What made you choose this project?
We’ve always been interested in adapting one of Wilde’s works and Earnest felt like the surest bet. It’s easier to adapt a play than a novel, so we would say “laziness” was one factor. But it was also clear that this could perhaps be one of the funniest “books” to a musical ever written—that we would not have to write ourselves. We were relieved that Wilde did most of the heavy lifting for us. So mostly, laziness.

How does The Importance of Being Earnest fit into the world of London in the 1960’s?
In two ways actually. First of all, the social mores of the early 1960’s are not that far removed from the social mores of Victorian Era. We set our musical in 1965 which is still 2 years away from the “Summer of Love” when everything changed. So it was easy to imagine the characters responding exactly the same way they would in 1965 as they would during Wilde’s time. It’s also interesting that the fashion that was coming alive on Carnaby Street was also inspired by some of the fashion from the Victorian Era. We’re not suggesting that we were that smart in figuring all of this out before hand, but rather we got lucky that it all ended up making sense.

How true to the original play did you keep?
Are there any major deviations other than time period?
We stayed very true to the play. I’m always amused when someone adapts a great piece of literature that has withstood the test of time—and then the author “changes it” to his or her whim. Wilde is a genius. We left the text alone as much as we could. Since this is a musical and not a play, we did make many cuts, but we left his dialogue nearly completely intact. The one element, besides music and lyrics, that we added was using various “quotes” from other sources from Wilde. This allowed us to go even further in his madness in some areas. But fans of the play, who are not horrified by our score, will not be disappointed in the text.

When writing the score, what music inspired you?

What are the challenges of writing a new musical?
Musicals are quite difficult to write. They can take years. Having based this one on an already existing masterpiece, allowed us as composers to focus mainly on the score. Whereas the music came out much more naturally, the challenge of creating lyrics to match the wit and wisdom of Oscar Wilde was more difficult. As the musical develops we will continue to “improve” the lyrics of the show until probably the end of our lives and we still won’t get there. But we remain optimistic that we are closer to improving the show than we are to the end of our lives.

What is most gratifying about writing a new musical?
Writing it…and avoiding writing it. When one is inspired the writing can be the most grueling but also the most rewarding. Also, when you’re in the middle of writing a show and—lets say you’ve just created a song or a scene that you’re happy with—you become very satisfied with yourself under the illusion that your work is done. It isn’t until the first reading or the first rehearsal that you realize your work is just beginning.

What are some of your other projects and are there any favorites?
(PAUL) Daddy Long Legs was fun to do Off-Broadway a few years back. I’m streaming my musical Emma this October on a new streaming platform for musicals and that’s very exciting. John Caird and I just opened Knights Tale in Tokyo based on Shakespeare’s Two Noble Kinsmen. We are also doing a revised version of Jane Eyre in Cleveland in a few weeks. And Jay and I have a project called The Front that is very near and dear to my heart. (JAY) Usually my favorites are the most recently written things, so there are lots of underscoring moments in various TV shows and a few songs that I’m currently pleased with…but that will change next week when I expect to dislike most of them. As Paul mentioned, The Front is a challenging and extremely satisfying musical which we are both very proud of.

What’s your favorite Oscar Wilde quote?
“I think God, in creating man, overestimated his ability” and “Some cause happiness wherever they go; others whenever they go”

What’s your favorite band from the 1960’s?
The Beatles, or to some younger musical minds, the band that Paul McCartney was in before Wings.