

STUDENT GROUP 18  
July 1965  
MAJOR BARBARA

Press transcripts

Thames Valley Times  
14 July 1965

TO mark the centenary of the Salvation Army, Questors' second year students are this week giving performances of Bernard Shaw's "Major Barbara." Although written 60 years ago and first produced in 1906, it is still a fine tribute to the Army's work. As is only to be expected of Shaw, the author has aimed many shafts of satire at the Army, but there is such a warm humanity behind the writing that it is impossible to be offended. Indeed an elderly woman officer of the Army at the opening performance on Saturday night was rocking with laughter at Shaw's sallies.

It is astonishing to find how sharply these young, comparatively inexperienced players put over the wit. Michael Hoddell, the producer, has been at great pains to emphasise this element of the play with the result that however familiar we may be with the work, it came over most enjoyably.

Particularly effective is the West Ham shelter scene with the opportunities it gives for rich characterisation. David Pearson makes the bullying Bill Walker a cringing coward, Jacqueline Hasland's Jenny Hill is a stout-hearted lass ready to forgive Bill's insults, and Peter Sharp and Wendy Jolly give equally well-etched studies of Snobby Price and Rummy Mitchens.

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BUT the two central characters are Andrew Undershaft, the munitions millionaire, and his daughter, Major Barbara herself. Christopher Taylor, as Undershaft, gives a remarkably well-controlled performance, building up the character from a quiet dignity as he tries to renew the severed threads with his family.

Wendy Stone's Barbara is a hard-headed, self-assured young woman, just as the author intended her to be.

Two other sharp-pointed performances are given by Roger Kidd as the effete

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Auditions for the new course are expected to be held from the end of this month.

THE Questors' autumn season will open on September 18th with a production by Colette King of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard." Shakespeare's "The Winter's Tale" starts on November 20th. The Antonia y Marina Spanish Dance Company will be at the Questors from September 28th until October 2nd, and on December 7th the Western Theatre Ballet is paying another visit.

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Others who enter into the excellent team work of the whole cast are Keith Godman, Jacqueline Hasland, Jill Champion, Michael Langridge and Phillip Irving.

Jill Champion has designed three most effective sets for the three-sided stage, suggesting the elegance of Lady Britomart's house, the tawdriness of the Army shelter and, with a massive cannon, the power of the Undershaft arms factory. The band music in the play was recorded by the Southall Salvation Army band.

A NEW student training course starts at the Questors' Theatre, Ealing, in September. It is run under the auspices of Ealing Education Committee in place of the old Middlesex County Council education committee, and as before, in conjunction with Ealing Technical College.

The primary aim of the course is to train amateur actors and actresses who want eventually to act at the Questors' Theatre. Previous experience is not necessary. What is essential is enthusiasm, willingness to work hard and a potential talent likely to be developed by training. Admission is subject to interview and audition.

There is no formal lower or upper age limit, but it is essential to accept a student under 16. Most of the students are between 17 and 24, but anyone above that age is accepted providing he or she fulfils the conditions and is able to fit in with the group.

A high standard of discipline and punctuality is required from students who are expected to attend all classes regularly. The acting classes are held on Saturday afternoons from 3 to 5.30 at the Questors' Theatre. These classes are conducted by Alfred Emmet, director of studies. Occasional Saturday classes are set aside for make-up. The movement classes, taken by Ludmila Mladá, are held on Thursday evenings at the Grange school from 7.15 to 8.15. Speech classes are also at this school.

Charles Lomax and by Stanley Goodchild as the bespectacled Intellectual, Adolphus Cusins, who worships Barbara so ardently. Audrey Hewlett, too, makes the most of the outspoken Lady Britomart who seeks, somewhat ineffectually, to rule her family with an iron hand.

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The play was written in 1905, at a time when the Salvation Army was fighting not apathy and disinterest as it is largely doing today, but open hostility and derision. Shaw was among the first to depict "The Army" sympathetically, although there were differences of opinion about this among his critics.

Major Barbara was first presented in 1906 at the Royal Court Theatre. It was well received by all who saw it, including a contingent of Salvation Army commissioners despite the fact that the Army had denounced the theatre as "a den of vice," "a hive of unspeakable iniquity," and "a poison as noxious as alcohol."

"Major Barbara" was presented by the Questors Student Training Group directed by Michael Hoddell. Settings were by Jill Champion. Because of the success of former productions by the students, the run of "Major Barbara" was extended to six performances.

Middlesex County Times  
16 July 1965

### 'MAJOR BARBARA' AIN'T WHAT SHE USED TO BE

A PRODUCTION of Shaw's "Major Barbara" by a student group might be expected to demand forbearance from the critic. But the Questors (second year) group at Mattock-lane, Ealing, marked the end of their training course with a balanced and thoroughly enjoyable performance that banished condescension.

Young actors playing older characters find it impossible to age their voices and, in some cases, their gait and because of this the play loses depth and authority, but it comes over with a punch all the same — and what a treat to be able to hear all the lines!

Wendy Stone, in the title role seems at the start to have everything against her. The part usually goes to big-boned, forceful women of the Wendy Hiller breed.

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Miss Stone is petite and rather sweet, both big disadvantages. But she buckles to with such delicate precision that we soon accept, and back to the hilt, her version of the character.

At times she is a little shrill, and inclined to flounce, but she handles most of her big scenes with a sure hand and steers the play to success.

The droll, likeable personality of Stanley Goodchild, as the man who joins the Salvation Army for love of the Major, suggests that the group should turn immediately to Whitehall Theatre farce. Here is an admirably easy and unforced piece of acting.

I appreciated the visual aspect of Christopher Taylor's performance as the Major's millionaire arms manufacturer father, but, alas, the actor's youth comes through in spite of excellent make-up.

Audrey Hewlett plays Lady Britomart rather too much on one note, but, admittedly, the part is a stock one.

Wendy Jolly's general picture of an East End crone is cleverly authentic — and again, full marks to the make-up artist.

The settings are economically effective, but why on Tuesday did the final arms factory backcloth protection disappear even as I admired it? Never to return.

The group are helped by one or two ex-students. Tony Shipley directs, with George Benn as stage manager.

The play opened a six night run on Saturday.

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### New Ealing Rotary President

MR JOHN R. BARRALET, nurseryman and landscape gardener was inducted president of Ealing Rotary Club by the retiring president, Mr. Denis Melhuish, at the club's weekly luncheon on Tuesday last week at Drayton Court Hotel.

Mr. Melhuish recalled club activities during his year of office and was presented by the new president with his past-president's badge.

Mr. Barralet, formerly a member of Camberwell Rotary Club, joined Ealing Club soon after he started business in Pishanger-lane, Ealing, about ten years ago. He became an active member of both the Community and International Service fields.

His main project during his year, in conjunction with Ealing "Phil" President Mr. H. Goldspink, is to promote a charity fete on Ealing Technical College sports ground on August Bank Holiday Saturday, in aid of local charities.

### RAMBLERS AT THEATRE ROYAL

With members of West London Ramblers Association on Saturday the Independent Rambling Club visited Eton College in the afternoon followed by tea in Windsor and the evening performance at Windsor Theatre Royal.

On Sunday, the ramble started from Leatherhead, after coffee at the Old Rising Sun. On leaving Leatherhead the party went by way of Hawks Hill and Rocketts Farm to Norbury

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