

## Arms and the Man — a good beginning

By JULIE BAYLISS

Arms and the Man is a three-act drawing-room comedy, in which boy meets girl in the first five minutes, and the rest of the time is spent getting them, via many misunderstandings, safely engaged. George Bernard Shaw's towering gifts as a playwright transcend this banal format, as our enjoyment of his wit transcends our interest in the trivial people the play is about.

Arms and the Man was written in 1894, and it is depressing to see how the deeper concerns in the play are still cause for alarm: the persisting affection for warfare as a sport; the inanities forced upon women by their secondary role; the hypocrisy of the seemingly noble.

In this production by the new Toronto Gate Theatre, Shaw's intentions are very adequately realized. The noble hypocrites, Raina and Sergius, have the hardest parts, and are the least successful. Charles Sittler was neither splendid nor cynical enough, and his words lost some of their point because of that. Marie Romaine Aloma is romantic and silly and doesn't make enough of the intelligence Shaw

gives her to make us anything but appalled at her eventual mismatching with Bluntschli.

Steven Sutherland, as Bluntschli, was almost perfect. He looked absolutely right, and delivered all his bons mots with great aplomb. People aren't as witty and self-conscious as Shaw makes them, and writing and performing as "stagey" as this would be better served in a less intimate setting than the Colonnade, and with lighter make-up than Sutherland wears. However we shrieked with joy at all his witticisms. He really had the easiest part. The rest of the cast was good, particularly Raina's parents, but Shaw's meaning might have been better conveyed by a more sophisticated Nicola.

For the first production of a new group this was a good beginning. Their teamwork will probably improve, even if their material doesn't. A play written by a genius can probably survive most of the injuries a company can do it, but I think the Gate may be as interesting to watch in future with less help from their authors.



Jacquelyn Jay as Louba and Charles Sittler as Sergius in Arms and the Man.

## Bethune fails to inspire at Passe Muraille

By ANDREA MICHAELS

Bethune! is a timely play about Montreal's fabled doctor that convinces everyone of his dedication to his work, but fails to really communicate the passion that motivated him

The play, directed by Peter Boretski, is confusing: Bethune is shown killed in the first scene and the rest is flashback. But I had to be told it was Bethune dying and not some hapless patient caught by the wrong edge of a surgeon's scalpel.

With alternating excerpts from W.C. Fields and Chairman Mao, the play brilliantly juxtaposes the basic conflicting philosophies that confront the Chinese peasant, and it makes it easier for capitalists to understand why China accepted Mao's works.

Bethune is played by several characters which certainly lends a new twist to biographical plays. Anne Anglin plays his wife who marries and divorces him twice. One cannot help but feel that she is haplessly caught between an

idealist's devotion to his work and those close friends ignored with equal callousness.

Anglin is one of the brighter spots in the cast's acting although she has nothing to do with what the play lacks. It seems to miss the contradiction that man is inspired to idealism by passion, and yet, can be led to war with the very same heart-wrenching action that inspires anyone to action.

Nationalism is a victory for the bourgeoisies of the world to expand economies and mercilessly eliminate the working class. And that nationalism that brought China its revolution and liberation is not fully utilized.

The ending with Oh, Canada is weak at best. Its attempt to show once again the prostitution of nationalism for capitalists' gain is not clearly shown despite the Chinese ballet it's put to.

It's difficult to compress one man's life into a single play and Theatre Passe Muraille has taken a good stab at it.

## The Faceless Drummer—it's good

By SANDRA SOUCHOTTE

At the risk of climbing on the Canadian Culture bandwagon, it must be said that the success of "Captives of the Faceless Drummer," is in part a tribute to its Canadian essence. "Captives," now playing at the St. Lawrence Centre, under the direction of Martin Kinch, is by Canadian playwright George Ryga. It draws its theme from the FLQ kidnapping crisis and pinpoints its relevancy to the

Canadian scene of today; the society of sell-out.

The action is tight and moves well from personal confrontation between kidnapper and kidnapped, to interjections of the past, and the refrains of the chorus. Peter Jobin, as The Commander, sustains a credible performance as aggressive captor, confident and cool, although the attempts to be casual man-in-charge sometimes seem forced. Alan Bleviss, as captive Harry, plays to him rather than against him, reducing some of the implicit tensions of their relationship. His is a controlled, but understated role of increasing bewilderment and self-doubt.

The chorus provides a cohesive force, counterbalancing the two main characters and adding color. Their tribal aspect sometimes blurs the political definition of what they represent, for they merge into Indian tribe, political revolutionaries, and finally agents

of the law who move in for the inevitable kill. But each of these groups has an integral relevance to the play.

The action presents a constantly shifting focus from the isolation of the cabin where Harry, the symbol of social privilege and political blindness, is held captive, to the expansion of the song, Grey Goose On The Prowl. The wings of the goose are broken and the agents of exploitation are moving in bringing bloodshed, violence and claustrophobic containment.

It is hard to say who is the most captive, the society, the prisoner or the Commander. His fate is perhaps too obvious; he dies, sinking into the garbage surrounding the set becoming indistinguishable from it. The impression of that garbage, chaotic, pervasive and somehow indefinable, is the most effective element in Murray Laufer's utilitarian set.

The play is good.

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