

# OSCAR WILDE ON SCREEN



**Week Eight**

**In Complete Earnest**

## Welcome to *Oscar Wilde on Screen*

### Week Eight

And here we are, finally. Not that the other work – as we've seen and will see – doesn't contribute greatly to Oscar's reputation overall, but 1895's second play *The Importance of Being Earnest* perhaps best represents, in addition to being much loved, the audience's perception of his work.

Endlessly revived, endlessly quotable (second, it's reckoned, only to Billy Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in terms of lines that have found their way into the general lexicon) and, above all else, extremely funny, *Earnest* is THE Oscar Wilde play.

As we talked about last week, it was to be a turbulent year for Oscar, but it did start with the success of *Husband* and *Earnest*, although the run of the former would coincide with his arrest and the premiere of the latter was very derailed by a certain Marquess of Queensbury, father of Lord Alfred Douglas, who intended to rock up with a bouquet of rotten vegetables and fling them at Oscar during his bow.

He was prevented from this attack by security, but in February 1895 scored a clearer hit with a calling card left at Oscar's club:

"For Oscar Wilde, posing Somdomite'

*(spelling error entirely the fault of the Marquess)*

And that was the beginning of the end.

Oscar's imprisonment would lead to two astonishing cappers to his written canon in *De Profundis* and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*.

As powerful as they are and as much as our understanding of the man himself is expanded exponentially because of them, it would be a much better world if he had been able to prod it gently with *Earnest's* stick for a little longer.

## FILMS WEEK EIGHT

The Importance of Being Earnest (1952)

*Dir. Anthony Asquith*

The Importance of Being Earnest (1964)

*Dir. Bill Bain*

The Importance of Being Earnest (1981/5)

*Dir. Michael Attenborough*

The Importance of Being Earnest (1988)

*Dir. Stuart Burge*

The Importance of Being Earnest (2002)

*Dir. Oliver Parker*

Ashta Chamma (2008)

*Dir. Mohana Krishna Indraganti*

The Importance of Being Earnest (2025)

*Dir. Max Webster*