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"The Importance of Being Earnest" by Oscar Wilde is a screenplay that has remained relevant for over a hundred years, including the notable Lyric Hammersmith production of 1930, the Globe Theatre production of 1939, and the Bloomsbury theatre production of 1989, among many others. Because of this, it has had many diverse productions, each of which consists of new directors, performers, and producers, and all at different time periods. This means that each iteration uses different set design, costume design and props. Some productions were set in the time they were performed. Others were directed using designs from earlier time periods. This can be very notable in the props used. Even in modern times, there are still people who live in very old houses and dress in very old clothing. The props, however, can truly reveal the technological extent of the time period.

Regardless of the setting, each director brought a new take on prop direction. If I were to direct "The Importance of Being Earnest," I would bring together some props from the time period of the original setting with others from modern times. While this does suspend disbelief, it accentuates numerous aspects of the intention and humor behind the work.

In order to explain how I envision this idea, I would like to discuss my own passion for metafiction. Metafiction is the idea that characters can reference their own fictional nature, or acknowledge the world outside the work of fiction. For several years, I have been fascinated with the unique creative choices this offers, whether this is used for comedy, horror or satirical commentary.

The way I see this playing into my prop concept is for the characters to appear self-aware within the fictional world of "Importance of Being Earnest," but this would only appear in the use of the props themselves. While none of the dialogue would change, characters might use modern technology, which is only revealed by accidents. For example, if a character were to check the time, they might draw out a cell phone out of habit, before noticing the audience and replacing it for a pocket watch. The characters could even participate in nonverbal communication with the audience, such as expressing annoyance or other hidden emotions to them, purely through facial cues. They could roll their eyes, wink, shrug, or do any number of related gestures.

Rather than distancing the story from the audience, I think this will draw it even closer. It is new and interesting and exciting, and will catch the attention of most people who watch it. In fact, it could help those watching to relate more deeply to the characters. It may make them feel as though the people on stage are just regular humans, making the characters they portray even more notable by giving them less realistic personalities. Somehow the understanding that a character or idea is fake – an idea that can be shared between the actors and the audience – makes them even more exaggerated. In a plot entirely driven by character motives, this could greatly improve these factors.

In all, this relatively new take on the direction of this performance could be manifested in no more than props and a few well-placed character actions. In doing this, I have conceived of an interpretation of the play that, while making no alterations to the costumes, set or script, can still bring interesting ideas into play.

