

Review – A Woman of No Importance

You don't expect a civilised matinée performance to erupt with applause early in Act 1 but when Lord Illingworth declares: "I have nothing to say against the House of Commons. It is the last bulwark of national stupidity," the rapturous clapping told us much about the mood of the moment.

Lord Illingworth's character would fare less well in the current climate. The caddish 45-year-old bachelor enjoys flirting with Mrs Allonby (played by Emma Amos) and the pair generate some palpable chemistry. Veteran performer Roy Hudd encourages one member of the audience to chant "bravo!" after the first of three music hall numbers in the role of the playful Reverend Daubeney.

Less fun is the pompous American puritan Miss Hester Worsley (Georgia Landers) who enjoys the black and white social paradigms of saints and sinners a bit too much. When Lord Illingworth is revealed to be the absent father of Gerald Arbuthnot, the illegitimate son of Mrs Arbuthnot, the play finally bursts into life. While there is plenty of Wildean wit, we wait too long for the real drama to begin.

When Gerald demands his parents get married to right the wrongs of the past, it summons the absurd Victorian atmosphere of the time.

This is one for the most ardent enthusiasts of the Irish

playwright.

A Woman of No Importance, King's Theatre.

