

Merely Players
Presents

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST
A Trivial Comedy for Serious People
By Oscar Wilde

Directed by
Mona Wood-Patterson+

Tech Directors
Samantha Duncan+
Charles Ford+

Stage Manager
Deborah Heath+

Scenic Designer
Charles Ford+

Costume Designers
Megan Sander
Kathleen McGee

September 25, 26, 27, 29, October 1, 2, 3, 4, 2026
at
Merely Underground in Durango, Colorado

The Importance of Being Earnest

CAST

Algernon Moncrieff	Geoff Johnson+
Jack Worthing	Brian Devine+
Gwendolen Fairfax	Mohriah James+
Cecily Cardew	Tara Demmy+
Lady Bracknell	Riki Tsethlikai+
Miss Prism	Joy Kilpatrick+
Rev. Canon Chasuble	Charlie Grice+
Lane/Merriman	Matt Bodo+

Time: 1895

Place:

Algernon's London flat.
The Garden at Manor House in the English countryside.
The Drawing Room at Manor House.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Light Technician	Jay Hecker+
Sound Technician	Melanie McKinney-Gonzales +
Costume Manager	Daphne Tingey+
Stagehand	David Ballantine
Wardrobe Lead	Mary Lynn Clark+
Props Lead/Box Office Manager	Diane Panelli+
Props Assistant	Jamie Pickering+
Ticket Manager	Greta Richter +
Production Coordinator	Mona Wood-Patterson+
Photographer	Kara Cavalca+
Lead Carpenter	Charles Ford+
Scenic Painters	Sabrina Motta+ Mariah Kaminsky+

Technical Assistants

Jenny Mason+
Matt Bodo+
Samantha Duncan+
Mohriah James+

Poster Design

Kate Ishay+

Set/Props Construction/Scenic Painting

Bernadette Borealis
Samantha Duncan+
Jenny Mason+
Matt Bodo+
George Gross+
Mohriah James+
Marilynn Monger
Jay Hecker+
Mick Souder+
Randy Hertzman+
Mark Russell+

+ Merely Players Artistic Company

There is a fifteen-minute intermission. Concessions by Mary Lynn will be on sale before the show and during intermission.

Please silence your cell phones; they don't work that well down here anyway.

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited. We know that, for many of you, taking performance photos or video of your loved ones is a huge temptation. Please respect this rule of theatre etiquette and resist! Phone use during a show is distracting to actors and audience members and is disrespectful of our creative property. Live theatre is meant to be temporal – let it be just that. Thank you!

*That said, we welcome you to take photos/video in the theatre before and after, **but not during**, the performance. If you post photos of the stage, please be sure to credit and tag Merely Players. @merely_players_durango*

WHO'S WHO

David Ballantine (*Stagehand*) grew up in Durango and graduated from Durango High School in 2005. Since then, he has lived in Washington, D.C., Texas, Florida, and southern California. He moved back to Durango this summer in 2026. David has a great passion for acting, especially cinematic. He began taking studio acting classes in Los Angeles in February of this year and is continuing his engagement in this industry while in Durango. He is excited to be part of this production and feels very fortunate that this town has theater opportunities. He looks forward to being involved in both production and acting of theater, film, and television.

Matt Bodo (*Lane/Merriman*) credits his Merely roles of the Wolf (*Into the Woods*), Claudius (*Hamlet*), Henry (*The Book of Will*), Caliban (*The Tempest*), and Duke

Frederick (*As You Like It*) in preparing him for Lane. He credits Rapunzel's Prince (*Into the Woods*), Nathan Detroit (*Guys & Dolls*), Lucius/Bull (*The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*), Frank (*Hands on a Hardbody*), and Silvius (*As You Like It*) in preparing him for Merriman. Matt made his directorial debut last December with *It's a Wonderful Life – A Radio Play* with Merely Players. He is the company's Studio Series Director, a freelance satire writer, and a third generation native of Durango. Matt will not be skateboarding in this production.

Mary Lynn Clark (*Wardrobe Lead*) is "Wildely" delighted to work with costume designers, Megan & Kathleen, again and delve into the world of Victorian clothing. She is always up for a special project to create the perfect accessory and perfect her haberdashery skills. Mary Lynn is enjoying her fifth season as Company Manger with Merely Players, especially now that she is an empty nester. She and her husband love to travel and have enjoyed a proper tea complete with cucumber sandwiches in places such as Australia, Scotland and Boston.

Tara Demmy (*Cecily Cardew*) is a comedian, theatre artist, and teacher from Philadelphia. Merely credits include *Small Mouth Sounds* (Alicia), *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* (Nellie), *Silent Sky* (Henrietta Levitt), and *Hamlet* (Mask Director). Tara has taught at improv training centers, theatre companies, and universities in Washington D.C., Philly, and now Durango. A big nerd, she has a PhD in Theatre from University of Maryland. Tara currently works for a nonprofit providing free arts/comedy classes to the military community. tarademmy.com

Brian Devine (*Jack Worthing*) returns to the Merely stage after performing in *It's a Wonderful Life* (George Bailey) and *Hamlet* (Polonius/ Gravedigger) last season. Other delectable Merely roles have included Gonzalo in *The Tempest* and Ratchett/Arbuthnot in *Murder on the Orient Express*. You also may have recently seen him across town in *The Minutes* (Durango Arts Center). Brian hopes you enjoy this feast of a play and thanks you for being part of Durango's frankly overpowered arts scene - what a town!

Samantha Duncan (*Associate Technical Director*) is starting the Merely season strong by making her debut as Associate Technical Director! She has spent the last nine years fine tuning her stage management skills, with her recent credits including *Silent Sky* and her "paperwork magnum opus" that was *Into the Woods*. She couldn't be more honored to have been given the opportunity to step into this role and work alongside her longtime mentor, Charles Ford. You will find Samantha later this season back behind the prompt book to stage manage *The Snow Queen* and *Come From Away*. When she isn't bringing an imagined world to the stage, she enjoys birdwatching and playing Dungeons & Dragons with her friends.

Charles Ford (*Tech Director/Scenic Designer*) is a master backstage technician and the Technical Director of Merely Players. An avid puppeteer, mask-maker, make-up artist, robotics engineer, and special effects designer, he has designed dozens of sets for a variety of theatrical genres. In addition, he typically designs the lighting, sound, props, and the special effects. Charles is the recipient of several awards, including the Durango Foundation of Educational Excellence's Outstanding Teacher Award, the Rocky Mountain Theatre Association Technical Theatre Award, and numerous Broadway World Denver awards for scenic and lighting designs.

Charlie Grice (*Dr. Chasuble*) dedicates his performance tonight to the loving memory of Georganne Sugden, who forged Charlie's love for the theater many years ago at Stage Eleven, the children's theater he grew up in. He also wishes to thank his wife, Daisy, for her love and support, as well as his daughter, Milli, for her continued inspiration.

Deborah Heath (*Stage Manager*) has been a staple of Merely Players' productions since 2013 when she was cast in *It's a Wonderful Life – A Live Radio Play*. Though she has acted in several productions since then (the last being *The Tempest*), her true love is stage managing which she began with Merely's 2015 production of *Other Desert Cities*. Earnest marks her 8th time as Stage Manager for a Merely show, the last being the 2025 production of *Hamlet*. Deborah is thrilled to be working on the socially satirical, sharp witted play by Oscar Wilde with this stellar cast and crew.

Jay Hecker (*Light Technician*) grew up in New England, but found home here in the San Juan Mountains. He's been involved in local theatre the past 20 years. Jay joined Merely Players last season working the light board for both *Hamlet* and *It's a Wonderful Life*. Lurking in the shadows, dressed in black and silent.... if he does his job well, you'll never know he is there.

Mohriah James (*Gwendolen Fairfax*) is delighted to be part of this whimsical, Wilde comedy. Born in Durango, Mohriah attended Fort Lewis College and earned her B.A. in Theatre. This year she was seen on the Merely stage as Little Red Riding Hood in *Into the Woods*, followed by the Fairy Godmother in *Shrek the Musical* with Four Corners Musical Theatre. Some of her most cherished roles with Merely Players include Ophelia in *Hamlet*, Alice Heminges in *The Book of Will*, Countess Andrenyi in *Murder on the Orient Express*, and John Sumner in *Men on Boats*. Mohriah is always grateful for the opportunity to perform, particularly with her immensely-talented husband, Geoff Johnson. Many thanks to Mona, cast, crew, and audience!

Geoff Johnson (*Algernon Moncrieff*) is cuckoo about collaborating on this comedic classic. Recent credits include Cinderella's Prince in *Into the Woods*, Peter in *Silent Sky*, Laertes/Guildenstern in *Hamlet*, and the one man show *Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol*. Geoff is tickled to play a member of the upper crust while nibbling on a crust-free cucumber sandwich. When not pretending to be a dandy Englishman, he has a dandy time managing his pretend football team. Geoff also enjoys getting dragged around by the energetic Juniper (dog) and making merry with his brilliant, clever wife Mohriah James.

Joy Kilpatrick (*Miss Prism*) has been passionate about performing ever since she was a little girl, dancing around her childhood living room with peacock feathers in hand. She appeared in her first commercial at age seven and received her first professional contract at fifteen, performing in Florida's State Play, *Cross and Sword*. Many moons later, Joy is earnestly grateful to still have opportunities to play onstage and share in the creative process of storytelling. Her greatest muse is her daughter, who brings immeasurable love, inspiration, and joy to her life. To learn more about Joy's many fun endeavors, visit breathworkswithjoy.com.

Kathleen McGee (*Costumer Designer*) was previously a board member and teacher at Jacqui Burke's Fashion School and the Wardrobe Supervisor for the Dunbar Lyric

Group, a theatre in Scotland. After moving to Durango, she began working and teaching sewing at Stitch. She has since worked as a costume designer and draper for local productions, including *Silent Sky* and *Hamlet* with Merely Players and countless productions at FLC. Kathleen teaches sewing, mentors developing artists, and constructs many of the intricate garments and specialty costume pieces worn by performers. Her skill, creativity, and attention to detail help bring characters to life on stage while supporting the next generation of makers and theatre artists. She believes the correct lumps of sugar to tea ratio is 1.

Melanie McKinney-Gonzales (*Sound Technician*) realized early that she loved the magic of live theater, both on stage and behind it. Past roles include melodrama heroine, *Alice in You Can't Take It with You*, and the Japanese shadow play, *Zeami*. After a long intermission devoted to raising children—complete with daily productions of another kind—Melanie was delighted to return to the theater assisting Merely Players in various tech roles during *Silent Sky* and *Into the Woods* earlier this year. She earnestly thanks her family and friends for their support.

Diane Panelli (*Props Manager/Box Office Manager*) is thrilled to join this fabulous season with Merely Players. She loves looking for all the props for the shows, and then meeting you all at the door to see the excitement of what we have created. Welcome to Victorian society through Oscar Wilde's words, eyes, and honesty. "Women are meant to be loved, not understood." - Oscar Wilde

Jamie Pickering (*Props Assistant*) is a longtime fan of all things Victorian and tea related. She is thrilled to be back in the props closet and her own closet gathering all the items needed to bring this Wilde play to life.

Greta Richter (*Ticket Manager*) remembers that her love of theatre started when she was young and saw her first musical, *Annie*, with Andrea McArdle as Annie. Greta was blown away and cried during "It's the Hard-Knock Life," as the actors sung the most amazing harmonies. Both of her kids were lucky enough to be in Mona and Charles' theatre program at DHS. She loved seeing them onstage as they sang, acted and danced. In 2002-2003, Greta got involved with DHS, helping backstage and at the box office, a position she remains in with Merely Players. She loves working with Mona and Charles and taking care of our wonderful subscribers. She feels fortunate to still have theatre a part of her life.

Megan Sander (*Costume Designer*) is a costume designer with a love for period precision and character-driven detail. Her recent credits include *Anais* and *Pippin* at FLC, and *Silent Sky* and *Hamlet* with Merely Players. Specializing in 1875's silhouette and social nuance, Megan builds costumes that do more than "look" the time period. She believes costumes help actors weaponize a parasol, a glove, or a perfectly tilted hat. Past work spans *The Great Comet of 1812*, *The Servant of Two Masters*, *Nevermore*, *Edwin Drood*, *5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche* and more. She holds a BFA in Theatre with a Costume Design emphasis from Cal Polytechnic University of Pomona and loves researching historical etiquette, playing with trim, and scientifically testing the correct number of sugar lumps for tea.

Daphne Tingey (*Costume Manager*) loves performing with Merely Players onstage. You may have seen her acting and puppeteering in Merely productions of *Into the Woods*, *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, *Bright Star*, and *Matilda*. Now she's helping out backstage for this show. A longtime lover of costumes, she's excited to be a part of bringing this production to life!

Riki Tsethlikai (*Lady Bracknell*) is excited to be joining the Merely Players stage once more for this production. As a Durango local, he has been involved in many Merely productions including Hector McQueen in *Murder on the Orient Express*, Donalbain in *Macbeth*, and most recently, a foley artist in *It's a Wonderful Life*. A graduate of Bayfield High School, he is excited to bring his full energies to the stage once again.

Oscar Wilde (*Author*) (1854–1900) was a celebrated Irish poet, playwright, novelist, and one of the most dazzling wits in literary history. Known for his brilliant social comedies, Wilde wrote such enduring plays as *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *An Ideal Husband*, and his masterpiece, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. His only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, remains a provocative exploration of beauty, morality, and the consequences of a life devoted to pleasure. A flamboyant socialite, Wilde used humor and satire to expose the hypocrisies and absurdities of Victorian society. Behind the sparkling wit, however, was a writer of remarkable insight and compassion whose work continues to entertain, challenge, and delight audiences around the world.

Mona Wood-Patterson (*Director*) has devoted her professional life to studying, teaching, and making theatre. She has directed around 200 productions in various venues and presented at educational and theatre conferences both in the United States and abroad. The Artistic Director of Merely Players, Mona is the recipient of numerous awards; including Colorado Theatre Teacher of the Year and Fort Lewis College Distinguished Alumnus. She was awarded a Fulbright to teach theatre in England and was inducted into the Colorado State Thespian Hall of Fame. She is grateful that she gets to work and play amidst remarkable people in Durango.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We offer our sincere gratitude to those who donated items or helped us with this show. Many hands and kind hearts help us to do our work:

Community Foundation Serving SW Colorado
Daisy Grice
Deb Schultz and Shari Duhaime
Dina Carr
The Durango Herald
Fort Lewis College Theatre
Jane Gould
Jeni Hartmann
Kelsey Parks
Margy Dudley/4 Corners Arts Forum/ KDUR
Patricia Pickering
Regina Roark/Shampoo

SUPPORTERS/DONORS WHO HELP MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE

Mere words cannot describe how honoured we are by your support. We encourage our audience members to solicit these businesses and to tell the individuals that they are grand!

ARTISTIC

Kathleen Adams
Nancy Agro
Donna Albright
Terra Anderson
Rita Jo Anthony
Jeffrey Babchick
Susy Baldwin
Gayle and Wayne Bedor
Ken Beegles
Lynnndee Beller
Carol Benjamin
Sandy Bielenberg
Thomas and Deb Bliss
Matt Bodo
Laura Boe
Lillian Boe
Pattie Boertje
BJ Boucher
Kip and Nellie Boyd
Cheryle Brandsma
Jessica Brewster
Janice Bryan
Susan Bryant
Cindy and Jon Buccowich
Christie Bultmann
Sandy Burke
Chris and Tecumseh Burnett
Deborah and Patrick Callahan
Ted and Nancy Carr
Virginia Miller Cavanaugh
Kara Cavalca
Suzanne Ciotti
Mary Lynn Clark
Jennifer Cocchia
Deanna Collins
Elaine Collins
Megan Connolly
Nancy Conrad
Hildreth Cooper
Libby Cowles
Bethiah Crane
Maggy and David Croxville
Janet Curry and Peter Arcomano

Barbara Dahl
J.J. Desrosiers
Ginny Dignum
Barbara Doran
Karla Dudley
Margy Dudley
Gerry Dye
Catherine Eagen
Glenda Ehrig
James Eidson
Roberta Eickman
Kristiana Elite
Lindsay Elworthy
Cathy and Bob Eppinger
Susan Euser
Sarah Fischer
Lori and Johnathan Fisher
Nancy Fisher
Vanessa Flory
Kathrene Frautschy and Jim Koenigsfeld
Seth Furtney
Nancy Galbraith
Maggie Galland
Leesa Zarinelli Gawlik
Suzy Gardner
Marlene Gebhardt
Alena George
Amy Ginn
Ronald Goetzinger
Natalie and Nick Gould
Charlie and Daisy Grice
Carroll Groeger
George Gross
Ruth Guarino
Roger Haar
Gustav Hallin
Haley Hamilton
Lorie Hansen
Tami Hanson
Jessica Jane and Jacob Harris
Jennifer Heinicke
Susan Hillmeyer
Darcy Hitchcock and Dale Graham
Sarah Holmes
Judy Hook
Jesse Hutt
Steve Iwanicki
Michael Jeppesen
George Johnson

Gail Johnston
Tami Joslin
Patricia and Jay Joy
Monika Julian
Robin Kissell
Matt Klausmeier
Richard Kolb
Darlene Koontz
Paul and Mary Jo Laakso
Ed Lally
Jill Langoni
Janis Larson
Teresa Lashley
Eileen Latini
Gail Lauter
Rachel Lasiewicz
Michael Lee
Trish Lemke
Morgan Mahan
Becky Maloney
Rochelle Mann
Meredith Mapel
Katie Marechal
Jenny Mason
Douglas McClelland
Dawn McDermond
Laura McGill
Meg McGilley
Susan McGinness
Cynthia McMahon
TJ McNichols
Jill Mercado
Paula Millar
Beth Miller
Laura Miller
Donna Middleton
Pamela Moreno
Grace Morledge and Mark Russell
Lori Moss
Stephanie Moran
Dawn Mulhern
Kathy Myrick
Catherine Nassif
Pam Nichols
Katy Olson
Mary Oswald
Michael Paine
Dan Peha and Maureen Keilty
Maddy Persing

Dave Peters and Jodie Petersen
Christine and Mike Phillips
Jan Phillips
Tammi Phillips
Debra Plumpton
Kris Poer
Wendy Pollak
Claire Raines
Heather Rasmussen Thomas
Judith Reynolds
Greta Richter
Sarah Ripley
Catherine Roberts
Mary Robins
Jane Robinson
Nancy Robinson
Rick and Deb Rodgers
Emily Rodman
Patricia Root
Bonnie Rozean
Kelly Rubin
June Russell and Frank Lockwood
Peter Salinger
Judy Schaefer
Peggy Sharp
Marsha Shutty
Christy Sinner
Lisa Skyhorse
Lynn Schneider
Faye Schrater and Dick White
Karen Soltes
Barbara Sowers
Rick and Lisa Stockwell
Tom and Susie Stuber
Micah Susman
Earlene Swann
Anne and Steve Swisher
Kathy and Mike Switzer
Jeanne Szczech
Jan Tankersley
Randy Tano
Tracy Tarpley
Lisa Taylor
Sheri Teeter
Tim Telep
Sarah Tingey
Sheri Tingey
Nisargo Troy
Stephanie Trudeau

Rachel Turiel
Lori Vernon
Megan Vogelaar
Nan and Brian Wagner
Chuck Wales
Bekah Webb
Carol Wehner
Heather and Noah Wells
Leslie Wustrack
Cheryl Wiescamp
Kory Williams
Mark Williams
Douglas Wingear
Peggy Winkworth
Susan Wise
Sue Woll
Briggen Wrinkle
Jodi Zuber
Heidi Zink

DYNAMIC

Jean Aaro
Nancy and Alan Andrews
Emmy Finley
Brooke Goulding
Julie Hartman and Jim Forleo
Dianna Hassett
Philippa Howard
Alisa Krakel
Steve Krest
Brian McAleer and Carol Shepard
Maria McGuigan
Timothy Miller
Kay Neal
Michelle Reott
Glennie Ritchey
Kathleen Shadell
Karen Zenger
Cathleen Zillich

IMAGINATIVE

Annette Angst
Susan Reese Brown
Barbara Browning
June Dunn
Kathryn Eppich
Carolyn Gebhard
Gyana Bundy Gomar
Lee Hagar

Wendy Hillmer
Carol House
Jenny Howell
Amy Huddleston
Dawn James
Christine Jerpbak
Robin Kissell
Donna Martin
Jan and Greg Mayer-Gawlik
Kathleen McGee
Lindsey Nicholson
MaryAnne Nelson
Dustin Nolen
Mary O'Donnell
Liz Oetter
Rhonda Raffo
Andy Rude
Mike Rustad
Jeff and Lori Schell
Diane Thornton
Jan Turner
Devon Wayne
Gretchen Wilson
Flow Wolf

CREATIVE

Sue Agranoff
Sherrod Beall and Werner Heiber
Linda Bellush and Bill Henley
Caroline Bergfalk
Scooter and Judy Bolton
Judy and Jim Bolen
Abby Bowen
Ginny Brown
Hallie Bullock
Tom Campbell
Chuck Carson and Susie Wise
Blake Crouch
Kathy Davis
Brian Devine and Melissa May
Sydney Dion
Deni Dorminy
Dan and Jane Doty
Martha Embrey
Bill Enenbach
Betsy Fitzpatrick
Chessa and Jay Gill
Jeffrey Graves and Dr. Katie McCrea
Richard and Gail Grossman

Michelle, Will, and Isabelle Herringer
Connie Jacobs and Tekla Miller
Ginger Jenks
Linda and Randy Jernigan
Maile Kane
Susan Koonce and John Lyons
Cindy Laudadio-Hill
Paula Lutz
Carolyn MacKay
Danna Manganaro
Phyllis Max
Lynn May
Maureen May
Hal and Melanie McLean
Jim and Karen McManus
Bernadette McNally
Debbie Meyers
Martha Tinsley Minot
Russ and Janet Monell
Winnie Neunzig
Nancy and Jim Ottman
Siggy Palmer
Angela Payne
Margaret Patterson
Katy Pytte and Beach Edwards
Joan Rhoades
Pat Rustad
Peppi Sanders
John and Aline Schwob
Rick and Georgi Silverman
Frank and Kathy Sinton
Ken and Jan Smith
Jill Somrak
Nancy Uhl
John Watson
Greg Weiss
Susanna Westerwick
Janet Whitney
Ann Willard
Teresa Wright and Steve Wolff
Bob and Lynn Wynn
Mary Young
Suzanne Zerbe
Jacqueline Zirkelbach

INNOVATIVE

Katherine Barr and Linda Barnes
Janet Blunt
Jacqueline Bufkin

John Condie and Wanda Ellingson
Chris Cooke and Kyle Oliver
Cathy Crum and Mike Field
Grace Dendy
Carrie and Joel Denman
Kathi Durst and Sheri Dye
Lisa Govreau/Remax
Susan and Scott Graham
Deborah Heath
Lynne Murison
Judith Noteboom
Shawna Off and Kent Ford
Susan Ristow
The Sheehan Family
Jill and Ted Wright

VISIONARY

Melina Adduci
Kay Anderson
Luann Andrew
Stephen Bowers and Wendy Grant
Robert Bowie and Vicki Vandegrift
Lourdes Carrasco
Stephen and Elizabeth Crandall
James Foster
Richard Farrington and Deborah Lycan
Glick Family Fund
Stephen and Sheryl Guy
David and Carol Grenoble
Halverstadt Family Fund
Chris Hansen
Mandy Irons
Douglas Jacober
Chris and Tony Johnson
Keith Lucas and Elizabeth Hogan
Thane Malison
Marcey Olajos
Christopher Otole
Jill Schuman and Larry Gross
Dick and Georgeann Reitz
Mick Souder and Linda Schwinghammer
Gordon and Dene Thomas
Helen Utley
Laurie and John Wilson
Kim and Chris Yeargin

INSPIRING

Jennie Albert
Marc and Pam Arbeeny

Bank of Colorado
Nanc Cole
Larry and Elizabeth Crawford Family
Kim Dalen
Bryan and Jacquelyn Dear
Lou and Joyce Fontana
Margie and Will Gray
The Harper Family and D&SNGRR
Kurt and Diane Hillman
Marti and Steve Kiely
Ken and Debbie Kurz
Bob and Kathy Miller
Barbara Noseworthy and James Cunningham
Joan Roberts-Ems
Ray and Carol Schmudde
Bob and Emmy Therrell
Ilga Vise
Jeannie Wheeldon
Rick and Enid Wood

EXTRAORDINARY

Richard and Mary Lyn Ballantine
Community Foundation of SW Colorado
The Bartig-Small Family Fund
James Foster
Trisha and William Hayes
Michael and Elaine Moravan
Red Mountain Fund
Gary and Carol Treat

SUPERLATIVE

Carrie and Eric Allen
Anonymous
Jim Beatty
Robert and Kimberly DeVore
Diane Panelli
In Memory of Susanne Shutz

MERELY PLAYERS began work in 1994, was officially founded in 1997, and has been bringing theatre to our community ever since. Our vision is to consistently provide quality theatre in this region, while broadening the range of types of experiences available to local theatergoers through relevant, exciting productions. Merely Players is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, and we assure you that any money donated will go toward making quality theatre in Durango both now and in the future.

Our 2026-2027 MERELY PLAYERS THEATRE SEASON continues:

A Magical Tale
The Snow Queen

December 2026

An Unforgettable Classic
The Price

January 2027

The Regional Premiere
Diversion

February 2027

The Award-Winning Musical
Come From Away

May 2027

Visit our website to purchase tickets.

AUDITIONS for *Come From Away*

November 14, 2026

See our website for all of the details. Positions available for both cast and crew.
We'd love to see you there!

CONNECT WITH US:

For more information on Merely Players, to buy tickets, to get involved, or to be added to our mailing list:

Website: <http://www.merelyplayers.org/>

Telephone: 970.749.8585

Email: merelydirectors@gmail.com

MERELY PLAYERS ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Artistic Director	Mona Wood-Patterson+
Technical Director	Charles Ford+
Company Manager	Mary Lynn Clark+
Studio Series Director	Matt Bodo+
Production Assistant	Diane Panelli+

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Janet Curry, President
Marc Arbeeney, Vice-President
Kate Ishay, Secretary
Jessica Jane Harris, Treasurer
Diane Panelli
Heather Howe
Deborah Heath

Thank you for spending your time with us. We would love to know what you thought about the play. Drop us an email at merelydirectors@gmail.com or share with us on Facebook at Merely Players – Durango.

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR:

Few plays written more than 130 years ago remain as fresh, funny, and delightfully subversive today as they were when first written. *The Importance of Being Earnest* is one of those rare works. First performed in London in 1895, Oscar Wilde's final play premiered to great acclaim, only to have its success abruptly overshadowed by the scandal and prosecution that would destroy Wilde's career and send him to prison just a

few months later. Although Wilde would never again enjoy the public success he had achieved, *Earnest* endured. Today, it is widely regarded as one of the greatest comedies ever written and a masterpiece of English theatre.

Wilde possessed a singular gift for language. His dazzling wit, sparkling epigrams, and uncanny ability to expose human vanity with affection, rather than cruelty, make his work uniquely joyful. Even the word *earnest* carried particular weight in Victorian society. To be earnest was to be sincere, serious, respectable, and morally upright—qualities highly prized in a culture deeply concerned with propriety and appearances. Wilde takes that much-vaunted virtue and turns it delightfully on its head.

At first glance, *The Importance of Being Earnest* seems to be little more than a frothy comedy of mistaken identities, cucumber sandwiches, clever phrases, and impossible romances. But beneath its elegant surface, Wilde gently pokes fun at the social conventions of his day—marriage, class, reputation, and the often-ridiculous lengths people go to maintain appearances.

His satire is never bitter. Instead, he invites us to laugh at the pretensions of Victorian society, only to realize that we have not outgrown them. We may have traded calling cards for social media and drawing rooms for digital platforms, but our fascination with appearances remains remarkably unchanged, and many of us still spend an extraordinary amount of energy carefully cultivating the image we present to others.

Our production embraces the play's joy, theatricality, and delicious nonsense. With a scenery and costumes that are a visual confection, we have leaned into its larger-than-life characters, its playful physical comedy, and its celebration of language that sparkles like champagne. In a world that often feels heavy, *The Importance of Being Earnest* reminds us that laughter is, indeed, not frivolous at all—it is essential.

-Mona Wood-Patterson