Bracknell, and has come to London to propose.

Algernon Moncrieff – Upper class English man of 25, Algernon is the nephew of Lady Bracknell and lives in an upmarket flat in London. He himself has created an imaginary friend called 'Bunbury' whom he visits in the country whenever he needs to avoid awkward situations in town. Algernon knows Jack as Ernest and when he discovers Jack's deception, he undertakes to visit Jack's country estate pretending to be Jack's errant brother, Ernest. Here, he meets Cecily with whom he immediately falls in love.

Lady Bracknell – Upper class English woman of around 50-60, mother of Gwendolen and 'Aunt Augusta' to Algernon who is the son of her sister. Lady Bracknell is formidable, absolutely proper, and exudes authority over all who pass her way. She is overly concerned with what is socially acceptable within late Victorian society and has very strong opinions on potential husbands for her daughter.

Gwendolen Fairfax – Lady Bracknell's daughter, an upper class English woman of around 25. Gwendolen is obsessed with the name Ernest and in love with Jack whom she believes is called Ernest. Gwendolen knows her own mind, pays little heed to her mother, and is determined to marry her 'Ernest'. She is mindful of society's rules and expectations but considers these easily overcome.

Cecily Mayhew – Cecily is an orphan who has come to be Jack's ward. She has just turned 18 but will not legally become 'of age' until she turns 35. Up to that point, Jack must give permission for her to marry. Cecily is bored with her lessons, keeps a diary, and has created a fantasy around the (non-existent) brother of Jack – Ernest. She, too, is obsessed with marrying someone called Ernest and has already decided that she is engaged to Jack's brother. When she meets Algernon, disguised as Ernest, she immediately accepts his actual proposal.

Miss Prism – Cecily's governess and the original holder of the handbag in which Jack was abandoned. Miss Prism is anywhere between 50 and 60, she is educated and well-spoken.

Canon (Dr) Chasuble – Dr Chasuble is the rector of the small parish church in the village near Jack's country estate. He is around 50 to 60, educated and refined, good hearted, and very much admires Miss Prism.

Lane – Algernon's manservant. Lane is dry-witted and sarcastic, he tolerates Algernon's behaviour and supports him in his deceptions about 'Bunbury-ing'. Age 30 to 60+ well spoken (this role can be combined with the one below)

Merriman – the butler at Jack's country estate. (can be combined with the role of Lane)

Production Schedule

Rehearsal Schedule:

15th February – first rehearsal (meet up/read through) 1pm – 5pm

16th February to 7th May – Monday and Thursday rehearsals each week 7.00pm to 9.30pm (any exception to these days and times (e.g.: public holidays) will be provided in the full schedule when available)

1st March – Sunday rehearsal 1pm – 5pm

22nd March – Sunday rehearsal 1pm – 5pm

19th April – Sunday rehearsal 1pm – 5pm

2nd May – Saturday rehearsal 1pm – 5pm

Production Week:

9th May - Bump In

11th May – Tech Rehearsal

12th May – Dress Rehearsal

13th May – Dress Rehearsal

14th May – Dress Rehearsal – performance conditions

15th May – OPENING NIGHT – 7:30PM

16th May – Evening performance – 4.30PM

17th May – Matinee performance 2:00PM

22nd May – Night performance 7:30PM

23rd May – Evening performance 4.30PM

24th May – Matinee performance 2.00PM followed by partial bump-out and clean up

25th May – Bump Out of set

Attendance at all rehearsals during Production Week and at performances is mandatory.

Audition Requirements

To be considered for a role please email beechworththeatrecompany.com.au to book a 15-minute audition. Auditions will be held on the days and times shown below. You need to book an audition time for ONE of these days. Please nominate which day and potential time you would like, and we will do our best to give you your preferred time.

Audition dates and times:

Monday 9th February 7.00pm, 7.15pm, 7.30pm, 8.00pm, 8.15pm, 8.30pm, 8.45pm

Thursday 12th February 7.00pm, 7.15pm, 7.30pm, 8.00pm, 8.15pm, 8.30pm, 8.45pm

NOTE:

Sunday 15th February – from 1pm - possible call backs and/or extra auditions (if we already have a cast, this day will be used for a first meet up and read through as per the schedule above)

Venue: Beechworth Servicemen's Memorial Hall, Ford St Beechworth

NOTE: Your audition may take longer than 15 minutes but will be no longer than half an hour. Please arrive at the hall at least 10 mins before your scheduled audition time. Someone will meet you in the foyer and let you into the hall when it is time for your audition. You will be required to read an excerpt from the play for your chosen character and/or any other character the Director chooses.

Copies of the readings will be available on the day. Everyone will have time to read through the relevant section of the script before being asked to present it on the stage. You do not have to memorise anything.

Preparation:

Although you will not be expected to memorise the reading, you will have a much better chance of being placed in a role if you prepare before your audition. It is very important to note that ALL characters are expected to use a British accent. In particular, the main characters of Jack, Algernon, Lady Bracknell, Gwendolen, and Cecily, need to speak in an upper-class English accent – commonly known as 'received' English. Miss Prism is also well-spoken; however, this character could have an accent from other areas of Britain such as a Scots or even light Irish accent. She could not have a cockney or more working-class accent, but she could have a middle-class accent. Dr Chasuble would also speak well. Both Miss Prism and Dr Chasuble are characters that could possibly be from upper-class origins (children of aristocracy/wealthy families often became governesses and ministers of the church if they were further down in birth order!). Both the butlers/manservants would have more refined ways of speaking as they were expected to have a level of refinement to match their positions. Please do some research (Google!!) about the play, the characters, and the required accents before you attend your audition.

The Importance of Being Earnest is a comedy and social commentary on the Victorian era of the late 19th century, with all its overblown ideas of 'propriety' and social standing. The script is designed to be delivered in a fast-paced, semi-farcical, manner. Almost every line in the entire play is humorous and there is a strong need for clarity, diction, and commitment to the sometimes nonsensical statements being made. This script is NOT subtle!

A great start for preparation is to read the article on Wikipedia about the play. If you can get hold of the script, do so and read it. It is easily downloadable from a number of sources as it no longer has any

rights attached to it. The movie made in 2002 with Colin Firth is also a very good adaptation, although of course there are some differences between it and the play script. However, the character development is pretty much what we are looking for.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR AUDITIONEES

Being in a BTC show is both fun and rewarding; however, in order to have a quality production, we do require a certain amount of commitment from cast members. BTC invests significant cost, time and effort to stage a show and to also run the company during the year, therefore we must charge people money for tickets. Because we are charging audience money, we need to provide as high a standard of production as possible as a community theatre company. Please read these notes carefully and decide whether or not you can provide this level of commitment before you audition.

Both in rehearsal & during performances the Director, Co-Director, and Stage Manager are in charge and you will be expected to work to their directions. You may not be called for every rehearsal, or for the whole time, but you must attend every rehearsal for which you are called. We cannot halt rehearsals over school & public holidays (except Easter/Christmas). If you know you will be unavailable on these or any other dates, please let the Director know at auditions. (We will not consider you ineligible for the cast, but we do need to know absences so that rehearsals can be structured accordingly.)

YOU ARE EXPECTED TO LEARN YOUR LINES!!! BTC does NOT use a prompt and we expect all cast members to put the time in at home to learn your lines. We support people with strategies and can usually arrange extra time if needed to help people learn lines. If you DO NOT know your lines by the deadline set by the Director, you may be asked to leave the cast.

Cast members will be expected to behave in a courteous, kind, and inclusive way throughout all rehearsals, performances, and other times when the cast and crew are together. We are community based but we strive for a professional attitude and performance! Our aim is for everyone to have fun when doing a BTC production and provide a welcoming and safe environment.

A full-length stage production is fairly demanding, both in time and effort. It can be both physically and mentally stressful. If you have a medical condition which you think we may need to know about, we would urge you to have a confidential word with the Director, who will then know if they should be taking this condition into account before asking you to do something which may not be comfortable for you.

If you are accepted into the cast, you must become a **financial member** of Beechworth Theatre Company Inc. This is primarily related to insurance purposes. A Committee member will be present at the first read-through/rehearsal to accept membership dues. Information about the cost of this and any additional costs will be sent to you if you are accepted into the cast.

We run our shows on a very small budget. We are generally unable to provide such items as shoes or make-up for cast members although we do have a small stock of makeup that can be used if you don't have your own. You will be provided with some costuming, and we are always happy to see people who can source costumes or help make them! You may be required to help make and/or paint scenery, and to help move the sets, props and paraphernalia in and erect them at bump-in as well as help with bump-out.

Please note that Beechworth Theatre Company pursues an alcohol and drug-free policy during both rehearsals and performances.

If you are unable to comply with the above commitments, you may be asked to leave the cast.

If you have any questions regarding anything outlined in the pack, please don't hesitate to contact us via our email: beechworththeatrecompany@gmail.com

You will be informed whether or not you are successful in the auditions by email or phone call as soon as possible after we finish auditions. Good luck with your audition!