

Learning
STAGE

SEP 2015
VOLUME VII, ISSUE 3



AN IDEAL HUSBAND

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Note from Director Isaac Walters

Love is wonderful. When we're looking for love, we're on our best behavior. And we love falling in love. We love the way it feels, the energy, the endorphins, the euphoria that feels like we'll never be unhappy again. When we look at our love, we're amazed at how beautiful they are, how funny they are, how well they understand who we truly are. They just "get us." And we know they're the perfect person for us. But eventually, at some point, the euphoria wears off, the daily grind reappears, and we may wake up next to someone that we don't even recognize anymore. Of course, that process happens to everyone who falls in love. Psychologists call it disillusionment. When that happens,

the question becomes what to do next. Some people believe they have fallen out of love and decide to break up. They move on trying to regain that feeling, that euphoria, once again with someone new only to discover that it too eventually wears off and they have to move on once more. Will we never discover the kind of true love that will last forever? Of course, when that disillusionment happens, the alternative is even scarier. We can let ourselves be seen. We can take an honest deep look at the person sitting next to us and then make the choice to love them, warts and all. When you both make that choice, the most amazing thing happens. You find true acceptance. You find a partner to be with you in every part of your life. You find bliss. And that is the genuine triumph of love.

A Brief History of *An Ideal Husband*

Oscar Wilde wrote *An Ideal Husband* in 1893 and had its first performance at the Haymarket Theatre in London on January 3, 1895. *An Ideal Husband* has been performed all over the world since its premiere and has had several film adaptations, staying true to the satire and themes of romance, betrayal and love. Director Herbert Slepkin made the first film adaptation of *An Ideal Husband* in Germany in 1935. The most recent film adaptation was released in 1999 and stars Rupert Everett, Julianne Moore and Peter Vaughan. The film was nominated for several awards, notably two Golden Globes for Best Actor and Actress.

The Playwright, Oscar Wilde



“Playwright, author and essayist Oscar Wilde in an 1882 photograph at age 26.”

Getting to Know Oscar Wilde

Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde was an Irish author who was born in 1854 and died in 1900. He was married to Constance Lloyd and had two sons, Cyril and Vyvyan. Wilde was fluent in English and French and was one of the best-known social figures of his time. He published numerous essays, poems and plays that were popular in their time and that remain relevant today. Wilde is best known for his social commentary and satire of Victorian society and morals.

Wilde’s best known play today is *The Importance of Being Earnest*, with *An Ideal Husband* his next most popular. Other notable theatrical works by Wilde include the comedies *Lady Windermere’s Fan* and *A Woman of No Importance* and the tragedy *Salomé*. Oscar Wilde is also known for his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and his bittersweet folktales including “*The Selfish Giant*” and “*The Happy Prince*.”

Quotations from Oscar Wilde:

- “If you want to tell people the truth, make them laugh, otherwise they’ll kill you.”
- “Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months.”
- “Deceiving others. That is what the world calls a romance.”
- “A man can be happy with any woman as long as he does not love her.”
- “You don’t love someone for their looks or their clothes... but because they sing a song only you can hear.”
- “Never love anyone who treats you like you’re ordinary.”
- “Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.”



Etiquette in Oscar Wilde's Time

The play *An Ideal Husband* was written and is set in Victorian England. The Victorian Era is named for Queen Victoria, who ruled Great Britain from 1837 to 1901. Queen Victoria was the longest reigning British monarch until her reign was surpassed this month by Queen Elizabeth II.

The Victorian Era is characterized by complex and rigid social rules. During this time, it was critical to maintain proper appearances, even when those appearances were artificial, false or hypocritical. In one scene in the play, most of the characters appear in masks, symbolic of the facades they needed to wear as players in Victorian high society.

One of the secret codes used in Victorian society was the language of the fan. The use of the fan allowed women to communicate discreetly during social outings and events. Here is a sample of the messages that could be transmitted by the use of the fan:

- Carrying the fan in the right hand in front of the face: "Follow me."
- Carrying the fan in the left hand: "I would like to make your acquaintance."
- Twirling the fan in the left hand: "I wish to get rid of you."
- Drawing the fan across the forehead: "We are being watched."
- Drawing the fan across the cheek: "I love you."
- Closing the fan: "I wish to speak to you"
- Drawing the fan across the eyes: "I am sorry."
- Putting the handle of the fan to the lips: "Kiss me."
- Opening the fan wide: "Wait for me."



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Credits:

Learning Stage is published by the Noorda Theatre Center for Children and Youth at UVU. This issue was guest edited by dramaturg Briana Lindsay under the direction of Dr. John Newman and Dr. Lisa Hall Hagen and was designed by Brian Gibbons. Costume design by Amanda Shaffer and mask designs by Madeline Ashton. Director's Note by Isaac Walters.

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