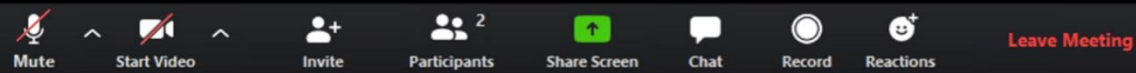


The Persimmon Tree Players present...



Ernest in Isolation

A "Wilde" ride in the time of Covid-19



November 13, 14 at 8:00 pm & November 15 at 4:00 pm

All performances virtual! <https://www.persimmontreeplayers.org> for info and tickets.

Written by Tom Green

Directed and Produced by Jen Starkey and Tom Green

Technical Direction by Shannon Montague



ACT 1, SCENE 1

“Backstage” prior to the opening night performance

ACT 1, SCENE 2

Act 1 of *The Importance of Being Earnest*

TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION

ACT 2, SCENE 1

“Backstage” immediately following the End of Act 1 of *The Importance of Being Earnest*

ACT 2, SCENE 2

Act 2 of *The Importance of Being Earnest*

and

“Backstage” immediately following the End of Act 2 of *The Importance of Being Earnest*

ACT 2, SCENE 3

Act 3 of *The Importance of Being Earnest*

and

“Backstage” immediately following the End of Act 3 of *The Importance of Being Earnest*

SHOW SYNOPSIS:

A first-time director for a small community theatre group is given the directorship of a production of Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The show, in its original form, was set to be performed on stage in April 2020. Then, the pandemic strikes. There is pressure from the theatre company to go forward with the production, despite the need for social distancing. Not wanting to blow his chance at a directorial debut, the director agrees to rework the script to make it a bit more modern and virtual-friendly, and plans virtual performances of the show for live streaming.

Flash forward to opening night. The struggle to find actors for a small community theatre production was as challenging as usual, and made even more so by the pandemic. The cast that the director managed to assemble is a motley and semi-dysfunctional “family” that includes, among others, an assistant director who is the understudy for every part; an actress who was off-off-off Broadway in her younger days before moving to this small community, and has little tolerance for anything, but puts up with this nonsense because she wants desperately to play the iconic role of Lady Bracknell; a young actor who has zero acting experience who is pulled in at the last second when one of the other actors doesn’t show up; and an actress who is “this close to quitting” the entire time.

This farcical comedy addresses the realities of the struggle to cast and put on any production in community theatre, made even more difficult by the challenges and pitfalls of virtual times. It is an homage to “everything that can go wrong...” farces like *Noises Off* and *The Play that Goes Wrong*, and the wonderful world of community theatre. It is never easy, but the cast manages to include the entire plot of *The Importance of Being Earnest* from beginning to end with various hiccups and detours along the way, showing the indomitable spirit of the stage and those who play on it.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS:

Jonathan Griffith (Director/Lane/Miss Prism/Merriman) - The frazzled first-time director who is trying to keep everything together despite all the mishaps and inevitable things going awry. When numerous actors don't show up for the performance, Jonathan ends up having to fill some of those roles.

Charles Townsend (Assistant Director/Reverend Chasuble/Algernon Moncrief) - An individual who has been with the theatre company for years. He loves the stage, and is always willing to do whatever is needed. In this production, Charles is cast as Reverend Chasuble and is the stand-in for anyone else who is missing from a rehearsal and, as it turns out, the performance itself.

Katherine Davis (Lady Bracknell) - She is perfect for the role of Lady Bracknell because she is cut from the same mold. Serious and self-important, stoic to the point of comedic, she never breaks character even when the walls are caving in all around her.

Jack Baxter (Jack Worthing) - The straight man in all of this. Plays his part, and goes with the flow. He is dependable, calm, humble, and a good actor. He is the actor who is cast as the young lead in every show the troupe performs, because young, dependable, male actors tend to be a rare commodity in community theatre.

Addie Anderson (Cecily) - Youthful, exuberant, and enthusiastic. This is her first play and she is just so excited! Her enthusiasm is infectious... good infectious for her co-stars with positive attitudes and outlooks, “nails on a chalkboard” for the less patient cast members.

Sarah Foster (Gwendolen) - Sarah fancies herself a very talented actress. She is not exactly the right age to play Gwendolen, but tries very hard to act younger than she actually is. She is convinced that she is pulling it off beautifully (she is not). She is constantly on the verge of quitting because she has no patience for anyone else in the cast.

Alex Anderson (Algernon Moncrief) - A last minute addition to the cast, he has zero acting experience and struggles to read the script correctly, especially having problems with names. But oh, is he having fun.

Marcus Madison (Technical Director) - Enthusiastic and capable tech wizard serving mostly behind the scenes as Director of Technology of the show.

CAST

(In order of appearance)

JONATHAN GRIFFITH	Jon Wilson
MARCUS MADISON	Marcus Dowd
CHARLES TOWNSEND	Kirk Martini
KATHERINE DAVIS	Kaye Pearse
JACK BAXTER	Jonathan Karns
ADDIE ANDERSON	Kate Green
SARAH FOSTER	Jen Starkey
ALEX ANDERSON	Ezra Smith

PRODUCTION STAFF

DIRECTORS	Tom Green & Jen Starkey
PRODUCERS	Tom Green & Jen Starkey
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR	Shannon Montague
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT	Marcus Dowd
SOUND	Shannon Montague & Mike Montgomery
ACCORDION	Kaye Pearse

SPECIAL THANKS TO

George Gaige and the PTP Board of Directors, Mike Sisson, Brooke Agee, Bob Wilson, Colleen Green, and Jim Starkey

CAST & DIRECTORS' BIOS

JON WILSON (Jonathan Griffith)



Jonathan Griffith

Jon is excited to be appearing in his first production with The Persimmon Tree Players and also the first with his sister since high school! Based in Syracuse, NY, Jon has performed in over 75 productions across New York State, including in NYC, Buffalo, Syracuse, Binghamton, and Ithaca. Some favorite roles include **Fellowes/Brent** in *Noises Off*, **Cornelius Hackl** in *Hello, Dolly!*, **Riff** in *West Side Story*, **Reverend Crisparkle** in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, and his many roles for the ACME Mystery Co. Jon extends his thanks to the *Earnest* cast and crew; his parents and siblings for their years of love and support; Peanut, Moose, and Pumpkin for keeping him on his toes; and especially Natalie for always believing in him. *Here we go again!*

MARCUS DOWD (Marcus Madison, Production Assistant)

Marcus is thrilled to be a part of *Earnest in Isolation!* While this busy high school sophomore is typically found onstage, he's excited to learn more about what goes on behind-the-scenes with this production. His favorite roles include **Ensemble** in *In The Heights* (Live Arts), **Malcolm** in *13: The Musical* (Virginia Rep/Cadence Theatre Company), **Nathan** in *The Full Monty* (Workhouse Arts Center), and **Ralphie** in *A Christmas Story: The Musical* (Riverside Center for the Performing Arts). He would like to thank his friends and family for their continued support.



TECH

KIRK MARTINI (Charles Townsend)



Charles Townsend

Kirk has performed improv with Charlottesville's Big Blue Door since 2013. He was cast in *Four Players*, part of a collection of one-act plays scheduled to open in March of 2020 at PVCC, which was sadly canceled because of, well, you know. He also appeared in UVA Drama's 2002 production of *Threshold*. In his day job, Kirk teaches at UVA's School of Architecture.

KAYE PEARSE (Katherine Davis)

Kaye made her feature film debut at 19, in the comedy classic *Squeeze Play*. Since then, she has appeared in numerous films, TV shows, commercials, and on stage. Her favorite roles include **Meg Brockie** in *Brigadoon*, **Cha-Cha** in *Grease*, and **Prunella** in Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Cinderella*. When not performing, Kaye teaches middle school math and enjoys sewing and playing the accordion. She has published two children's books about her very special cat, Wibber Dibber Doo (who makes an appearance in this show!), and is currently working on a young adult novel. Kaye recently moved from Central Virginia to the seaside village of Ocean Shores, Washington. She is honored to share this theatrical adventure with such an incredibly talented group of people.



Katherine Davis

JONATHAN KARNIS (Jack Baxter)



Jack Baxter

Jonathan is glad to be performing again. He is typically a dancer and character actor, so concentrating on dialogue and facial expressions has been a lovely but challenging opportunity. As a Charlottesville based actor, he has performed with theaters such as Live Arts, Four County Players, and Wayne Theater, among others. He hasn't had the opportunity to work with PTP before and is lucky to have had his first experience be with such passionate

KATE GREEN (Addie Anderson)

Kate is a junior at Monticello High School. She has been in multiple productions over the years, including *The Phantom Tollbooth* as **Tock** with PTP, *Ten Ways to Survive a Quarantine* with Empowered Players, and multiple smaller plays written during classes with EP. She was also a part of *Crybaby*, the Monticello spring musical, before it was cancelled. Kate is super excited to be a part of this production, and hopes you enjoy it!



addie anderson

JEN STARKEY (Sarah Foster, Director & Producer)



Sarah Foster

Last seen on stage as **Mom** in *A Nice Family Gathering*, Jen is delighted to be working on her eighth show with PTP as a performer and her second as a director. She received a B.A. from the Theatre & Dance Department at SUNY Buffalo and has performed in numerous musicals, operettas, plays, and theme park productions on the East Coast, in California, and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. A few of her favorite roles include **Rosa Bud** in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, **Sister Mary Leo** in *Nunsense*, and **Athena Sinclair** in *Suite Surrender*. Offstage, Jen lives in Fluvanna County, and is the Business Manager for the Miller Center of Public Affairs at UVA.

EZRA SMITH (Alex Anderson)

Ezra is excited for his first production with PTP! He is a junior at Albemarle High School, where his recent roles include **Christopher** in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, and **Ted** in *Peter and the Starcatcher*. Ezra also performed this summer in the Live Arts' virtual production of *In the Heights*.



anderson_alex

TOM GREEN (Playwright, Director & Producer)



Thomas Green

Tom is thrilled to have this incredibly talented cast assembled to create virtual theatre when many theaters themselves remain dark. This is his third time directing with Persimmon Tree Players, having previously co-directed *Out of Sight*, *Out of Murder* and directed *The Phantom Tollbooth*. He has also appeared on the Carysbrook Stage in Fluvanna as **Felix Ungar** in *The Odd Couple*, **Detective Sergeant Trotter** in *The Mousetrap*, and **Donald Kidding** in *You've Gotta Be Kidding*, among others. Tom's most recent appearance on stage was as **Lancelot** in PVCC's production of *Spamalot*, and he is slated to play **George Hay** in PTP's *Moon Over Buffalo*, which is currently on hold due to the pandemic.

SHANNON MONTAGUE (Technical Director)

Shannon is excited to be involved in her first PTP show – thank you to Jen and Tom for the opportunity! She has been involved in volunteer-based and community theater in the mid-Atlantic region from a young age and continues to act and sing whenever she is able. An educator by day, Shannon began directing youth productions the summer after she graduated from high school and has directed plays and musicals at the various schools where she has worked. A UVA graduate for her undergraduate degree, Shannon moved back to Virginia in 2017 and became involved with Live Arts theater as a board member, an actor, a director, and most recently as Director of Technology for their fully online teen theater ensemble production of *In the Heights*. Other directing credits include *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Legally Blonde The Musical*, *Triangle*, *Disney's The Lion King JR.*, and the web series *Serenity Hill in the Pandemic*.



NOTES FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

The story of *Earnest in Isolation* began on Sunday, March 8th, 2020. The Persimmon Tree Players were in the middle of in-person, on-stage rehearsals for their April production of Ken Ludwig's *Moon Over Buffalo*. George Gaige, Chip Staples, and our crew of volunteers had completed the building of our set that weekend. That afternoon, we had our first... and last rehearsal on that set.

Over the next few months, we postponed the show from April to May, then from May to June, then from June to August, and then finally called it quits for 2020. We tried to rehearse on Zoom to prepare for a recorded performance, we talked about turning it into a radio play, and ultimately, we "performed" it as a public reading in camp chairs at the Pleasant Grove pole barn in Fluvanna to an audience of 11 mask-wearing family and friends.

During that time, we met on Zoom to rehearse, to connect, and to try to keep the spirit of the stage alive in times of pandemic and social isolation. Zoom was by no means a perfect medium, but it did at least give a glimmer of hope that the show really COULD go on. It also provided some great comedic moments as we navigated the pitfalls and pratfalls of technology. Fellow cast member, Brooke Agee, and I got to thinking about the idea of a play intended for Zoom and all of the obstacles of trying to do virtual theatre.

I took a summer theatre class at Longwood University, and I chose Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* as the play that I would be focusing on during that class. I saw potential in using *Earnest* as the guiding story for this virtual medium, and began writing.

Earnest in Isolation was born of all of these experiences and obstacles. It is about a community theatre group trying to do exactly what we tried to do this past spring... find ways to keep theatre alive in a time when we were not able to gather together on a physical stage or in the audience. It embraces the love of theatre and the family bonds that theatre creates. It is about rising above the challenges in these times to create and share the stage as actors with an audience.

Much like our *Moon Over Buffalo* experience, Jonathan and the cast and crew have had to reinvent and adapt to the virtual world to share their show with their community. We join them on opening night as they prepare to go live, and what ensues is an homage to Wilde's classic farce, and to the indomitable spirit of community theatre.

One thing that can be said is that good can come out of even the toughest of circumstances, and this is no exception. The fact that all rehearsals and performances are virtual, means that we were able to bring folks together from great distances for this show. Kaye Pearse, who lived here in Central Virginia up until just a few months ago, now lives in Washington State, but is joining us for her PTP debut as the actress portraying Lady Bracknell. Jon Wilson is making his Central Virginia debut from Syracuse, NY as director, Jonathan. We are thrilled to welcome several new local actors to PTP, including Jonathan Karns, Kirk Martini, Kate Green, Ezra Smith and Marcus Dowd, who is also helping out "backstage" as our Production Assistant. PTP regular Jen Starkey joins us as a Director/Producer and the actress playing Gwendolen in *Earnest*. And without our Technical Director/lifesaver, Shannon Montague, who joined PTP for the first time to lend us her invaluable technological expertise, this production would never have made it to your screens.

We are all excited to be able to share this production with you!

Tom Green