Thespians Prepare Fall Performance

Ann Griner

They've been preparing since early September - rehearsing, constructing elaborate sets, sewing brilliantly colored costumes. You could almost say they've been practicing in earnest.

The cast and crew of "The Importance of Being Earnest" will present the culmination of almost two months of work when the show opens on Wednesday.

Director Bill Hutson, associate professor of fine and performing arts, said he wanted to direct Oscar Wilde's "Earnest" ever since he participated in a radio broadcast of the show a few years ago.

"It was with a group of actors that called themselves The Wilde Bunch," Hutson said. "I played the roles of both servants, and I thought it was a really great play."

Hutson said the theatre department was looking for a production that allowed for elaborate costuming. "Earnest" is set in Victorian England, so the costumes are festooned with layer upon layer of petticoats, enormous leg-of-mutton sleeves and, of course, corsets.

"They're the worst part of the show," said Danielle Young, an Arts & Sciences sophomore, who plays Gwendolyn.

Wendy Stark, adjunct professor of fine and performing arts, plays the role of Lady Bracknell and also designed the show's costumes.

"There are lots of options for character and costuming in 'Earnest,'" said Stark. "It's not boring in any way."

Adjunct professor of fine and performing arts Bill Van Deest designed "Earnest's" richly colored set, which centers around a rotating stage and a butterfly motif.

"It [the rotating stage] was really a practical solution," Van Deest said. "The show really does lend itself to a rotating stage. And we're doing "Carousel!" next semester, which requires a rotating platform."

Van Deest said the butterfly motif fits the spirit of "Earnest" as a farce.

"The characters flit in and out," Van Deest said. "It's a really fun play. It's so much fun to put on. If we've been practicing all this time with corsets..."

Young said.

"It's extremely funny," said Brent Tierney, an Arts & Sciences sophomore, who plays Jack Worting. "It will make you forget your midterms."

At a Glance
What: The Importance of Being Earnest
When: 8 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 21-Nov. 1
Where: Lied Education Center for the Arts Information: Box Office 280-1448