



Jord Arthur Savile's Crime

by Constance Cox
 from Oscar Wilde's original story

February 1999
 (D. Young)

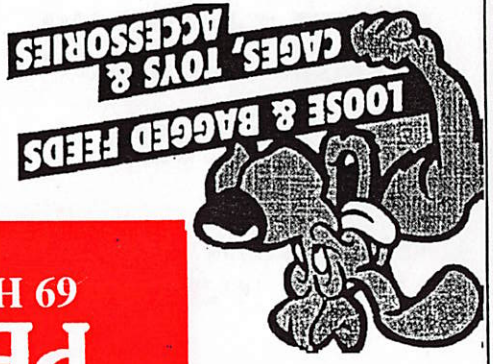
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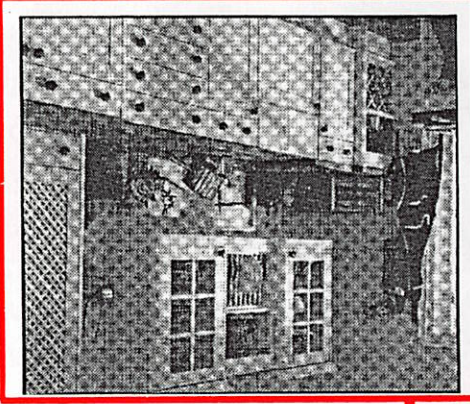
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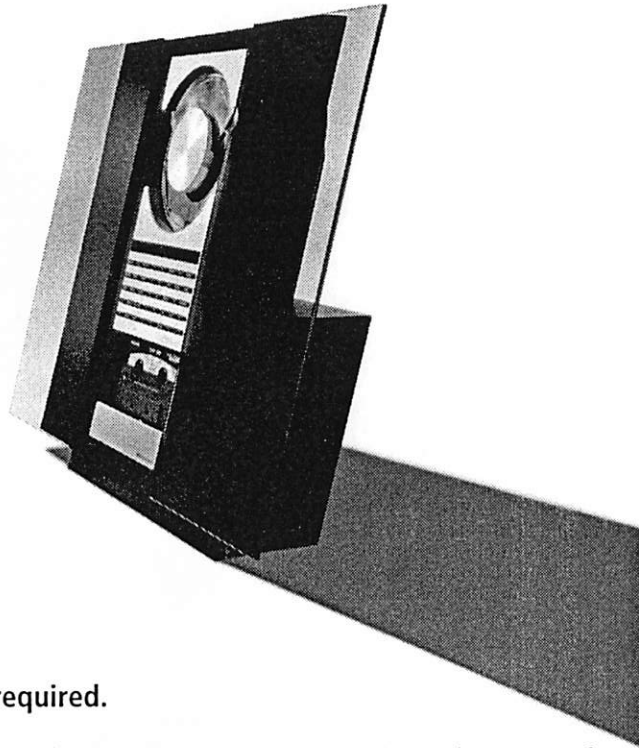
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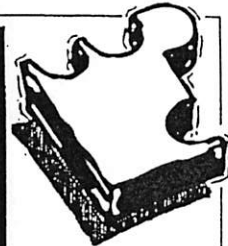
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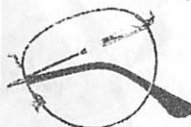
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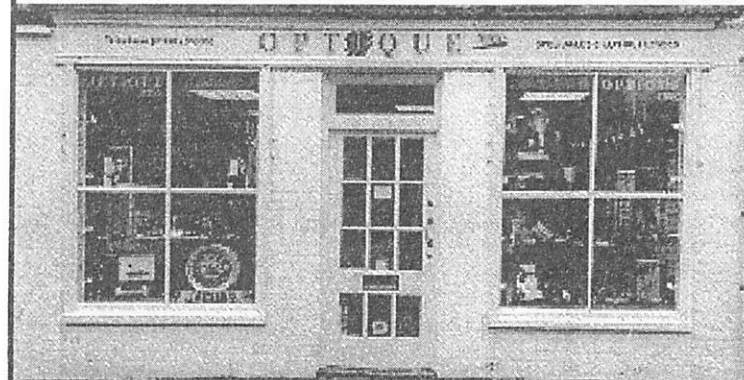
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Oscar Wilde: a life full of incident

Oscar Fingal O'Flaherty Wills Wilde was born on 16th October 1854 at 21 Westland Row, Dublin. He would later assert that a name which is destined to be in everyone's mouth must not be too long. All the world would come to know him simply as Oscar Wilde. His father, William Robert Wilde, was appointed Surgeon Oculist to the Queen and was knighted. His mother, Jane Francesca Elgee, wrote patriotic Irish verse under the pseudonym Speranza. Oscar Wilde was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and later at Oxford, where he fell under the influence of Walter Pater and the doctrine of art for art's sake. Wilde moved to London in 1879 and set about establishing himself as the leader of the aesthetic movement. He wore velvet coats with contrasting braid, knee britches, loose-fitting wide-collared shirts with flowing ties, and lavender-coloured gloves. He was caricatured in the press flamboyantly attired and bearing an over-sized sunflower – an icon of the aesthetic movement. In 1881 his collected poems were published. In 1882, short of money, he accepted an invitation to embark on a lecture tour of America. The tour was a great success and Wilde returned to London in triumph and richer by several thousand pounds. In 1884 Wilde married Constance Lloyd, the daughter of an Irish barrister. They had two sons, Cyril and Vyvan.

Director's Notes

Good evening and welcome to our current production at the Tivoli Theatre. *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* is a play that I am delighted to be associated with, having, some 12 years ago, appeared as Winkelfkopf in a wonderful presentation by St Luke's Players in Bournemouth. The play is adapted by Constance Cox from a story by Oscar Wilde published in 1891. Of her five plays, this is the most successful. *Lord Arthur* opened in the West End in 1957. Those of you who saw my last production here at the Tivoli – Alan Bennett's *Forty Years On* – will know I am not one for vast sets: I much prefer my audience to pay their money, sit back and use any imagination they so wish. I especially do not like stage flats, so tonight you will be able to choose your own wallpaper! The stage is also greatly reduced in size to offer a more intimate drawing room. I would like to mention two of the cast, if only to point out that Enid Davies, who directed our first production at the Tiv (*Bedroom Farce*, October 1994), is now appearing in her first role on this stage: and Jeremy Austin, whom I am very fortunate to have in my cast, played the Headmaster superbly well in *Forty Years On*. To the whole cast, as well as the production team, I offer my sincere thanks. Now sit back, and enjoy yourselves.



In 1891 a guest of the Wildes brought a young man to tea. Alfred Douglas – Bosie – was the foppish, poet son of the Marquess of Queensberry. They were immediately attracted to each other. Bosie was taken with the brilliance of Wilde's conversation and wit, and Wilde was entranced by young Queensberry's good looks and title. From 1891 to 1895 Wilde produced his best work: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *Salome*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and *An Ideal Husband*. These were well received by the public and Wilde became the toast of London society.

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Jan Stevenson joined Wimbome Drama in 1979, her first role being Pippin, the bumbling maid, in *George and Margaret*. She has appeared in many productions since, including *Blythe Spirit, Dear Octopus, Quiet Weekend, Dangerous Corner, Tomb With A View, Bedroom Farce, One For The Road, A Voyage Round My Father* and *Fur Coat and No Knickers*. Last year she was nominated Best Actress at the Echo Curtain Call Awards for her portrayal of Mrs Lovett in *Sweeney Todd*.

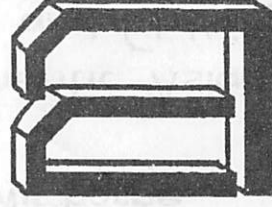
Tony Willmet has been with Wimbome Drama for five years during which time he has delighted us with his portrayals of a homosexual window dresser in *Run For Your Wife*, an imaginary husband (*Woman in Mind*), an eccentric schoolmaster (*A Voyage Round My Father*) and a beadle (*Sweeney Todd*). Off stage Tony also tries to amuse us with his vast repertoire of corny jokes.

Barry Baynton (*Director*) has previously directed Alan Bennett's *Forty Years On* (1996) and Harold Pinter's *Dumb Waiter*, which won the Pokesdown Award for the Youth Class at the Owl 1998 Ferndown Festival. Barry's acting credits for Wimbome Drama are the Owl in *Run For Your Wife*, *Bedroom Farce*, *DS Porterhouse* in *Run For Your Wife*, Bill in *Woman in Mind*, the headmaster in *A Voyage Round My Father* and Ronald Greenhagh in *Fur Coat and No Knickers*; and with groups in London and Bournemouth he has appeared in *Absurd Person Singular*, *Ten Times Table*, *An Inspector Calls* and *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*.



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The "crime" of Oscar Wilde

When Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* premiered at St James's Theatre, London on Valentine's Day, 1895, Wilde (aged 40) was widely acknowledged to have conquered the theatre world.

However within 100 days, *The Importance of Being Earnest* had closed, no theatre would stage Wilde's plays, Wilde himself had been publicly humiliated, and he was facing a two-year prison term. His crime: being homosexual.

For the previous two years, Wilde's lover had been Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas. However Bosie's father, the Marquess of Queensbury, did not look upon his son's relationship with Wilde favourably and was determined to bring Wilde down.

His first plan had been to disrupt the premiere of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, but Wilde was forewarned and managed to deny the Marquess entrance to the theatre. So a few days later, on 18th February, he left a calling card at Wilde's club, with the note: "To Oscar Wilde



Wilde with Lord Alfred Douglas

posing as a sodomite" [sic].

Enraged, Wilde applied for a warrant for criminal libel against Queensbury. The trial was set for 3rd April, with Queensbury represented by a college acquaintance of Wilde's — Edward Carson. A day or two before the trial, Wilde was appalled to learn that the defence had come up with ten names of boys Wilde had allegedly solicited, along with some letters he had written to Bosie.

Wilde took the stand on the first day, and at first delighted the court with his wit. But gradually Carson gained the upper hand. Eventually Wilde confessed: "You sting me and insult me and try to unnerve me; and at times one says things flipantly when one ought to speak more seriously. I admit it..."

Queensbury was not just exonerated; the judge instructed the jury to find him justified in calling Wilde a sodomite in public. Having lost, Wilde's friends recommended he flee the country, because arrest seemed inevitable, but Wilde's pride would not allow it, and on the 5th April he was arrested and jailed.

During April, Wilde faced a series of preliminary hearings, in which new evidence was introduced by various hotel employees testifying about Wilde's bedpartners. But the trial ended in a hung jury, and a second trial had to be scheduled for 22nd May.

Having been released on £5,000 bail on 7th May, Wilde again had the opportunity to flee, and chose not to. On 25th May, the jury found him guilty, and the judge declared, "People who can do these things must be dead to all sense of shame... It is the worst case I have ever tried... I shall, under such circumstances, be expected to pass the severest sentence that the law allows. In my judgement it is totally inadequate for such a case as this. The sentence of the Court is that... you be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for two years."

In Pentonville prison (to where he was moved after a brief spell in Wandsworth), he was required to walk a treadmill for six hours every day, and to sleep on a bare board. He was allowed no communication with the outside world for the first three months. A chaplain wrote:

When he first came down here... he was in an excited flurried condition, and seemed as if he wished to face his punishment without finching. But all this has passed away. As soon as the excitement aroused by the trial subsided and he had to encounter the daily routine of prison life, his fortitude began to give way... He is now quite crushed and broken.

While in prison Wilde was declared bankrupt; his house and possessions were sold to pay his debts.

He was moved again, to Reading, where he wrote a long letter to Bosie, *De Profundis* (*From the Depths*). He was released on 18th May 1897. The following year he settled in France and published *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. He died of meningitis on 30th November 1900, at the age of 46.

Source: *Oscar Wilde* by Richard Ellmann

THE NATIONAL POLICE GAZETTE

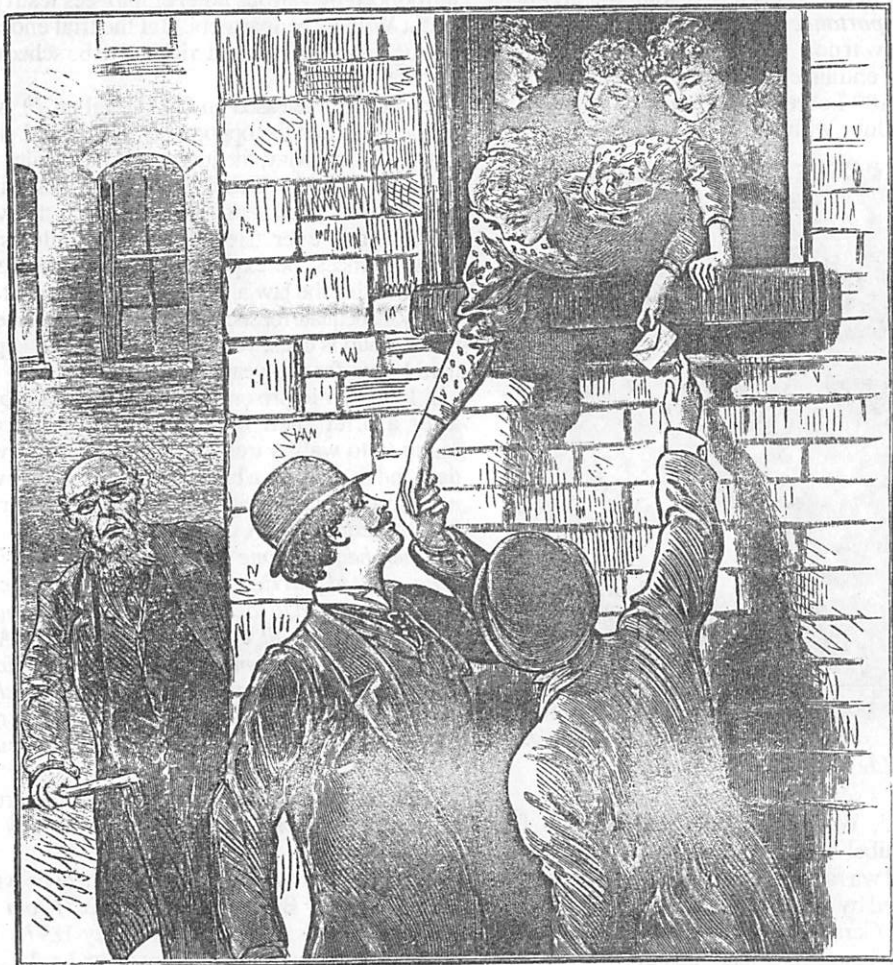
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LONDON, WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 1897. [Vol. II.—No. 35 Price 2d.]

The "Police Gazette" is the World's Sporting Authority.



THE OLD MAN SPOILED THE FUN.

THE ELDERLY FATHER OF A FLOCK OF PRETTY SCOTCH GIRLS MAKES IT WARM FOR TWO OF THEIR SUITORS

Carolyn Hewitt began acting at school where she played Ado Annie in *Oklahoma*. She joined Wimborne Drama more than twenty years ago, since when she has taken many diverse parts in various productions. Most recently she played Pauline in Harold Pinter's *A Kind of Alaska*, Daphne in *A Voyage Round My Father* and Johanna in *Sweeney Todd*.



"A man cannot be too careful in the choice of his enemies"

Gerald in *Woman in Mind*, Ian in *An Evening With Gary Lineker* (for which he received an Echo Curtain Call nomination), several roles in *A Voyage Round My Father*, Wordsworth, a cheeky waiter, in *Mr Macaroni and the Exploding Pizza Pie*, and Harry Ollerenshawe in *Fur Coat and No Knickers*.

Penny Scotford began her acting career at the tender age of seven when she appeared as a fairy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Since then she has performed at music festivals and in *Move Over Mrs Markham*, *The Day After the Fair*, *The Deep Blue Sea*, the female version of *The Odd Couple*, *84 Charing Cross Road*, *When We Are Married* and *Living Together*. Lord Arthur Savile's *Crime* marks Penny's Wimborne Drama acting debut, although she directed our 1998 production of *Sweeney Todd*.

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Cast Notes

Jeremy Austin has appeared as Fred in *Semi Detached*, Editor in *Our Town* and Gosforth in *Gosforth's Feat*. For *Wimborne Drama* he has played DS Toughon in *Run For Your Wife*, Pepsy in *And So To Bed* and the Headmaster in *Forty Years On*. He took on several roles in *A Voyage Round My Father* and most recently appeared as Nip in *Fur Coat And No Knickers*.

Joe Brooks has been with *Wimborne Drama* since 1960 and is a seasoned actor, director and stage manager. In 1996 he directed and very much enjoyed *Run For Your Wife*, and two years ago played the title role in *A Voyage Round My Father*. He has also appeared in *And So To Bed* and *Sweeney Todd*, and the festival plays *A Kind of Alaska* and *Elegy for a Lady*.

Enid Davies trained at Central School of Speech & Drama and is an experienced performer, teacher and director. She has directed two of our productions at the *Tivoli*, *Bedroom Farce* and *Mr Macaroni and the Exploding Pizza Pie*. However this is her first acting role for a few years, and it is nice to see her trading the boards again. Highlights of her career include playing a dancing slave girl in *Aladdin*.

Colourcraft

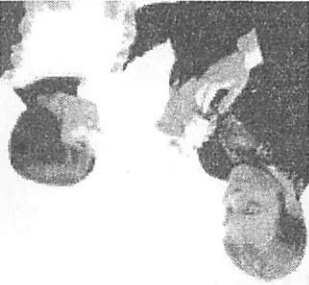
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"Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them?"

Author, Mary Warren in *The Crucible* and Laurey in *Oklahoma*. She has worked in theatre-education and is, at present, a primary school teacher in Bournemouth.

Paul Dodman, who is the Club's newly elected Chairman, has worked for the RSC's Youth Theatre. He played George Bernard Shaw in *The Merchant of Venice* and the Nun's Priest in *The Canterbury Tales*. He co-directed the Bournemouth Youth Theatre in *Macbeth* and Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. Whilst with

Wimborne Drama he has appeared in *An Evening With Gary Linker*, *A Voyage Round My Father*, when he played the son, *Sweeney Todd* and *Fur Coat And No Knickers*.



"I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy"

The Naughty Nineties

The popular concept of 'The Gay, Naughty Nineties' rested upon a privileged vantage point in society. In 1890, General Booth had made a missionary tour, which he described in his book *In Darkest England*. He revealed the misery, degradation and vice of poorer people, hidden behind the shiny Victorian facade. In the strongly layered society of the late nineteenth century, you could live happily in the middle and upper classes virtually unaware of the widespread tragedies and despairs of poverty.

With 'Knowing one's place in society' went an inherited set of values and morals reflected in art, literature and newspapers. Different classes had their own reading matter. The great dailies like *The Times* and the *Daily Chronicle* were relatively dignified. Journals like *The Pink 'Un* (or *Sporting Times*) appeared largely to the leisured and well to do. If you had enough money or title, you could revel in the Bohemian life of sport, high class music halls and theatre, without slipping into the sinister depths of lower-class gambling, alcoholism or prostitution. The middle classes without literary pretension were well served by *Ti-Bits*, *Answers* and *Pearson's Weekly*.

The code of respectability of the conservative middle-classes required periodic token sacrifices of those who offended through indiscretions of divorce, sexual inidelity or outspoken literature. In 1890 Oscar Wilde's *Portrait of Dorian Gray* was condemned by the *Daily Chronicle* as "a poisonous book, the atmosphere of which is heavy with mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction". The trial of Wilde, with revelations of a love that dare not speak its name, shook the nation.

Against this background of moral stuffiness, the vulgarities of the *National Police Gazette* were beneath notice. It was a decadent rag appealing only to the lowest of working-class taste. No decent news-stand would exhibit it. It was sold in back streets. And yet it claimed to have 'five million readers every week', and revived the pictorial sensationalism of the old penny broadside ballads of *Horrible Murders and Confessions of Jenny Camach* from fifty years earlier. It also pointed to the future, when the sensational murder would once again be the main circulation booster of the popular daily and evening newspapers. The *Gazette's* owner, Richard K. Fox, became a millionaire by exploiting a public thirst for crime and sex. His voluptuous girth engarings thrilled the public, but aroused a conscience.

The *Gazette* also exposed crime and corruption, and opened up a new world of sport in prize-fighting. Most of all it depicted the amazingly progressive women of the period. There were vivid illustrations of female abortionists, blackmailers, cigar smokers and murderers, side by side with stage beauties and honest working girls living in poverty or exposed to peril. The advertisements, in America, the *Gazette* would carry claims of a cure for 'Seminal Weakness, Shrunkn Organs, and Variocele' by the use of an electric belt; in this country, the medical ads were for 'falling memory' or 'rubber preventatives'.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the *Gazette* looked old fashioned. State education and mass literacy enlarged the horizons of working-class readers, and so the popularity of the pink periodical waned.

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Lord Arthur Savile's Crime

by Constance Cox
from Oscar Wilde's original story



The Cast (in order of appearance)

Baines, the butler	Jeremy Austin
Lord Arthur Savile	Paul Dodman
Sybil Merton, his fiancée	Carolyn Hewitt
The Dean of Paddington, his uncle	Joe Brooks
Lady Windermere, his aunt	Jan Stevenson
Lady Clementina Beauchamp, his great-aunt	Enid Davies
Lady Julia Merton, Sybil's mother	Penny Scotford
Mr Podgers, a cheiromantist	Tony Willmet
Nellie, the maid	Jean Dishington
Herr Winkelkopf, an anarchist	Simon Jackson

Directed by Barry Baynton

The action of the play passes in the drawing-room of Lord Arthur's house in Grosvenor Square, London

Act I		Evening
Act II	Scene 1	The following morning

Interval of approximately 20 minutes

Act II	Scene 2	Morning, three days later
Act III	Scene 1	Early evening, several days later
	Scene 2	The following morning

Lord Arthur Savile's Crime was staged by Wimborne Drama at the Tivoli Theatre, Wimborne on 10th-13th February 1999

Stage Manager
Martin Matthews

Set Design
Amanda Brown & Eddie Colton

Lighting Director
Russell Parker

ASM
Ann Pond

Costumes
Enid Davies & Carolyn Hewitt

Properties
Saliann Colton Kate Mounce
Heather Shew

Make-up
Clare Downes & Karen Treadwell

Caller
Matthew Gill

Advertising Sales & Publicity
Barry Baynton &
Dave Williams

Posters
Geoff Whipp

Programme
Richard Neal

Photography
Eddie Colton

Transport
Amanda Brown

The Production Team
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The Kings Head Hotel
Minster Flowers

St Luke's Players
St Peter's Players
Tivoli Theatre Staff
and all our Patrons
& Advertisers