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Inland Stage Features “Importance of Being Earnest”

The Inland Stage Company presents Oscar Wilde’s over-the-top comedy “The Importance of Being Earnest,” at the Esplanade Art Center, March 29 through April 7.

“‘The Importance of Being Earnest’ is a comedy that attacks the stereotypes of Victorian propriety in surprising and hilarious ways,” said Director Yvonne Flack. “Each character hides behind sound bytes that espouse Victorian values while simultaneously subverting those mores. My concept for the production centers around the double entendre implied in the dual meanings of the homophone ‘earnest.’”

The two heroines, Gwendolen Fairfax and Cecily Cardew, become enamored with the idea of marrying a man called Ernest. The only problem is that neither of their respective lovers is actually called Ernest, though both claim to be Mr. Ernest Worthing.

“What ensues is the farcical quest of Jack and Algernon to become christened under the name of Ernest in order to maintain their guise of earnestness,” Flack said. “After some surprising twists and a big revelation at the end involving ‘an ordinary handbag,’ Jack realizes that he has been earnest all along, a most troubling realization for a Victorian man whose sole drive is to maintain appearances of decorum without actually being decorous.”

Flack worked with her cast on building layers into their characters and gave each his opportunity to let the mask of Victorian propriety slip to reveal his true colors.

“The result is an over-the-top farce punctuated by moments of real emotion,” Flack said, “The effect will have audiences laughing out loud as they watch each character try to resume his composure after each Victorian faux pas.”

One of Flack’s biggest notes to her cast has been, “If you feel ridiculous doing it, then you’re probably doing it right.”

Jared Moore embraces the role of Jack Worthing.

“I love the role of Jack because he has so many roles that he plays in his life that are very different from one another,” Moore said. “The situation that he finds himself in, trying to marry the love of his life, gets very complicated when his two worlds collide. This is also such a great role due to the era that it takes place in and the language is very smart and challenging.”

Monica Reichl is greatly enjoying the role of Gwendolyn.

“It’s so much fun to enter into this world of people who are so surfaces to the point of being absurd,” Reichl said. “We get to play them over-the-top and that is always fun. But there is still that sense of truth about them, the lengths to which they will go through to appear normal.”

“This production is unique in that it embraces the script’s true potential for over-the-top comedy,” Flack said. “Wilde was a wordsmith, so many of the jokes and digs at Victorian society are highlighted in this production through the juxtaposition of the words and the level of sincerity with which the actors deliver the lines.”

The show runs 8 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and 2 p.m. Sundays, March 29 through April, with the exception of Easter Sunday.

Tickets for the show are \$15 for general admission and \$12 for students, seniors and military. Thursday performances are “Pay What You Can,” with a \$5 suggested donation. And on Saturdays there are Student Rush Tickets for \$7, 10 minutes before the show, if seats are available.

ISC also offers group rates and season tickets.



The Esplanade Art Center is located at 2181 W. Esplanade Ave., San Jacinto, Ca.

Visit www.inlandstage.org for details.

