

Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest" to be presented

November 6, 1978

"In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing." Oscar Wilde

The classic comedy, Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest," will be presented by the University of California, San Diego Department of Drama for 13 performances beginning Thursday, November 16.

The play, considered by many as one of the wittiest comedies ever written, was first performed in 1895. At UC San Diego it will be staged in the 200-seat UCSD Theatre November 16-19, 21-22, 24-26, 29-30 and December 1-2. Curtain time is 8 p.m. for each performance. General admission is \$4 and student admission is \$3. Tickets are available from the UCSD Theatre Ticket Office, 452-4574.

Eric Christmas, professor of drama and director of UCSD Theatre, is directing the production which features a cast of nine undergraduate and graduate students.

According to Christmas, "The Importance of Being Earnest," is a classic piece of drama that defies time and fashion.

"In terms of comedy," Christmas said, "it represents the best of the late 19th century and the best of Oscar Wilde's plays."

"The whole play is absolutely crammed with brilliant wit," he said. "It is entirely based on reverse logic, that is, a reversal of truth or basic logic.

"It is also a very young play and, as in Shakespeare, the women are much superior to the men; much sharper in wit and intelligence and awareness."

Christmas said the play is a comedy of manners similar to the restoration comedies of the 16th and 17th centuries.

"The play has often been done facetiously but it shouldn't be," he said. "It should be done with serious intent."

Christmas said that although the play is English he is not overly interested in making it English.

"With the exception of one or two words we will not try to make the actors something they are not," he said.

He is, however, having the girls rehearse in corsets and the men in tight fitting suits to force them to sit up properly as was the style at the time of the play.

"My biggest problem is the relaxed life style of Southern California, Christmas said. "My actors have to learn to work with such things as hats and gloves and parasols so that such items become natural and not a prop."

Set designer Bob Israel, new to the campus this year, has developed what Christmas calls an imaginative two dimensional, artificial world through the use of cardboard boxes decorated with reproductions of elegant engravings. The result is a stunning manifestation of the concern with facade during this period.

"The clothes and the people are real," Christmas said. "What we have done is put real people in an artificial world - something we can equate with the jet set people of today. This is a play that is of real people in an artificial world dealing with trivia," he said. "Most of Wilde's life was concerned with trivia and his characters share the same concerns.

"As Wilde states in the play, 'In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing.' That is the whole object and direction of this play," Christmas said.

For information contact: Paul W. West, 452-3120

(November 6, 1978)

Cast for "THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST"

Presented by the Department of Drama, UC San Diego

Lane . . . Tarquin Cardona

Algernon Moncrieff . . . Kip Baker

John Worthing . . . Kevin Bash

Lady Bracknell . . . R. S. J. Iglewski

Hon. Gwendolyn Rairfax. . . Sharon Silverglate

Merriman . . . Lauren Leff

Servant . . . Cynthia Buddes

Cecily Cardew . . . Valerie Keffala

Miss Prism . . . Emily DuBois

Rev. Chasuble . . . Walter Schoen