

# Neptune Theatre's misalliance

by J.L. Round

Review of Misalliance, playing at Neptune Theatre until Dec. 20th.

With George Bernard Shaw's prolific output of plays in his 94 years of life, Neptune Theatre, I must say, has shown terribly original audacity in choosing this one. G.B.S.'s Misalliance is, in cold, hard fact, a very obscure, dull play. A hell-of-a-lot of nothing happens in its two-and-a-half hour entirety. But it's funny. It's sort of like "All In The Family" in that you're always assured of a lot of laughs and nothing else.

Misalliance concerns itself with a May afternoon in 1909 in the household of John Tarleton Sr., underwear manufacturer and philosopher. With various other characters - Mrs. Tarleton, John Tarleton

Jr., Hypatia Tarleton, Hypatia's snivelling little fiancée, Bently (Bunny) Summerhays - the talk goes on and on.

The play is quite contemporary in its themes. Shaw gets in several good cracks for the women's liberation movement and some rather insidious remarks about bibles and organized religion and general religious hypocrisy. He deals some swift blows to the generation gap and has some off-colour rascist remarks. And the whole play itself is a narrow satire on the love-adventures of the idle rich.

On the whole, the cast is more than excellent and, under the direction of John Wood, the performance manages to give the play its all. And although the play may be

lacking, several of its characters are very entertaining in themselves. Peter Hutt gives an excellent show of delicious childishness as Bunny, the spoiled young man of fleeting shows of bravado and prolonged self-pity.

Not until the end of the first act does the play begin to move. Complications enter in the forms of Joseph Percival, friend to Bunny, and the very virile Lina Szczepanowska (the Polish lady). Everybody has a hang-up in this play. John Tarleton Sr. persists in prescribing authors and readings for the education and well-being of his guests. Mrs. Tarleton is horrified when people of dignity and bearing talk of such base things as drainage systems (and who could

blame her?). And the Polish lady likes to take her friends into the gymnasium and build them up by working them out. Denise Ferguson manages very well in keeping up the spark and vitality and accent of her very amusing and energetic lady to the end of the play.

It is in the second act that the play reveals its touch of class in the beautifully ludicrous character of Julius Baker. Frank Maraden gives a fantastically droll performance in the twitching, scratching, Socialist-theory spouting, anti-bourgeois, would-be-murderer clerk. From the time he comes on until his exit, Maraden is the undisputed focal point on the stage.

At first glance, designer Susan Benson's conservatory-setting for the play looks very elegant and lavish. On a subsequent survey, it assumes a peaceful-simplicity and suits the production nicely. The lighting, however, was obscene - I couldn't look at it! By the end of the play the bright-blue background, which abused the whole back wall, was causing me grievous distress. My eyes were watering and the stage was a blur and I hadn't been drinking. And, unfortunately, the novelty of green-looking shoes and hair that sporadically changed colour had long since worn off.

But anyway, if you really want to know about the lives of the idle rich, read Arcadian Adventures. Read Leacock.

## 20th century town crier

HALIFAX, N.S. -- In the midst of the Athletic hurly-burly of Canadians preparing for Olympic greatness the lonely training program of Mr. Peter Cox has gone unnoticed.

Mr. Cox's achievement of fame, if his sincerity is rewarded, will come in the town square of Hastings, England, and not in the great Olympic stadium in Montreal. The lack of notice hasn't been due to Mr. Cox's unwillingness to stand up and shout but because he goes about his regular business while he trains.

Mr. Peter Cox is the official Town Crier of Historic Properties, Halifax and a principal reason why a visit to the restoration development is truly a trip back in time to the end of the 18th Century. Mr. Cox expects to represent Halifax in the 1976 World Championship Town Crier competition which is held annually in England.

While fellow Canadians are seeking to top the speed, height, or distance of the last record holder in their event, Mr. Cox is matching his efforts against those of a legendary figure born about 1770 and reputed to be the finest town crier in North America. Peter Cox's historic mentor and nemesis, George Charker, was said to have the birthdates of 2,000 Haligonians on the tip of his tongue and, in need, could come up with hundreds of wedding anniversaries. To start, Mr. Cox has had to give at least a hundred pounds away to Charker who was built like a weightlifter and who could be seen and heard by everyone in the crowded street around him.

"I can't do anything about the height and very little about the weight," Mr. Cox says, "but I'm not willing to concede anything on voice. Those who have heard Mr. Cox on duty at Historic Properties are willing to bet at least even money against the fabled Charker outshouting Mr. Cox. Twenty years as a scout master either gives

you an indestructible voice or turns you into a whisperer. I decided against whispering when I was four."

Peter Cox is now a man with a mission: to give Halifax the most authentic descendent of the famous town criers of North America and Great Britain and to win the town crier championship for Canada. He spends hours of his own time digging up the tiny bits and pieces which are in print about Town Criers and talks, when he can, to historians who specialize in the social history of the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries.

If Peter Cox wins the Town Crier championship he will be able to take it in stride. He presently is champion salesman for all Canada in his other full-time job as salesman for a national brand of storm windows and doors. Mr. Cox became a Town Crier as the result of a dare from his boss who said, "you're always ready to talk" (or words to that effect). The people running a wide search for an Historic Properties' Town Crier auditioned him, heard Mr. Cox give one of his scoutmaster shouts, and the job was his. He didn't know he was hooked until dressed in a temporary 18th Century uniform (Mr. Cox insists he does not wear a costume but a uniform for his job just as a fireman or policeman or soldier wears a uniform in his job.) He went out to meet the people. Their interest in what he was doing and how he did it, started him searching so that he could better answer visitors' questions.

When Mr. Cox appears in the town Square of Hastings the competitors from other parts of the world will have trouble matching his sartorial splendor. For Christmas, Historic Properties' presented their Town Crier with a resplendent new uniform designed by a Canadian specialist in historic dress. A coat of deep blue with silver buttons will do Mr. Cox and Canada proud when he

takes his turn ringing his bell and cries Canada's wares in the world championship.

If any reader has a ware to cry or a birthday greeting to be proclaimed, Mr. Cox is available. He feels the more varied his cries, the broader his repertoire - the better are his chances of winning the championship.

Meanwhile, if a man in a Dickensian uniform offers you a good deal on a set of storm windows and doors don't call the mental help number. It will be a good deal and it will be Mr. Peter Cox too busy to change uniforms but not too busy to sell.

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