

A Man of No Importance

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A Man of No Importance is a musical that combines the best elements of the artform: a compelling story, characters worth caring about and some first-rate music and lyrics by the team of Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens who wrote the score for *Ragtime*.

Acting Up Stage is presenting the Canadian premiere of this chamber-sized musical at the Berkeley Street Theatre and it's a first rate production directed by Lezlie Wade.

The staging is minimalist: A few chairs, a table are all that is needed for this small-town theatrical troupe to act out the story of the life of Alfie Byrne - A middle-aged Dublin bus fare collector with a passion for the writings of Oscar Wilde. His sister wishes he would just settle down and get married, but Alfie's life revolves around his amateur theatre troupe that stage their plays in the Church Hall.

Douglas E. Hughes plays Alfie with sad-eyed charm. It's a remarkable performance – both sung and acted with passion. He is paired with Kyle Blair as the bus driver who awakens Alfie's long repressed feelings. Blair leads the lively ensemble "The Streets of Dublin" in the first act letting his voice soar. It's a moment of pure magic...and there are many more throughout the performance. There is not one weak link in the 12-member cast, and they are given excellent support by Reza Jacob's orchestra, which gives the Irish flavored melodies a rich texture of flute, violin and guitar.

The balance between singers and orchestra is excellent. Every word comes through clearly without the aid of amplification. All in all a memorable performance, as we have come to expect from this dedicated troupe.

A Man of No Importance continues at the Berkley Street Theatre until Sat March 22. Performances are Wed to Sat at 8, with a matinee at 2 on Saturday. For tickets or more info visit www.manofnoimportance.com or call the box office at 416-368-3110.

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