



Play of the Week: A Woman of No Importance

Director: Joan Kemp-Welch

Production Company: Associated-Rediffusion

Adapted by: Paul Dehn

[Based on the play] By: Oscar Wilde

Designer: John Clements

Costume Designer: Ernest Hewitt *

Music Composed by: Ron Grainer

Cast:

Helen Cherry (*Mrs Allonby*)

Griffith Jones (*Lord Illingworth*)

Athene Seyler (*Lady Hunstanton*)

Marian Spencer (*Lady Caroline Pontefract*)

Gwen Watford (*Mrs Arbuthnot*)

Charles Lloyd Pack

(*The Ven. Archdeacon Daubery, DD*)

Nicholas Hannen (*Sir John Pontefract*)

Eira Heath (*Miss Hester Worsley*)

Clifford Elkin (*Gerald Arbuthnot*)

Marcia Ashton (*Lady Stutfield*)

Michael Logan (*Mr Kelvil, MP*)

Tony Bateman (*Lord Alfred Rufford*)

Stringer Davis (*Farquhar*)

Coral Fairweather (*Alice*)

Michael Ely (*James*)

ITV tx 9.2.1960

75 mins

Play of the Week: Three Sisters

Director: Joan Kemp-Welch

Production Company: Associated-Rediffusion

Adaptation: Leo Lehman

[Based on the play] By: Anton Chekhov

Designed by: Fred Pusey

Translated by: Miki Iveria, Kitty Black

Cast:

Jill Bennett (*Masha*)

Kenneth Griffith (*Lieutenant Touzenbach*)

Griffith Jones (*Lieutenant Colonel Vershinin*)

Peter Woodthorpe (*Andrei*)

Ann Bell (*Irina*)

Wensley Pithey (*Doctor Chebutikin*)

John Wood (*Kouligin*)

Anne Cunningham (*Natasha*)

Gerald Flood (*Captain Soleny*)

Margaret Gordon (*Olga*)

Tad Burner (*2nd Lieutenant Roday*)

John Quayle (*2nd Lieutenant Fedotik*)

Frederick Peisley (*Ferapont*)

Hilda Barry (*Antissa*)

ITV tx 3.9.1963

80 mins

* Uncredited

Please note this programme will have a small comfort break of 5 mins between *A Woman of No Importance* and *Three Sisters*. The total runtime with the interval is 165 mins

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Associated-Rediffusion: The UK's First Groundbreaking TV Franchise

Drama 3: The Classics at Associated-Rediffusion

As an original ITV company, in the early years Associated-Rediffusion mined the classical theatre canon for many of its TV dramas. It has left us a fascinating historical legacy, acclaimed 1960s actors in key canonical works. In *A Woman of No Importance*, an all-star cast revel in Oscar Wilde's mischievous tale of social scandal, while Chekhov's tale of a family distanced from their environment and living in a world of growing disillusionment is a stunning adaptation of the Russian writer's play.

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A Woman of No Importance

The five main parts in this Oscar Wilde comedy will be taken by Helen Cherry, Griffith Jones, Athene Seyler, Marian Spencer and Gwen Watford. The director is Joan Kemp-Welch.

'All my first choices for these parts agreed straight away – and that is something which does not happen very often,' says Joan Kemp-Welch.

'It is a classic play by a brilliant author and full of great parts. It is a challenge to any actor and actress and that is, I think, why they all accepted. The play is amusing at the expense of women and is about women being amusing at the expense of men. It contains many truisms which still apply today,' adds Joan Kemp-Welch. 'We are using Paul Dehn's adaptation which stripped the original of its melodrama while keeping the comedy.'

Most of the costumes were specially designed by Associated-Rediffusion's head costume designer, Ernest Hewitt. One dress, worn by Helen Cherry in the last act, is a 60-year-old original. Others were made up from a length of 1908 French embroidered material found in London by Ernest Hewitt.

Helen Cherry, who plays the part of Mrs Allenby, last appeared in an Oscar Wilde play when she was an unknown actress in repertory.

Griffith Jones had his first big West End success in Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* at the Haymarket nearly 20 years ago. 'Ever since I have had a deep affection for him as an author.'

When Griffith Jones was at R.A.D.A. one of the teachers was Athene Seyler who appears as Lady Hunstanton in the play.

She says: 'I love the play for its gaiety and style. There's too much emphasis on second rate people and squalor these days.' Also in the play is Athene Seyler's husband, Nicholas Hannen, who plays Sir John Pontefract.

Gwen Watford plays Mrs Arbuthnot in her first play by Oscar Wilde. Gwen Watford first met director Joan Kemp-Welch when she won the award for the best British television actress of the year in 1958. At the same time Joan Kemp-Welch took the award for the best light entertainment director.

Rediffusion publicity notes

Associated-Rediffusion: The UK's First Groundbreaking TV Franchise

Comedy 1: Ronnie Barker and the Pythons

+ intro by season curator Dick Fiddy

Tue 2 Sep 18:15

Drama 1: The Entertaining Mr Orton

Sun 7 Sep 17:25

Comedy 2: The Fred Shows

Fri 12 Sep 18:10

Drama 2: Harold Pinter

Sat 13 Sep 17:30

The Lost World of Children's Programming

+ intro by Elinor Groom, Curator of Television

Tue 16 Sep 18:20

Drama 3:

The Classics at Associated-Rediffusion

Sat 20 Sep 14:15

Object Z + intro by writer Jon Dear

Sun 21 Sep 14:35

Captive Cinema + intro by Lisa Kerrigan,

Senior Curator of Television

Tue 23 Sep 18:20

Ready Steady Go!

Fri 26 Sep 18:00

Missing Believed Wiped:

Associated-Rediffusion Special

Sat 27 Sep 12:15

The Precious Things – Oddities and Rarities

from the BFI National Archive

Sat 27 Sep 15:20

Tackling Racism + intro by Chantelle Lavel Boyea,

BFI Assistant Curator of Television

Fri 3 Oct 18:10

The Associated-Rediffusion collection is preserved in the BFI National Archive

With thanks to Archbuild

With thanks to

BFI colleagues Xavier Pillai, Lisa Kerrigan,

Chantelle Lavel Boyea and Elinor Groom

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Please note that some of the programmes in this season contain racist language, attitudes and other content that reflect the views prevalent in its time, but will likely cause offence today (as they did then).

For specific content warnings, please visit

[bfi.org.uk/whatson](https://www.bfi.org.uk/whatson)

Three Sisters

Four people achieve one of their big ambitions with the production by Rediffusion Television of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*.

They are Ann Bell, Jill Bennett and Margaret Gordon who play the three sisters and Joan Kemp-Welch who directs the production, which also includes Gerald Flood, Kenneth Griffith, Wensley Pithey, Peter Woodthorpe and Anne Cunningham.

'I directed *Three Sisters* at the Edinburgh Festival some years ago and have always been trying to do it on television,' says Joan Kemp-Welch. 'It is a fast-moving comedy of romance and love with all the ecstatic happiness and tragedy that love can bring. Chekhov's characters are so real.'

Three Sisters has been adapted for television by Leo Lehman from a translation by Miki Iveria. It tells of three sisters who live in a small town in which a regiment is garrisoned, and of their loves. In all, some three eventful years in their lives are covered.

For Ann Bell it has meant a very busy time. During the day she was rehearsing Chekhov and at night she was appearing in the West End production of *The Provok'd Wife*. 'I could grumble about being overworked – which was marvellous – for that is the ambition of every person who acts. As another ambition of mine has been to appear in a Chekhov play you could say I killed two birds with one stone.'

For Jill Bennett it meant that she succeeded in appearing in her favourite play. 'I love Chekhov – he has been my favourite ever since I was at school.' For Margaret Gordon it meant an ambition achieved and a reunion with Jill Bennett. They last appeared together in *The Anatomist* – as sisters. But they have also worked on radio when Margaret Gordon played her mother – 'people couldn't see my face so it did not matter if I did not look old.'

Rediffusion publicity notes