# Costume design brings new vibrancy to Lyric Theatre’s The Importance of Being Earnest



The Lyric Theatre’s latest production of Oscar Wilde’s classic play *The Importance of Being Earnest* marries the elegance of the Victorian era with a contemporary vibrancy, as illustrated through the meticulously crafted costumes designed by Catherine Kodicek. Set against the backdrop of 1895, the visual elements of this production promise to enhance the satirical undertones of Wilde's work, which cleverly critiques the upper class's frivolities.

Kodicek’s vision incorporates true-to-period silhouettes while infusing a modern twist. As she states, “My main thing for this production is the silhouettes...they’ve got these big sleeves, small waists, big hems – it was completely bonkers." This focus on aesthetics aims to evoke the feelings associated with summer gardens and gaiety, matching the tone of Wilde’s “trivial comedy for serious people.” Drawing from her extensive background in theatre and a deep-seated affection for costume design, Kodicek has been instrumental in creating a visual narrative that complements Wilde's humour and wit.

The collaborative spirit of the costume department further enriches this production, helmed by Kodicek alongside her team, comprising costume assistant Ciara Leneghan and costume supervisor Mairead McCormack. Each member brings unique strengths to the table, fostering an environment where creativity can flourish. Leneghan, who recently joined through a theatre artist fund programme, shares a passion for the visual arts that aligns with the department’s ethos. “We’ve formed a bit of a dream team,” she claims, highlighting the importance of a supportive creative environment.

Mairead McCormack echoes this sentiment, recognising that the camaraderie within their small team helps to navigate the complexities of costume design. The meticulous attention to detail resonates throughout the process, as each member finds joy and satisfaction in the tasks at hand, whether it involves sewing, dyeing, or brainstorming concepts. With a focus on creating not just costumes but also a narrative reflective of the characters’ personalities and backgrounds, Kodicek underscores the importance of grounding design work in the script itself. “You always have to start with the play,” she asserts, showcasing the depth of research that character-driven costume design necessitates.

As the curtains rise for *The Importance of Being Earnest*, anticipation is palpable, especially as the production promises not just visual splendour but also the nuanced comedy that has delighted audiences for generations. The unique approach taken by the Lyric Theatre, particularly under the direction of Jimmy Fay, aims to breathe new life into Wilde’s work, making it relevant and entertaining for today’s audience. This fresh take is underscored by Kodicek's assertion that the costumes should not only look beautiful but also express the essence of each character, contributing to the overarching narrative.

With performances running until July 6, this production invites theatre lovers to revel in both the lavish costume designs and the magical world of Wilde’s storytelling. As Kodicek passionately encourages, “Firstly, it’s an incredibly funny play...why wouldn’t you come and see it? It’ll be Wilde, witty and the actors will be wonderfully dressed.”

The innovative creative choices made by the Lyric Theatre, combined with the expertise of its costume department, are set to create a truly memorable theatre experience that pays homage to Wilde’s legacy while engaging a modern audience.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/wilde-witty-and-wonderfully-dressed-inside-the-lyrics-lavish-take-on-the-importance-of-being-earnest-FRSM2VJLHJGCJJ2FV4CVWNPPE4/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/wilde-witty-and-wonderfully-dressed-inside-the-lyrics-lavish-take-on-the-importance-of-being-earnest-FRSM2VJLHJGCJJ2FV4CVWNPPE4/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/wilde-witty-and-wonderfully-dressed-inside-the-lyrics-lavish-take-on-the-importance-of-being-earnest-FRSM2VJLHJGCJJ2FV4CVWNPPE4/), [[3]](https://lyrictheatre.co.uk/about-us/news/wilde-about-lyrics-new-play)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/wilde-witty-and-wonderfully-dressed-inside-the-lyrics-lavish-take-on-the-importance-of-being-earnest-FRSM2VJLHJGCJJ2FV4CVWNPPE4/), [[5]](https://pmltheatre.com/seasons/season-60/the-importance-of-being-earnest/), [[6]](https://niopera.com/performances/the-importance-of-being-earnest/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/wilde-witty-and-wonderfully-dressed-inside-the-lyrics-lavish-take-on-the-importance-of-being-earnest-FRSM2VJLHJGCJJ2FV4CVWNPPE4/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/wilde-witty-and-wonderfully-dressed-inside-the-lyrics-lavish-take-on-the-importance-of-being-earnest-FRSM2VJLHJGCJJ2FV4CVWNPPE4/), [[3]](https://lyrictheatre.co.uk/about-us/news/wilde-about-lyrics-new-play)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/wilde-witty-and-wonderfully-dressed-inside-the-lyrics-lavish-take-on-the-importance-of-being-earnest-FRSM2VJLHJGCJJ2FV4CVWNPPE4/), [[7]](https://www.allthatdazzles.co.uk/post/review-the-importance-of-being-earnest-lyttlelton-theatre)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/wilde-witty-and-wonderfully-dressed-inside-the-lyrics-lavish-take-on-the-importance-of-being-earnest-FRSM2VJLHJGCJJ2FV4CVWNPPE4/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/wilde-witty-and-wonderfully-dressed-inside-the-lyrics-lavish-take-on-the-importance-of-being-earnest-FRSM2VJLHJGCJJ2FV4CVWNPPE4/> - An article detailing the Lyric Theatre's 2025 production of 'The Importance of Being Earnest', focusing on the costume designs led by Catherine Kodicek. The piece highlights the Victorian-inspired silhouettes with modern twists, aiming to evoke summer gardens and frivolity. It also delves into Kodicek's background, from her early passion for theatre and sewing to her career in banking and eventual return to costume design. The article underscores the collaborative efforts of the costume department, including assistant Ciara Leneghan and supervisor Mairead McCormack, in bringing the production to life.
3. <https://lyrictheatre.co.uk/about-us/news/wilde-about-lyrics-new-play> - A news piece from the Lyric Theatre discussing their upcoming production of 'The Importance of Being Earnest'. The article features insights from set and costume designer Robin Peoples, affectionately referred to as 'Uncle Robin'. It highlights the positive reactions to his designs, particularly the grandeur and elegance conveyed through his set models. The piece contrasts this production with previous ones, noting the use of the Northern Bank Stage to create a sense of style and sophistication.
4. <https://www.guthrietheater.org/shows-and-tickets/2023-2024-season/the-importance-of-being-earnest/> - Information about the Guthrie Theater's 2023-2024 season production of 'The Importance of Being Earnest'. The page provides details on the creative team, including director David Ivers and costume designer Susan Tsu. It also lists the cast members and offers ticket purchasing options. The Guthrie Theater is known for its high-quality productions, and this page serves as a resource for those interested in attending or learning more about this particular staging.
5. <https://pmltheatre.com/seasons/season-60/the-importance-of-being-earnest/> - Details about PM&L Theatre's production of 'The Importance of Being Earnest', running from April 21 to May 7, 2023. The page includes information on the cast and creative team, highlighting director Fran Jansta and costume designer Trish Jansta. It also provides a brief overview of the play and its significance. The PM&L Theatre is a community theatre known for its engaging performances, and this page offers insights into their rendition of Wilde's classic.
6. <https://niopera.com/performances/the-importance-of-being-earnest/> - An overview of Northern Ireland Opera's 2013/14 season production of 'The Importance of Being Earnest'. The page features reviews from various publications, praising the production's vibrancy and energy. It also lists the cast and creative team, including conductor Pierre-André Valade and director/designer Antony McDonald. The Northern Ireland Opera is recognized for its innovative productions, and this page serves as a resource for those interested in this particular staging.
7. <https://www.allthatdazzles.co.uk/post/review-the-importance-of-being-earnest-lyttlelton-theatre> - A review of the National Theatre's production of 'The Importance of Being Earnest' at the Lyttelton Theatre. The article discusses the set and costume designs by Rae Smith, highlighting the blending of traditional Victorian grandeur with modern elements. It also touches upon the direction by David Suchet and the performances of the cast. The review provides insights into how the production revitalizes Wilde's classic play for contemporary audiences.