“The artist is the creator of beautiful things. To reveal art and conceal the artist is art’s aim. Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming. This is a fault. Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things are the cultivated. For these there is hope. They are the elect to whom beautiful things mean only beauty. There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all. All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their peril. It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.”

Notwithstanding this admonition, with hindsight, Wilde’s work seems replete with coded references to his own history. One finds oneself wondering if his wife Constance attracted the same level of gossip as Lady Windermere, and whether she reacted to Bosie’s presence in her home as Lady Wotton does to Dorian. Does the studied triviality of The Importance of Being Earnest conceal coded references to other kinds of double-lives. Not to mention the saucy symbolism of The Remarkable Rocket! This performance is above all a celebration of how the lasting popularity of Wilde’s work transcended his own tragic end, but it also explores how life and art are inextricably interlinked, for all Wilde’s protests to the contrary.

“A truth in art, Oscar Wilde remarked, is one whose contradiction is also true; and much the same could be said of Wilde’s own brilliant, blighted career… As a celebrity who was secretly homosexual, Wilde lived out a conflict between his public identity and his private self; and this fissure between the two is interestingly typical of his age” Terry Eagleton

PROLOGUE

The Main Entrance Hall

Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde – Donal Morgan
Constance Wilde, née Lloyd (his wife) – Julie Lamberton
Speranza Wilde (his mother) – Antoinette Morelli
Lord Alfred Douglas (Bosie) – Sydney Bull

‘LADY WINDERMERE’S FAN’ (1892)

Drawing Room, Dining Room & Countess’s Room

Lady Windermere – Stephanie Dale
Lord Darlington – Richard Croxford
Lord Windermere – Stefan Dunbar
Mrs Erlynne – Antoinette Morelli
Parker – Curtis Reed/Marcus Crawford/Jack Breen

Lord and Lady Windermere seem to be the perfect society couple. But the town is rife with rumour. Who is the mysterious Mrs Erlynne? What hold does she have on Lord Windermere? And should Lady Windermere be told?

‘THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST’ (1895): A Trivial Comedy for Serious People

(Library & Venetian Room)

Lane – Curtis Reed/Marcus Crawford/Jack Breen
Algernon Moncrieff – Stefan Dunbar
Jack Worthing/Ernest – Patrick McBrearty
Lady Bracknell – Antoinette Morelli
Cecily Cardew – Julie Lamberton
Gwendolen Fairfax – Stephanie Dale

Ernest wants to marry Gwendolen and Cecily wants to marry Ernest until a complex web of false identities is quite exploded and the shallow mask of manners so evident in Lady Windermere’s Fan is stripped away.

‘THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY’ (1891)

Dining Room & Servants Stairs

Basil Hallward – Richard Croxford
Lord Henry Wotton – Donal Morgan
Dorian Gray – Sydney Bull
Lady Henry Wotton – Julie Lamberton

“How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that—for that—I would give everything! I would give my soul for that!”
‘REQUIESCAT’ by Oscar Wilde (1881)

Read by Richard Croxford

THE REMARKABLE ROCKET’ (1888)

Countess’s Room

Oscar – Donal Morgan

“Every one, in fact, was a great success with the singular exception of the Remarkable Rocket. He was so damp (with crying) that he could not go off at all. So he sank deep into the mud, and began to think about the loneliness of genius.”

Production Team

Stage Manager – Bronagh McFeely
Costume Design – Enda Kenny
Costume Assistant – Holly Nedeljkovic
Sound Design – Sydney Bull
Incidental Music – Clara Schumann
Sound Operator & Double Bass – Seth Taylor
Documentation – Gerard Donnelly
Company Manager – Eamon Quinn
Director – David Grant

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Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)

1864 Enters Portora Royal, Enniskillen
1871 Goes to Trinity College, Dublin
1884 Marries Constance; settles in Chelsea
1885 Elder son, Cyril, born
1886 Younger son, Vyvyan, born
1888 The Happy Price and Other Tales
1891 The Picture of Dorian Gray
1892 Lady Windermere’s Fan
1895 The Importance of Being Earnest
1898 Sentenced to two years hard labour
1900 Death of Constance
1900 Dies in Paris