

Ernxst, Or the Importance of Being

This sample is an excerpt of a
Concord Theatricals title.

Samples of Concord Theatricals titles
are for perusal and cannot be used for
performance or downloaded, printed,
and distributed in any way.

This sample may not reflect the version
of the play currently in print.

Acting Edition

Ernxst, Or the Importance of Being

Book by
Justin Elizabeth Sayre

Lyrics by
Kait Kerrigan

Music by
Bree Lowdermilk

Based on
The Importance of Being Earnest
by Oscar Wilde

concord
theatricals

Copyright © 2025 by Justin Elizabeth Sayre, Kait Kerrigan,
and Bree Lowdermilk
Artwork © 2025 Subplot Studio
All Rights Reserved

ERNXST, OR THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all member countries of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, the Universal Copyright Convention, and/or the World Trade Organization conforming to the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. All rights, including professional and amateur stage productions, recitation, lecturing, public reading, motion picture, radio broadcasting, television, online/digital production, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

ISBN 978-0-573-71134-3

www.concordtheatricals.com

www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION INQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

info@concordtheatricals.com

1-866-979-0447

UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

licensing@concordtheatricals.co.uk

020-7054-7298

Each title is subject to availability from Concord Theatricals Corp., depending upon country of performance. Please be aware that *ERNXST, OR THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING* may not be licensed by Concord Theatricals Corp. in your territory. Professional and amateur producers should contact the nearest Concord Theatricals Corp. office or licensing partner to verify availability.

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *ERNXST, OR THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING* is subject to a licensing fee. The purchase, renting, lending or use of this book does not constitute a license to perform this title(s), which license must be obtained from Concord Theatricals Corp. prior to any performance. Performance of this title(s) without a license is a violation of federal law and may subject the producer and/or presenter of such performances to civil penalties. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised to apply to the appropriate agent before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre. A licensing fee must be paid whether the title(s) is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged. Professional/Stock licensing fees are quoted upon application to Concord Theatricals Corp.

This work is published by Concord Theatricals Corp.

No one shall make any changes in this title(s) for the purpose of production. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, scanned, uploaded, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, digital, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. No one shall share this title(s), or any part of this title(s), through any social media or file hosting websites.

For all inquiries regarding motion picture, television, online/digital and other media rights, please contact Concord Theatricals Corp.

THIRD-PARTY MATERIALS USE NOTE

Licensees are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted third-party materials (e.g., incidental music not provided in connection with a performance license, artworks, logos) in the performance of this play and are strongly cautioned to do so. If no such permission is obtained by the licensee, then the licensee must use only original materials and materials that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for clearances of all third-party copyrighted materials, and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play(s) and their licensing agent, Concord Theatricals Corp., against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of such copyrighted third-party materials by licensees. For music, please contact the appropriate music licensing authority in your territory for the rights to any incidental music not provided in connection with a performance license.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

If you have obtained performance rights to this title, please refer to your licensing agreement for important billing and credit requirements.

ERNXST, OR THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING was commissioned by the Educational Theatre Association and presented in a staged reading sponsored by Concord Theatricals at the 2022 International Thespian Festival in Bloomington, Indiana on June 24, 2022. The production was directed by Justin Elizabeth Sayre, with music direction by Zachary Orts. The stage manager was Sydney Stephenson. The cast was as follows:

JAX	.....	Jasmine Iacullo
ALGY	.....	Christopher Nguyen
CECILE	.....	Mel Driggers
GWYN	.....	Alexis Helmer
LADY BRACKNELL	.....	Jeron Robinson
WINCE	.....	Kara Cody
SPERANZA	.....	Sophie Littig
OSCAR	.....	Lukas Freeman
FINGAL	.....	Hayes Hunter
WILLS	.....	Trinity Hines
WILDE	.....	Eva Parhami
O'FLAHERTIE	.....	Lauren Betz
ENSEMBLE	.....	Rylee Armstrong, Madelynn Atkinson, Lucia Graves, Sofia Jones, Annie Sullivan, Maddie West, Landon Small, Cam Ramirez, Sam Pepper

CHARACTERS

PRINCIPAL

JAX – (20s) Dignified and steady on the surface, yet underneath Jax is a bundle of nerves. Jax is a young person searching for their place in the world. Jax hopes to maintain a certain decorum in order to win love and respect in society. Always walking a self-imposed tightrope, Jax longs for order, while around every corner encounters only confusion and strife. Jax is the emotional center of the show, and their journey toward self-acceptance is paramount to the show's success.

ALGY – (20s) Jax's best friend. With a mischievous grin, Algy flouts the rules of society. A scamp and a bit of rogue, Algy is always having the best of times no matter the company or the circumstances. Algy's a clown discovering that underneath it all there's a heart in need of love.

CECILE – (18) Jax's young ward. Young and vibrant, Cecile is looking out on the world with hopeful and expectant eyes. A person of enormous imagination and drive, Cecile weaves journals and notes into a history of who and what this "Cecile" may actually become.

GWYN – (20s) Jax's Love. Gwyn has been raised to be the jewel of society. Seemingly prim and proper to all, Gwyn has an uncovered depth. A young person confined by society, Gwyn looks to Jax as a way out. In Gwyn, we someone constrained by the role they play in society, or rather, the role they are asked to play.

LADY BRACKNELL – (50s) Jax's obstacle. A Lion of the social order. Dignified and pompous, with an often unintended wit. Bracknell stands for the right way things are done and the right people doing them. Bracknell is the final word in style, society, and ultimately the happiness of most of the people in our play. Lady Bracknell should have a classic, aristocratic British Accent (RP).

WINCE – (40s) The leader of our "Wildes," Wince is the taskmaster in charge of making sure that this play about manners is done with the utmost correctness and sense. A stern leader, Wince is dire even in moments of hilarity. A deadpan face of no in a world screaming out with yes!

SLOUCH – (20s) Wince's assistant. Where Wince is all rules and regulations, Slouch is here for the pure enthusiasm of the theatre. Slouch is awestruck that there's a play going on and in some way, Slouch may actually get to be a part of it. An excitable and ultimately charitable character, Slouch inhabits all our excitement about putting on a show and the power of what it is to be seen.

THE WILDES

Named after the author, these are the makers of our merriment. The Wildes step into any and every role that is required to create the scene, the setting, or the character needed for the play to carry on. They should be played by open and dynamic performers who are able to inhabit even the smallest of moments with wit and personality.

The Wildes are intended to be an ensemble of at least ten performers, but can be performed with as few as six and can be infinitely and creatively expanded beyond the named characters.

FEATURED WILDES

OSCAR – Higher Voice with high pop belt and strong upper register

FINGAL – Higher Voice with high pop belt

O’FLAHERTIE – Higher Voice with strong mid-range pop belt

WILLS – Higher Voice with strong mid-range pop belt

WILDE – Lower Voice with high pop belt

SPERANZA – Lower Voice with high pop belt

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL WILDES

For split tracks – named for important figures in Wilde’s life.

CONSTANCE

ELLEN

BOSIE

ROBBIE

In the score, “Wildes” refers to **OSCAR, FINGAL, O’FLAHERTIE, WILLS, WILDE,** and **SPERANZA**. “Ensemble” refers to the entire ensemble (non-principals), while “All” means ensemble, featured soloists, and principals.

Casting Note:

While gendered names are adapted or maintained from the original, the spirit of the show is one of exploration. Casting should be based on a performer’s embodiment of the character regardless of gender, race, and ability. There are several pre-approved alternate keys for no extra charge. Please refer to your Keyboard-Conductor for a list of the available keys.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

01. Become Yourself Company
02. The Socials Today Algy, Jax & Ensemble
03. Wider Spectrum.....Jax & Wildes
04. Earnest Love.....Gwyn, Jax & Ensemble
05. Born With It Lady Bracknell & Portraits
- 05A. Become Yourself (Reprise)..... Algy, Wince & Ensemble
06. Out Here Cecile
- 06B. Become Ernest Algy
07. Wild Cecile & Algy
- 07A. Wild Tag Cecile
- 07B. The Socials Today (Reprise)..... Algy, Jax & Ensemble
08. Tea Fight Cecile, Gwyn, Slouch, Wince & Wildes
- 08A. Tea Fight (Reprise) Cecile, Gwyn & Wildes
09. Tell Me.....Gwyn, Jax & Wildes
- 09A. Born With It (Reprise).....Lady Bracknell & Portraits
10. What A Shame Lady Bracknell, Slouch & Ensemble
11. Wider Spectrum (Reprise).....Wildes, Jax & Slouch
12. Worthy..... Jax, Gwyn, Cecile, Algy, Wince, Slouch & Wildes
13. X Marks The Spot Company
14. Bows.....Instrumental

ACT I

Scene One

[MUSIC NO. 01 – BECOME YOURSELF]

(A blank stage.)

*(Slowly, our **WILDES** enter the space, each carrying an object to furnish what will become Algy's sitting room. Each **WILDE** strikes a pose as they deliver their quote.)*

WILLS. "I am not young enough to know everything."

O'FLAHERTIE. "True friends stab you in the front."

WILDE. "I can resist everything except temptation."

FINGAL. "The only difference between a sinner and a saint is...

O'FLAHERTIE. ...Every saint has a past

WILLS. ...And every sinner has a future."

OSCAR. "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell the truth."

O'FLAHERTIE. "We are all of us in the gutter..."

SPERANZA. ...But some of us are looking up at the stars."

*(Enter **WINCE**, 50s, our majordomo of the evening, an exacting servant of the utmost and upright propriety. They are very stiff,*

*very sure, very aware of the right way things are to be done. They enter holding a small clipboard with a pencil. While **WINCE** is lost in lists, **SLOUCH**, 20s, wanders on behind them. **SLOUCH** is a young and rather awestruck enthusiast, taking in the theatre, and even waving to the audience. They're very excited to get started.)*

*(**WINCE** stops center, perfectly center, and checks something off the list.)*

WINCE. *(Very stiffly.)* Good evening, gentles all.

SLOUCH. Welcome to the theat-RE.

WINCE. Excuse me?

SLOUCH. I say it with the R-E to be more sophisticated.

WINCE. *(Moving on.)* Tonight, we celebrate the work of –

*(The first group of **WILDES** line up across the stage, to announce themselves and our author.)*

OSCAR. Oscar

FINGAL. Fingal

O'FLAHERTIE. O'Flahertie

WILLS. Wills

WILDE. Wilde.

*(The second group of **WILDES** follow suit.)*

OSCAR. The poet,

FINGAL. Playwright,

O'FLAHERTIE. Novelist, and

WILLS. Lover of...

WILDE. Green carnations.

*(All the **WILDES** pull out a green carnation, and pin it to their lapels.)*

SLOUCH. Green carnations? That's a little queer, isn't it?

OSCAR. You have no idea.

*(The **WILDES** break from their line and begin to assemble the room. **SLOUCH** gets lost in the swirling excitement, as **WINCE** oversees the **WILDES'** construction.)*

O'FLAHERTIE.

WHEN THE LIGHTS ARE LOW

OSCAR.

AND THE DOOR'S SHUT TIGHT

SPERANZA.

YOU CAN TAKE YOUR SPACE

O'FLAHERTIE, OSCAR & SPERANZA.

YOU CAN FIND YOUR LIGHT

*(**SLOUCH** follows after **WINCE** in a state of amazement. Distracted, **SLOUCH** bumps into **WINCE**.)*

WINCE. Slouch!

SLOUCH. I'm sorry, but it's all so wonderful!

WINCE. As it's meant to be. Stop gawping and come along.

*(**WINCE** takes **SLOUCH** off as the **WILDES** continue to construct the room.)*

SLOUCH.

OH OH.

WILDE.

WITH ITS STYLE GENTEEL

FINGAL.

AND ITS MANNERS MILD

WILLS.

COMES THE GAYEST LARK

WILDES.

FROM THE PEN OF WILDE.

*(**SLOUCH** and **WINCE** reenter as the **WILDES** continue to build the scene.)*

SLOUCH. I feel like that's meant to say something.

WINCE. It did. But you aren't.

*(**WINCE** moves **SLOUCH** off, as chairs are moved into place.)*

OH OH.

OSCAR.

LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT.

SPERANZA.

IF THE SHOE FITS,

OSCAR & SPERANZA.

BREAK IT IN.

*(The **WILDES** create Algy's sitting room, in joyous celebration.)*

WILDES.

NO ONE WILL KNOW

IF IT'S YOUR MAKEUP OR YOUR NATURAL GLOW.

WINCE. *(Shouted.)* Let's go!

*(The **WILDES** build with abandon!)*

WILDES.

BECOME, BECOME,
BECOME YOURSELF.

FINGAL.

THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR YOUR SELF.

O'FLAHERTIE.

YOU'RE MAKING RAINBOWS FROM YOURSELF.

WILDES.

BECOME, BECOME
YEAH, EV'RYONE,
BECOME, BECOME,
BECOME YOURSELF.

*(WINCE reenters with a long rolled-up banner.
They hand it to FINGAL and O'FLAHERTIE.)*

WINCE. Tonight, we present Wilde's masterwork.

*(FINGAL and O'FLAHERTIE unfurl the banner
which reads, "The Importance of Being
ErnXst.")*

ALL. *The Importance of Being...*

*(The scene comes to a halt as everyone tries to
understand the typo.)*

WINCE.

SLOUCH!

(SLOUCH reenters.)

SLOUCH. What did I do?

WINCE. The sign reads "The importance of being 'Ernixst'"?
"Ernext"? One barely knows how to pronounce the
thing without succumbing to the guttural. Why was I
not alerted to this error?

SLOUCH. Oh, because I did it on purpose. You know, X?
The unknown. X marks the spot.

(To audience.) Who's Ernest? I don't know. Spooky.

WINCE. Ridiculous. I shall deal with you later. For now, let us proceed.

(WINCE claps twice and the music begins again.)

O'FLAHERTIE.

WHEN THE TEA IS POURED
IN THE PARLOR ROOM,

WILLS.

THOUGH THE TONE IS LIGHT
FEEL THE TENSION LOOM.

WINCE. The year is 1893, in a fashionable part of London.

(As the room begins to take shape.)

We find ourselves in the sitting room of Algy Moncrieff.

(From stage left, OSCAR and WILDE push on the actor playing ALGY MONCRIEFF, our smiling and beguiling mischief maker. They delight in the drama.)

OSCAR & SPERANZA.

OH, OH.

WINCE.

SUCH A FASHION PLATE
OH SO DIGNIFIED

SLOUCH.

HIDING GAMBLING DEBTS
WITH A BOAST OF PRIDE.

ALGY. Oh, I'm so naughty!

OH, OH!

WILDES.

LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT.
IF THE SHOE FITS,

BREAK IT IN.
NO ONE WILL KNOW

SLOUCH.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE MASK –

WINCE.

OR SCENIC TABLEAU.

ALL.

OH!

*(The **WILDES** take **ALGY** into the sitting room set. They dress **ALGY** and place them into the scene.)*

ALGY.

HEIGH HO!

ALL.

BECOME, BECOME, BECOME YOURSELF.
THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR YOUR SELF.
YOU'RE MAKING RAINBOWS FROM YOURSELF.

FINGAL.

BECOME BECOME
BECOME.

ALL (EXCEPT FINGAL).

BECOME, BECOME, YEAH
EV'RYONE, BECOME.

*(From the opposite side of the stage, **JAX WORTHING** enters. **JAX** is reserved yet friendly to a fault.)*

JAX.

BECOME YOURSELF.

O'FLAHERTIE. Enter Ernest Worthing, a young person of excellent character,

SPERANZA. ...if slightly faulty pedigree.

SLOUCH. But oh so dreamy.

JAX. That's very sweet, but I'm merely myself.

WINCE. Or that's what you'd like us to think. Come along, Slouch.

(JAX flashes a humble smile as the WILDES prepare them for the scene.)

ALL.

A COSTUME DRAMA SET
IN EIGHTEEN NINETY-THREE
OPENS UP THE WORLD
OF WHO WE USED TO BE.
THE DRESSES AND THE SUITS,
VICTORIAN AND QUEER.
OUR LIES BELIE A TRUTH
THAT'S HIDING
UNDER THE VENEER.

WINCE. We present this paragon of wit, satire...

SLOUCH. And the course of true love!

ALL.

TIME FOR THE SHOW TO START.

(JAX and ALGY are set in the now assembled sitting room as WILDES complete the tableau.)

WINCE. Places, everyone!

ALL.

PLAY YOUR PART

SLOUCH. Take up your trays!

WINCE.

LIGHTS UP! LOOK SMART!

ALL.

BECOME, BECOME, BECOME YOURSELF.
THE WORLD IS WAITING FOR YOUR SELF.
YOU'RE MAKING RAINBOWS FROM YOURSELF.

BECOME, BECOME
NOW, EV'RYONE -

WINCE.

WELL, NOT EV'RYONE -

ALL.

OH YES! EV'RYONE!

**OSCAR, FINGAL
& SPERANZA.**

BECOME, BECOME

OH BECOME YOURSELF.

WILDES.

BECOME, BECOME,
BECOME YOURSELF

THE WORLD IS WAITING
FOR YOUR SELF.

ALL.

YOU'RE MAKING RAINBOWS FROM YOURSELF.

(WINCE races around to put the final touches on the room. SLOUCH is handed a tray of cucumber sandwiches.)

BECOME,

(WINCE weaves through the scene, giving it a last minute check.)

WINCE.

SMILES ALWAYS BRIGHT.

ALGY.

OH!

WINCE.

PINKIES ALWAYS OUT.

SLOUCH. *(Looks at sandwiches on tray.)*

SANDWICHES ALWAYS...CUCUMBER?

ALL (EXCEPT OSCAR

& FINGAL).

BECOME,

OSCAR & FINGAL.

BECOME...

ALL (EXCEPT OSCAR & FINGAL).

BECOME,
BECOME...

WINCE.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING...

*(WINCE looks at the banner and gets hung up
on the X again... SLOUCH shrugs.)*

ALL.

YOURSELF!
OH OH.

*(JAX tries to take a sandwich, and ALGY
slaps their hand away.)*

WINCE. And scene!

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

Please visit our website to buy the full script, apply for a license to perform this show (if it's available), or to explore hundreds of similar titles.

www.concordtheatricals.com

www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

To be the first to know about new books, licensing releases, and anything theater-related, follow us on our social media channels.

@ConcordShows and **@ConcordUKShows** on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

concord
theatricals