

# BOSTON AND BEYOND/ART & ENTERTAINMENT

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By Susan Mulford

THROUGH October 7: *BEING EARNEST*



The Cast of *Being Earnest*. Photo Credit: Nile Scott Studios.

Multiple IRNE Award-winner as well as an Elliot Norton Award-recipient, Director and Choreographer, Ilyse Robbins, is proving herself to be the “King,” or should I more correctly say, “Queen Midas” of the theater with her creatively golden touch. Everything Ms. Robbins seems to lend her hand to turns out to be a shining success... and Greater Boston Stage at 395 Main St. in Stoneham’s presentation of this delightful New Musical is no exception. With her uncanny ability to choose the perfect cast, and to recognize pitch perfect vocalists who also possess excellent acting abilities, the result is pure entertainment. Inspired by Oscar Wilde’s classic comedy, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, five-time Tony nominee, Paul Gordon has brilliantly adapted Wilde’s original work, propelling it into the 1960’s era, without compromising Wilde’s notoriously clever dialogue. Gordon, along with Grammy and Emmy-nominated composer, Jay Gruska, have composed a wonderful mixed score of witty ballads, rock and 60’s psychedelic songs with crisp, pertinent and very funny lyrics also by Gordon.

This East Coast Premiere boasts a fabulous, geometric and colorful set design by Nick Oberstein that takes the audience from London in a Carnaby Street flat to a garden in a country estate and into the interior of the same. In 1965, times are changing fast. The sounds and colors are psychedelic, and the skirts are getting shorter while the hair is growing longer, but it still holds to Wilde’s wild romantic comedy of mistaken identities.

The story opens in the London flat of Algernon Moncrieff (Michael Jennings Mahoney), a ne’er-do-well and reprobate, but on the society register. He is speaking with John (Jack) Worthing (Dave Heard), who tells everyone his name is Earnest. He wants to marry Algernon’s cousin, Gwendolen Fairfax (Sarah Coombs), who is madly in love with Jack because she thinks his name is Earnest.

But her snooty mother, Lady Bracknell (Beth Gotha) refuses to give her blessing when she finds out that Earnest, actually Jack, despite being wealthy does not know the origin of his family as he was a foundling, discovered in a hand bag in a Kensington train station. Meanwhile, Cecily Cardew (Ephie Aardema), Jack’s 20-year-old ward who resides in the country manor longs to shed herself of her tutor, Miss Prism (Kerry A.

Dowling) and enjoy “Bad Behavior” which happens when Algernon goes to the country house and pretends to be Jack’s evil brother Earnest, that allegedly lives in London. The two, of course, fall in love.

And through all this mayhem is Lane, the London Butler; Rev. Chasuble, the country vicar; and Merriman, the country house man servant who are interchangeably performed by one of Boston’s prominent actors, Will McGarrah. This production had its World Premiere at TheatreWorks in April of 2013, and offers an engaging choreographic mashup of The Freddie, The Frug, The Hitch-Hike, The Loco-motion, The Mashed Potato, The Shimmy, The Swim, and of course The Twist. At the opening of the 2nd act, it sported a blatant but very fun hint of Rowan & Martin’s *Laugh-In*...spotlighting cast members who would each respond with some of Wilde’s clever, famous lines. Tickets for this bubbly bright, sparkling colorful, and joyously entertaining show may be obtained at [www.greaterbostonstage.org](http://www.greaterbostonstage.org).