

OSCAR WILDE ON SCREEN



Week Six

Important Women

Welcome to *Oscar Wilde on Screen*

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Ladies and Gentlemen. I have enjoyed this evening immensely. The actors have given us a charming rendering of a delightful play, and your appreciation has been most intelligent. I congratulate you on the great success of your performance, which persuades me that you think almost as highly of the play as I do myself.'

So said Oscar Wilde himself, in the theatre world's most famous curtain calls, thoroughly leaning into the public persona for which the writer is still known today.

The year was 1892, the theatre was St James' and the play was, of course, *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

That's right. We've finally reached the society plays for which Oscar, his tragic ending notwithstanding, is still best known.

This week we'll be looking at two plays, the aforementioned *Windermere* and the less-adapted *A Woman of No Importance* (1893).

As we'll see there are still multiple versions, across the decades, of the former but very few of the latter (certainly not surviving).

Again, there are a fascinating number of overseas adaptations of plays that would seem to have been written for and aimed at a particular English audience – however much they are being sent-up.

There is comedy here, but also pathos. Both stories demonstrate Oscar's mastery of both. But it's worth considering too that these are *hit* plays, commercially successful works of theatre – a giant stride in that direction after the failures of *Vera*, *The Duchess of Padua* and *Salomé*.

Oscar had found his audience and learned how to write for them.

Within three years, they would turn on him.

FILMS WEEK SIX

Lady Windermere's Fan (1916)

Dir. Fred Paul

Lady Windermere's Fan (1925)

Dir. Ernst Lubitsch

Story of a Bad Woman (1948)

Dir. Luis Slavsky

The Fan (1949)

Dir. Otto Preminger

2 Women (1975)

Dir. Hassan Ramzy

Lady Windermere's Fan (1985)

Dir. Tony Smith

A Good Woman (2004)

Dir. Mike Barker

Belonging to Laura (2009)

Dir. Karl Golden

A Woman of No Importance (1936)

Dir. Hans Steinhoff

A Woman of No Importance (1968)

Dir. Alberto Gonzalez Vergel

A Woman of No Importance (2019)

Dir. Dominic Dromgoole & Ross MacGibbon