

# ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

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## Artists Rep presents Oscar Wilde's Quick-witted Comedy **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST** featuring an all-female Portland cast

**WHO:** Artists Repertory Theatre  
**WHAT:** [The Importance of Being Earnest](#)  
By Oscar Wilde.  
Directed by Michael Mendelson.  
**WHEN:** May 16 – June 11, 2017  
Preview performances: May 16, 17, 18, 19  
Opening Night/Press Night: Saturday, May 20  
Regular run through April 2: Wed-Sun @ 7:30pm, Sun @ 2pm  
Tuesdays: May 16 & June 6 @ 7:30pm  
Wednesday: May 31 @ noon  
Accessibility Performances: Sun, June 4 @ 7:30pm (Open Captioned);  
Sat, June 10 @ 2pm (ASL Interpreted)  
Post-show discussions follow Sun, 2pm matinee shows; Wed, May 31 @ noon  
**WHERE:** Artists Repertory Theatre, Alder Stage, 1516 SW Alder Street, Portland  
**TICKETS:** \$50 regular price; \$25 preview/student/under 25  
PREVIEW WEEK SPECIALS  
Pay-What-You-Can First Preview performance: Tuesday, May 16  
-\$10 book ahead or PWYC at the door  
Preview Play Price & Pizza: Wednesday, May 17  
-\$25 ticket & FREE slice of HotLips Pizza  
Preview Play Price & Beer: Thursday, May 18  
-\$25 ticket & Lagunitas Beer  
Preview Play Price & Happy Hour + Live Music: Friday, May 19  
p:ear Partner Performance, June 6  
-\$40 ticket, \$20 goes to [p:ear](#)  
Buy Tickets: 503.241.1278 or [www.artistsrep.org](http://www.artistsrep.org)

### SPECIAL EVENTS

**Post Show Discussions** | Every Sunday after 2pm matinee + TBA, see website for updates

**Pre Show Music** | See website for schedule

**SHOW IMAGE ATTACHED:** Photo credit David Straub

**PRODUCTION PHOTOS AVAILABLE:** May 18, 2017

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE. Portland, Oregon | April 28, 2017.** For the final production of its 2016/17 season, Artists Repertory Theatre presents *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde, directed by Resident Artist Michael Mendelson. Previews run May 16 through May 19, the play opens May 20 and runs through June 11 on the Alder Stage.

An all-female cast of Portland theatre stars lead this production of Oscar Wilde's magnificent 19th Century comedy of manners and social status. Lovely Gwendolyn and adorable Cecily don't care who they marry as long as his name is Earnest (so manly and respectable!). Jack and Algernon are utterly smitten and only too happy to ditch their given names to bamboozle their way into the ladies' hearts. Imperious Lady Bracknell is aghast, agog and practically apoplectic, but her efforts to impose propriety prove useless against Cupid's earnest truth. High jinx, *bon mots* and cucumber sandwiches are served.

With this fresh take on an enduring masterpiece, Artists Rep's production features a host of Resident Artists including Linda Alper, Ayanna Berkshire, JoAnn Johnson, Sarah Lucht and Vana O'Brien with Resident Artists Michael Mendelson directing and Mary McDonald Lewis, Bobby Brewer-Wallin and Megan Wilkerson on the design team. Well-known Portland actors Jamie M. Rea and Crystal Ann Muñoz round out the cast with Portland newcomer Kailey Rhodes.

"Let me answer the question that might be on your mind: Why an all-female cast?" wrote Artistic Director Dámaso Rodríguez for the production's playbill. "We were looking for a classic comedy with a light touch to balance out our slate of contemporary plays with a darker edge. We were also hoping to find a play with great roles that could feature some of the incredible women in our Resident Artist Company. If Shakespeare's plays could hold up to the convention of all-male casts, so could Wilde's to an all-female cast."

"*The Importance of Being Earnest* is fluff, it is satire," said Director Michael Mendelson. "And, that's ok, that's great! Not everything needs to be political and it may be just what we need right now. It's about societal "norms" and poking fun at them. The lies we live and the masks we wear."

#### **ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT**

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) was an Anglo-Irish poet, author and playwright. His poetry was first published in 1881. He contributed to publications such as "Pall Mall Gazette" and he wrote the novel, *The Novel of Dorian Gray* (1891). Perhaps most recognizable for his work as a playwright, Wilde wrote comedies such as *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *An Ideal Husband*, *Salome* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Shortly after *The Importance of Being Earnest* was written, Wilde was imprisoned for two years. He was arrested after losing a libel case against the Marquess of Queensberry. Wilde had had an ongoing affair with Marquess' son. While in prison, he wrote a well-known 55,000-word letter to his love called "De Profundis." After his release from prison, he published portions of the letter, including *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. He died shortly after he was freed at the age of 46. He lived his life extravagantly, but he suffered greatly.

#### **ABOUT THE DIRECTOR**

Michael Mendelson is a Resident Artist at Artists Rep and the Artistic Director of Portland Shakespeare Project. Well known in Portland as an actor, director and teacher, he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Wayne State University and a Master of Fine Arts from University of Washington's Professional Actors Training Program. While in New York City, he studied with Tanya Berezin. Recently, Michael directed *The Understudy*, *Intimate Apparel* and both directed and starred in *Mistakes Were Made* for Artists Rep. Other directing credits include *The Tempest*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It* and

*Lear's Follies* for Portland Shakespeare Project, *Love's Labour's Lost* (Northwest Classical Theatre Company), *Stones In His Pockets* (Public House Theatre), *As Is* (Key Productions), *The Meaning of Prayer* (Verbatim Productions) and staged readings of *Botticelli* (Profile Theatre) and *Dinner With Friends* (Mt. Hood Repertory Theatre). His acting credits at Artists Rep include Jon in *Marjorie Prime*, Oliver in *Trevor*, Walter in *The Price*, also roles in *Tribes*, *Blithe Spirit*, *The Quality of Life*, *Ten Chimneys*, Andrei Borchevsky in *Red Herring* and Sherlock in *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Carol*, also *God of Carnage*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Superior Donuts*, *Othello*, *Design for Living*, *Holidazed*, *Becky's New Car*, *Three Sisters*, *Eurydice*, *House, Garden, Orson's Shadow*, *Mr. Marmalade* and *Theater District*. Other local credits include work with Oregon Shakespeare Festival/Portland, Profile Theatre, Miracle Theatre, Northwest Classical Theatre Company, triangle productions!, Tygres Heart Shakespeare, Portland Center Stage, A Contemporary Theatre, Reader's Theatre Repertory and New Rose Theatre. New York credits include Revolving Shakespeare Company, Theatre 1010, The Normal Heart (Lincoln Center/Clark Studio Theatre), Genesis Guild and The Barrow Group. Regional credits include work at PCPA Theatrefest, Paper Mill Playhouse, A Contemporary Theatre, Saint Michael's Playhouse, Penobscot Theatre Company, Arkansas Repertory Theatre, First Stage Milwaukee, Idaho Rep, Attic Theater and Wisconsin, Utah and Berkeley Shakespeare Festivals. Michael is a proud member of SDC.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST**

By Oscar Wilde

Directed by Michael Mendelson

### **CAST**

Sarah Lucht\*^ | Merriman/Lane

Ayanna Berkshire\*^ | Algernon Moncrieff

Jamie M. Rea | Jack Worthing

Linda Alper\*^ | Lady Bracknell

Kailey Rhodes | Gwendolyn Fairfax

Vana O'Brien\*^ | Miss Prism

Crystal Ann Muñoz\* | Cecily

JoAnn Johnson\*^ | Rev. Chasuble

### **CREATIVE TEAM**

Michael Mendelson~^ | Director

Megan Wilkerson#^ | Scenic Designer

Bobby Brewer-Wallin^ | Costume Designer

Kristeen Willis Crosser# | Lighting Designer

Jen Raynak | Sound Designer

Luan Schooler | Dramaturg

Mary McDonald Lewis^ | Dialect Coach

Arianne Melton | Props Master

Trevor Sargent | Assistant Scenic Designer

### **PRODUCTION TEAM**

Artistic Producer | Shawn Lee

Associate Producer & Production Manager | Kristeen Willis Crosser

Stage Manager | Carol Ann Wohlmut\*^

Board Op | Alan Cline

Production Assistant | Karen Hill+  
Production Assistant | Megan Moll  
Wardrobe | Will Bailey  
Costumer | Clare Hungate-Hawk  
Technical Director | Nathan Crone  
Master Carpenter | Eddie Rivera  
Master Electrician | Ronan Kilkelly  
Scenic Charge | Sarah Kindler

\* *Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers*  
# *The scenic, costume, lighting, projection & sound designers are represented by United Scenic Artists*  
~ *Member of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society*  
^ *Artists Rep Resident Artist*  
+ *Equity Membership Candidate*

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## **GALLERY INSTALLATION**

The Geezer Gallery presents Portland Art Museum Docents, an all-female exhibition inspired by Artists Repertory Theatre's all-female production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde. The Geezer Gallery is proud to partner with the Portland Art Museum's docents to create a diverse show to exhibit the docents' personal artwork. The Docent Council is a passionate group of art enthusiasts who pursue avenues to share their knowledge of the fine arts with the community at The Portland Art Museum. There will be over 20 docents participating in this unique show that celebrates this group's successful women in all mediums of the art world. Through performance or fine art, these women's expression will be empowering and inspiring.

*The Geezer Gallery's Portland Art Museum Docents show opens May 16 with an artist reception on May 24 at 6:30pm.*

## **ABOUT ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE**

[Artists Repertory Theatre](#)'s mission is to produce intimate, provocative theatre and provide a home for artists of varied backgrounds to take creative risks. Artists Rep is Portland's premiere mid-size regional theatre company and is led by Artistic Director Dámaso Rodríguez and Managing Director Sarah Horton. Founded in 1982, Artists Repertory Theatre is the longest-running professional theatre company in Portland. Artist Rep became the 72<sup>nd</sup> member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) in 2016 and is an Associate Member of the National New Play Network (NNPN). Artists Rep's 35<sup>th</sup> season is announced, the 2017/18 play selections can be [found here](#).

Artists Rep has become a significant presence in American Regional Theatre with a legacy of world, national and regional premieres of provocative new work with the highest standards of stagecraft. The organization is committed to local artists and features a company of Resident Artists, professionals of varied theatre disciplines, who are a driving force behind Artists Rep's creative output and identity.

Artists Rep is committed to developing new work through its new play development program Table|Room|Stage. With T|R|S, Artists Rep strives to empower and support Oregon-based playwrights while also creating a Portland home for writers from around the country to develop their work. Additionally, this program strives to make a meaningful impact on diversity, equity and inclusion in the theatre field by mandating opportunities for women writers and writers of color, and cultivating the

next generation of theatre-goers by creating work specifically for young people (13 and up). Artists Rep makes a vital impact on the Portland arts community with its ArtsHub, creating space and offering a home to 10 multidisciplinary arts organizations within its facility.

[RESIDENT ARTISTS](#) – Artists Rep productions feature the work of a core group of over two dozen multidisciplinary theatre professionals. Hailing from around the country, our Resident Artists are nationally renowned and award-winning actors, directors, writers, designers and educators who have chosen to make Portland and Artists Rep their artistic home. Working together and independently, they create inventive and theatrically rich experiences for our audiences while playing a major role in defining Portland’s cultural landscape.

[TABLE | ROOM | STAGE](#) – Through T|R|S, Artists Rep is committed to becoming an engine for new play development. As a recipient of a \$125,000 Oregon Community Foundation Creative Heights grant to establish a robust new play development program, the company is creating opportunities for local and national playwrights to ensure that underrepresented voices are heard on stage. The goal of the T|R|S program was to commission a total of eight plays by year-end 2017 – at least four of the eight commissions to writers of color, at least four to women, one play written for young adults and one is the [Oregon Play Prize](#), which was awarded to Oregon playwright Steve Rathje for his play *Signs*. In addition to Steve Rathje, Artists Rep has commissioned plays from Yussef El Guindi, Linda Alper, Larissa FastHorse, Andrea Stolowitz ([Lacroute Playwright-in-Residence](#)), Dael Orlandersmith and Hansol Jung . El Guindi’s play *The Talented Ones* is onstage now through May 21, 2017. More information about all these [At the Table](#) projects is on the website. [On the Workbench](#) is another aspect of the T|R|S initiative which is supporting the creation of new works by Anthony Hudson and Susannah Mars. Additionally, the [Fresh Eyes](#) program invites ‘civilians’ to attend productions in rehearsal and share their observations with our wider community.

[ARTSHUB](#) – Artists Rep is also home to the ArtsHub, serving as a community arts center, where its performance venues and lobbies buzz with creative energy and Portland’s arts-loving audiences can gather. Artists Rep offers a home within its facility to a diverse range of artists and arts organizations. They can thrive here with access to affordable administrative, performance and rehearsal space, as well as a myriad of support services. Over the last year, hundreds of performances, events and happenings by Portlanders found a place in Artists Rep’s building.

The 2016/17 Artists Repertory Theatre season is presented by sponsors Ronni Lacroute/WillaKenzie Estate and David & Christine Vernier and the Robert and Mercedes Eichholz and Renaissance Foundations. Other season support comes from the Collins Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation, Theatre Communication Group and the Regional Arts and Culture Council and Work for Art.

*The Importance of Being Earnest* is made possible by support from Karl & Linda Boekelheide, Bob & Janet Conklin, Romy Klopfer, The Standard and Mentor Graphics.

[artistsrep.org](http://artistsrep.org)

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