



## THOROUGHLY STUPID THINGS OR THE CONTINUOUS IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

*Whirled Peas Productions at the Bleecker Street Theatre as part of the New York International Fringe Festival*

You're unfamiliar with Montserrat Mendez, you say? Oh my dear, then you must go off to your garrulous Google or your yappy Yahoo and absorb all you can about him! He is—and I say this with envy—a perfectly marvelous playwright, and his *Thoroughly Stupid Things*, a sequel to Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, is a comic masterwork.

In a drawing room (finely decorated by Mendez and Andrew Farrugia), we re-encounter those paradigms of the fairer sex immortalized by Wilde, Gwendolen (Emma Gordon) and Cecily (Amy Forney). Some time has elapsed since their solemn vows to Wilde's "bunburying" antiheroes, Jack (Darrell Glasgow) and Algernon (Stephen Laferriere), and their nuptial bliss is foundering. Why must Jack and Algy indulge in so much time at their men-only club? Could it be the club's sole exception, the French chanteuse Bibi LaFlam (James Edward Becton), who beguiles men with her lascivious charms?

Spurred on by governess-turned-novelist Ms. Prism (Stephanie Lovell), stolid Lady Bracknell (Justin McKenna), and the flamboyant steward Merriman (H. Dean Jones), the ladies disguise themselves as men, both named Earnest, and patronize the club to ascertain the truth about their husbands. And oh my dears, how they do! Complications ensue, a score of subplots emerge, and at length there is a veritable monsoon of precisely executed comedy demonstrated by a most polished cast. Each actor superbly draws every drop of amusement from Mendez's script, with its matchless gift for literary allusion, and director Megan Demarest's staging approaches flawlessness. Oh, to laugh again! I hardly expected *Thoroughly Stupid* to be so bright.

*Presented by Whirled Peas Productions as part of the New York International Fringe Festival at the Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St., NYC.*

*Aug. 10–23. Remaining performances: Tue., Aug. 19, 9:45 p.m.; Fri., Aug. 22, 4:15 p.m.; Sat., Aug. 23, 7 p.m. (212) 279-4488 or (866) 468-7619 or [www.fringenyc.org](http://www.fringenyc.org).*

**Reviewed by Leonard Jacobs**

*Published on BackStage.com on August 15, 2008.*

*Copyright 2008 The Nielsen Company. All rights reserved.*