

# Lord Arthur Savile's Crime

A comedy by Constance Cox  
based on a short story by Oscar Wilde  
Performed in November 1989

## It was worth an Oscar!

Lord Arthur Savile's Crime. This merry little short story by Oscar Wilde has been cleverly adapted by Constance Cox into a full-length play with a script the old genius would have been proud of.

Indeed, so smoothly went its transition, it was difficult to believe he had not had a hand in it. Whatever, he would have been justifiably proud of the result. And as a fellow contemporary author would have wrote, "you couldn't even see the joins".

That said, the play was tailor-made for the Faringdon Community Dramatic Society debut of Nick Hobden - a fairly new comer to the town - and, if this performance is anything to go by, we should be seeing a lot more of this young man. He was, indeed, the epitome of a Wildean milord: tall, good-looking and elegant in his smoking jacket, his voice and delivery perfectly in tune with his autocratic role.

Slightly less so, perhaps, were his relatives - aunt, Lady Windermere (Brenda Keith-Walker), and great-aunt, Lady Clementine Beauchamp (Carolyn Taylor) who seemed to have forgotten their one-time notoriety. They were vehemently demolished in a painfully withering denouncement by Lady Julia Merton, Lord Arthur's prospective mother-in-law, which earned Jo Webster a well-deserved, spontaneous round of applause.

Wickedly, she laced in references to "a fan and its embarrassing social consequences" and (hilariously) a "person" of no importance! S'truth, were he alive today, how Wilde would have enjoyed all this ! Fiancee Sybil Merton (Joan Lee) dithered and dallied as such young ladies, we are led to believe, did in those days. Lord Arthur's uncle, the Dean of Paddington, was suitably dotty (Dave Headey), and Nellie the maid (Sophie Webster) made a pretty impact with her supporting role.

Superb were Mr Podgers, a cheiromanticist (palmist), introduced by Lady Merton. Especially so, and even funnier, was Herr Winkelkopf, a demented anarchist (Peter Webster), who nearly but never quite put paid to every other person present. Holding it all together, Nigel Keith-Walker as Baines, the ponderous, unruffled butler, a real gentleman's gentleman.

Produced by Carole Tappenden, this delicious compote of Wilde fruits was one of Faringdon Community Dramatic Society's best efforts to date. Nothing had been overlooked in staging and effects. And amusingly, even the programme was pseudo-Victorian in its language.

I.V.C.

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