

Evening News 22/5/1957

News from the Amateur Theatre

by LEWIS
CRANSTON



Ffrangcon Price is acquiring an accent for her part as Eliza in "Pygmalion," and Paul Imbusch is developing a fruity voice for his part as her father. Vincent McQueen, as Professor Higgins, lends an authoritative ear.

WHERE DO YOU LOOK FOR A COCKNEY ACCENT?

THE Cockney accent is proving quite a struggle for 23-year-old Ffrangcon Price, who is playing the part of Eliza in "Pygmalion," next production at the Questors Theatre (May 25 to June 4).

Ffrangcon, of Ealing, has a degree in English and Philosophy. Quite a contrast!

Working near Covent Garden (for a publishing firm) helps with that accent problem she tells me; so does riding home on tops of buses. Ffrangcon is one of the precious few Elizas to make an appearance since the Broadway ban was lifted.

The part of Higgins couldn't be better cast. It is being played—I should say interpreted—by schoolmaster Vincent McQueen, whose special interest is speech drama and phonetics.

Paul Imbusch, who has appeared in many amateur musicals as tenor lead, is taking the part of Doolittle. "I'm developing a rich fruity voice," he said. And he demonstrated. I was amazed!

Evening News 29/5/57

IN REVIEW

ELIZA DOOLITTLE must be one of the most difficult roles for an amateur actress. Ffrangcon Price, currently playing the part ("Pygmalion," Questors Theatre, Ealing, until June 4), is one of the saintliest Elizas I have seen. Her interpretation, though it needs more contrast, is a

pleasure to watch. I particularly like the provocative way she uses her eyes and her mischievous smile.

So lovely is this Eliza that one is constantly angered by the way she is treated by Professor Henry Higgins (Vincent McQueen). Fortunately for Eliza she has a good friend

in Colonel Pickering, fastidiously portrayed by Francis W. Smith.

Paul Imbusch, who has a tenor voice, manages to get the gruff throatiness into the part of Alfred Doolittle. His is a real ripe, fruity performance—the dustman de luxe.

Other parts are taken by Theresa Heffernan, Lorna Holbrook, Jo Carpenter, Betty Ogden and June Jansen. The play is admirably produced by John Holbrook.



Paul Imbusch, Ffrangcon Price and Vincent McQueen are the principal characters in the Questors latest production "Pygmalion." Starting to-day, it is running until June 4.

'Pygmalion' scores again

BERNARD SHAW'S "Pygmalion" seems to occupy a very special place in the affections of many playgoers.

A visit to Torquay Open-Air Theatre, in the grounds of Torre Abbey this week, should confirm this view. It is fairly certain that the majority of the first-night audience yesterday, for the performance by the Questors Company, had seen the play before, or at least knew the characters and situations well.

But this fact obviously did nothing to detract from their enjoyment of a fascinating play, splendidly presented by a first-class team under a producer (John Holbrook) with no lack of original ideas, all in keeping with the Shavian atmosphere.

It was interesting, too, to reflect that among the first-nighters there must have been some seeing the play for the first time—one can only guess at the tremendous impact it must have had for them. Shaw at his wittiest comes over today as forcefully as ever.

Eliza Doolittle, the grubby, almost unintelligibly Cockney flower-seller, with her indignant cries of "I'm a good girl, I am"—was ever a more unlikely local girl chosen to "make good," and not

only make good but outshine all her sisters?

Henry Higgins, the phonetics expert, who can pronounce 130 distinct vowel sounds but, confirmed bachelor and stubborn mule that he is, cannot or will not get his tongue around the three simple little words that would have altered the whole drift of the play and made it far less enjoyable—was there ever a more infuriating or more fascinating hero?

As for Eliza's father, Alfred Doolittle, in him Shaw created an immortal tribute to the great unwashed and undeserving—and happy to stay that way.

Ffrangcon Price as Eliza, Vincent McQueen as Professor Higgins and Paul Imbusch as Doolittle, were all as well-nigh perfect in their roles as one could wish to see. They did not even suffer by comparison with one's cherished memories of the screen version, with Wendy Hiller, Leslie Howard and Wilfrid Lawson, and that is praise indeed.

Francis W. Smith made a likeable Colonel Pickering, and Betty Ogden an understanding and tolerant Mrs. Higgins. Other parts were skilfully portrayed by Lorna Holbrook, Alan Drake, Barbara Turpin and Theresa Heffernan, with Joan McQueen, Bill Rudderham and Neville Bradbury in walk-on parts.

'Pygmalion'

A scene from "Pygmalion" being presented at Terquay Open-Air Theatre by the London company "The Questors." Last year the company drew the biggest audiences to their production of "She Stoops to Conquer"

