

PROSCENIUM



5 - 8 November 2025

An Ideal Husband

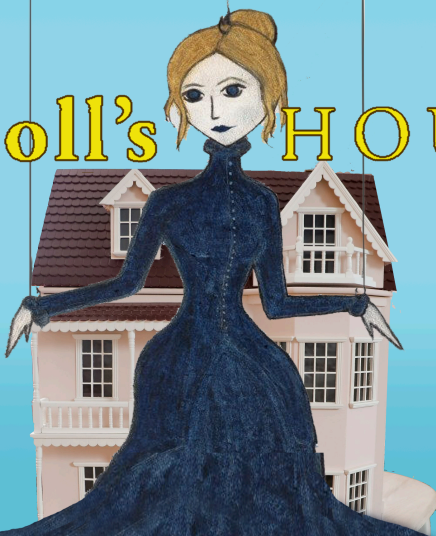
Oscar Wilde

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PROSCENIUM

An Ideal Husband

Oscar Wilde

Wednesday 5 to Saturday 8 November 2025
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

Cast

Sir Robert Chiltern (<i>Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs</i>)..	Wesley Lloyd
Lady Gertrude Chiltern (<i>his wife</i>)	Eva Peerless
Miss Mabel Chiltern (<i>his sister</i>)	Lynette Alston
The Earl of Caversham.....	Neville Price
Viscount Goring (<i>his son</i>)	Dermot Boyle
Mrs Cheveley	Elene Hadjidaniel
Lady Markby	Angela Evans
Vicomte de Nanjac	Michael Seaman
The Countess of Basildon	Shirley Wootten
Mrs Marchmont	Crystal Anthony
Mason (<i>Maid to the Chilterns</i>).....	Zena Wigram
Phipps (<i>Butler to Lord Goring</i>)	Michael Seaman

Creative Team

Director	Linda Hampson
Stage Manager	Izzie Cartwright
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Sybil Noorden
Properties	Crystal Anthony, Shirley Wootten
Costumes	Angela Evans
	Zena Wigram, Anne Gerrard
Lighting Design / Lighting Operation	Helene Smith
Sound Operation	Mark Sutherland
Poster and Programme Design	Charles Anthony
Programme Compilation	Mark Sutherland

There will be one interval of fifteen minutes
between Act 2 and Act 3

With thanks to East Lane Theatre, Harlequin Costumes, Anne Soutry
*Programme Sources: programmes for An Ideal Husband productions,
The Globe November 1992, and Vaudeville Theatre, April 2018*

Director's Note

An Ideal Husband is my favourite Oscar Wilde play, and I am delighted to have had the opportunity to stage it with such a talented company.

Like so many of Wilde's plays, it concerns someone who has a secret which, if revealed, could spell public shame and ruin for them and their family. Hardly surprising, when one considers the events of 1895: the play opened in January, Wilde was arrested on a charge of gross indecency on April 5th, and the play's run ended abruptly on April 6th.

The play exposes moral hypocrisy (an unpleasant human trait not confined to the late Victorians). It is Wilde at his serious best arguing eloquently for understanding, compassion and forgiveness and the possibility of redemption, an argument which he was to repeat when writing privately from his prison cell in 1897.

I hope that you will enjoy the society chit-chat, wit and light-heartedness of the play, but that we have also succeeded in reflecting the more serious values that underpin it.

Linda Hampson

Oscar Wilde

- 1854 Born in Dublin, his father a doctor, his mother an Irish nationalist and poet.
- 1874 Leaves Trinity College Dublin, goes up to Magdalen College Oxford.
- 1881 Production of his first play, Vera, about Nihilism in Russia, is cancelled at the last moment, probably for political reasons.
- 1882 Lecture tour of the USA and Canada.
- 1883 Second play, The Duchess of Padua, is turned down.
- 1884 Marries Constance May Lloyd, daughter of a well-known Irish barrister. She bears him two sons in the next two years.
- 1890 The Picture of Dorian Gray is published.
- 1892 Falls in love with Lord Alfred Douglas, the son of the Marquis of Queensbury. Production and success of Lady Windermere's Fan. His biblical play Salome is banned by the Lord Chamberlain. 13 years later Richard Strauss makes the play into a successful opera.
- 1893 Production of A Woman of No Importance.
- 1895 Success of An Ideal Husband and The Importance of Being Earnest. Wilde is left a note by the Marquis of Queensbury accusing him of being a "somdomite" (sic). Wilde sues him for libel, loses the case, and is arrested himself. The trial for homosexuality ends without a verdict. A re-trial sees him found guilty and sentenced to 2 years imprisonment with hard labour. The two plays, both running successfully, are closed.
- 1897 Writes a letter to Lord Alfred Douglas which is later published entitled De Profundis. He is released and leaves England for good to live in France.
- 1898 The Prisons Act, which improves conditions, is passed, partly as a result of Wilde's attack on prison life. He writes The Ballad of Reading Gaol.
- 1899 Received into the Catholic Church.
- 1900 Dies in Paris. He left a selection of "last words" for posterity, among them "It's the wallpaper or me – one of them has to go".

An Ideal Husband

Wilde wrote *An Ideal Husband* in a little under three months, between November 1893 and the end of February 1894. He wrote it for the actor manager John Hare but he turned it down and Wilde then offered it to another actor manager, Herbert Beerbohm Tree. Tree liked the play very much but because of other commitments could not himself either produce or act in it. He did however strongly recommend it to Lewis Waller and HH Morrell, who were to run his theatre – the Haymarket – when he was in America. They agreed to produce it as the first play of the 1895 season, and open it as soon as possible after Christmas.

An Ideal Husband opened at the Haymarket Theatre on January 3rd 1895 and was an immediate success. The Prince of Wales attended the opening night and sent for Wilde to congratulate him after the performance. Wilde remarked that he might cut some of the scenes as the performance was too long. “Pray do not take out a single word” said the Prince, a command which Wilde was only too pleased to obey.

Interview with Oscar Wilde after the opening of *An Ideal Husband*

“What do you think is the chief point the critics have missed in your new play?” “Its entire psychology – the difference in the way in which a man loves a woman from that in which a woman loves a man, the passion that women have for making “ideals”

(which is their weakness) and the weakness of a man who dare not show his imperfections to the thing he loves. The end of Act One, the end of Act Two, and the scene in the last act when Lord Goring points out the higher importance of a man's life over a woman's - to take three prominent instances - seems to have been quite missed by most of the critics. They failed to see their meaning; they really thought it was a play about a bracelet. We must educate our critics - we really must educate them." said Mr Wilde half to himself...

Gilbert Burgess, The Sketch, January 9th 1895

Contemporary Press Comment

Mr Oscar Wilde's play... seems to have caught the taste of the public...and everyone from Balham to Belgravia is going to see the story of Sir Robert Chiltern and the stolen bracelet...

The Sketch, 13 February 1895

An Ideal Husband was brought out last night with a similar degree of success to that which has attended Mr Wilde's previous productions...

The Times, 4th January 1895

... of course the new play is brilliant ... of course the audience roars with laughter ... it is so smart, it is so pungent ... it so tickles artificial society ... we doubt not that the play will be successful, it is so smart and so characteristic of its author ... when the play was over the applause was hearty...

Daily Telegraph, 4th February 1895

Wilde's imprisonment for homosexuality was news across the world, and impacted on performances of his plays in Europe and America:

Reuter's New York correspondent telegraphs that at the Lyceum Theatre, where Oscar Wilde's play *An Ideal Husband* is now running, it has been decided to remove the author's name from the bills and programmes. Miss Rose Coghlan, who has been playing *A Woman of No Importance* in the Western States, has resolved to omit the play from her repertoire. A later despatch states that the Directors of the Lyceum Theatre have decided not to continue the performances of Oscar Wilde's play *An Ideal Husband* after this week.

Daily Telegraph, 8th April 1895

Wilde On...

Nature: "If Nature had been comfortable mankind would never have invented Architecture."

Public Opinion: "The public is wonderfully tolerant. It forgives everything except genius."

Written Memoirs: "I dislike modern memoirs. They are generally written by people who have entirely lost their memories or have never done anything worth remembering."

The Art of Lying: "If a man is sufficiently unimaginative to produce evidence in support of a lie, he might just as well speak the truth at once."

Oscar Wilde, Intentions 1891

Our Next Production:

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By Florian Zeller

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Reality shifts as the play reveals itself - the only certainty is the love between André and Madeleine.

The Times described the West End's 2018 production, starring Jonathan Pryce and Eileen Atkins, as 'Deeply moving. A play that takes us to the edge of what it is to love'. Zeller's other plays include *The Father*, which was recently turned into a well-reviewed film with Anthony Hopkins and Olivia Coleman.

Ticket price includes a programme, available on your way in.

Directed by Lynette Alston
Wednesday 18 to Saturday 21 March 2026
Compass Theatre, Ickenham
Box Office : 01895 250 615

About Proscenium

Proscenium was founded in 1924. Since then, the aim of this experienced group has been to present classic and contemporary plays to as wide an audience as possible. Since 1990, performances have taken place at the Harrow Arts Centre and, more recently, at the Compass Theatre, Ickenham.

The company meets three times a week in Harrow for rehearsals, so that up to four plays are presented in each season. Social, fund-raising activities and play readings take place throughout the year.

Chair : Mike Williams

Contact us at www.proscenium.org.uk

The Height of the Storm

PROSCENIUM

By Florian Zeller

Translated by Christopher Hampton

18-21 March 2026

7.45pm, Compass Theatre
Ickenham, UB10 8PD
Tickets: £17, Concessions: £16
Groups of 10+: £13

www.proscenium.org.uk
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