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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**BAG&BAGGAGE PRESENTS A ROARING 20s INSPIRED
*THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST***

Hillsboro, OR – Bag&Baggage Productions, Hillsboro’s only professional theatre company, is pleased to announce a 1920s, martini and caviar inspired production of one of the most popular plays in the English language; Oscar Wilde’s hysterical social satire *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Performances take place at The Venetian Theatre on Main Street in downtown Hillsboro from May 7 through the 24, Thursdays through Saturdays at 7:30pm, and Sundays at 2:00pm.

As with all of Bag&Baggage’s shows, Artistic Director Scott Palmer promises this production will be unlike anything Hillsboro audiences have ever seen. “So many theatre companies approach this play the same traditional way, but I believe Wilde’s script is much more open to interpretation than that,” said Palmer.

The Importance of Being Earnest is Oscar Wilde's best known play, and a staple of professional theatre companies across the country. However, when Wilde first wrote the play, it did cause a good deal of controversy. Palmer said, “Wilde’s play was shocking to Victorian audiences in part because the play called into question basic notions about gender and social status, it questioned how men and women were supposed to act and behave. Our production takes those questions as the starting point, and we are pulling out all the stops to make Wilde’s insights into gender, love and passion the focus of our show.”

Maggie Chapin, who plays the lead “male” character Jack, said, “The show takes inspiration from early performers like Marlene Dietrich and Katharine Hepburn, and is truly different from any production of this show that I have ever seen. The subtext of Wilde’s play, and Wilde’s life, has influenced everything from the costumes to the set to the style of the acting.”

Gregory Pulver, who designed the costumes and the set for the show, has used Noel Coward and the roaring 1920s as the basis for the style of the production, and did painstaking research on the fashion of the era for the costumes.

Palmer said, "Gregory has really turned the traditional Victorian style of Oscar Wilde upside down, and the amazing thing is how well the show works when set in the roaring 20s! Our production is much more martinis and caviar than tea cups and crumpets, and we are focusing on how to make the performance as visually entertaining as Wilde's characters."

Arianne Jacques, who has performed in Bag&Baggage's previous productions of *Macbeth* and *The Reindeer Monologues*, and who plays Gwendolen in *Earnest* said, "I can remember reading this play in college, and I swear I have seen it performed more than a dozen times, but never like this. Ever. It is like an entirely new play, and it is so much fun."

Dr. Scott Foster, Chair of the Bag&Baggage Board of Directors, said, "We have always had great professional actors working with us, but this cast is truly incredible. Of course we have Bag&Baggage favorites like Maggie and Arianne, but we also have some amazing new members of the company as well."

The cast includes Portland favorite Patrick Spike as Lady Bracknell, Lesli Okorn (previously seen as Angela the Jeweler in *The Comedy of Errors*) as Algernon Moncrieff, Kiri Dyken as Cecily Cardew, Jason Myers (seen as Dasher in *The Reindeer Monologues*) as Miss Prism, Jacob T Morehead (recently arrived in Portland from Denver) as the Rev. Canon Chasuble, and Tylor Neist (who played The Critic in *The Comedy of Errors*) as Lane and Merriman.

"I have been promising our audiences an *Earnest* unlike anything they have ever seen, and we are definitely going to deliver on the promise," Palmer said.

Tickets are \$22 for General admission and \$18 for Students and Seniors. Tickets can be purchased at <http://www.venetiantheatre.com> or at the venue on the night of the performance. Group Discounts available: email tickets@bagnbaggage.org to inquire for details.

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Calendar Listings:

Bag&Baggage Presents

Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*

May 7 – 24, 2009: Thursday – Saturday at 7:30pm, Sunday matinee at 2:00pm

The Venetian Theatre

253 East Main Street

Hillsboro, OR 97123

Tickets: \$22 general admission / \$18 for students and seniors

Available online at www.venetiantheatre.com

Group discounts available

Editor's Note: Publicity photos available upon request