

Production team

Co-director – Lorna Middleton
Co-director – William Wilkinson

Cast

Cecil Graham – Christopher Bird
Lord Windermere – Peter Daly-Dickson
Lady Agatha Carlisle – Emily Donoghue
Parker – John Fenner
Lord Augustus Lorton – Bryan Ferriman
Duchess of Berwick – Elaine Freeborn
Mr Dumby – Jeremy Heynes
Lady Jedburgh – Joanna Kukla
Mrs Erylne – Lorna Middleton
Mrs Cowper-Cowper – Katie Newman
Lady Plymdale – Esther Riggs
Lord Darlington – Jack Sargent
Lady Windermere – Leonie Slater
Mr Hopper – Adam Turner



REVIEW: MATTHEW SALISBURY, LEAMINGTON OBSERVER

STYLISH, classy and immaculately observed there is a real panache about the Loft's revival of Oscar Wilde's classic examination of responsibility, fidelity and honesty in family life.

Admittedly it's a play better viewed as a period piece than a work of much relevant social comment, but – thanks to this beautifully-staged production – it still works and still pays its way.

There are two plays at work here. One is a serious moral dismantling of the nature of trust and reputation in a relationship; the other is a comic deconstruction of the eternal differences between the sexes as they strive to form those relationships.

As director, William Wilkinson ensures that, as far as possible, the two strands don't become confused with one another. A strong directorial hand is also at work to prevent the more dated exchanges becoming the parody of Edwardian comedy they could so easily become.

There are excellent performances throughout. Leonie Slater as Lady Windermere and Lorna Middleton as the woman whose presence, initially a threat, later a guarded revelation, both convince and hold the attention. At times Wilde's flowing script is slow by modern standards and the fact that we believe in these people at all is testament to some commendable concentration.

There is also a fine turn from Elaine Freeborn as the Duchess dispensing unwanted advice and questionably tired wisdom whether it's requested or not.

On the comic side of the coin there are fine character performances from Jeremy Heynes, Bryan Ferriman and John Fenner all savouring the crisp, astute one-liners quotable enough to give them separate lives outside the play. This relaxed, cynical side provides the perfect counterpoint to the moralising going on elsewhere.

Richard Moore's set is impressive and the work put in on the finer details is there for all to see. The staging is confident and clear throughout, right down to the wryly choreographed scene changes. Hats off too to the wardrobe department for a splendid range of sumptuous costumes.

Early run glitches and a few oddly-delivered lines apart, the pace throughout is good. There is every indication this show will get better as any wrinkles are smoothed out.

REVIEW BY NICK LE MESURIER, LEAMINGTON COURIER

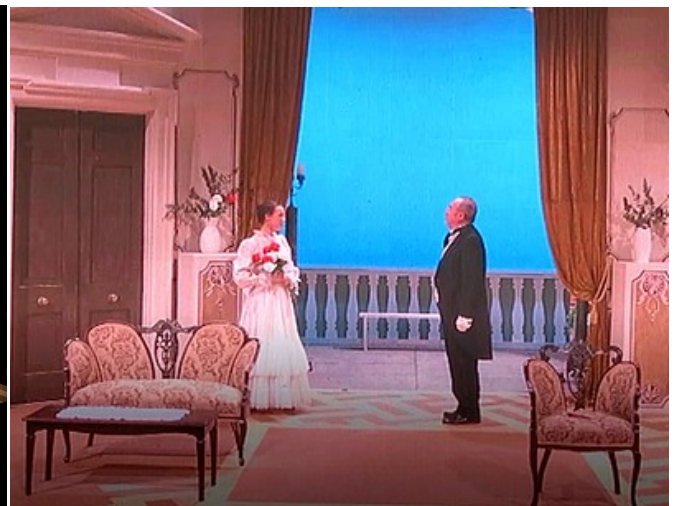
Lady Windermere's Fan is, arguably, Oscar Wilde's 'other' play. Darker than *The Importance of Being Earnest*, it is perhaps slightly less well known. He wrote ten plays in all, and *Lady Windermere's Fan* was his first big hit. It contains just as many sparkling aphorisms, yet there are real teeth behind the forced smiles and genteel manners of the upper crust of late Victorian London.

The story is about a lady's reputation, its importance, and its vulnerability. Lord Windermere (Peter Daly-Dickson) tries to protect his wife (Leonie Slater) from knowing an awful truth, one that would see her disgraced and shunned by society.

That truth concerns a Mrs. Erylne (Lorna Middleton), an attractive woman who has recently arrived on the London scene. Attractive to the men, that is; the women are more suspicious, not least Lady Windermere, who finds her husband has been paying her substantial sums of money and suspects him of having an affair. Gradually Mrs. Erylne wins everyone round, and we discover the nobility and the tragedy that lies behind her character and her position.

Wilde himself knew a lot about position, and one cannot help but think that the play foresees something of his own life to come and its tragic downfall. There's a sharpness to the humour, an edge if you like, which is honed to perfection in this production. It's the full shilling: beautiful costumes, a lavish set, and a polished performance full of characters that are rich in every sense.

Leonie Slater is particularly well cast as Lady Windermere. Her cut-glass accent and elegant posture bely her fragility and symbolises the nature of her society. This play reaches for the stars and in the quality of its writing and performance it achieves them.



David Bradley was in last evening and has sent me the following note today,

“Hi Sue, I saw Lady Windermere’s Fan last night and so enjoyed it. Sorry I didn’t get to see you, or Bill, but would you please pass on my congrats to him, and the cast, for a fine production. See you next time. All the best. David.”

Please distribute his good wishes!
Sue x
Sue Moore
Artistic Director

