

Neptune faithful to Shaw

by Cheryl Downton

"... Oh, war! war! the dream of patriots and heroes! A fraud, Bluntschli. A hollow sham, like love."

—Sergius Saranoff Act III
Arms and the Man

George Bernard Shaw wrote these words in 1894 as a central thesis of his play, **Arms and the Man**. The play is now being shown at Halifax's Neptune Theatre until December 3. There has been little lost over the years since it was first performed in London and New York in 1894, and theatre companies continue to include it in their repertoires. The Neptune production gives present day audiences a little different look into the world of war games and the antics of those in and out of love.

Dan MacDonald as Captain Bluntschli, also known as the chocolate cream soldier due to his love of the sweets, gives a strong portrayal of the anti-hero. His acting is competent and Shaw's character is

played to perfection.

Bluntschli's lady love, Raina Petkoff, played by Nicola Lipman, is a young lady who prides herself on her high ideals and unflinching aristocratic airs; airs she later denounces as affected and put on because it is expected of her. Lipman plays Raina to the hilt, although it is difficult to realize the change from one to the other; affected to unaffected. Her portrayal is generally effective and convincing.

Florence Patterson, who plays Raina's mother, Catherine Petkoff, would have had Shaw nodding his head in pleased approval. Shaw's description of Catherine as "... a very splendid specimen of the wife of a mountain farmer, (who) is determined to be a Viennese lady..." (stage notes Act 1) is certainly a challenge which Patterson handles magnificently.

Joseph Rutten's Major Petkoff is suitably jovial, while Melody Ryane as 'the servant without the soul of a servant' adds just the right amount

of tenacity and youthful innocence deserving of this rather complicated Shaw character. John Dunsworth's offering of Nicola as the servant who knows his place, and has no higher ambition than a shop in Sofia, is well done, and again, distinctively Shaw.

For a twist in **Arms and the Man**, enter Douglas Chamberlain as Major Sergius Saranoff. Chamberlain's acting is superb and he

seems to give Shaw more than he bargained for. The end result is a delightful characterization, as enjoyable as it is memorable.

The sets are a little bleak, but suitably apt for the play. Costuming is excellent, lighting adequate. The only note of real discord is the musical prelude, designed one would suspect to interject local Bulgarian colour, but only serving as a minor infringement.

Showboat does Kiss Me Kate

by Cheryl Downton

When is a performance within a performance a 1930's musical comedy which has been rewritten from a Shakespearean play? It's Cole Porter's **Kiss Me, Kate**, a story which integrates Shakespeare's **Taming of the Shrew** with the everyday realities of love, marriage, divorce, jealousy and debt—all neatly interspersed with musical expression.

Kiss Me, Kate was recently performed in Halifax by the enthusiastic ensemble which makes up the Kipawo Showboat Company. Sponsored by the Halifax West branch of the Rotary Club, their two performances played to large crowds at the Queen Elizabeth High School auditorium. The Kipawo Showboat Company is a Wolfville based theatrical company which tours its productions throughout the province in an effort to raise funds for future endeavours.

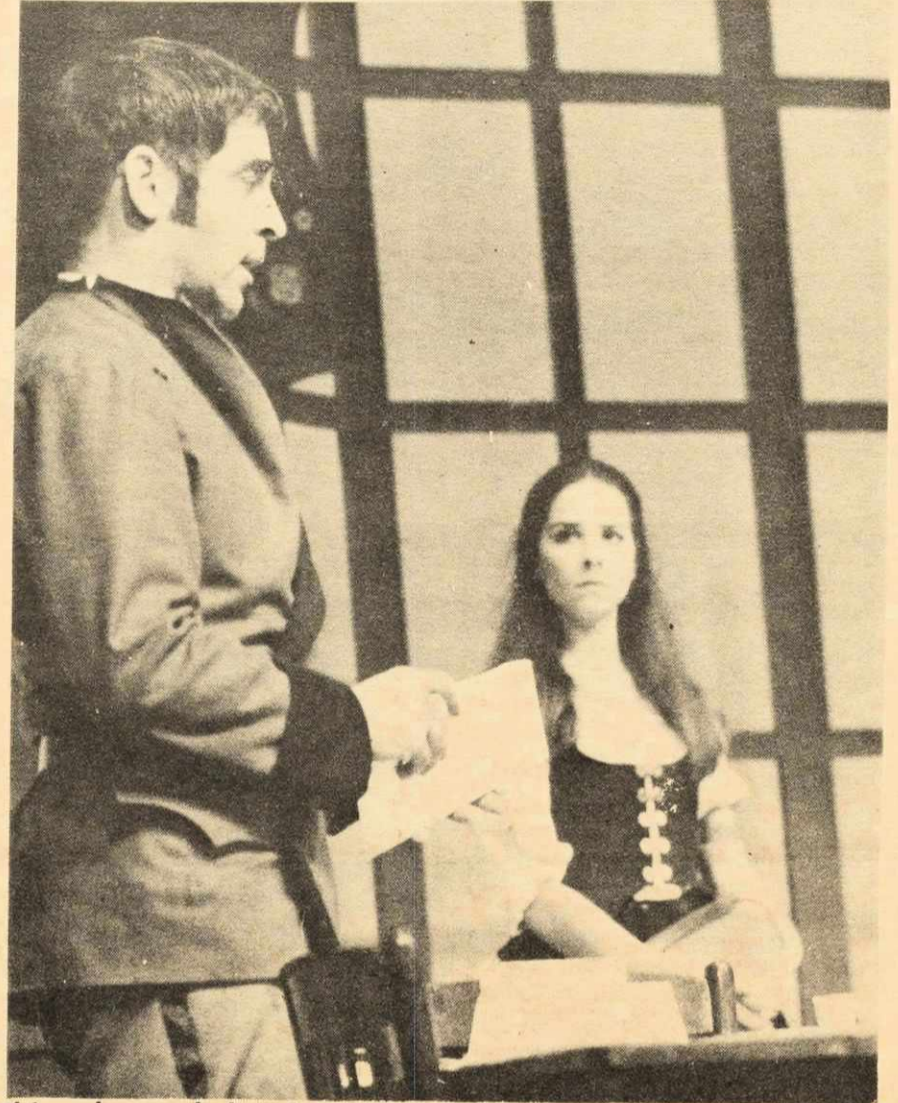
In this production of **Kiss Me, Kate**, several of the performers were remembered from the Showboat production of **Carousel** which played at the Cohn some months ago. Stephen Abbass portrayed Fred Graham, a not so youthful aspiring actor whose recent marital life has been anything but blissful. Abbass has a good strong voice and

is a very capable actor, but **Kiss Me, Kate** does not have much musical material suitable for him. His "I've Come to Wive it Wealthily in Padua" and "Where is the Life That Late I Led" sounded strained and forced, while "So in Love" seemed a much better outlet for his talents.

Jean Staples is not a stranger to Company performances. She too has a fine voice, but the best effect was achieved through her singing of "I Hate Men", in the admirably shrew-like voice of Katherine. ("He may have hair upon his chest but so does Lassie")

Lois Lane (alias Bianca), a small town nympho on the way to stardom, was played by Toni Newman. Newman gave a good overall performance, and her portrayal of the good natured, prone-to-fooling-around starlet was enjoyable. Her vocal numbers were adequate, with her "Always True to You Darling in my Fashion" probably the best.

The chorus work was harmonious and full, and several of the 'minor' characters were excellent. Sylvia Wedderburn as Paula displayed fine musical vocal ability and was a joy to listen to when she sang "It's too Darn Hot." The two characters who



This rehearsal shot from Neptune Theatre's production of George Bernard Shaw's **Arms and the Man** shows Dan MacDonald as Bluntschli and Melody Ryane as Louka

stole the show, Neal Benneworth and Sandy Abbass as the none too bright gangsters, were excellently cast. Their rendition of "Brush Up Your Shakespeare" accompanied by awkward pirouettes and waltz steps was much appreciated.

Costumes were generally well done, with the outfits of the gangsters taking top points. Several of the male performers' tunics seemed uncomfortably short, and one pair of male legs could have benefited from opaque tights.

The production of such an involved musical comedy was indeed a grand undertaking. The Kipawo Showboat Company was equal to the task, and their performance included tap dancing, whistling, gymnastics and a capable six member orchestra. (piano, marimba, guitar / drums, flute and a page turner)

The Kipawo Showboat Company has come a long way, and still has lots of energy and optimism necessary for future growth.

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