

'Earnest' sets provide visual treat

By CHRIS AAGAARD
Herald Staff Writer

The latest feature from Georgetown Little Theatre Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest", is a two-fold success for the company, which wraps up another drama season this Saturday night.

Of course, there's recognition due the cast for outstanding performances in this turtledove at the British upper class of the late Victorian era.

But the play, which opened at the John Elliott Theatre

Friday night, was also an enormously successful experiment for GLT's backstage crew. Never before had GLT worked with so many different elaborate sets on such a large stage. Combined with a great deal of attention paid to costuming, down to the minutest detail, it was genuinely breathtaking every time the stage lights opened on a new act.

Much of the credit for the magic in the sets goes to David Antscherl, a professional stage designer commissioned by GLT thanks to a grant from

Theatre Ontario. His instruction and hands-on management over three weekends last month contributed immensely to what is GLT's finest production in recent memory. The lessons learned in building and using flats will prove invaluable in future productions.

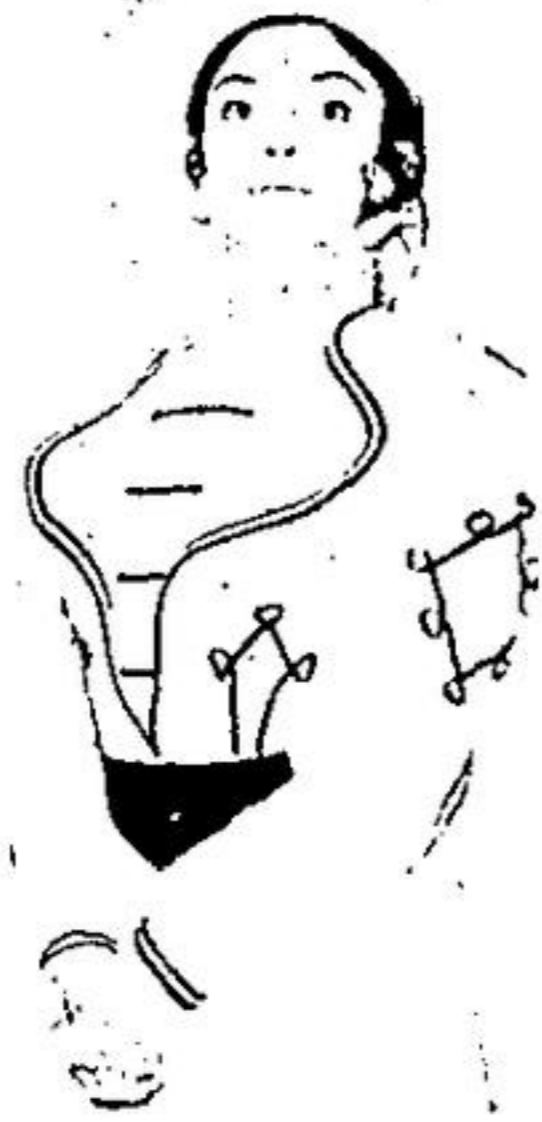
During the course of the play, skillfully directed by Derek Joyes, the audience moves from a London drawing room to a country garden to "the morning room at Manor House, Woolton". "Earnest" is considered one of the most "perfect" plays in English theatre, ranking with Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream" and "As You Like It". Wilde delights in exploding Victorian social pretensions in "Earnest", using his dynamite the problems these customs cause for lovers considering marriage.

The most explosive character of all, the person who regards herself as a bastion of proper conduct, is also the most comical. Lady Bracknell's statements about social etiquette are outrageous, but when she steams into a room like a massive, creaking dreadnought, her verbal firepower gives others cause to cringe.

Applauded for the role is Vera MacDonald. She plays the character perfectly, filling her with a great sense of British imperial might. Through her wire-rimmed glasses, Lady Bracknell's scrutiny can strip paint. Fittingly enough, she is dressed in black throughout the play, breaking up the "love" scenes between Algernon and Cecily or John and Gwendolen like a thundercloud which passes over a picnic.

Ashley Windsor plays Algernon, an old-fashioned, Dudley Moore "Arthur", who clowns his way through his lavish social position and has perfected "Banburying" - a clever device used to avoid "boring" appointments. His performance is also first-rate and despite Algernon's mischievousness (he's the type of person who would think hand-buzzers terrific novelties) the audience can't help liking the fellow.

plays a character who takes life substantially more seriously



ly and, although quaking a little at the knees, defiantly proposes marriage to Gwendolen despite Lady Bracknell's disapproval.

Worthing, like Algernon, has invented a character as an excuse to visit the city. The misuse of these fictitious people gets him and Algernon in a heap of trouble.

GLT newcomers fill major female roles in the play and do so admirably. Cecily (Susan Stevens) and Gwendolen (Jill Evans) are classic as stylish yet innocent women who have stirred "Algie" and Jack to love. Timing is extremely important in their roles because their characters' whims seem to change from passage to passage, adding to the anxiety of their bailed suitors.

GLT veterans fill smaller roles - comic extras in the play - who continually delight the audience. Pat Joyce is the air-headed and ancient Miss Prism, a governess with something to hide. Ron Hill plays Rev. Canon Chasuble, an old-

timer who is proud of his celibacy, has mastered a "works in a drawer" sermon from which he can remove and replace parts as he wishes (cutting down on his workload every Sunday) and has caught the spinsterish eye of Miss Prism.

Meanwhile, doltering about Manor House is Merriman, played by Bill Marchant, a popular young member of GLT. Merriman is anything but merry as the household servant and he provides the play's slapstick elements, clumsily serving tea and announcing guests with as much effort as his aging bones can muster.

"Earnest" is a very light play, without too many moving parts to tax the intellect. It's the kind of production which keeps you chuckling while allowing frequent outbursts of laughter.

And it's not just a visual delight, it's a visual miracle. The sets are outstanding and together with the costuming

organized by Barbel Schrim, Joyce Holland, and Connie Halvarson, GLT's year-end production is delightfully "unsettling".

There are only odd seats remaining for Thursday night's (tomorrow's) performance and the Friday and Saturday shows are completely booked. However, there are tickets available for the Xi Delta Beta sorority benefit performance tonight (Wednesday). You can purchase benefit performance tickets at the theatre box office which will be open today from 2 to 8 p.m. or call 877-4066.

In the new season, which opens in October, GLT will be presenting such hits as "Absurd Person Singular", the annual Christmas show, "Nurse Jane Goes to Hawaii" and "Death Trap".

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May 19. Mark that date on your calendar. Wednesday, May 19 at 7:30 p.m. in the multi-purpose room of the Cultural Centre, Halton Hills Arts Council will hold their "Annual General Meeting". This is your opportunity to discover just what the Arts Council is all about.

You are welcome. You do not have to be a paid up member. You may renew your membership or take out a new one at the meeting. Perhaps you are not sure whether you wish to join or not, come anyway. This is your chance to hear what we have been up to for the past year. It will give you a look at the inner workings of the Council and help you decide if you wish to support us.



The Arts Council is not just for artists, performers and craftspeople. It is for anyone who has ever enjoyed the music of the Choral Society or admired the work of a local artisan. The Arts Council's role is to promote the arts in Halton Hills. The larger our membership, the easier our job. Come on out and be a part of it.

"What do I get out of it?" There are many benefits enjoyed by council members. Among them are advance booking and discounts on "Musical Trillight" series tickets, special programs such as the new "Members' Lecture Series" and most importantly our quarterly "Calendar of the Arts". No home in Halton Hills should be without this comprehensive guide to artistic and entertainment activities available in our area.

The membership fees are \$5 for individuals and \$10 for families. Come to the meeting. See the slide display of our past achievements and hear our plans for future endeavors.

CONTINUING:
Georgetown Little Theatre - May 6, 7 and 8 - "The Importance of Being Earnest" by Oscar Wilde, 8:30 p.m. at the John Elliott Theatre.
Gallery House Sol - Until May 13 - George Hawken - Etchings to Kafka's "Metamorphosis" and related works.

COMING SOON:
Heritage Weavers - May 7 and 8 - An Exhibition of Weaving at the Georgetown Public Library in the lower foyer, during library hours. Some articles will be for sale.
Georgetown Public Library - May 10 - "Right Out of History: The Making of Judy Chicago's Dinner Party" will be screened at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$1 and may be obtained in advance from the Acton and Georgetown Libraries.

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