



# THE ALLEY THEATRE | 2018-2019 SEASON

## CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

**Auditions: Oct. 13 & 14 | 2p-5p | The Alley Theatre  
923 Jackson Street, Anderson**

### **“THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST” by Oscar Wilde** **Directed by CHERYL FESMIRE**

*John Worthing, a carefree young gentleman, is the inventor of a fictitious brother, “Ernest,” whose wicked ways afford John an excuse to leave his country home from time to time and journey to London, where he stays with his close friend and confidant, Algernon Moncrieff. Algernon has a cousin, Gwendolen Fairfax, with whom John is deeply in love. During his London sojourns, John, under the name Ernest, has won Gwendolen’s love, for she strongly desires to marry someone with the confidence-inspiring name of Ernest. But when he asks for Gwendolen’s hand from the formidable Lady Bracknell, John finds he must reveal he is a foundling who was left in a handbag at Victoria Station. This is very disturbing to Lady Bracknell, who insists that he produce at least one parent before she consents to the marriage.*

*Returning to the country home where he lives with his ward Cecily Cardew and her governess Miss Prism, John finds that Algernon has also arrived under the identity of the nonexistent brother Ernest. Algernon falls madly in love with the beautiful Cecily, who has long been enamored of the mysterious, fascinating brother Ernest.*

*With the arrival of Lady Bracknell and Gwendolen, chaos erupts. It is discovered that Miss Prism is the absent-minded nurse who twenty years ago misplaced the baby of Lady Bracknell’s brother in Victoria Station. Thus John, whose name is indeed Ernest, is Algernon’s elder brother, and the play ends with the two couples in a joyous embrace.*

#### **John (Jack/Ernest) Worthing, J.P.**

The play’s protagonist. Jack Worthing is a seemingly responsible and respectable young man who leads a double life. In Hertfordshire, where he has a country estate, Jack is known as Jack. In London he is known as Ernest. As a baby, Jack was discovered in a handbag in the cloakroom of Victoria Station by an old man who adopted him and subsequently made Jack guardian to his granddaughter, Cecily Cardew. Jack is in love with his friend Algernon’s cousin, Gwendolen Fairfax. The initials after his name indicate that he is a Justice of the Peace.

#### **Algernon Moncrieff**

The play’s secondary hero. Algernon is a charming, idle, decorative bachelor, nephew of Lady Bracknell, cousin of Gwendolen Fairfax, and best friend of Jack Worthing, whom he has known for years as Ernest. Algernon is brilliant, witty, selfish, amoral, and given to making delightful paradoxical and epigrammatic pronouncements. He has invented a fictional friend, “Bunbury,” an invalid whose frequent sudden relapses allow Algernon to wriggle out of unpleasant or dull social obligations.

**Gwendolen Fairfax**

Algernon's cousin and Lady Bracknell's daughter. Gwendolen is in love with Jack, whom she knows as Ernest. A model and arbiter of high fashion and society, Gwendolen speaks with unassailable authority on matters of taste and morality. She is sophisticated, intellectual, cosmopolitan, and utterly pretentious. Gwendolen is fixated on the name Ernest and says she will not marry a man without that name.

**Cecily Cardew**

Jack's ward, the granddaughter of the old gentlemen who found and adopted Jack when Jack was a baby. Cecily is probably the most realistically drawn character in the play. Like Gwendolen, she is obsessed with the name Ernest, but she is even more intrigued by the idea of wickedness. This idea, rather than the virtuous-sounding name, has prompted her to fall in love with Jack's brother Ernest in her imagination and to invent an elaborate romance and courtship between them.

**Lady Bracknell**

Algernon's snobbish, mercenary, and domineering aunt and Gwendolen's mother. Lady Bracknell married well, and her primary goal in life is to see her daughter do the same. She has a list of "eligible young men" and a prepared interview she gives to potential suitors. Like her nephew, Lady Bracknell is given to making hilarious pronouncements, but where Algernon means to be witty, the humor in Lady Bracknell's speeches is unintentional. Through the figure of Lady Bracknell, Wilde manages to satirize the hypocrisy and stupidity of the British aristocracy. Lady Bracknell values ignorance, which she sees as "a delicate exotic fruit." When she gives a dinner party, she prefers her husband to eat downstairs with the servants. She is cunning, narrow-minded, authoritarian, and possibly the most quotable character in the play.

**Miss Prism**

Cecily's governess. Miss Prism is an endless source of pedantic bromides and clichés. She highly approves of Jack's presumed respectability and harshly criticizes his "unfortunate" brother. Puritan though she is, Miss Prism's severe pronouncements have a way of going so far over the top that they inspire laughter. Despite her rigidity, Miss Prism seems to have a softer side. She speaks of having once written a novel whose manuscript was "lost" or "abandoned." Also, she entertains romantic feelings for Dr. Chasuble.

**Rev. Canon Chasuble, D.D.**

The rector on Jack's estate. Both Jack and Algernon approach Dr. Chasuble to request that they be christened "Ernest." Dr. Chasuble entertains secret romantic feelings for Miss Prism. The initials after his name stand for "Doctor of Divinity."

**Lane**

Algernon's manservant. When the play opens, Lane is the only person who knows about Algernon's practice of "Bunburying." Lane appears only in Act I.

**Merriman**

The butler at the Manor House, Jack's estate in the country. Merriman appears only in Acts II and III.

## **“FOREVER PLAID: PLAID TIDINGS” by Stuart Ross**

**Directed by KIRBY GILLIAM**

This show has been pre-cast.

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## **“GREATER TUNA” by Jaston Williams, Joe Sears, & Ed Howard**

**Directed by TIFFANY JACKSON**

*Greater Tuna is a comedy about a small town in Texas named Tuna, Texas' third smallest town. The wacky inhabitants of this town -- men, women, children and animals -- are all played by two skillful, transformative actors who must change parts at a rather breakneck speed and use inventive voicework.*

### **CAST MEMBER #1** *(a partial character list)*

Charlene Bumiller - Daughter of Hank and Bertha Bumiller, and sister to Stanley and Jody

Jody Bumiller - Youngest child of Bertha Bumiller, followed constantly by "eight to ten dogs"

Stanley Bumiller - fresh from [reform school](#); twin to Charlene

Vera Carp - Town snob and vice president of the Smut-Snatchers of the New Order

Petey Fisk - Employee of the Greater Tuna [Humane Society](#)

Didi Snavelly - Owner of Didi's Used Weapons ("If we can't kill it, it's immortal")

Arles Struvie - A [disc jockey](#) at radio station OKKK

Chad Hartford- A reporter from Houston who comes to interview Bertha

Phinas Blye- A politician from Indiana who runs for City Council every election

Harold Dean Lattimer- OKKK's weatherman

Helen Bedd - waitress, Tastee Kreme Diner

### **CAST MEMBER #2** *(a partial character list)*

Bertha Bumiller - wife of Hank and mother to Jody, Stanley, and Charlene; member of the Smut Snatchers of the New Order

Hank Bumiller- Husband of Bertha

Pearl Burras - Aunt to Bertha, who is, as Petey Fisk claims, addicted to killing dogs (in the play, called canicidal thumbitus)

Leonard Childers - Station Manager of OKKK for his talk show, "Leonard on the Line"

Sheriff Givens- Believes in old-fashioned jails

Elmer Watkins, head of the local chapter of the KKK, dedicated to making the town safe "for the right kind of people"

Yippy the dog- Pet of the month for five weeks in a row, yips a lot, and no one wants to adopt him

R.R. Snavelly - UFOlogist, town drunk, and husband to Didi

The Reverend Spikes, president of the Smut Snatchers of the New Order

Thurston Wheelis - A disc jockey at radio station OKKK

Inita Goodwin - cook, Tastee Kreme Diner

## **“PICNIC” by William Inge**

### **Directed by SHARON ZIMMER**

*On a sweltering Labor Day morning, the women of a quiet neighborhood on the wrong side of the tracks are preparing for the annual picnic. Watchful mother Flo Owens has hopes that her beautiful daughter Madge will get a proposal from Alan, the local millionaire's son. Younger sister Millie, the “smart one”, yearns to grow up and leave her small town behind. Good-natured Mrs. Potts is happy to get a break from taking care of her aged mother. And spinster schoolteacher Rosemary Sydney cheerfully keeps her boyfriend Howard at arms' length. This seemingly placid feminine environment is disrupted when Hal Carter, a muscular and charming young drifter who happens to be a former fraternity brother of Alan's, hops off the freight train, and straight into Mrs. Potts' hospitable home. Hearts are broken and lives are changed in the following twenty-four hours, as Hal's lively, dangerous, masculine energy wakes up the sleepy community. A small Kansas town in the 1950s is the setting for William Inge's bittersweet melodrama Picnic, which explores themes of sexuality, repression, rites of passage, and disappointment.*

#### **Helen Potts**

widow lady, 40s to 60s, pleasant, even-tempered, nurturing, sweet spirit

#### **Hal Carter**

vagabond, 20s, good-looking, sexy, drifter, lonely, wants desperately to fit in somewhere

#### **Millie Owens**

student, 16, smart, boisterous, assertive, smart-mouthed, insecure

#### **Bomber Gutzel**

newsboy, teens, smart-mouthed, bully, picks on Millie, worships Madge

#### **Madge Owens**

works at dime store, 18, beauty-queen, charming, searching for escape from small town life

#### **Flo Owens**

mother, 40s, hard exterior, protective of daughters, untrusting of strangers, left jaded by unhappy marriage

#### **Rosemary Sydney**

school teacher, 30s to 40s, bawdy, bragadocious, very lonely, desperate

#### **Alan Seymour**

college student, 20s, smart, polished, wealthy appearance and upbringing, in awe of Madge

#### **Irma Kronkite**

school teacher, loud, enjoys her single-life, funny, jokester when around Rosemary

#### **Christine Schoenwalder**

school teacher, 20s to 40s, somewhat shy, quiet, looks up to Irma and Rosemary

## Howard Bevans

business owner, 42, kind, good neighbor, friendly, content, loves Rosemary

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## “THE TAMING OF THE SHREW” by William Shakespeare

### Directed by KAY WINTER

*The play opens as the student Lucentio arrives in Padua. He hears that the merchant Baptista has two daughters, but the younger, prettier daughter, Bianca, cannot be married before her strong-willed sister, Katherine. On seeing Bianca Lucentio falls in love with her and changes identities with his servant Tranio. Bianca already has two suitors, but doesn't like either. The elderly Gremio hires Lucentio, disguised as a Latin tutor, to woo Bianca on his behalf, while Hortensio disguises himself as a musician to get access to her. Meanwhile Petruchio, a young adventurer from Verona, arrives to visit his friend Hortensio. He learns about Katherine and decides to woo her, aided by both Gremio and Hortensio.*

*Baptista is enthusiastic about Petruchio's suit because the feisty Katherine is a burden to him and is continually quarrelling with her sister and with him. Petruchio will not be put off as he woos Kate and he fixes their wedding day. At the church, where Kate unwillingly awaits him, Petruchio arrives in an absurd outfit and after the ceremony he leaves for Verona immediately, with his new wife. On reaching there Kate is mistreated by Petruchio and his servants, and is denied food and sleep. To teach her to obey him Petruchio does not allow her new clothes or a hat. Eventually, worn down by her husband's relentless eccentricity, Kate submits and accepts all his eccentricities. They set off to visit her father in Padua.*

*On the journey the couple meet Vincentio, Lucentio's wealthy father, who is subjected to a strange conversation as Petruchio tests Kate's obedience. The three reach Padua where Hortensio, rejected by Bianca, has married a widow and Baptista has been tricked into believing a passing stranger is Tranio's rich father. While Vincentio attempts to unravel the complexities of the situation his son Lucentio returns from a secret wedding with Bianca.*

*Nevertheless, Baptista holds a wedding feast for both his daughters. As the men relax after their meal Petruchio devises a competition to prove whose wife is the most obedient. Bianca and the widow fail to come to their husbands when called while Kate lectures the women on the duties of a wife.*

### **Katherine**

The “shrew” of the play's title, Katherine, or Kate, is the daughter of Baptista Minola, with whom she lives in Padua. She is sharp-tongued, quick-tempered, and prone to violence, particularly against anyone who tries to marry her. Her hostility toward suitors particularly distresses her father. But her anger and rudeness disguise her deep-seated sense of insecurity and her jealousy toward her sister, Bianca. She does not resist her suitor Petruchio forever, though, and she eventually subjugates herself to him, despite her previous repudiation of marriage.

### **Petruchio**

Petruchio is a gentleman from Verona. Loud, boisterous, eccentric, quick-witted, and frequently drunk, he has come to Padua “to wive and thrive.” He wishes for nothing more than a woman with an enormous dowry, and he finds Kate to be the perfect fit. Disregarding everyone who warns him of her shrewishness, he eventually succeeds not only in wooing Katherine, but in silencing her tongue and temper with his own.

**Bianca**

The younger daughter of Baptista. The lovely Bianca proves herself the opposite of her sister, Kate, at the beginning of the play: she is soft-spoken, sweet, and unassuming. Thus, she operates as Kate's principal female foil. Because of her large dowry and her mild behavior, several men vie for her hand. Baptista, however, will not let her marry until Kate is wed.

**Baptista**

Minola Baptista is one of the wealthiest men in Padua, and his daughters become the prey of many suitors due to the substantial dowries he can offer. He is good-natured, if a bit superficial. His absentmindedness increases when Kate shows her obstinate nature. Thus, at the opening of the play, he is already desperate to find her a suitor, having decided that she must marry before Bianca does.

**Lucentio**

A young student from Pisa, the good-natured and intrepid Lucentio comes to Padua to study at the city's renowned university, but he is immediately sidetracked when he falls in love with Bianca at first sight. By disguising himself as a classics instructor named Cambio, he convinces Gremio to offer him to Baptista as a tutor for Bianca. He wins her love, but his impersonation gets him into trouble when his father, Vincentio, visits Padua.

**Tranio**

Lucentio's servant. Tranio accompanies Lucentio from Pisa. Wry and comical, he plays an important part in his master's charade—he assumes Lucentio's identity and bargains with Baptista for Bianca's hand.

**Gremio and Hortensio**

Two gentlemen of Padua. Gremio and Hortensio are Bianca's suitors at the beginning of the play. Though they are rivals, these older men also become friends during their mutual frustration with and rejection by Bianca. Hortensio directs Petruchio to Kate and then dresses up as a music instructor to court Bianca. He and Gremio are both thwarted in their efforts by Lucentio. Hortensio ends up marrying a widow.

**Grumio**

Petruchio's servant and the fool of the play—a source of much comic relief.

**Biondello**

Lucentio's second servant, who assists his master and Tranio in carrying out their plot.

**Christopher Sly**

The principal character in the play's brief Induction, Sly is a drunken tinker, tricked by a mischievous nobleman into thinking that he is really a lord.