

OSCAR WILDE ON SCREEN



Week One

Happy Princes and Selfish Giants

Welcome to *Oscar Wilde on Screen*

Week One

In September 1997, I made a pilgrimage to the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, to visit the grave of Oscar Wilde.

(Technically, I was on my honeymoon, but it was worth making clear to my new bride that the tombs of famous authors were going to play a large part in our life together. I suspect, by the time we were divorced, that the only author's grave she had left to visit was mine, but, to date, she has been kind enough to wait.)

In the course of my childhood, there were many authors that brought succour to my tortured little brain. Oscar Wilde was amongst the potent.

God knows, I love me an epigram.

Oscar's story is most often told as a tragedy, a great talent brought down by a heady mixture of prejudice and hubris. But it does the man a disservice, I believe, to reduce the entirety of his life and work to the trials (literal and figurative) of those final years.

Over the next ten weeks, we'll be spending time with Oscar in all of his incarnations, as commemorated across television and film. The writer of children's stories. The poet. The wit. The aesthete. The playwright. And, yes, the icon, the martyr and the fool for love.

In our first two weeks, we're going to look at some of the stories with which he first made his name, beginning with his children's tales – many of which have been mined by biographers and critics for clues to the man himself, often to the occlusion of the tales' own merits.

Our first thought, when it comes to Oscar, may be of his downfall. Or perhaps, on a good day, even his plays.

But we are talking about a complicated figure, who produced a lifetime's worth of endlessly entertaining work.

That we continue to talk about, stage and adapt that work, in reality, should be remembered with equal fervour as the events which overtook its creator.

FILMS WEEK ONE

Wilde (1997)

Dir. Brian Gilbert

The Selfish Giant (1972)

Dir. Peter Sander

The Selfish Giant (2003)

Dir. Rachel Bevan Baker

The Selfish Giant (2013)

Dir. Clio Barnard

The Happy Prince (1974)

Dir. Michael Mills

The Nightingale and the Rose (2003)

Dir. Maurice Joyce

The Nightingale and the Rose (2015)

Dir. Del Kathryn Barton & Brenda Fletcher

The Devoted Friend (2003)

Dir. Maurice Joyce