



Classic Spring announces a year-long celebration of Oscar Wilde at the Vaudeville Theatre from October 2017

Embargoed until 11am Thursday 6 July 2017

- Four social comedies to be staged in a year-long season
- Dominic Dromgoole to direct *A Woman of No Importance*
- Kathy Burke to direct *Lady Windermere's Fan*
- Olivier Award-winner Eve Best to star in *A Woman of No Importance*
- *The Selfish Giant*, a new folk opera penned by BRIT Award and Ivor Novello Award-winning songwriter Guy Chambers, to premiere in April
- 20,000 tickets under £20 to be offered across the season
- *Wilde Creatures*, a new family show based on Wilde's fairy tales, to be produced by Tall Stories
- Frank McGuinness to adapt *De Profundis* for the stage
- 'Wilde Talk' series to include opening address by Oscar Wilde's grandson, Merlin Holland

Classic Spring, a new theatre company from former Artistic Director of Shakespeare's Globe **Dominic Dromgoole**, today announces first casting and creatives for a year-long celebration of Oscar Wilde at the Vaudeville Theatre.

An iconoclast, a socialist and a gay Irishman in the socially conservative late-Victorian era, Oscar Wilde broke the mould in his work and in his life. Opening in the year of the **fiftieth anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality** in the UK, this season aims to offer a much fuller picture of the man and the artist, and reveal this much-loved playwright as the brilliant renegade he was in his own time. Interspersed with the plays will be a curated series of interludes and 'Wilde Talks' that will reveal the deep current of radicalism and subversiveness that runs through all of Wilde's writing.

Eve Best will star as Mrs Arbuthnot in *A Woman of No Importance* from **6 October to 30 December 2017**, directed by Dominic Dromgoole. Eve recently starred in *Old Times* on Broadway alongside Clive Owen, and *Love In Idleness* at the Menier Chocolate Factory and in the West End. She has won an Olivier Award, an Evening Standard Award and three Critics' Circle Awards, and been nominated for two Tony Awards.

Other early casting includes **Eleanor Bron** as Lady Pontefract, and **William Gaunt** as the Venerable Archdeacon Daubeny. Eleanor first shot to fame as Ahme in the Beatles' film *Help!*, and also starred in the original *Alfie* with Michael Caine. William's credits include *King Lear* opposite Ian McKellen in the West End and on film, and *The Crucible* at the Old Vic.

Multi-award-winning actor, director, comedian and playwright **Kathy Burke** will direct *Lady Windermere's Fan* from **12 January to 7 April 2018**. Kathy starred in Gary Oldman's film *Nil by Mouth*, for which she won Best Actress at the 1997 Cannes Film Festival. Her other screen credits include *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, *Dancing in Lughnasa*, *Absolutely Fabulous* and *French and Saunders*. She has directed at many of London's leading venues, including the Donmar Warehouse, the Royal Court and the Hampstead Theatre. Her other awards include a Royal Television Society Award, a British Independent Film Award and a British Comedy Award; she has also been nominated for six BAFTAs.

A limited run of lightly-staged performances for a new folk opera by **Guy Chambers**, entitled *The Selfish Giant*, will start in April 2018, offering a unique opportunity for audiences to see a work in progress by one of the world's most acclaimed contemporary songwriters. Guy is a long-time collaborator with Robbie Williams, having co-written many of his most popular hits, including *Angels*, *Millennium* and *Let Me Entertain You*. Guy has also collaborated with Kylie Minogue, Rufus Wainwright, Mark Ronson and Diana Ross, amongst others. He has won three BRIT Awards, three Ivor Novello awards and an MTV Video Music Award.

Frank McGuinness will adapt *De Profundis*, Wilde's letter to Lord Alfred Bosie from Reading Gaol, for the stage, for a limited engagement of 3 to 6 January 2018. Frank is an acclaimed playwright, poet and translator. He has won numerous awards and prizes throughout his distinguished career, including a Tony Award, an Irish PEN Award and the French Order of Arts and Letters.

Merlin Holland, Oscar Wilde's grandson, will give a pre-show talk on 14 October. Merlin is the author of *A Portrait of Oscar Wilde* and *The Wilde Album*.

Lady Windermere's Fan will be followed by *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Casting, creatives and dates will be announced in due course. Across the season, **over 20,000 tickets under £20** will be made available to encourage younger audiences and make the season accessible to everyone.

A family show based on Oscar Wilde's fairy tales, entitled **Wilde Creatures** and produced by Olivier Award nominated Tall Stories, will cater to everyone aged 5 – 105 and help create new generations of future theatre-lovers.

Dominic Dromgoole, Artistic Director of Classic Spring, said: "My ten years as Artistic Director of Shakespeare's Globe allowed me to explore Shakespeare in the kind of theatre he wrote for: the thrust stage and open air of the 'wooden O'. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to do the same with Oscar Wilde, in the kind of space he wrote for: the velvety darkness and proscenium arched stage of one of the West End's most

perfect playhouses, the Vaudeville, just across the road from where Wilde once lived, loved, wrote and entertained at his very first home in London."

ENDS

NOTES FOR EDITORS

CLASSIC SPRING: A Celebration of Oscar Wilde

Vaudeville Theatre, 404 Strand, London WC2R 0NH

A Woman of No Importance

Written by Oscar Wilde

Directed by Dominic Dromgoole

Designed by Jonathan Fensom

Lighting by Ben Ormerod

6 October to 30 December 2017

Press night: 7pm, 16 October 2017

Lady Windermere's Fan

Written by Oscar Wilde

Directed by Kathy Burke

12 January to 7 April 2018

Press night: 7pm, 22 January 2018

De Profundis

Adapted by Frank McGuinness

3 to 6 January 2018

Performance times

Monday-Saturday: 7.30pm

Thursday and Saturday matinees: 2.30pm

Please visit classicspring.co.uk for a detailed performance schedule

Box office: 0330 333 4814 / classicspring.co.uk

Tickets from £19.50, with reduced price previews