

THE Classic Theatre
SAN ANTONIO

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**ARMS
and the
MAN**

A Comedy by George Bernard Shaw
Directed by Stacey Connelly

AUGUST 22 - SEPTEMBER 7, 2014

THURSDAY AUG 28 & SEP 4 AT 8:00 PM
FRIDAY & SATURDAY AT 8:00 PM • SUNDAY AT 3:00 PM
Tickets \$25 • Sr/Mil/SATCO \$20 • Student (w/ ID) \$10



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STUDENT STUDY GUIDE

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The Classic Theatre mission is to reinvigorate and create new audiences for theatre by presenting professional productions of popular classics and forgotten masterpieces for residents of and visitors to San Antonio.



AIM High intern Renelle Wilson (far right) onstage with the cast of Classic Theatre of San Antonio's award-winning production of *Scapin* by Moliere.

Synopsis of the Play

ACT I

A fleeing member of the Serbian army desperately climbs through Raina Petkoff's bedroom window to escape capture, but he turns out to be a Swiss mercenary officer by the name of Captain Bluntschli. Raina scolds him for being cowardly and informs him of the bravery of her fiancé, Sergius, a cavalry officer who led the Bulgarian victory. Bluntschli informs her of the foolish nature of Sergius' charge in the battle and then explains that chocolates are more valuable in a war than bullets, a statement that outrages Raina. He shocks her even more when he reveals that he is afraid and unwilling to die. However, when the soldiers come seeking out the runaway, Raina hides the fugitive, and only her maid, Louka, is aware of her actions.

ACT II (Four Months Later)

Raina's father and fiancé have returned after the war. The two men talk about a young Swiss officer who had impressed them with his practical approach to the exchange of soldiers. The men also laugh about the tale of the officer's escape from the front and how a young girl had given him shelter in her bedroom, little suspecting that it had happened in Major Petkoff's own house. Meanwhile in secret, Sergius has been flirting with Louka. Unexpectedly, Captain Bluntschli shows up to return an overcoat that Raina had lent him for his escape, and she panics when her father invites him to stay for lunch.

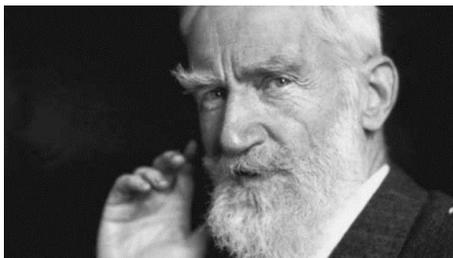
ACT III

While Bluntschli is helping the men plan for the transport of troops, Raina is worried that her father will find the photo she had secretly left in the coat pocket for her "Chocolate Cream Soldier." When Sergius discovers the bond between Raina and Bluntschli, he challenges Bluntschli to a duel, but Raina interrupts and expresses her real feelings for Bluntschli. Louka succeeds in securing Sergius for herself and Major Petkoff and his wife give consent to Bluntschli to marry Raina.



Serbian soldiers in 1914.

About the Playwright: George Bernard Shaw



George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin on July 26, 1856, to Irish Protestant parents. His childhood was difficult; his father was a failed businessman and an alcoholic, and his mother, a professional singer, left his father for London when Shaw was fifteen. At twenty, Shaw went to join her but spent the next several years struggling to find success in writing. He supported himself partially through music criticism and attempted a few novels, but these were largely rejected by publishers. His first play, *Widower's Houses*, had a tepid popular debut, and his next two plays, *The Philanderer* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, were suppressed by the strict British censorship laws of the time. It was not until *Arms and the Man* that Shaw received true critical and commercial success.

Shaw's success in playwriting continued for the next 56 years. He wrote prolifically and became almost as well known for his dramatic criticism. He wrote most passionately, however, on behalf of the Fabian Society, a socialist organization that attempted widespread social reform based on education and gradual change rather than aggressive resistance. Shaw never attempted to disguise the presence of his socialist ideals within his plays.

In the course of his political involvement, Shaw met Charlotte Payne-Townshend, an Irish heiress and fellow Fabian. Shaw married her in 1898 after she had nursed him through an illness. Townshend had resolved to have no children, and their marriage was never consummated. They remained married until her death in 1943.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 damaged Shaw's popularity in his adopted country. He spoke and wrote vehemently against what he saw only as a waste of young life and the corruption of the capitalist system. His anti-war articles proved disastrous for his public image, and there was even talk of his being tried for treason. He wrote only one major play, *Heartbreak House*, during the war years. Post-war, Shaw found his voice again and rebuilt his reputation. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1925.

He lived the rest of his life as an international celebrity, travelling the world and writing a dozen more plays. He died at the age of 94 from complications after a fall. His estate was divided among prestigious art institutions in England and Ireland.

The History of the Play

Shaw wrote *Arms and the Man* as a favor to actress Florence Farr, who had suffered a recent critical failure at the Royal Avenue Theatre. It premiered on April 21, 1894 and was immensely popular. It became the first Shaw play ever produced in the United States when actor-manager James Mansfield picked it up that same year. With the royalties from that production, Shaw, at the age of 38, was able to open a bank account for the first time in his life.



Studio photographs from the 1894 production

Interest in the story continued into the next century, when Shaw yielded the rights to *Arms and the Man* for the creation of a German operetta called *The Chocolate Soldier*. Though Shaw despised the result, he later regretted refusing to accept payment from the proceeds as it became an enormous popular success.



Rehearsals for Classic Theatre's production of *Arms and The Man*. From L: Kathleen Couser (Catherine), Maggie Tonra (Raina), Elizabeth Anne Cave (Louka) and Nathan Thurman (Sergius).



Production Team, Classic Theatre of San Antonio

CAST:

Raina Petkoff Maggie Tonra
 Captain Bluntschli Tyler Keyes
 Sergius Saranoff Nathan Thurman
 Louka Elizabeth Anne Cave
 Major Petkoff Allan S. Ross
 Catherine Petkoff Kathleen Couser
 Nicola Robert Ferrelli
 Russian Officer Joseph Urick

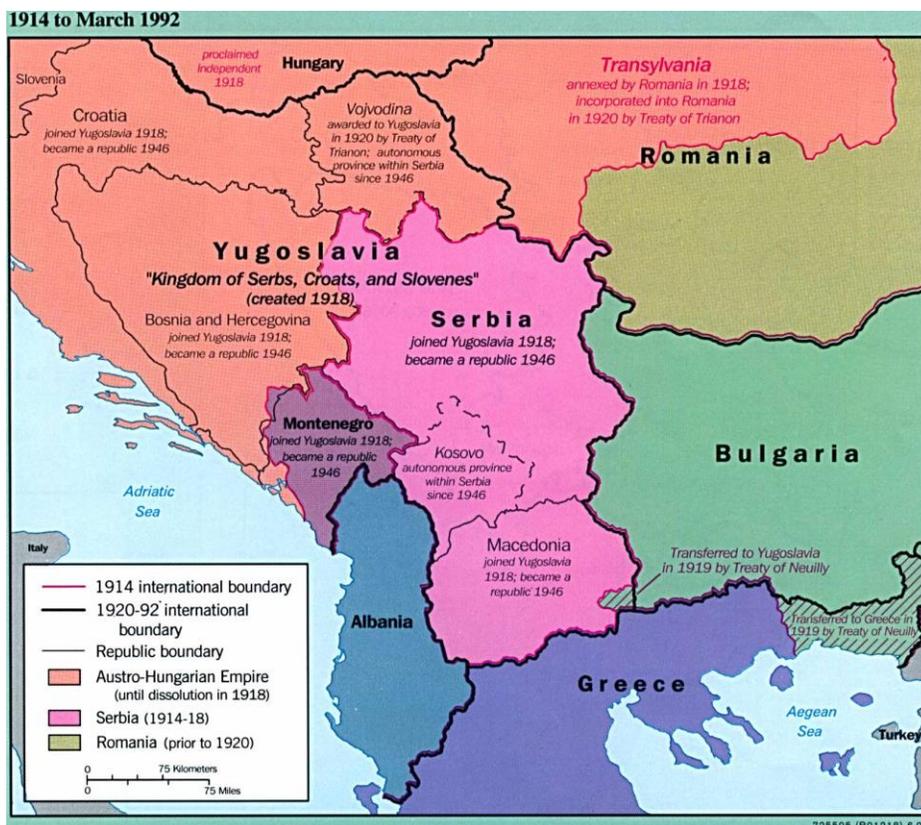
<u>CREW:</u>	<u>CLASSIC THEATRE STAFF:</u>
Director Stacey Connelly	Rick Malone, Executive Director, Founding Member Diane Malone, Co-Artistic Director, Founding Member Allan S. Ross, Co-Artistic Director, Founding Member
Stage Manager Joseph Urick	Christie Beckham, Director of Education Linda Ford, House Manager/Bookkeeper
Tech Director Rick Clyde	Florence Bunten, Box Office Manager Joseph Urick, Graphic Design
Set Design Abigail Entsminger	
Costume Design Jodi Karjala	
Lighting Designer Gregory Starbird	
Sound Designer Rick Malone	
Prop Master Terri Peña Ross	
Dramaturg Kate Cuellar	
AIM High Intern* Brian Hill	
	<p>Study Guide written by: Kate Cuellar with Christie Beckham</p> <p><i>*The AIM High program is an immersive internship program for high-school and college students interested in pursuing a career in the theatre.</i></p> <p>Applications are available on our website: www.classictheatre.org</p>

Themes of *Arms and the Man*

Idealism vs. Realism: Shaw subtitled *Arms and the Man* “an anti-romantic comedy,” suggesting one of the piece’s key themes: the separation of reality from an idealized, romantic view of life. Many of the Bulgarian characters of the play perceive the world through the lens of “Byron and Pushkin,” romantic poets of the early nineteenth century. A champion of realism in the theatre, Shaw thought the romantic plays of his period did a disservice to society by suggesting that people or events could be truly idealized. *Arms and the Man* trumpets the notion that real life is more interesting and moving than stories of courtly love or glorious battle.

Love: Raina and Sergius perform a romantic style of love, but their words of affection and passionate actions have no substance. Their performance of “the higher love” secretly exhausts them. Shaw makes the case for real love being both simple and brave as he gives each of these two characters a new love that acts as an antidote to their hypocrisy.

War: Shaw satirizes romantic ideas of war that glorify its true terrors. He uses Captain Bluntschli, entering for the first time exhausted, dirty and afraid, as a realistic example of a soldier. Late in the play Bluntschli casually describes the death of his friend Stoltz, who was shot in the hip and burned alive in a wood yard. Raina is horrified by such a pointless, wasteful end, but Bluntschli remarks that many men die similarly in war. Confronted with this new perception of war, all of the Petkoffs but especially Sergius Saranoff, for whom war has been “the dream of patriots and heroes,” must reassess their entire viewpoint of combat.



Vocabulary

The Balkans: a mountain range on the Balkan peninsula, encompassing the cities of Istanbul, Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest, Sofia, Plovdiv, Thessaloniki, Zagreb, Skopje, and Tirana.

The Dragoman Pass (*Stage Directions, Act I*): The Dragoman pass is the area of the Balkans near the town of Dragoman, close to the Serbian border. “Dragoman” means a professional interpreter or guide in the Near East.

Klissoura Road (*Sergius, Act III*): a gorge made by the Danube on the frontier of Hungary and Serbia

Leva: Unit of Bulgarian currency. Singular: “lev.” Pronounced with short “e.”

Prince Alexander (*Catherine, Act II*): Alexander I of Battenberg (1857-1893), the first modern prince of Bulgaria and nephew of Alexander II of Russia. He served with the Russian forces in the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78), which gave Bulgaria its independence. Alexander was elected constitutional prince of Bulgaria in April 1879.

Swiss professional soldier (*Bluntschli, Act I*): Mercenaries who were hired to fight for any state or nation without regard to political interests. There was a strong tradition of hired soldiers in Europe from the 14th century. Swiss soldiers had an especially good reputation, and many were hired on a large scale by their own governments.

Affianced (*Sergius and Louka Acts II and III*): Pledged in a promise of marriage; betrothed. Pronounced “ah-FI-anced” with long “I.”

Blackguard (*Bluntschli, Act I*): a person, particularly a man, who behaves in a dishonorable or contemptible way. Pronounced “BLAG-gurd”

Byron (*Raina, Act I*): George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824), British Romantic poet, whose poetry and personality captured the imagination of Europe.

Ernani (*Raina, Act I*): a 19th-century opera by Giuseppe Verdi. Bluntschli mistakes it for Charles Gounod’s operatic adaptation of *Faust*.

“Hand aufs Herz” (*Bluntschli Act I*): Literally, “Hand on heart,” the German equivalent of the English idiom “cross my heart.” Pronounced “Haunt owfs hairts.”

Pushkin (*Raina, Act I*): Aleksandr Sergeyevich Pushkin (1799-1837), poet and prose writer, often considered Russia’s greatest poet and the founder of modern Russian literature. During an exile to South Russia, he composed a “Byronic” poem, *The Prisoner of Caucasus* (1821). He died of wounds he received in a duel.



A **QUICK GUIDE** to discussing
Arms and the Man

On the Bus:

- Share a bit of the synopsis with your students.
- Briefly discuss audience etiquette, particularly emphasizing no cell phone use or picture-taking, sitting politely and quietly during the performance but laughing and applauding where appropriate. Encourage students to view the entire production with “theatre eyes” (as opposed to, say, “movie eyes” or “TV eyes”) and to think about questions they may have for cast and crew during our Q&A following the show.

Reflection Questions after Performance:

- Which characters changed the most by the end of the play?
- Discuss the costume, set and sound design. How did they come together to capture the time period and location?
- Are the themes addressed in the play (war, marriage, love, etc.) still relevant today? Would the play have been more effective in communicating its message if the ending had not been so cheerful?

Delving Deeper:

The title of *Arms and the Man* comes from the opening line of Virgil's epic poem, "The Aeneid." Review a summary of this epic and contrast its message to that of Shaw's play.

In the 1990s the Serbians were involved in a war that resulted in international intervention. Trace and report on the history of the various Balkan conflicts from the late 1800s to the present day. Compare and contrast them with the war being fought in *Arms and The Man*.

Improvise a “deleted scene” from *Arms and The Man*. Example: Louka discovers Bluntschli in Raina’s room.

STUDENT SURVEY:

Teachers, please help us gather important information to obtain future grant funding for this program by having your students fill out this survey:



You can also access this survey at www.classictheatre.org under Education.

UPCOMING STUDENT PERFORMANCES:

(email Christie@classictheatre.org to make reservations for your class today!)

<i>Ghosts</i> by Henrik Ibsen	Wednesday, November 12 & 19 7:00 pm
<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> by William Shakespeare	Wednesday, February 18 & 25 7:00 pm
<i>Vanya & Sonya & Masha & Spike</i> by Christopher Durang	Wednesday, May 6 7:00 pm

We do workshops! Classic styles, monologue work, scenic design assistance.

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