



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Plosive Productions spices up *The Importance of Being Earnest*

February 10-26, Tues-Sat & Valentine's Day 8pm, Saturday matinees 2pm

At The Gladstone, 910 Gladstone, box office 613-233-4523 or www.thegladstone.ca

Valentine's Day Special ♥ Preston St. Sponsorship and Dinner Deal ♥ Spicy Setting

Ottawa, Ontario, January 20, 2011 – *The Importance of Being Earnest* opens February 10 at The Gladstone and promises to infuse the cold Ottawa winter with a bit of warmth, colour and spice.

A Valentine's Day Tradition

The original production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* opened in London on February 14, 1895. A mere 116 years later, it is still the perfect show to enjoy on a romantic evening with a special someone. While the 14th lands on a Monday—normally a dark night for theatres—**Plosive is offering a special Valentine's Day performance.** Tickets are now on sale at The Gladstone.

Preston St. BIA and Local Restaurants Join in the Fun

Plosive is also thrilled to announce that the **Preston Street BIA** has stepped up as our 2011 Season sponsor. The Business Improvement Area's commitment to supporting an active arts community in the neighbourhood goes beyond financial support. Several Preston St. restaurants are also partnering with Plosive to offer a "**Dinner & Show**" special. For \$55, patrons can enjoy a dinner & show package at their choice of one of four participating restaurants. (See attached for details.)

A Spicy New Setting

Oscar Wilde's comedy of manners and romance is always sure to lift spirits, but Plosive gives this production a new twist. Director David Whiteley and designer Andrea Robertson are packing up this "*Trivial Comedy for Serious People*" and loading it on an elephant bound for India of the British Raj—a setting that underscores the frivolous nature of the leisure class in a time and place when only "mad dogs and Englishmen" went out in the midday sun. Robertson lends the show a light, warm colour palette, growing all the more colourful as the flavours of India infuse the show with budding romance. This perfectly complements Wilde's zesty wit and the airy, whimsical performances Whiteley is teasing out of his actors. But **why India?** One of the great strengths of this play is that beneath the light comedy lies a scathing mockery of the British leisure class. Moving the action from England to India plays up this satirical bite by showing the privileged Brits through the eyes of their Indian servants. The frivolous preoccupations of Jack, Algy and the rest are all the more ridiculous in this colonial setting. There's that, and the fact that **it's just plain fun!**

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INFO IN DEPTH

Who's in *YOUR* Community?

For media wanting a local, personal angle, here's a partial list of where our key people are from:

- Katie Bunting (Gwendolen) lives in **Sandy Hill**
- Fiona Currie (Sound Designer and Plosive Staffer) lives in **Hull**
- James A. Fritz (Stage Manager) lives in **Kanata**
- Teri Loretto-Valentik (Miss Prism and Plosive Co-Artistic Director) lives in **Ottawa West**
- Kel Parsons (Lady Bracknell and Plosive Co-Artistic Director) lives in **Lower Town**
- Chris Ralph (Dr. Chasuble) lives in **Manor Park**
- Andrea Robertson (Set and Costume Design) live in **Brockville**
- John Solman (Lighting Designer) lives in **Westboro**
- Bronwyn Steinberg (Cecily) lives in **Sandy Hill**, and is also a member of the Jewish community
- David Whiteley (Director and Plosive Co-Artistic Director) lives in **Hull**

Dinner & Show Detail:

Preston St. Restaurants **Allegro, il Primo, il Piccolino** and **Stoneface Dolly's** have all joined with **Plosive Productions** to offer our **\$55 Dinner and Show package**. Details are as follows:

- Patrons purchase the package by calling The Gladstone's box office at 613-233-4523
- \$55 price tag covers dinner and show, inclusive of HST. Gratuities for dinner are separate.
- Each restaurant is offering a complete three-course meal with several choices of main course; menu options are listed at www.prestonstreet.com.
- Patrons can then book their choice of restaurant for a 6pm meal prior to the 8pm show.
- Their receipt from The Gladstone serves as a voucher for their meal. They need only show the voucher and tip their servers once at the restaurant.
- Offer not valid Valentine's Day.

About the Play:

Google “funniest play in the English language” and the top hits are all for *The Importance of Being Earnest*. In Oscar Wilde’s farcical comedy, protagonists Jack and Algy maintain fictitious personas in order to escape the burdensome obligations of the leisure class. As the young couples struggle to pair up despite their idiosyncrasies and the disapproval of their stodgy Victorian elders, the play satirizes the triviality of Victorian notions of civility with all the wit and fun for which Wilde is famous. Ironically, Wilde originally hesitated to submit his script for production, fearing that a play “with no real serious interest” would not be well received. Now, however, we can see that a hundred years before Seinfeld, Wilde’s “trivial comedy for serious people” proved how funny a comedy “about nothing” can be.

About the Production:

This production plays up the self-absorption of its whimsically exaggerated Victorian characters, showing their bubble of “civility” in a new context: Calcutta (now Kolkata) and the Darjeeling hill station of Kalimpong, British India, during “the Raj”. Far from altering Wilde’s work, the new setting stays faithful to the playwright’s text while refreshing and magnifying his spoof of the social mores of the society around him. Entertainment and educational opportunities both abound with this unique staging.

The production is directed by David Whiteley with scenography by Andrea Robertson, and features Katie Bunting, Sean Conforti, Teri Loretto-Valentik, Stewart Matthews, Kel Parsons, Garrett Quirk, Chris Ralph, Henna Kaur Sodhi and Bronwyn Steinberg.

About Plosive Productions:

Plosive Productions is Ottawa’s newest professional theatre company. The brainchild of Teri Loretto-Valentik, Kel Parsons and David Whiteley, Plosive was born of a desire to put on plays that audiences really want to see and that we and our fellow artists really want to perform: plays that entertain, thrill and challenge. Plosive will bring familiar favourites and exciting new discoveries to Ottawa stages with one thing in common: they are great stories told by some of Ottawa’s best actors, directors and designers. Simply put? Great theatre.

Plosive Productions takes an “audience first” approach to programming, seeking to offer audiences what they will find most worth seeing—without sacrificing artistic integrity. We will grow Ottawa’s theatre-going audience while simultaneously prioritizing the creation of artistically satisfying paid work for professional artists, recent grads and students.

Teri Loretto-Valentik

Teri began acting and singing at an early age and soon moved to Ottawa to study theatre at Canterbury High School. She then went on to study Theatre at the University of Ottawa, where she is currently completing a Masters degree. Teri has been twice nominated for the Rideau Award for Best Performance-Female for *Shirley Valentine* and for Mary in *How the Other Half Loves*, (The Gladstone Theatre.) She was also nominated for a Golden Cherry Award in 2009. Other memorable roles include the title role in *Miss Witherspoon* (Vision Theatre), Sphinx and Mum in *Greek* (Third Wall Theatre/Repercussion Theatre), 5 characters in A Company of Fools' production of *As You Like It*, Jesse in *'night Mother* (Still Standing Theatre Co.) and Lucy/Red Operator for

the North American eastern seaboard tour with the Caravan Stage Barge. She is part of the Absinthe Collective that wrote and produced *A Leave of Absinthe* in 2008. Directing credits include *Sorrow*, which won best dramatic production at the Ottawa Fringe in 2008, *Theatre Life* and *Laramie, The Epilogue-10 Years Later* for TotoToo Theatre, *Equus* for the Algonquin College theatre program and *Seven Stories* for Encore! Productions. Teri teaches in the Theatre programme at Algonquin College and is directing her second play for that program in 2011. She is an instructor at Orleans Young Players and Theatre School and teaches at Carleton University in the Learning in Retirement program. Teri has been the stand in weather person for CBC Ottawa Radio One and Television's News at 5, 5:30 and 6 for several seasons. She is a member of The Canadian Media Guild, ACTRA and Equity Canada.

Kel Parsons

Kel Parsons combines over twenty years of experience in the realms of acting (stage, radio, and screen) and writing with an academic background in Renaissance English literature. She has written program notes and delivered Table Talk lectures for the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, taught English and theatre at the University of Ottawa, and served on the boards of a number of arts and cultural organisations. She is part of the Niche creative space here in Ottawa, at which her own small production company, Otherkin, resides. Select theatre credits include *This Is A Play*, *Playing Bare* and *pool (no water)* with Evolution Theatre; *Molly Sweeney* and *A Flea In Her Ear* with SevenThirty Productions; and *The Last Disciple of Abraham* and *Race* with New Ottawa Repertory Theatre. Kel is part of the upcoming web series Sweet Tarts Takeaway (YOW Productions) and will also be producing short films with YOW, based on her series of short stories and monologues.

David Ross Whiteley

David is thrilled to be launching Plosive Productions with Kel and Teri. As an actor/director/musician, David has worked with most of Ottawa's professional theatres, including four summers with the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival, a Company of Fools' 20th anniversary production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and most recently SevenThirty Production's *A Flea in Her Ear*. David also provided the translation for that production; other translations and adaptations include *What Goes Around... / ... Comes Around* (Rideau and Golden Cherry Award nominations; Best in Venue, Ottawa Fringe Festival), *Ubu Rex* (which he also directed) and rhymed verse renditions of Molière's *The Misanthrope* (which he also directed) and *Tartuffe* (Rideau Award nomination). Other directing credits include *The Brothers Menæchmus* (Third Wall Theatre), *Hidden in This Picture* (Vision Theatre), *A Leave of Absinthe* (The Absinthe Collective) and *Thirsty for your skin, my parched parted lips...* (mutatis mutandis). David has studied at Ryerson Theatre School, the University of Guelph and holds a Masters degree from l'Université du Québec à Montréal.

Earnest Goes to India

February 10-26, Oscar Wilde's classic comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest* will get a facelift at The Gladstone. We're moving the action from England to the British Raj, with Calcutta substituting for London and Kalimpong, Darjeeling substituting for Woolton, Hertfordshire. Come see *Earnest* with fresh eyes—and a hint of Indian spice! Tickets on sale now at the box office, or online at www.thegladstone.ca.



The British Raj

Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India 1899-1905. British colonial presence in India dates back to early in the 17th century with the British East India Company. After the Indian Rebellion of 1857, rule was transferred to the Crown, and in 1876 Queen Victoria was named Empress of India. British rule or “raj” continued until 1947 when India was granted independence.



Morgan House, Kalimpong, Darjeeling District

“More British than the British.” Whether in Gibraltar, India or Victoria, B.C., colonial Brits went to great length to recreate the comforts of home while living abroad. So how better to laugh at Victorian snobbery than against a backdrop of the British Raj? Wealthy English families escaped Calcutta's heat in English-style mansions at “hill stations” in the mountains. Morgan House, built in Kalimpong by a British jute merchant, serves as a real-life model for Jack Worthing's manor house in Woolton for this production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*.