

2018 JEWELL MAINSTAGE PLAY GUIDE



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COMPANY

PROFESSIONAL THEATRE IN A NEIGHBORHOOD SETTING

THE 2018 JEWELL
MAINSTAGE SEASON:

CAMPING WITH HENRY AND TOM
JAN 24 - MAR 3

CROWNS
MAR 21 - APR 28

LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN
MAY 16 - JUN 23

SWEET LAND
JUL 11 - AUG 18

BASKERVILLE: A SHERLOCK HOLMES MYSTERY
SEP 12 - OCT 20



LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN

BY OSCAR WILDE

DIRECTED BY KAREN LUND

MAY 16 - JUNE 23

WELCOME

A play about a good woman ... and a fan.

It's the party of the social season, but instead of celebrating, Lady Windermere suspects her husband is having an affair with a mysterious and beautiful stranger. As rumors swirl and secrets are revealed, the Windermere's lives are upended and threatened to end in disgrace. This comedy classic from Oscar Wilde will charm you with its cleverness and wit.

What does it mean to be good? Who gets to decide?

Upper-class Victorian England was a society of manners and social order and to defy the social standards of the time was scandalous. All societies have their own sets of social rules, both spoken and unspoken, and we have to decide for ourselves what we think of people who fall outside our concepts of societal norms. Often what we see on the surface is masking what a person is really like on the inside. A person of poor reputation might be capable of amazing generosity. A person who seemingly has it all together might be capable of unspeakable cruelty.

Can someone be a good person without anyone knowing it?

We would love to hear from you!

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EVERYONE'S A CRITIC ... starting with YOU!

What did you think?

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Let us and your friends know
if you liked the show!



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*Be sure to tag us when
you post about us!*

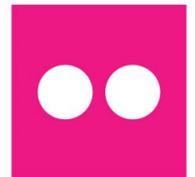
TAPROOT THEATRE
C O M P A N Y

*Professional theatre in
a neighborhood setting*

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See behind the curtain!

See what inspires and delights
us behind the scenes here at
Taproot Theatre.





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Oscar Wilde

Oscar Wilde was born October 16, 1854 in Dublin. He is remembered for his barbed witticisms, his affairs and scandals, his literary triumphs and his legal tragedies. Through his plays, short stories, essays, poems, and one full-length novel, Wilde examined society's foibles with a gaze both sardonic and compassionate.

He was exposed to poetry early in life: his mother, Jane Francesca Wilde, was a poet herself, whose work often dealt with themes of Irish nationalism.

From 1874 to 1878, while attending Magdalen College at Oxford University, Wilde began to make forays into creative writing and also became interested in the aesthetic movement, a philosophy centered on the idea that art exists for the sake of its beauty alone.

Wilde graduated from Oxford in 1878 and published his first poetry collection, *Poems*, in 1881. He traveled to America in 1882 to give a lecture tour and rubbed elbows while he was there with American writers like Henry Longfellow and Wilde's personal poetic hero, Walt Whitman. Upon returning to the Britian, he continued to tour and lecture until 1884.

In 1884, he married Constance Lloyd. A year later, in 1885, he was hired to edit *Lady's World*, a woman's magazine that had seen better days. Wilde brought a seriousness to the magazine that kept it going for several years. But it was after leaving *Lady's World* that Wilde embarked on his most prolific and most creative period. Almost all of his best known works – *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888), a collection of original fairy tales; *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (1891), a political text; *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), his only novel – were created during the seven-year span of 1888 to 1895.

Some sources call *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892) Wilde's first play; others refer to it as his first successful play. Two previous plays, *Vera; or, the Nihilists* and *The Duchess of Padua* had had no success; Wilde wrote *Salome* for the 1892 theatrical season, but the Lord Chamberlain banned the play for its portrayal of Biblical figures. (It would finally premiere in Paris in 1896.)

Thus *Lady Windermere's Fan* was Wilde's official debut on London's stages. The success of *Lady Windermere's Fan* was followed by *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895), and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895).



Wilde with his collection Poems in New York, 1882. Photo by Napoleon Sarony.

*Art is the only serious thing
in the world.*

*And the artist is the only person
who is never serious.*

— Oscar Wilde

Who's your favorite author?

**What qualities of their writing
interest you the most.**

Oscar Wilde

Scandals and Imprisonment

Despite the success of his plays, particularly *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 1895 was also the year of Wilde's downfall. Wilde had met Lord Alfred Douglas, or "Bosie," in 1891, and by 1893 they had begun an affair. Bosie was spoiled and reckless; Wilde was infatuated and indulgent; both were indiscreet. Bosie's father, the Marquess of Queensberry, suspected his son and the playwright of carrying on an affair for some time, and confronted Wilde about the relationship more than once.

Things came to a head on February 18, 1895, when Queensberry left a calling card at Wilde's club accusing him of homosexuality. Outraged, Wilde sued Queensberry for libel. This was unwise. The burden of proof was placed on Queensberry and his defense lawyer, Edward Carson, to prove that the accusation was true – which of course, it was.

Carson brought forward incriminating letters exchanged between Wilde and Bosie, and the threat of testimony from other young men with whom Wilde had had relationships. Attempting to avoid further scandal, Wilde dropped the case. Queensberry was found not guilty of libel – that is, according to the court, his accusation was true. Not only that, but that made Wilde liable for Queensberry's legal costs.

Upon the dismissal of the libel case, a warrant was issued for Wilde's arrest on charges of sodomy and gross indecency. Though several of his friends urged Wilde to flee to France, he was arrested the next day, April 6, 1895. At his first trial, Wilde pleaded not guilty. On the witness stand he offered a heartfelt, though counter-productive, defense of "the love that dare not speak its name." That trial ended in a hung jury, and his friends posted bail so that he could spend the time between trials outside of jail. On May 25, 1895, at a following trial, Wilde was found guilty of gross indecency and sentenced to two years of hard labor.

The following two years of imprisonment destroyed Wilde's health. He was moved to three separate prisons in 1895, finally being sent to Reading Gaol in November. It is hard to imagine a harsher life for an aesthete than the one he was sentenced to: hours of walking a treadmill in Pentonville Prison, "hard fare and a hard bed" in Wandsworth.

He was not even allowed pen or paper, and very limited reading material, until the reformer Richard B. Haldane took up his cause and gained him access to a few books and writing materials. While incarcerated, Wilde wrote Bosie a letter of some 50,000 words, posthumously published and titled *De Profundis* (Latin for "from the depths"), reflecting on their relationship, his own foibles, and his spiritual growth and "mental development" in prison.

Wilde was released from Reading Gaol in May of 1897. He left for France, and never returned to England. Bankrupted by his legal battles and weakened by his imprisonment, he drifted to a few different locales in Europe – staying in a French village with his friend Robert Ross, reuniting briefly with Bosie near Naples – before finally settling into a cheap hotel in Paris. During his stay with Ross he wrote his final poem, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, which tells the story of a hanging he witnessed during his incarceration. The poem sold well enough to relieve a little of his financial stress, but he never regained his former luxurious life.

In 1900, Wilde's health deteriorated further. In prison he had ruptured his right eardrum in a fall, and a resulting infection had developed into meningitis. As the infection worsened, Wilde became confined to his hotel room. On November 29, Robbie Ross came at Wilde's request and sent for a Catholic priest. Wilde was given a Catholic baptism and last rites, and died on November 30, 1900. He was 46.



Oscar's wife, Constance Wilde, with her eldest son Cyril, 1889.

Lady Windermere's Fan

**Please Note: This section contains spoilers and important plot points.
Skip this page if you wish to be surprised during the play.**



George Alexander as Lord Windermere, Ben Webster as Mr Cecil Graham, A. Vane-Tempest as Mr Dumby, J. Nutcombe Gould as Lord Darlington and H. H. Vincent as Lord Augustus Lorton in an early productions of Lady Windermere's Fan, St James's Theatre.

*Photograph by Alfred Ellis.
Via the Victoria & Albert archive.*

Never Let It Be Said That Oscar Wilde Missed An Opportunity To Congratulate Himself.

The curtain fell on the opening performance of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, February 20, 1892, to enthusiastic applause and cries of "Author!" Wilde took the stage himself – still holding his cigarette, a titillating déclassé move – and thanked cast, audience, and himself for a rousing success.

"I have enjoyed this evening immensely," he told the crowd. "The actors have given us a charming rendering of a delightful play, and your appreciation has been most intelligent. I congratulate you on the great success of your performance, which persuades me that you think almost as highly of the play as I do myself."

Writing the Play

Wilde began writing *Lady Windermere's Fan* in the summer of 1891, at the urging of Sir George Alexander, the actor-manager of St. James's Theatre, and finished the play by October of the same year. (Alexander also played Lord Windermere in the first production.)

Writing the play was a trial. Wilde almost abandoned it several times, once complaining to Alexander "I can't get my people real." When he finally presented the manuscript to Alexander, he described it as "one of those modern drawing room plays with pink lampshades."

In initial drafts and up through opening night, Mrs. Erylne's secret past was held in reserve until the final act. The question of what to reveal, and when, vexed Wilde and Alexander as they revised and rehearsed the play.

Alexander felt that revealing Mrs. Erylne's relationship to Lady Windermere earlier would both clarify the action and make the audience more sympathetic to her. Wilde preferred to keep the secret longer, arguing that "if [the audience] knew Mrs. Erylne was the mother, there would be no surprise in her sacrifice—it would be expected."

Wilde felt the play hinged on a woman who has a child, but never known the passion of maternity, suddenly sees the child she has abandoned falling over a precipice. There wakes in her the maternal feeling.... She rushes to rescue, sacrifices herself ... and the next day she feels 'This passion is too terrible. It wrecks my life.... Let me go away. I don't want to be a mother anymore.' And so the fourth act is to me the psychological act, the act that is newest, most true.

Wilde wanted his audience to engage with Mrs. Erylne's passion, with the dramatic cost of her decision juxtaposed with her status as a "fallen woman." But Alexander prevailed after opening night: the audience, while appreciative, was confused by Mrs. Erylne's relationship to Lady Windermere rather than engaged by it, and so Wilde finally revised the script to reveal Mrs. Erylne's secret bit by bit through the play.

Lady Windermere's Fan

**Please Note: This section contains spoilers and important plot points.
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Wilde's Conflicting Philosophies

It's interesting to compare Wilde's aesthetic philosophy with the undeniable social commentary present in *Lady Windermere's Fan*. During his libel trial against the Marquess of Queensberry, Wilde told defense lawyer Edward Carson, "In writing a play or a book, I am concerned entirely with literature—that is, with art. I aim not at doing good or evil, but in trying to make a thing that will have some quality of beauty."

Lady Windermere Fan is certainly a beautiful play, as Wilde defines it, well-written and thought-provoking. It also clearly plays off Victorian expectations of feminine purity, motherhood, and moral and immoral behavior. Mrs. Erlynne and Lady Windermere represent two well-known female archetypes, the fallen woman and the virtuous heroine. In any other melodrama of the time, audiences would reasonably expect Mrs. Erlynne to either be punished for her moral failing, or to be redeemed by overcoming her moral weakness and rejecting and repenting of her past life. She might even pay for her sins with her life, But Mrs. Erlynne follows neither of these paths. She sacrifices reputation and social standing in England, but ends the play married to a well-to-do lord. She may regret leaving her infant daughter, but as she tells Lord Windermere, "Repentance is quite out of date," and she even threatens to "make my name so infamous that it will mar every moment of her life" if Lord Windermere tells Lady Windermere the truth.

Carole Hamilton points out, regarding the play's central paradox, that Wilde uses "the structure of the paradoxical epigram, which is a statement that contains two opposing ideas in a balance." Wilde was a master of the epigram (for example, from *Dorian Gray*: "I adore simple pleasures. They are the last refuge of the complex.") and Hamilton argues that *Lady Windermere's Fan* is itself structured as a paradoxical epigram:

"The pattern of the paradox is repeated in the plot as well. Wilde's play contains a series of internal plot paradoxes, in a kind of nested box structure. Lady Windermere thinks of life as a sacrament, and discovers that her husband has betrayed that belief, but she is really wrong--a paradox. ... Another paradox lies in the fact that she is brought to her senses by the very woman who had betrayed her as a child. Being saved by the one who abandoned her is a reversal, or paradoxical pattern. ... Furthermore, [Mrs. Erlynne's] second "abandonment" of her daughter is a boon, not a betrayal. The audience, too, undergoes a reversal in its opinion of Mrs. Erlynne."

For Lady Windermere herself, she falls more neatly into the archetype of the ingenue, tempted by vice but ultimately virtuous. Though she nearly compromises her morals, she chooses to remain true to her family. But Lady Windermere, too, has reversed her opinions on bad and good by the end of the play. If she is the audience's moral model, perhaps the way she finds moral nuance as she matures is Wilde's ideal.



Maya Burton, Larua Lee Caudill and Marianne Savell in Taproot Theatre's *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

Lady Windermere's Fan

**Please Note: This section contains spoilers and important plot points.
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A Possible Muse

It's interesting, also, to examine Wilde's sources of inspiration. Eleanor Fitzsimons, in *Wilde's Women*, suggests that Lillie Langtry, the socialite, actress, and friend of Wilde's, may have been the real-life version of Mrs. Erlynne. Like Mrs. Erlynne, Langtry had a daughter whom she did not recognize for many years: in 1880, while married to Edward Langtry, Mrs. Langtry had ongoing affairs with Prince Louis of Battenberg and Arthur Clarence Jones. She gave birth to Jones' daughter in March 1881, named her Jeanne Marie, and returned to her life as a London celebrity. Jeanne Marie was raised by her grandmother, without knowledge of her true parentage. She called Lillie Langtry ma tante (my aunt) until she was fourteen, and Lillie did not publicly acknowledge her until Jeanne Marie was sixteen. Jeanne Marie only learned the identity of her father when she was eighteen and about to be married, from another socialite.

Wilde asked Langtry to play Mrs. Erlynne in typically dramatic fashion. Langtry wrote in her memoir that Wilde presented her with a manuscript and declared, "There is a play I have written for you." When he told her that the part was a mother with a grown-up daughter, though, Langtry – who would have been about 37 or 38 in 1890 – objected that she was not "old enough to have a grown-up daughter of any description" and rejected the role. (Mrs. Erlynne raises a similar objection to Lord Windermere when he suggests that she acknowledge Lady Windermere as her daughter.) Perhaps she also felt that the subject matter hit too close to home, that her friend had taken things a step too far by offering to cast her as the absent mother of an illegitimate daughter.

It seems most likely that, if Wilde was inspired by Langtry, it was by her persistence and beauty rather than by her peccadilloes. He was a great admirer of hers, after all. But in the end, the role of Mrs. Erlynne was played by Marion Terry, with Winifred Emery as Lady Windermere.



Lillie Langtry, August 1885.
Photograph by William Downey.

"A Play About A Good Woman"

George Alexander is responsible for another change that hints at Wilde's intentions with *Lady Windermere's Fan*. The play was originally titled *A Good Woman* – easily seen as a reference both to Lady Windermere's upright morality at the beginning of the play, and to Mrs. Erlynne's complicated redemption at the end of it. Alexander worried that the title might put off audiences, so Wilde changed it. He kept the reference in the play's subtitle, though: "*A Play About a Good Woman*."

Costumes

Authors of novels or short stories will often include character descriptions as part of the story. In a play, the costume designer is responsible for creating the first impression of a character. As soon as an actor walks out on stage you can guess something about their character. Are they old or young? Are they rich or poor? Are they from another time period or dressed in modern clothes?

Costume Design
by
Jocelyne Fowler



What do these costume sketches tell you about the characters in the play?

Use a blank sheet of paper and draw a costume you might want to wear if you were in a production of *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

Setting/Place

In a novel or a short story the setting is usually established by the author's description indicating time and place. At most theatrical productions the program will briefly list the setting and time period of the play, but after that it's up to the set designer to create a visual representation of the location that the story is set. A good set designer will create a set that gives the audience clues about the story even before the actors come on stage.

What can you guess about the setting (location and/or time period) of this play by looking at the set design below?

*This wallpaper and I are
fighting a duel to the death.
Either it goes or I do.*

— Oscar Wilde



Taproot Theatre 2018
Mark Lund, Designer

Victorian Morality

The Victorian era was famously one of puritan morals, in which innocence and purity were prized, and strict order defined daily life. It was an era of social reform that sought to influence individual choices as well as societal choices; the temperance movement's crusade against alcohol represented the former, while politicians and reformers' efforts to improve working and living conditions for the poor represented the latter.

Obedience to authority was one common thread through Victorian morality. On a societal scale, this translated to the lower classes existing in obedience, subservience, and deference to their "betters": the rich man, the aristocrat, the Queen. On a more personal level, children were expected to be obedient to their parents and their teachers, and wives were expected to be obedient to their husbands. On a spiritual level, mankind was expected to be obedient to God, the church, and the Bible (the 19th century saw an increase in evangelical Christian movements in both England and the United States). It seems ironic that during an era defined by a female head of both church and state, ultimate authority was still derived from maleness.



“IF WE LIFT OUR SKIRTS, THEY LEVEL THEIR EYE-GLASSES AT OUR ANKLES.”
Cartoon from 1854 depicting two gentlemen ogling a passing woman. The caption reads: "If we lift our skirts, they level their eye-glasses at our ankles."

W. J. Reader writes, of the absolutist thinking that runs through Victorian morals:
"... the weight of the Victorian conscience was not universally repressive. Some very talented people found it so ... But the fact that unquestionable standards of right and wrong were generally held to exist, backed by the force of established authority, was an immense support to many people. They were relieved of any necessity to dissipate effort in thinking these matters out for themselves, and they could build their lives on what they believed to be unshakable foundations ..."

With their acceptance of established authority the Victorians combined a settled belief in individual responsibility and individual rights. The first followed from their ideas on morality; each man would answer for his actions, good or bad, gaining praise or blame as the case might be, and there was little disposition to admit that anyone might be undeservedly fortunate on the one hand or the victim of circumstances on the other.

This unequivocal morality did do some good for society. The Abolitionist movement had earlier success in England than it did in the United States, and slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire and its colonies in the 1830s. (British imperialism was at its height during Queen Victoria's reign and into the 1910s.) The temperance movement succeeded in preventing the sale of alcohol to children. And reformers like Charles Dickens and Caroline Norton appealed to Victorians' sense of moral outrage at cruelty to seek better conditions for poor people, children, and women in abusive marriages.

At the same time, the rigidity of Victorian morals was stifling for many individuals – Oscar Wilde and his fellow aesthetes among them – and counter-ideologies bubbled beneath society's staid appearance. In fact, Michel Foucault argues in *The History of Sexuality* that an obsession with controlling or repressing sexuality encourages more attention towards "improper" behavior, not less. "Transgressive" ideas and feelings have always existed, after all, and punishing them over-harshly often only gives them more power. The rise of the decadent and aesthetic movements of the late 1800s can easily be seen as a backlash to a repressive, authoritarian society.

Women in Victorian England



Winifred Emery and George Alexander as Lady and Lord Windermere. Photograph by Alfred Ellis. Via the Victoria & Albert archive.

Please note: these sections focus primarily on people in the middle class, nobility and gentry of Victorian society – that is, the people of Wilde’s class, and of Lady Windermere’s class. With the industrial revolution came prosperity and more social mobility, but the divisions between the working class of laborers, domestic servants, and shopkeepers, and the business and aristocratic classes, were still stark. Daily life for Lord and Lady Windermere does not resemble daily life for a lower-class character, like Rosalie.

Education and Daily Life

Girls among the upper classes were frequently educated at home, being taught to read, write, and conduct themselves as ladies. As the 1800s wore on, girls’ boarding schools came into vogue – at least for the upper-middle class of professionals. For aristocrats and the gentry, private education at home was considered preferable to sending their girls away.

A young lady of refinement would not be learning a trade, of course, but she was expected to acquire “accomplishments”: music, drawing, dancing, and general knowledge. One female writer described “The ideal presented to a young girl” as “to be amiable, inoffensive, always read to give pleasure and be pleased.”

Married women of the middle and upper classes were rarely employed outside the home, but that didn’t mean they were idle. Isabella Beeton’s *The Book of Household Management*, first published in 1859, provides an interesting snapshot of what might be expected of “the Household General.” In addition to a great many recipes – “Men are now so well served ... at their clubs, well-ordered taverns, and dining-houses,” she writes, “that in order to compete with the attractions of these places, a mistress must be thoroughly acquainted with the theory and practice of cookery” – there are chapters on:

- 41.—DOMESTIC SERVANTS.
- 42.—THE REARING AND MANAGEMENT OF CHILDREN, AND DISEASES OF INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD.
- 43.—THE DOCTOR
- 44.—LEGAL MEMORANDA

In an aristocratic house like the Windermere’s, cookery and first aid might not be the lady of the house’s priorities, but maintaining the household order would no doubt be on her mind. The ideal wife was both the general and the angel of the house.

The Social Season

Maintaining social ties was also an important part of a Victorian woman’s role in the household. The social season traditionally ran from about February, when the hunting season was over, to July, when the upper echelons of London society would retreat to their country homes to escape the heat. The Houses of Parliament were in session during the season, so the important work of both socializing and governing took place.

The season was also the traditional time for young women to be introduced to society as marriageable ladies.

(This tradition of introducing debutantes during the season continues in some British circles to this day.)

Women in Victorian England

All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy.

No man does, and that is his.

— Oscar Wilde

Courtship and Marriage

Every girl wanted to be married well – or, perhaps more accurately, every girl was expected to marry well. That meant a husband of comparable social standing, of good character, and of good income and prospects. A well-off husband was an assurance of economic stability for a young woman, particularly those without much in the way of family fortune. This being said, the 19th Century also marked a turning point in societal ideas about love and marriage. As any reader of Jane Austen’s Regency-era romances knows, marriages based on necessity or convenience were not unheard of, but marriages based on mutual affection were the ideal. By the Victorian era, marriages of companionship and love were becoming the norm. The Queen herself, with her deep love (and long mourning) for her husband Prince Albert, personified this ideal.

Young women in the upper classes were introduced into society at a coming out ball, usually in their late teens and certainly no later than 20 or 21. A woman unmarried by the age of thirty was considered consigned to spinsterhood. A young woman’s goal was to be married within her first season; making a good match quickly assured her social standing, boosted her mother’s place in society, and set her up for life.

And it was, for most intents and purposes, for life. Divorce was possible but infrequent, and until the passage of the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act (1857), difficult to obtain, as it required a private act of Parliament. Caroline Norton wrote in a letter to the Queen in 1855:

“If the wife sue for separation for cruelty, it must be “cruelty that endangers life or limb,” and if she has once forgiven, or, in legal phrase, “condoned” his offences, she cannot plead them; though her past forgiveness only proves that she endured as long as endurance was possible.

“... If an English wife be guilty of infidelity, her husband can divorce her so as to marry again; but she cannot divorce the husband a vinculo [from the bond], however profligate he may be. No law court can divorce in England. A special Act of Parliament annulling the marriage, is passed for each case. The House of Lords grants this almost as a matter of course to the husband, but not to the wife. In only four instances (two of which were cases of incest), has the wife obtained a divorce to marry again. ... As her husband, he may divorce her (if truth or false swearing can do it): as his wife, the utmost “divorce” she could obtain, is permission to reside alone,—married to his name.”

The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act did make it easier for a couple to obtain a divorce on the grounds of adultery, cruelty, or “Desertion without Cause for Two Years and upwards.” However, a husband’s infidelity was not considered grounds for divorce unless it was aggravated by bigamy (marrying another woman while already legally married), incest, cruelty, or bestiality. (This double standard with regards to adultery remained law in Britain until 1923.)

Married women had very few rights to property, money, or even to her kin or her reputation. In Norton’s letter to the Queen she lists the rights that English wives lacked: no legal claim on her own property or possessions, even if she owned them before the marriage; no ability to make a will of her own; no legal claim to any wages she earned; no ability to prosecute for libel or sign legal documents. “A married woman in England,” she writes, “has no legal existence: her being is absorbed in that of her husband.”

Men in Victorian England



Kalulu, an African boy brought to England by the explorer Sir Henry Morton Stanley. 1872.

Education and Career

Among the gentry – the land-owning aristocratic class – and the upper-middle class of professionals, boys were expected to attend school not to learn a trade, but to learn to be gentlemen. They were, after all, likely to be inheriting land, money, and businesses from their fathers, and therefore must be able to conduct themselves in high society.

Before the Victorian era, boys were usually educated either privately at home, or at a local grammar school. As the industrial revolution introduced more money into households' coffers and mass transit in the form of railways, boarding schools became more and more popular. There were also the long-established public schools: privately run secondary schools such as Eton College, Harrow School, and Rugby School.

W.J. Reader writes in *Life in Victorian England*:
“The greatest prestige in the educational world attached to the ancient public schools, with their rigidly classical curriculum and their anti-commercial outlook, scornful alike of money-making, technology and science. They were emphatically not designed to cater for the rising middle classes and never in Victoria’s reign did they admit that commerce or industry could really be a fit occupation for a gentleman. Which was a pity, for the Victorian self-made man, greatly desirous of having his sons accepted as gentlemen, was apt to have them educated at these establishments if he could afford to, and so they were disabled from taking up the kind of work on which the country increasingly depended for its livelihood.”

There was a great emphasis on education in the classics (“useless intellectual lumber as they were for most boys,” says Reader), and in Latin and Greek. These subjects were certainly impractical, but considered vital for the development of the intellect. Young men destined for professional careers and trades might also learn arithmetic. More to the point, boys were being crafted into men: “What we must look for,” wrote Dr. Arnold of Rugby School, “is, 1st, religious and moral principles; 2ndly, gentlemanly conduct; 3rdly, intellectual ability.”

Those men in a position to inherit land or titles might continue on to higher education at Oxford or Cambridge to prove themselves to be intellectually accomplished. The real value of a university education might have been much the same as it is now, though: networking. They left knowing all the right people of their own class, having spent some years in “fox-hunting, racing, a not too serious form of cricket, and no end of good dinners in the company of the best fellows in the world as they knew it.”

The sons of gentlemen – particularly eldest sons, who stood to inherit their fathers’ estates – were not necessarily expected to have a career beyond “gentleman.” Some went into military service in the Army or Navy. Families that owned land would make their money from rental income, but the landowner himself might not be very involved in the overall running of his estate. The rest of their income would most likely come from investments rather than employment.

Men in Victorian England



Marion Terry and George Alexander as Mrs. Erylne and Lord Windermere. Photograph by Alfred Ellis. Via the Victoria & Albert archive.

Marriage

As with women, men faced pressure to marry and marry well, but the expectations were certainly different. Men tended to marry their first wives before the age of 30. It would be considered immoral for a man to have any sexual experience before marriage – but far from unheard of – and though it might stain his reputation, it would be unlikely to ruin it as entirely as it would for a woman.

While courting, though, a man was expected to maintain absolute respect and propriety around his intended. For an unmarried man and woman, this meant no physical contact, with a possible exception for dancing; no unsupervised visits until it was clear that marriage was a possibility; no hand-holding while “walking out” with one another, unless it was to offer support over rough patches.

Married men enjoyed a good deal more freedom and license than women. As mentioned (pg. 12), a husband’s unfaithfulness to his wife was not considered sufficient grounds for divorce until 1923, while a wife’s unfaithfulness to her husband was enough for him to divorce her. Perhaps “enjoyed more freedom” is the wrong turn of phrase, though. The French critic Hippolyte Taine wrote, of Englishmen indulging in infidelity, “An Englishman in a state of adultery is miserable: even at the supreme moment his conscience torments him.”

Once married, men became responsible for their wives’ wealth, possessions, and any property she had or income she earned after the marriage. But he was expected to provide her with the life to which she was accustomed; a single man with little income or financial prospects of his own would find himself hard pressed to find romantic prospects, too.

A Note About Titles

It’s worth taking a moment here to note that many of the characters in *Lady Windermere’s Fan* are referred to as “Lord”: Windermere, Darlington, Augustus, and the unseen husbands of Lady Carlisle, Plymdale, et cetera. This means that they belong to or are related to the peerage. In all likelihood these lords are barons, and therefore inherited their title, some amount of familial land, and a good deal of social standing and expectation. A barony did not necessarily come with the obligations that we might associate with a title, and lords frequently had some other career or vocation. Take Lord George Gordon Byron, the 6th Baron Byron, who spent his life as a poet and writer, or his successor George Anson Byron, a naval officer.

Fan Flirtations

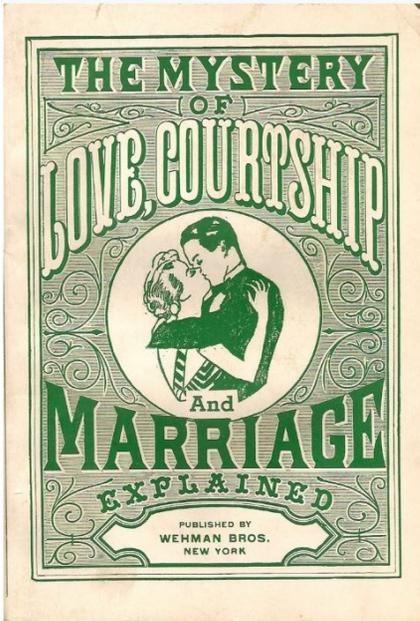
The Victorians loved secret languages: everything from flowers to handkerchiefs to fans could be used to send messages to one another. With so many strictures on how men and women could interact, it's no surprise that subtler methods of communication developed.

There are many versions of "fan language" to be found, and perhaps there was never a codified set of fan flirtations.

This particular set comes from 1890's *The Mystery of Love, Courtship, and Marriage Explained* by Henry J. Wehman. Wehman writes:

"Fans and flowers have each their language, and why not handkerchiefs? No reason having been discovered, it has transpired that handkerchief flirtations are rapidly coming into fashion. As yet the "code of signals" is confined to a select few, but we do not intend that they shall enjoy the monopoly any longer, and accordingly publish the key.

It may be used at the opera, theatre, balls, and such places, but never in church; and we hope that this restriction will be observed, and are quite sure that it won't."



Fan Flirtations.

Carrying in right hand in front of face.....	<i>Follow me.</i>
Carrying in left hand	<i>Desirous of an acquaintance.</i>
Placing it on the right ear.....	<i>You have changed.</i>
Twirling it in left hand	<i>I wish to get rid of you.</i>
Drawing across forehead	<i>We are watched.</i>
Carrying in right hand	<i>You are too willing.</i>
Drawing through the hand	<i>I hate you.</i>
Twirling in right hand.....	<i>I love another.</i>
Drawing across the cheek.....	<i>I love you.</i>
Closing it.....	<i>I wish to speak to you.</i>
Drawing across the eye.....	<i>I am sorry.</i>
Letting it rest on right cheek.....	<i>Yes.</i>
Letting it rest on left cheek.....	<i>No.</i>
Open and shut	<i>You are cruel.</i>
Dropping.....	<i>We will be friends.</i>
Fanning slow	<i>I am married.</i>
Fanning fast	<i>I am engaged.</i>
With handle to lips.....	<i>Kiss me.</i>
Shut.....	<i>You have changed.</i>
Open wide	<i>Wait for me.</i>

Post-Show Reflection

After the show, write a short review of the performance using the space below. Include what you liked and didn't like while identifying the main conflicts of the play and its plot structure.

TAPROOT THEATRE COMPANY

MISSION STATEMENT

Taproot Theatre Company creates theatre experiences to brighten the spirit, engage the mind and deepen the understanding of the world around us while inspiring imagination, conversation and hope.

ABOUT US

Taproot Theatre Company was founded in 1976 by six friends, five of them graduates from Seattle Pacific University. From its humble beginnings as a touring group, the company is now Seattle's largest mid-size theatre company. Today Taproot Theatre serves over 150,000 people annually throughout the Pacific Northwest with its Jewell Mainstage season, Isaac Studio Theatre season, Touring programs and Acting Studio.

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EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In-School Residencies & Workshops

- From drama games to acting classes to putting on a production, Taproot Theatre's residencies can range from several weeks to months, or an entire school year. Whether during the school day or after school as an enrichment program, let Taproot's trained teaching artists introduce a whole new world to your students.
- Our theatre arts professional will visit your classroom for a workshop that will inspire and excite your students. They will develop basic acting skills and explore non-theatre curriculum using theater as a medium.

Touring Productions

- The Road Company – performing plays for elementary and secondary schools focusing on issues such as bullying prevention, substance abuse, and friendship skills.
- Family oriented productions and improv comedy for churches, clubs, office parties and other groups.

Camps & Classes

- Taproot Theatre Company's Acting Studio is a year-round instructional program for theatre artists of all ages and experience levels. We are devoted to the wholeness of the artist with the goal of creating a nurturing environment to help each student develop his or her unique gifts.

NEXT ON THE JEWELL MAINSTAGE:



The poignant tale of an American immigrant's experience.

In this sweeping musical that soars like the Minnesota skies, a young German woman crosses the sea to marry a man she's never met. What should be their happy ending is met with suspicion and prejudice as friends and neighbors abandon them. But when hardship befalls the community, Inge and Olaf sacrifice everything to save their friends.

Tickets On Sale Now!

COMING SOON TO THE JEWELL MAINSTAGE:



Intergenerational Matinee: Wednesday, October 10 at 10:30 AM

Sherlock Holmes is back and searching for clues to explain a mysterious death on a haunted moor. In this murderously funny mystery, five fearless actors conjure over 35 characters to deliver laughter and chills. This dizzyingly inventive adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* will have you biting your nails and howling with delight, as Holmes and Watson face their most diabolical case ever.

Tickets On Sale Now!

CONTACT GROUP SALES FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO RESERVE TICKETS

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