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The Mermaid Theatre Trust
Presents Two Plays by Bernard Shaw

The shewing-up of Blanco Posnet
(a sermon in crude melodrama)
and
Androcles and the Lion
(a fable play)

Directed by FRANK DUNLOP
Designed by ROY NOAKES

This Shaw double bill staged at the Mermaid Theatre for a 3-week run opening on
Tuesday 3 October 1961

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Shaw's answer to 'Peter Pan'

A Note on 'Androcles and the Lion' by Hesketh Pearson

We owe this play partly to Shaw's dissatisfaction with the work of a fellow-dramatist. 'When Peter Pan was in its first great vogue,' he told me, 'Max Beerbohm caricatured Barrie nothing better. It is to a circle of elderly people and children. The children were sitting with enjoyment; the children were all asleep. I agreed, and wrote Androcles to show what a play for children should be like. It should never be childish; nothing offends children more than to play down to them; all the great children's books, The Pilgrim's Progress, 'SING IT! MAKE MUSIC OF IT!'

Shaw gives some lessons in virtue during the mishaps of Androcles. With him was Harry Granville Barker and Ethel McCarthy.

Collier, Robinson Crusoe, Andersen, Arabian Nights, and Grimms' Fairy Tales, were written for adults.'

Originally a music-hall sketch, Androcles became what Shaw called 'a religious farce, suitable for children of all ages,' and he allowed Granville Barker to open a season with it at St James's Theatre on 1 September 1913. As a rule Shaw produced his own plays, but he was busy just then and lent the job to Barker, who had practically invented the restrained school of under-acting that superseded the flamboyant style suitable for Shaw. Consequently, when Shaw turned up at the final dress rehearsal, he

Continued on page 11

Hesketh Pearson, one of the most celebrated of modern biographers, is author of Bernard Shaw, His Life and Personality (London), described by James Agate as 'this masterpiece of biography', and of biographies of Gilbert and Sullivan, Oscar Wilde, Benibolin Tito, Dandini, and Charles II among others. He played Medusa in the first English production of Androcles and the Lion, and was a close friend of Shaw.
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witnessed a quiet naturalistic performance of a drama that called
for declamation in the Shakespearean manner, and he spent some
time in changing the whole tone of the show. 'Sing it! Make music
of it!' he implored the cast: 'And I want Verdi, not Debussy.'
The grown-up children in the audience enjoyed the play, but
most of the dramatic critics were highly offended, their notices
being peppered with such phrases as 'cheap', 'offensive', 'insulting',
'nasty', 'infantile', 'Ripperian', 'cynical', 'insincere', 'impudent',
'outrageous', 'crude', 'repulsive' and 'blasphemous'.

Shaw answered his critics: 'I know that most people do not
believe that Christians were really killed in the arena at all, and
are shocked at the idea of their being callously called to their
deaths as numbered turns in a variety entertainment by a vulgar
call-boy, instead of simply being painted by Royal Academicians
as being politely led up to heaven by angels with palm branches.
And it gives me an extraordinary satisfaction when the shrieks of
these poor creatures prove that I have brought them face to face
for the first time with the grim reality of persecution and their own
daily complicity in it, and perhaps hurt their eyes with a dash of
the unbearable radiance of real religion.

'Androcles' is NOT a Comedy—says G.B.S.

In a programme note for the first American production of *Androcles*,
Shaw wrote: 'The author of *Androcles and the Lion* received one of
the worst shocks of his life when an American editor published its
text under the heading 'A Comedy'. It is not a comedy: it is precisely
what the author calls it, a Fable Play: that is, an entertain-
ment for children on an old story from the children's books, which
nevertheless contains matter for the most mature wisdom to
ponder.'

'Androcles'—the first productions

*Androcles and the Lion* was first produced at the Kleine Theatre,
Berlin, on 31 December 1919. Its English premiere was given by
Granville Barker at the St James's Theatre, London, on 9 Septem-
ber 1919 with the following cast: Megara, Claire Greet; Androcles,
O. P. Heggie; The Lion, Edward Sillwoad; Centaur, H. O.
Nicolson; Captain, Ben Webster; Lavinia, Lilah McCarthy; Leandro,
Donald Calthrop; Marketeer, Horace Pearson; Spintus,
J. F. Quarmby; Ferovius, Alfred Beddome; Ox Driver, Ralph
Hutton; Call Boy, Neville Gartside; Editor, Herbert Hewetson;
Menagerie Keeper, Diallo Holloway; The Emperor, Leon Quar-
termaine; Senator, Allan Jayes; Relator, J. B. Turnbull.
Looking at the Lions

by Bernard Shaw

'A Christian martyr was thrown to the lions not because he was a Christian, but because he was a crank: that is, an unusual sort of person. And multitudes of people, quite as civilized and amiable as we, crowded to see the lions eat him just as now they crowd the lion-house in the zoo at feeding-time, not because they really cared twopenny about Diana or Christ, or could have given you any intelligent or correct account of the things Diana and Christ stood against one another for, but simply because they wanted to see a curious and exciting spectacle.

'You, dear reader, have probably run to see a fire; and if somebody came in now and told you that a lion was chasing a man down the street you would rush to the window. And if anyone were to say that you were as cruel as the people who let the lion loose on the man, you would be justly indignant. Now that we may no longer see a man hanged, we assemble outside the jail to see the black flag run up. That is our dullest method of enjoying ourselves in the old Roman spirit. And if the Government decided to throw persons of unpopular or eccentric views to the lions in the Albert Hall or the Earl's Court stadium tomorrow, can you doubt that all the seats would be crammed, mostly by people who could not give you the most superficial account of the views in question.

'Much less unlikely things have happened.

'It is true that if such a revival does take place soon, the martyrs will not be members of heretical religious sects: they will be Peculiars, Anti-Vivisectionists, Flat-Earth men, scoffers at the laboratories, or infidels who refuse to kneel down when a procession of doctors goes by. But the lions will hurt them just as much, and the spectators will enjoy themselves just as much, as the Roman lions and spectators used to do.'

[The above is an extract from Shaw's epilogue to Androcles and the Lion]
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HEATHER JENNER

WATNEYS

RED BARREL

Shaw versus the Censor

A Note on 'The Shameful-Up of Blasco Posnet'

by HEDRITH PEARSON

One of Shaw's activities as a playwright in the early part of this century was to campaign against the Censor, and he experienced great difficulty in gaining the support of the other playwrights, to say nothing of the leading actors. For some years Beerbohm Tree, proprietor of His Majesty's Theatre, had pestered Shaw to write

NO! IT'S NOT BLANGO POSNET!

This picture is not an open-air dress rehearsal of Blasco Posnet - it was taken during the shooting of a mysterious new film about, and nominally directed, by James Durie. Front left to right: Lord Howard de Walden, William Atherley, Sir James Barrie, Q. H. Cavendish, and Bernard Shaw.

a play for him on Don Quixote. But Shaw had no desire to write a variation on a theme by Gervantie, and at last presented Tree with a one-act melodrama for performance at a Charity matinee. 'I am rather clever at fitting actors with parts,' he told Ellen Terry: 'I wrote a perfect triumph of this made-to-measure art for Tree in Blasco Posnet, and he was simply shocked by it, absolutely horrified.'

Continued on page 21
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The Cast
In order of appearance

The shewing-up of Blanco Posnet

Babe
Lottie
Hannah
Josie
Emma
Rider Daniels
Blanco Posnet
Scrapper Kemp
Squinty
Pooey Evans
The Sheriff
Poreman of the Jury
Nestor
Waggoner Jo
Woman

SALLY MILES
CLAIRE KINSON
MARGARET LARK
JUDELINE TEVERSON
GAYNOR OWEN
ALAN MICHAUD
ROBERT FRASER
BOB SPINNER
J.C. KEMP
JILL BENTON
GAL MCCORD
DANIEL THOMSON
PETER FRASER
ANNA BERKIN

Androcles and the Lion

The Lion
Megara
Androcles
Centaur
The Captain
Lavinia
Lentulus
Metellus
Spiridio
Petronia
Cox Driver
The Call Boy
The Editor
The Menagerie Keeper
The Emperor Caesar
Senator
Retarius

GAL MCCORD
JOSEPHINE TEVERSON
DAVE RAYE
DANIEL THOMSON
EDWARD DE SOUZA
JILL BENNET
JEREMY SPINNER
ALAN MACDAUGAHTAN
PETER FRASER
RICHARD ROBINSON
ROBIN FERRESDAY
FRANK WINDSOR
ROGER KEMP
RICHARD ROBINSON
JOSEPH BURNS
CLIVE ELDRIDGE

Other parts in both plays are played by
Howard Daley, Barry Dinock, Carol Ann Fels, Naomi Goldsberry, Bruce Gray, John Hughes, Ian McDermott, Raymond Ross, Norman Stobbs, Caroline Smiths, Donald Sutherland, Matthew Vaughan, Ron Wellings,
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Authentic costumes and accessories for 'Blanco Posse' kindly loaned by Cal McCord.
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Druya King-Frank
Programme editor Gerald Frew
Production photographs by Morris Newcombe
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Stage Manager: Ian Mclmurray
Stage Manager: Donald Robinson
Assistant Stage Manager: Irene Tippett, Caroline Smith

Chief Electrical: David Bay
Stage Carpenter: Andrew Higginson
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Assistant to the Producer: Betty Cote

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Shane versus the Censor restate.

Discussing the episode with Tree, and later with Shaw, I gathered that the actor was shocked by Blanco Posnet’s description of God as ‘a sly one’, ‘a mean one’, who ‘plays cat and mouse with you’, and scandalized by Blanco’s statement that Fenny had immoral relations with every man in the town, including the Sheriff, a remark that would make the stalls rise in a body and walk out of the theatre. ‘So much the worse for the stalls,’ said Shaw. If those bits about God and the prostitute were cut, Tree said he would consider the play. ‘If you cut a single syllable of a single sentence, I shan’t consider letting you play it,’ replied Shaw.

Tree was rescued by the Censor, who refused to pass the play, which was produced by Lady Gregory at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, in the teeth of official opposition, during Horse Show Week, August 1909. Re-submitted to the Censor, the author was informed that if he omitted the passages about God the Lord Chamberlain’s licence would be granted. On which Shaw commented: ‘All the coarseness, the profanity, the prostitution, the violence, the drinking-bar humour into which the light shines in the play are licensed, but the light itself is extinguished. I need hardly say that I have not availed myself of this licence, and do not intend to.’

Eventually the Lord Chamberlain’s nerves, shattered by the pervasiveness of Irving’s Ghosts and Dunsany’s Good by Britten, rallied under the repeated shocks of the modern drama, and licences were granted for the public performances of Mrs Warren’s Profession and Blanco Posnet by Shaw.

‘Blanco Posnet’—the first productions

Having been banned by the Censor from public performance in London (on the grounds of blasphemy), The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet was first produced by Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on 25 August 1909. On 5 December the same year, Lady Gregory and Yeats, in conjunction with the Stage Society, produced the play in London’s Aldwych Theatre. The Stage Society, being a private club, was outside the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain. The play, both in London and Ireland, was cast from the Abbey Theatre Company, the first players including Fred O’Donovan as Blanco; Arthur Sinclair and J. A. O’Rourke, Daniels; Cathleen Neilan, Hannah; J. M. Kerrigan, Kemp; Sara Allgood, Fenny; and Maire O’Neill as The Woman.
Overheard 1961

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Tomorrow, then?..."
and strew them in goblets about the stage. . . 'The true critic . . . is the man who becomes your personal enemy on the sole provocation of a bad performance, and will only be appeased by a good performance.'

1883. His first play, *Widow's Homes*, is performed by the Independent Theatre Society.

'It is clear that I have nothing to do with the theatre of to-day; I must educate a new generation with my pen from childhood up — audience, scenes, and all, and leave them my plays to be murdered after I am cremated.'

1885. Becomes Theatre Critic of *The Saturday Review* (at 6 guineas a week).

In this world you must know ALL the points of view, and take one, and stick to it . . . The theatre is my lair, my nursery as much as the platform or the press: that is why I want to drag it to the front. My capes are part of a bigger design than you think; Shakespeare, for instance, is to me one of the towers of the Bastille, and down he must come.'

1887. Becomes a vestryman in the Vestry of St Pancras. . .

... it is good for me to be worked so the last inch while I last; and I love the reality of the Vestry . . . after the silly visionary fashion-drenched theatres; but the machine, Shaw, is not quite perfect yet . . .


1909. *Arms and the Man*.

1914. Stands as Progressive Candidate for St Pancras South in the LCC elections — is defeated.

The Vedrenne-Barker race opens at the Court Theatre, Sloane Square. Shaw is established as the leading playwright in London.

My plays are mixtures of seventeenth century theatre, of modern thought and of that barbarous English humour which shocked Voltaire in Shakespeare. They are full of politics, religion, biology, and all sorts of terrestrial things except adultery.'

1916. Shaw moves to Ayot St Lawrence.


1923. *Androcles and the Lion* produced at the St James's.

1925. *Pygmalion* becomes a sensational success in London.

1925. *Wose*.

1926. Receives the Nobel Prize for Literature.

1936. Shaw's 80th birthday.

'My life has rushed through very quickly; I have seen very little of anyone who has not worked with me. Except with my wife, I have no companionships; only occasional contacts, intense but brief.'

1950. 2 November. Shaw dies at the age of 94.
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