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GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S ARMS AND THE MAN:

A DIRECTOR'S STUDY FOR PRODUCTION

by

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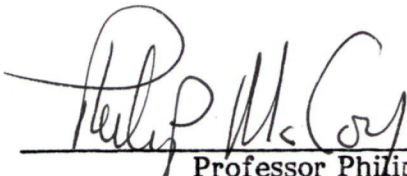
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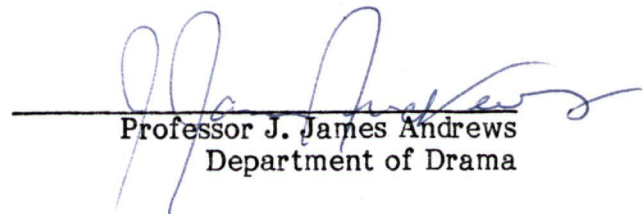
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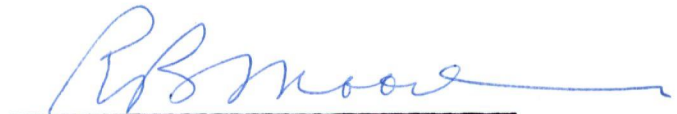
The undersigned certify that they have read, and do recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "George Bernard Shaw's Arms and the Man: A Director's Study for Production," by Brian Thomas Baxter in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.




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ABSTRACT

This thesis records the directorial processes involved with the production of George Bernard Shaw's Arms and the Man, presented by the Department of Drama of the University of Calgary from October 23 to November 2, 1985. The first chapter, in essay form, establishes the theoretical base for a farcical approach to Arms and the Man, acknowledging the romantic/realistic dichotomy which is at the heart of the dramatic action whilst showing the play to be a failed sermon against the idealization of life. As well, this chapter examines specific sources of comedy in the script. The second chapter deals with the director's pre-production work of developing a method of staging to support this theoretical analysis, looking specifically at issues of style and mise en scene, and providing a rationale for using contrasting symmetrical and asymmetrical movement patterns to emphasize the romantic/realistic dichotomy. The director's production diary, detailing the process of bringing these concepts to the stage, makes up the final chapter. Samples of the director's pre-production notes, program information and reviews are included as appendices.

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CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

I. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

ARMS AND THE MAN AS FAILED SERMON

George Bernard Shaw wrote Arms and the Man, his self-titled "anti-romantic comedy,"¹ not only to amuse and entertain his audiences, but also to teach a lesson against what he saw as the common practice of idealizing life. The enduring popularity of the play has shown that it is highly successful as a farcical comedy, yet I would suggest that it is a failure as a sermon, today as in 1894 when it was first produced, because its serious messages are sacrificed to its wild, rollicking humour.

In view of the origins of Arms and the Man, it is less than clear as to which, if either, of the purposes was dominant in Shaw's mind: to amuse or to instruct. Well before the play was produced, Shaw wrote at the end of a note to Janet Achurch: "I have made a desperate attempt to begin a real romantic play for F.F. [Florence Farr] in the style of Victor Hugo. The first act is nearly finished and it is quite the funniest attempt at that style of composition ever made."² That this is the earliest reference in Shaw's correspondence to the script in progress, suggests that Arms and the Man was written first as an entertainment, which later became infused with Shaw's social and political ideas. Of course, whilst this theory seems to be supported by Shaw's own "Preface" to Plays Pleasant in which he says that he, "having nothing but unpleasant plays in my desk,

hastily completed a first attempt at a pleasant one,"³ it remains conjectural only and principally of biographical interest.

What is certain is that Shaw, in articles and letters which appeared in profusion after the play had been produced, stated that Arms and the Man was a serious and realistic comedy which dealt with weighty themes. To Ellen Terry he wrote: "By the way, when I used to read the play before it was produced, people used not to laugh at it as they laughed in the theatre. On my honour it was a serious play — a play to cry over if you could only have helped laughing."⁴ He goes even farther in a note to W.T. Stead, then a leading proponent of the world disarmament movement:

Allow me to point out that you have not, as far as I'm aware, come to see my play Arms and the Man, in which, for the first time, soldiering has been treated on the stage with some reference to reality ...If you were going to preach a sermon on war, I would come to church to hear you. Why not come to the theatre to hear my sermon?⁵

Without question Shaw was treating his play as a serious piece, and he defended the importance and the realism of his work in a lengthy article titled, "A Dramatic Realist to His Critics," published in The New Review a few months after Arms and the Man had opened in London, in which he documented at great length the many sources of military information which had informed his writing.⁶

For the specific target of the lesson in Arms and the Man, we can again

look to Shaw's "Preface" to Plays Pleasant, in which he indicates that he has aimed at the sentimental tendency of people to idealize their world. Shaw suggests that critics generally, and notably one Moy Thomas, most objected to the anti-romantic cynicism of his play, wondering whether political and religious idealism would "survive the general onslaught...which is implicit, and indeed explicit, in Arms and the Man and the naturalist plays of the modern school." Shaw's position is most clear on this issue:

For my part I hope not; for idealism, which is only a flattering name for romance and politics and morals, is as obnoxious to me as romance in ethics or religion. In spite of a Liberal Revolution or two, I can no longer be satisfied with fictitious morals and fictitious good conduct, shedding fictitious glory on robbery, starvation, disease, crime, drink, war, cruelty, cupidity, and all other commonplaces of civilization which drive men to the theatre to make foolish pretences that such things are progress, science, morals, religion, patriotism, imperial supremacy, national greatness and all the other names the newspapers call them. On the other hand, I see plenty of good in the world working itself out as fast as the idealists will allow it.⁷

The theme of the dangers of idealization is repeated often and forcefully by Shaw in his discussions of Arms and the Man, leaving little doubt as to the specificity of his intentions. Bernard Dukore writes in his book, Bernard Shaw: Playwright: "It is not that he wants to abolish war, but the idealization of war; not that he wishes to abolish love, but the unrealistic

views of love."⁸ This central theme encompasses and directs all other component subjects.

In looking at Arms and the Man, I do not intend to treat Shaw's attitudes towards idealization in life and idealization in art (theatre) as separate issues. In his work, Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theatre, Martin Meisel suggests that Arms and the Man is "a Comedy whose point of departure was ... Romantic Drama, and particularly Military Melodrama," and goes on to look at elements of the plot in terms of models from the contemporary London stage, arguing convincingly that Shaw was working at parodying popular theatre styles.⁹ Shaw did not distinguish between the theatre and real life; idealization in one affected the other. Shaw wrote of the evils of the "Romantic Formula" in theatre: "The romantic conventions on which the formula proceeds are all false, and are doing incalculable harm in these days when everybody reads romances and goes to the theatre."¹⁰ For my purposes at least, it is enough to treat idealization as a general theme.

In the time immediately following the first production of Arms and the Man, Shaw was an eloquent and aggressive proponent of the understanding of the play as a serious, realistic piece; it is against this assessment that I am arguing. The play, I would suggest, is neither serious nor realistic, in style or purpose. I agree, however, with Archibald Henderson's comment, quoted in an essay by Charles A. Berst entitled, "Romance and Reality in Arms and the Man," that "the play has for its dramatic essence the collision of romantic illusion with prosaic reality,"¹¹ and it is from this angle that I will first approach the script.

As indicated by his comments in the "Preface" to Plays Pleasant (already quoted), Shaw not only sees dangers and sterility in idealization but also "plenty of good in the world working itself out as fast as the idealists will allow it."¹² Shaw's technique in Arms and the Man is to first establish the romantic ideal, devalue it, and finally offer a positive alternative to it. Specifically he establishes the ideals of love and war and then completely demolishes them and replaces them with realistic, healthy perspectives.¹³

Act One, which serves as something of a prologue to the main action of the second and third acts, goes a long way into this process. The scene opens on a beautiful young lady in a rich fur cloak, standing on the balcony outside her bedroom, "...intensely conscious of the romantic beauty of the night, and of the fact that her own youth and beauty are part of it." (19) Raina's dreaming is interrupted by the bustling entrance of her mother, Catherine, who comes with news of the war. "A great battle at Slivnitza! A victory! And it was won by Sergius!" she tells Raina, going on to say: "Sergius is the hero of the hour, the idol of the regiment," (20) and describing in some detail how, against orders, he gallantly led a charge against the enemy's guns and turned the tide of battle. Together they rejoice, basking in the glory of their handsome, dashing hero; Raina, who had somewhat doubted the heroism of Sergius, is especially swept up:

Oh, to think that it was all true! that Sergius is just as splendid and noble as he looks! that the world is really a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act its romance! What happiness! What unspeakable fulfilment!

(21-2)

The romantic, heroic ideals are established from the outset and are personified by the unseen but much lauded Sergius; this paradigmatic role for Sergius is most important, because his eventual embarrassment is the vehicle for the devaluation of the whole system of romantic ideals. At this stage, though, he is a gleaming distant hero.

Raina and Catherine are interrupted in their passion by the maid, Louka, who warns that they must seal up the house to protect against Serbian troops retreating headlong through the town. Catherine, "her housekeeping instincts aroused," (22) heads off to supervise and Raina is left alone. Still glowing, she goes to her chest of drawers and picks up a portrait of her beloved Sergius. "She does not kiss it, or press it to her breast, or show it any mark of bodily affection; but she takes it in her hands and elevates it like a priestess. Looking up at the picture. Oh, I shall never be unworthy of you any more, my soul's hero: Never, never, never!" (23) Picking up a novel, she slips dreamily into bed, glancing back at the portrait and murmuring, "My hero! My Hero!" (23) the perfect picture of romantic bliss.

It is into this warm and contented nest of romanticism that the outside world, in all its brutal reality, suddenly and sharply intrudes. Gunshots ring out in the streets below Raina's window, bringing home the immediacy of the fighting. Raina blows out her candles and dives beneath the covers of her bed, hiding in her darkened room from the sounds outside. All is silence and darkness, and then amidst a crashing volley the shutters fly open and the silhouetted figure of a man stands panting in the

darkness; the real world has thrust itself into the very seat of romance. This violation of Raina's world forces her into direct contact with a reality completely at odds with her romantic illusions. There is a long exchange between Bluntschli and Raina which I will examine momentarily, but it is useful to consider the first and most powerful image of this intrusion, for it captures immediately the thematic essence of the whole scene. Out of the darkness, the invisible, ominous Bluntschli orders Raina to strike a match that he might see her. Raina lights a candle and holds it up before her to light the room. Juxtaposed are Raina, the beautiful young girl in her soft nightdress, and Bluntschli, "in a deplorable plight, bespattered with mud and blood and snow, his belt and the strap of his revolver case keeping together the ruins of the blue tunic of a Serbian artillery officer," (24) panting, frightened, brandishing his pistol at the young lady. He is completely out of place, not only in the cosy bedroom but in any idealised vision of war and soldiery. Yet into both has he trespassed.

Bluntschli's behavior following on from this first encounter quickly serves to amplify and reinforce the contrast between himself, the realist, and Sergius, the established romantic ideal. He is entirely pragmatic, consciously assuming a menacing tone with Raina in order to silence her. Faced with her gallant challenge, "How do you know that I am afraid to die?," (25) Bluntschli astutely changes tactics and seizes her cloak, correctly determining that she would be loath to call in soldiers in her state of undress. "Revolted", Raina cries, "It is not the weapon of a gentleman!" (25) appealing to what she imagines to be a soldier's sense of

honour. Bluntschli replies squarely "It's good enough for a man with only you to stand between him and death" (25): he is completely and blatantly practical, and totally realistic. Following almost directly on this moment, Shaw cleverly manages both to reinforce our sense of the practical nature of Bluntschli and at the same time to cast a very sympathetic light upon him. Knocking is heard at the front door, along with cries of Bulgarian soldiers demanding to search the house. Knowing that intimidating Raina no longer serves any useful purpose, Bluntschli returns her cloak, saying, "sincerely and kindly, No use, dear: I'm done for. Quick! Wrap yourself up: they're coming." (26) We see a Bluntschli neither cruel nor dishonourable, but simply realistic.

Raina's decision to help Bluntschli is of particular interest in that it reveals her predisposition towards the natural and the realistic. Firstly, we see her act spontaneously and genuinely; as Bluntschli prepares for his death fight, Raina says, "Impulsively, I'll help you! I'll save you!" This is in sharp contrast to her studied and mannered actions at the opening of the act and to much of her grand manner later on. Secondly, we see that Raina is a very capable realist as she hides Bluntschli and proceeds to fool the searching officer and her mother with bold and bald-faced lies. Her actions (if not her motives) are neither heroic nor pure, but wonderfully practical and efficient.

It is not necessary here to look at the rest of the first act in this detail; it is enough to say that Bluntschli and his relentless realism continue to deny Raina's most cherished illusions. His revelations about war, of how he

carries chocolate creams instead of cartridges, of how after days under fire he could be made to cry at the slightest scolding, and other unheroic details, make a veritable barrage against Raina's romanticism. For her part, Raina gamely sticks to her dreams, trying to maintain the pose of a great romantic lady in the face of Bluntschli's constant counters; indeed when Raina decides to continue to harbour Bluntschli, she justifies her action by citing the opera Ernani as a model, creating an heroic scenario within which the ever practical Bluntschli is happy to play a part. But the overall effect of the long scene between Bluntschli and Raina is to call into question the value and validity of the romantic ideals expressed in the act's opening.

One particular section which deserves special mention is Bluntschli's description of the cavalry charge, for it is here that the character of Sergius is, for the first time, undercut. Asked by Raina to recount the details of the "great cavalry charge," (30) Bluntschli proceeds to paint a rather dismal picture of men as "mere projectiles," (31) most often injured in collisions as they attempt to hide behind each other. But, concedes Bluntschli, the leader of the Slivnitsa charge was different. "He did it like an operatic tenor. A regular handsome fellow, with flashing eyes and a lovely moustache, shouting his war cry and charging like Don Quixote at the windmills." (31) This marks the apex of the glory of Sergius, his high point in the eyes of Raina and the audience. But Bluntschli (and Shaw) has set up Sergius to knock him down. Immediately Bluntschli adds, "We did laugh," (31) and goes on to show Sergius as a bumbler who had risked himself and his troops and was saved only through a mix-up in ammunition

delivered to the Serbian machine-gun batteries: "He and his regiment simply committed suicide; only the pistol missed fire; that's all." (32) When Bluntschli sees that Raina is hurt and offended by this, he tries to put a favourable light on things but cannot; Sergius is irrevocably compromised in the eyes of the audience and, one must imagine, in Raina's eyes as well. Shaw raises Sergius up as our hero and then drops him, thus turning our betrayed sympathies against him and that which he represents. This mirrors the function of the act as a whole, setting up the romantic ideals and then undercutting them, pulling out their supports. The main action of the play, in Acts Two and Three, is the toppling of these ideals and their replacement with a satisfying realism.

Act Two is well separated in time from the opening, set on a fine spring morning some months after the battle. Here the undercutting of Sergius begins almost right away as the soldiers return from the wars. First, Petkoff, Raina's father, subtly confirms Bluntschli's analysis of the charge, reminding the audience of Sergius' foolishness and incompetence. Thus when Sergius arrives and begins to complain of his military contributions going unrecognised, the passage is ripe with irony.

I won the battle the wrong way when our worthy Russian generals were losing it the right way. In short, I wounded their self-esteem. Two cossack colonels had their regiments routed on the most correct principles of scientific warfare. Two major generals got killed strictly according to military etiquette. The two colonels are now major-generals; and I am still a simple major. (45)

Sergius' vacuous assessment of the reasons for his not being promoted, following on the heels of Petkoff's comment, "He hasn't the slightest chance of promotion until we're sure the peace will be a lasting one," (44) serves to strip away further Sergius' heroic glory, and, by contrast, to raise the audience's opinion of Bluntschli.

The most important undercutting of romantic ideals in Act Two is not in the areas of war and soldiering but in the field of love, which shows most clearly the falseness inherent in romance. When Raina first reveals herself in the garden at an opportune moment, "posing regally she presents her hand" and Sergius "drops chivalrously to one knee and kisses it." (46) Left alone, they continue this stiff ritual of romance. Raina, "placing her hands on his shoulders...looks up at him with admiration and worship," and exclaims, "My hero! My King!" Sergius, "kissing her forehead," replies "My queen!" (49) After months of separation this hardly seems a very warm, passionate greeting. They continue, swearing their mutual love in the most exalted terms:

SERGIUS: Dearest, all my deeds have been yours.
You inspired me. I have gone through the war
like a knight in a tournament with his lady
looking down on him.

RAINA: And you have never been absent from
my thoughts for a moment. Very solemnly.
Sergius: I think we two have found a higher
love. When I think of you, I feel that I could
never do a base deed or think an ignoble
thought.

SERGIUS: My Lady and my Saint! He clasps her
reverently.

RAINA: Returning his embrace. My lord and
my—

SERGIUS: Sh-Sh! Let me be the worshipper, dear.
You little know how unworthy even the best
man is of a girl's pure passion. (49)

This last line, at the end of this great gush of "higher love," has a telling double irony. First, only moments before this scene, Raina had, with her mother, deliberately and calculatingly lied to Sergius, scolding him for repeating the story of Bluntschli's being sheltered by two women after his escape from Slivnitsa. "If such women exist," exclaims Catherine, "we should be spared the knowledge of them." (48) A "girl's pure passion" is shown to be not so pure after all. However, it is worth noting that Raina's deception covers up a potentially embarrassing situation and is not perceived (by the audience at least) as genuine wrong-doing. The second and more damning irony of the line is given when, only moments later, after Raina has left to fetch her hat for a walk, Sergius turns to the pretty servant girl: "Louka, do you know what the higher love is?... Very fatiguing to keep up for any length of time. One feels the need for some relief after it." (50) Sergius proceeds to follow this innuendo-laden line with sexual advances towards her. Sergius the lover is shown to be false, and just as ideals of military heroism have been previously trampled, so now are illusions of romantic love shown as frauds devoid either of nobility or honesty.

By this time, the first purpose of the play has been fulfilled: romantic idealism has been effectively attacked. We see Sergius and Raina playing

out roles which they know to be false within a scenario which they desperately want to believe in. What remains is for Shaw to pose an antithesis within which the characters can begin to lead their lives naturally and happily. The catalysts which serve to bring about these revelations are Louka and Bluntschli. Acting separately, each of these realists brings some degree of insight to another character: Bluntschli to Raina and Louka to Sergius; and these efforts come together in the scene à faire in which everything is revealed and all are reconciled.

Bluntschli comes back to the Petkoff house, ostensibly to return the coat which had been loaned him to aid his escape, and despite Catherine's frantic attempts to be rid of him, he is spotted by Petkoff and pressed to accept an invitation to lunch. Raina barely avoids uncovering all when, on suddenly seeing Bluntschli, she exclaims, "Oh, the chocolate cream soldier!" (58) and must scramble to cover this with an elaborate lie. Whilst Raina escapes public exposure, at least temporarily, when alone with Bluntschli she cannot avoid self-discovery. When the others have gone from the library, inadvertantly leaving her and Bluntschli alone, Raina once again begins to play her role as noble heroine. It pains her to deceive Sergius, she says: "My relation to him is the one really beautiful and noble part of my life. I hope you can understand that." (65) With good-natured cynicism, Bluntschli replies "You mean that you wouldn't want him to find out that the story of the ice pudding was a-a-a-you know." (66) Bluntschli clearly sees and states that something truly beautiful and noble cannot be based on falsehoods and deception. Raina rallies valiantly, claiming that in her life she has told but two lies, and

both to save Bluntschli's life. Not to be put off the scent, Bluntschli continues his doubting: "You said you'd told only two lies in your whole life. Dear young lady, isn't that rather a short allowance? I'm quite a straightforward man myself, but it wouldn't last me a whole morning." (66-7) Raina raises the stakes: "Do you know , sir, that you are insulting me?" (67) but to no avail. Bluntschli presses home the attack and the end of Raina's glorious romantic pose is not far off:

BLUNTSCHLI: I can't help it. When you strike that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but I find it impossible to believe a single word you say.

RAINA: Superbly. Captain Bluntschli!

BLUNTSCHLI: Unmoved. Yes?

RAINA: Standing over him as if she could not believe her senses. Do you mean what you said just now? Do you know what you said just now?

BLUNTSCHLI: I do.

RAINA: I! I!!! She points to herself incredulously, meaning, "I, Raina Petkoff, tell lies!" He meets her gaze unflinchingly. She suddenly sits down beside him and adds, with a complete change of manner from the heroic to a babyish familiarity. How did you find me out?

(67)

Of course the falseness of Raina's pose is not a revelation to her; she has always known it to be false, but in sincere imitation of a manner which

she believed in. The revelation is that the heroic attitude is artificial in everyone. "They believe in it. I do it before Sergius. He believes it," (67) she says, and Bluntschli replies "Yes, he's a little in that line himself, isn't he?", (67) startling Raina with an apparently new and original thought. A whole new vision of her world begins to open up as she trails off in thought, saying "I wonder- I wonder, is he? If I thought that..." (67) Raina has not only had to admit to her own pretense but has also been given an entirely new, clear perspective on the romantic ideals to which she has held.

Following on directly from this exchange is a very similar scene between Louka and Sergius. Louka is just as blunt and direct with Sergius as was Bluntschli with Raina; each time Sergius assumes grand airs, Louka peremptorily dismisses them. Sergius exclaims, "Fervently. Give me a man who will defy to the death any power on earth or in heaven that sets itself up against his own will and conscience: He alone is the brave man." (73-4) To this, Louka's reply is more than plain: "How easy it is to talk! Men never seem to me to grow up: they all have schoolboy ideas. You don't know what true courage is." (74) Louka challenges him, saying he'd not have the courage to claim her, a common girl, if he so desired, and she waves off his claims of Raina's higher love by revealing Bluntschli as Raina's true fancy. Like Raina before him, Sergius rises to new heights of heroic grandeur, and like Bluntschli before her, Louka presses on to the kill:

SERGIUS: Recoiling. The Swiss?

LOUKA: A man worth ten of you. Then you can come to me; and I will refuse you. You are not good enough for me. She turns to the door.

SERGIUS: Springing after her and catching her fiercely in his arms. I will kill the Swiss; and afterwards I will do as I please with you.

LOUKA: In his arms, passive and steadfast. He will kill you perhaps. He has beaten you in love. He may beat you in war.

SERGIUS: Tormentedly. Do you think I believe that she!-She! [note repetition of Raina's "I!-I!!!" pattern] whose worst thoughts are higher than your best ones, is capable of trifling with another man behind my back?

LOUKA: Do you think she would believe the Swiss if he told her now that I am in your arms?

SERGIUS: Releasing her in despair. Damnation! Oh, Damnation! Mockery! Mockery everywhere! Everything I think is mocked by everything I do.

(75)

Sergius, like Raina, has now had his eyes forced open and after this it is only left to bring everything into the open and join everyone together in their true combinations. This process is speeded along by Sergius challenging Bluntschli to a duel, a challenge stumbled onto by Raina. Sergius majestically accuses Raina; she, helped by Bluntschli, battles back and accuses Sergius of secretly making love to Louka. Sergius admits this, saying "Cynically. Raina, our romance is shattered. Life's a farce." (78) thus earning Bluntschli's whimsical comment: "You see: he's found

himself out now." (78) Eventually all is found out; Louka's love for Sergius, Sergius' love for Louka, the attraction between Bluntschli and Raina, the truth of the chocolate-cream soldier, Bluntschli's true station in life. The play ends with the two couples, paired off by natural attraction and not by false romantic formulae, with every prospect for health and happiness in the future.

Thus Shaw successfully plays out the conflict between reality and romantic illusion, with the realist viewpoint clearly emerging the favourite. But this does not make Arms and the Man "... A serious play—a play to cry over..."¹⁴ as Shaw contends, but is instead the basis of a rollicking farcical comedy, light and fun but without weight. And without realism. The reason for this lies in Shaw's tendency to exaggerate and simplify characters and situations to a point which bears no relation to the real world but becomes instead an hilarious parody of it; and the thematic ideas, real as they are, are buried in the fun.

One of the clearest examples of this exaggeration comes in the language of the play's romantic characters, which often is transparently ridiculous. Raina's great emotional gushes at the play's opening set the tone straight off; no one, I venture to suggest, could honestly believe in a line such as: "Oh, to think that it was all true! ... that the world is a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act its romance! What happiness! What unspeakable fulfilment!" (21-2) By any standards, this is excessive, artificial emotionalism, and yet it is the norm in Arms and the Man; the pompous, sticky exchange (quoted earlier) between the

reunited Sergius and Raina fits right in, as does the elevated language of their great squabbles. These exchanges are, in every way, extreme and unrealistic.

This heightened language is an outward symptom of the unbelievable situations in which the characters find themselves. In particular, Raina, Catherine and Sergius are asked by the script to believe passionately and completely in a system of romantic ideals to which they do not themselves conform. This leads to absurd contradictions, as seen in Sergius' mercurial hot-and-cold scene with Louka in the garden. Having taken Louka in his arms, he holds her in spite of her protestations that they might be seen:

LOUKA: Let me go, sir. I shall be disgraced. She struggles: he holds her inexorably. Oh, will you let go?

SERGIUS: Looking straight into her eyes. No.

LOUKA: Then stand back where we cant be seen.
Have you no common sense?

SERGIUS: Ah! thats reasonable. He takes her into the stable yard gateway, where they are hidden from the house.

LOUKA: Plaintively. I may have been seen from the windows: Miss Raina is sure to be spying about after you.

SERGIUS: Stung: letting her go. Take care, Louka. I may be worthless enough to betray the higher love; but do not you insult it.

LOUKA: Demurely. Not for the world sir, I'm sure. May I go on with my work, please, now.?

SERGIUS: Again putting his arm round her. You are a provoking little witch, Louka. If you were in love with me, would you spy out of windows on me?

LOUKA: Well, you see, sir, since you say you are half a dozen different gentlemen all at once, I should have a great deal to look after.

SERGIUS: Charmed. Witty as well as pretty. He tries to kiss her. (50-1)

The extreme hypocrisy and blindness in Sergius is very funny but hardly credible. This comical belief in a system completely at odds with their personal realities is equally apparent in Catherine and Raina: Catherine knows that she and Raina both play-act for others, but seems to believe completely in Sergius; Raina, who has put on a grand manner since she was a mere child, never suspects the sham of Sergius' front. These are not people recognizable from any world outside the theatre, but wild, enlarged caricatures of familiar types.

Many of the subtle, potentially humanizing aspects of the script, which could give more complexity and three-dimensionality to the characters are absent or underwritten and hurried by, almost as asides. For example, Shaw says of his character Sergius:

I complicated the psychology by making him catch glimpse after glimpse of his own aspect ... the result, of course, being the most horrible dubiety on his part as to whether he was really a brave and chivalrous gentleman or a humbug and a moral coward.¹⁵

But Shaw spends more words on this paragraph than he gives to Sergius to communicate his introspective nature to the audience; the result is an hilariously blatant, token expression of self-doubt:

SERGIUS: Speaking to himself. Which of the six is the real man? That is the question which torments me. One of them is a hero, another a buffoon, another a humbug, another perhaps a bit of a blackguard. And one, at least, is a coward, jealous, like all cowards. (52)

Five lines, with which to examine the secret fears of one's soul, seem completely inadequate on paper, and when spoken onstage in fifteen-odd seconds, they become wholly laughable. Other "givens" of situation and character are thrown in, without full explanation or development: when, for example, does the attraction between Bluntschli and Raina grow to such a point that she slips a souvenir portrait into the coat for him, and he returns specifically to see her months later? Either far beneath the dialogue of Act One, which contains no hints of anything approaching "love at first sight," or, more probably, during the intermission between Acts One and Two. What, if anything, was the relationship of Sergius and Louka before Slivnitza? Except for Nicola's remark, "I've often thought that if Raina were out of the way, and you just a little less of a fool and Sergius just a little more of one, you might come to be one of my grandest customers, instead of only being my wife and costing me money," (71) which comes as the play begins to draw to a close, we have no textual references at all; those things which would make this a story of real people in the naturalist mode are missing, and this lessens the play's ability to speak seriously to its audience.

These aspects of Arms and the Man are not problems or weaknesses in the script, but rather, essential strengths which make the play a successful romantic farce; they simply qualify one's perception of the piece, moving the play from a commentary on real life to a farcical parody of it. Audience members cannot recognize themselves in the play and feel that they are the direct objects of the author's commentary, but instead see an exaggerated world of boldly-drawn characters, a comedy of manners and morals, in which the characters are so distant from known reality as to remain safe and emotionally unchallenging. Arms and the Man comments on the weighty issue of romantic idealism, much as Joan Littlewood's, Oh, What a Lovely War! comments on war, or Joe Orton's What the Butler Saw comments on the social and moral establishments: explosively, excessively and enjoyably, but definitely not seriously.

This assessment is certainly supported by the response of the audience to the first production. William Archer, in a review published in his book, The Theatrical "World" of 1894, writes:

There is not the least doubt that Arms and the Man is one of the most amusing entertainments at present before the public. ...We laughed at it wildly, hysterically; and I exhort the reader to go and do likewise. But he must not expect a humdrum, rational, steady-going farce, like Charley's Aunt, bearing a well-understood conventional relation to real life. Let him rather look for a fantastic, psychological extravaganza, in which drama, farce, and Gilbertian irony keep flashing past the bewildered eye, as in a sort of merry-go-round, so quickly that one gives up the attempt to discriminate between them, and resigns

oneself to indiscriminating laughter.... If one could think that Mr. Shaw had consciously and deliberately invented a new species of prose extravaganza, one could unreservedly applaud the invention, while begging him in future to apply it with a little more depth and delicacy. But I more than suspect that he conceives himself to have written a serious comedy, a reproduction of life as it really is, with men and women thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting as they really do think, feel, speak, and act.¹⁶

Archer goes on to suggest that the characters of the play are inhuman ciphers for Shaw's ideas, whipped about by the unreal demands of the script. He comments on the rapid cross-spectrum swings of the characters, noting: "Such instantaneous chassés croisés used to be common enough in Elizabethan drama, and are quite the order of the day in Gilbertian extravaganza. In any more serious form of modern drama they would be not only preposterous but nauseous."¹⁷

Yet Archer does not deny the validity or importance of Shaw's ideas in Arms and the Man, saying positively:

And amid all his irresponsible nonsense, he has contrived, generally in defiance of all dramatic consistency, to drag in a great deal of incidental good sense. I begin positively to believe that he may one day write a serious and even an artistic play, if only he will repress his irrelevant whimsicality, try to clothe his character-conceptions in flesh and blood, and realise the difference between knowingness and knowledge.¹⁸

Shaw himself came to see Arms and the Man in this light also, I believe, and soon his protestations as to the seriousness of the play tapered off; indeed, it is interesting to watch his attitude change. As early as 1898, Shaw wrote to Henry Lowenfield, a man requesting authorization to write and produce The Chocolate Soldier, a comic opera based on Arms and the Man:

I have been all this time recovering from the shock of your proposal to make a comic opera of Arms of the Man. How Cd [sic] you possibly make it more a comic opera than it is at present?¹⁹

In 1904, Shaw noted that he "was startled to find what flimsy, fantastic, unsafe stuff it is."²⁰ In 1920, following a successful revival at the Duke of York Theatre in London, which "was immensely popular at the end of the First World War with ex-servicemen,"²¹ Shaw called the play, "a simple theatrical projection effected by a bag of the oldest stage tricks."²² Finally, in 1944, fifty years after Arms and the Man first opened in London, Shaw, then 88 years old, spoke to Ralph Richardson following a rehearsal of the play in Manchester. Telling Richardson that, as Bluntschli, his great naturalistic pantings after climbing the drainpipe were wrong, Shaw said:

It doesn't suit my play. It's no good for me, it's no good for Bernard Shaw... It's one joke after another, it's a firecracker... It's a musical play, a knockabout musical comedy."²³

However Shaw may have seen the play in 1894, he came to realize that as a serious sermon it had failed, but as an entertaining farcical comedy, it was a great success.

THE SOURCES OF COMEDY IN ARMS AND THE MAN

I have said earlier that the exaggeration of characters and situations in Arms and the Man moves the play out of the realm of realism to a broader, more farcical mode, and that this is an essential strength of the play. I shall now go further to say that this exaggeration establishes a condition vital to the existence of comedy. In his well-known essay on laughter, Henri Bergson suggests that laughter is a cerebral response, and thus it is crucial to be emotionally distanced from the object of one's amusement: "the absence of feeling...usually accompanies laughter... Indifference is its natural environment, for laughter has no greater foe than emotion."²⁴ This seems a truism of comedy; in order to laugh at people and their problems, one must be free of empathetic identification with them. Bergson continues: "Give your sympathy its widest expansion: as though at the touch of a fairy wand you will see the flimsiest of objects assume importance and a gloomy hue spread over everything. Now step aside, look upon life as a disinterested spectator; many a drama will turn into a comedy."²⁵ By way of example, consider the treatment of Malvolio in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: an essentially innocent, if arrogant, character is deliberately duped, disgraced, ridiculed, and physically and psychologically abused. No one would laugh at this treatment, if the audience were invited to view Malvolio as a living, breathing man, complete with complex psychology and emotions; Malvolio is shown simply as stuffiness incarnate, nothing more, and it is

precisely this exaggeration and two-dimensionality of character which renders him, and his suffering, comic. Malvolio is a type, an idea, for which the audience feels no personal attachment or sympathy.

In his book Playmaking: A Manual of Craftsmanship, William Archer drew a distinction between what he called "character-drawing" and "psychology," saying: "character-drawing is the presentment of human nature in its commonly-recognized, understood and accepted aspects; psychology is, as it were, the bringing of hitherto unsurveyed tracts within the circle of our knowledge and comprehension."²⁶ Character-drawing is in no way inferior, he suggests, offering Falstaff and Juliet's Nurse as prime examples of this technique. The more limited and fixed the scope of the "accepted aspects" within a drawn character, the closer it comes to being a pure type and the less likely it is to attract an emotional involvement from the audience. This is exactly the sort of character we find in Arms and the Man; each has one or a few "accepted aspects" which are established from the outset and remain constant throughout. Raina is first shown as a would-be romantic who cannot help but see through this facade; nothing she does in the play contradicts or enlarges upon this first image. The same holds for the others: Catherine as the matriarch and pretentious snob; Bluntschli as the extremely practical but human soldier; Nicola as the clever, self-serving servant and so on. No attempt is made to divine the roots of these characteristics; never is Sergius' childhood examined for the source of his buffoonery. The characters in Arms and the Man are not full or complete persons, but projections of known types,

and this allows the audience to maintain an emotional distance from them, and so to laugh at their confusion and mistakes.

This precondition having been established, let us look in greater detail at the sources of comedy in Arms and the Man. Whilst there are many humorous moments, I suggest that they all share a common aspect: the comedy in Arms and the Man depends on the audience knowing more about what is going on in the play than the characters, creating a sense of superiority in the audience. This superiority is generated in several ways, as I shall demonstrate, but the comic element remains the same; the spectator has knowledge beyond that of some or all of the characters and so can laugh at their inappropriate and ignorant actions. Here again Bergson offers insight into the comic process. Laughter, he suggests, is a form of social censure, a criticism of individuals or groups whose behaviour is somehow inadequate;²⁷ we laugh at people and their actions which, through blindness, stupidity or similar flaw, are wrong. Situations which establish this sense of audience superiority abound in Arms and the Man.

First, there is a series of comic situations which stem from the audience having knowledge of certain pieces of information not shared by one or more characters on stage. This technique of secrets known by the audience but not shared with the characters is common to much theatre, both comic and tragic, and is one of the bases of the well-made play form;²⁸ here, it is the detachment of the audience from the characters which makes this particular treatment comic. Thus, in the first act, when

Bluntschli tells Raina of the idiocy of Sergius' cavalry charge, without realizing that she is engaged to him, his tactless action elicits laughter. The further he goes, the funnier it becomes; after describing the events of the battle, he continues:

And there was Don Quixote flourishing like a drum major, thinking he'd done the cleverest thing ever known, whereas he ought to be courtmartialled for it. Of all the fools ever let loose on the field of battle, that man must be the very maddest. He and his regiment simply committed suicide; only the pistol missed fire: that's all. (31-2)

The audience loves watching Bluntschli digging himself ever deeper into trouble, and then is doubly pleased when he recognizes his mistake and only makes the circumstances worse in his attempts to apologize. His failure to understand and deal correctly with a situation understood by the audience provides the humour. There are other incidents of this type of comedy in Arms and the Man, mostly stemming from the central secret that Bluntschli was hidden by Raina and Catherine, a secret which leads to all sorts of confusion. The story told by Sergius, in Act Two, is a good example, having the double-edge that the joke-tellers are also the dupes in another, larger joke; as Sergius and Petkoff tell the shocking and daring story of Bluntschli's escape they never realize that the confederates of the Swiss officer are sitting before them. Other examples of this include Nicola's innocent entrance carrying Captain Bluntschli's bag, "unconscious of the effect he is producing," (59) and Petkoff's confused search for the identity of the chocolate cream soldier. The clever use of this technique is one of the main driving forces behind the comedy in Arms and the Man.

The sense of audience superiority is also created by the spectator's ability to see through the mistaken and pretentious attitudes of the characters. The central theme of realism versus romantic idealism sets up this kind of humour superbly; the Bulgarians' habit of idealizing their world inevitably leads to their misunderstanding and misrepresenting it, whilst the audience sees through to the truth beneath. One of the recurring examples of this is the Petkoff family's overestimation of their own wealth and importance. Raina's claims to social sophistication and standing, based on her father's position as a major, on there being a flight of stairs inside her house, and on her having "spent a whole month in Vienna," (35) are hilarious to an audience that sees through these ignorant pretensions, whilst Catherine's refusal of Bluntschli's request for Raina's hand in marriage in the last act is positively ludicrous. Not realizing that Bluntschli is the possessor of a considerable fortune, Catherine snobbishly turns him down, saying:

I doubt, sir, whether you quite realize either my daughter's position or that of Major Sergius Saranoff, whose place you propose to take. The Petkoffs and the Saranoffs are known as the richest and most important families in the country. Our position is almost historical: we can go back for twenty years. (87)

This dichotomy between the Petkoffs' perception of their standing and the audience's perception of it is clearly something Shaw intended to emphasize, as he has built into the script an elaborate and lengthy joke surrounding the Petkoff's library. Throughout Acts One and Two, the

Petkoffs take every opportunity to boast of their prize possession, Bulgaria's 'only library; indeed, Petkoff "cannot mention the library without betraying how proud he is of it." (58) Then Act Three, following this great build-up, is set in this room. Shaw says "Its not much of a library. Its literary equipment consists of a single fixed shelf stocked with old paper covered novels, broken backed, coffee stained, torn and thumbled." (61) The obvious anti-climax of this much-touted library tangibly emphasizes the gap between the Petkoff's visions and their real position, and so, provides a physical focus for the audience's feelings of superiority.

A similar gap between perception and reality exists in the way characters see themselves. As already suggested, Catherine sees herself, and wants to be seen, as a grand refined lady, whilst the audience sees that in many ways she is pompous, snobbish, greedy and coarse; her inability to recognize her own nature invites audience censure. Petkoff sees himself as the stern patriarch of family and town; the audience laughs because his bark carries no bite and he is easily, and regularly, manipulated by his wife and daughter. As previously noted, Sergius sees in himself the epitome of romantic heroism whereas the audience sees a posing, blundering fool. This inability of characters properly to understand themselves and others of course influences events and this fact becomes a source of information about the workings of the action, which in turn contributes to the situational humour.

One last specific source of humour arising from audience superiority can

once again be found in Bergson's essay on laughter. Bergson postulates that society most admires and respects the quality of "elasticity,"²⁹ the ability to adapt and cope with situations; the lack of this flexibility invites censure. In Arms and the Man, laughter is generated by characters at either end of this spectrum of elasticity, by complete rigidity and complete adaptability. The most extreme form of rigidity is found when a human comes to be seen as something mechanical; something not controlling itself but responding automatically to stimuli. Sergius is a perfect example of this in his unfailing response to any suggestion that he apologize or withdraw a word or action; like a toy soldier whose trigger has been touched, he says, "with measured emphasis, folding his arms, I never withdraw" (46) or "Im never sorry." (73) Bergson's comments on mechanical movement are applicable here:

If I notice it and it succeeds in diverting my attention, if I wait for it to occur and it occurs when I expect it, then involuntarily I laugh. Why? ... This is no longer life, it is automatism established in life and imitating it. It belongs to the comic.³⁰

Sergius is so predictable that Bluntschli can anticipate his response to Louka's demand for an apology (84), and Louka herself uses this automatic response to seal her claim to being Sergius' betrothed. Sergius has promised to marry her if ever he touches her again; as he kneels to apologize, he takes her offered hand and kisses it:

LOUKA: ...That touch makes me your affianced
bride.

SERGIUS: Springing up. Ah! I forgot that.

LOUKA: Coldly. You can withdraw if you like.

SERGIUS: Withdraw! Never! You belong to me! (84)

By contrast, Bluntschli's absolute flexibility and adaptability is most impressive; with a few brief notable exceptions, Bluntschli is cool. Throughout the play, in the centre of all the confusion and excitement, Bluntschli remains unflappable and in control; in particular, his seemingly disinterested counterpoint to the squabble of Sergius and Raina in the third act stands out as an example of this. Of course part of his comic power comes from contrast, since he serves to emphasize the idiocy of the others, but I think there is at work a more subtle form of humour as well. I believe we laugh at Bluntschli's aplomb as we laugh at feats of great skill and daring or at the antics of great improvising comedians; it is a kind of self-censuring, an "I wish I could do that but I can't" appreciation of his smoothness and mastery. This not only explains our joy at his superiority, but the wild delight we take at those few moments when he falters, as when he mistakes the twenty-three year old Raina for a girl of seventeen; Bluntschli, caught off guard following a long and slick speech, is momentarily struck dumb by his error and can only repeat "twenty-three!" (81) So both extremes of human elasticity, seen in Sergius and Bluntschli, are sources of humour in Arms and the Man.

There is virtually no verbal comedy in Arms and the Man, no witty exchanges nor punning to speak of; nor is there much in the way of pure physical comedy, Bluntschli's attempts to stay awake at the close of Act One being a notable exception. Virtually all the comic impetus of the

play stems from the mistakes and confusions caused by characters misunderstanding other characters and situations and, as a result, acting inappropriately and earning the censure of the audience, through laughter.

NOTES

¹The full title, Arms and the Man: An Anti-Romantic Comedy, appears in the Table of Contents of Shaw's collection of scripts entitled Plays Pleasant. References to the text of Arms and the Man are taken from George Bernard Shaw, Plays Pleasant: Arms and the Man; Candida; The Man of Destiny; You Never Can Tell (n.p.: Penguin, 1984). All subsequent references to the text of this play will appear in parentheses, by page number, after the reference. It should be noted that a different text was used for production: George Bernard Shaw, Arms and the Man (Toronto: French, 1958 — acting edition).

²George Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters: 1874-1897, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London: Reinhardt, 1965) 409.

³Shaw, preface, Plays Pleasant 7.

⁴Shaw, Collected Letters 660.

⁵Shaw, Collected Letters 445.

⁶George Bernard Shaw, "A Dramatic Realist to his Critics," New Review (London: July 1894), in Selected Non-Dramatic Writings of Bernard Shaw, ed. Dan H. Laurence (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965) 323-340.

⁷Shaw, preface, Plays Pleasant 16.

⁸Bernard F. Dukore, Bernard Shaw, Playwright: Aspects of Shavian Drama (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1973) 160.

⁹Martin Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theatre (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963) 186. Meisel's treatment of Arms and the Man covers pages 186-194.

¹⁰George Bernard Shaw, "How to Write a Popular Play," introduction, Three Plays by Brieux (New York: Brentano's, 1911) xxii-xxvii, quoted in Playwrights on Playwriting, ed. Toby Cole (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961) 56.

¹¹Archibald Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: His Life and Works (Cincinnati, 1911) 310, quoted in Charles A. Berst, "Romance and Reality in Arms and the Man," Modern Languages Quarterly 27(June 1966): 199.

¹²Shaw, preface, Plays Pleasant 16.

¹³In Shaw's writings, terms such as Romance, Romantic, Idealism, Idealist, Realist and so on, are to be found either capitalized or not. In an attempt to rationalize their usage, and to indicate that these terms are used to refer to tendencies identified by Shaw and not to formal philosophical or artistic movements, I shall use lower-case spellings throughout.

¹⁴Shaw, Collected Letters 660.

¹⁵George Bernard Shaw, preface, The Theatrical "World" of 1894, by William Archer (London: Scott, 1896) xxvii-xxviii.

¹⁶William Archer, Theatrical "World" 110.

¹⁷Archer, Theatrical "World" 116.

¹⁸Archer, Theatrical "World" 117.

¹⁹Shaw, Collected Letters 825.

²⁰George Bernard Shaw, Letters From George Bernard Shaw to Miss Alma Murray, Letter XV (n.p., 1927) unpagged. Quoted in Charles A.

Carpenter, Bernard Shaw and the Art of Destroying Ideals (Milwaukee: U of Wisconsin P, 1969) 91.

²¹St. John Ervine, Bernard Shaw: His Life, Work and Friends (London: Constable, 1956) 267.

²²George Bernard Shaw, "I Am a Classic But Am I a Shakespeare Thief?", Heart's Magazine XXXVIII(Sept 1920), in Shaw on Theatre, ed. E.J. West (New York: Hill and Wang, 1958) 132.

²³Ralph Richardson, interview, The Oxford Book of Theatrical Anecdotes, ms., ed. Peter Hay. (In press at Oxford UP.)

²⁴Henri Bergson, "Laughter," Comedy, ed. Wylie Sypher (Garden City: Doubleday, 1956) 63.

²⁵Bergson 63.

²⁶William Archer, Playmaking: A Manual of Craftsmanship (New York: Dover, 1960) 248.

²⁷This statement reflects the general thrust of Bergson's essay. On page 74, however, Bergson addresses this question, saying specifically: "society ...is confronted with something that makes it uneasy, but only as a symptom — scarcely a threat, at the very most a gesture. A gesture, therefore, will be its reply. Laughter must be something of this kind, a sort of **social gesture**."

²⁸Stephen S. Stanton, introduction, "The Well-Made Play and the Modern Theatre," Camille and Other Plays, ed. Stanton (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960) xii.

²⁹Bergson 74.

³⁰Bergson 81.

CHAPTER II

PREPARATION FOR PRODUCTION

II. PREPARATON FOR PRODUCTION

STYLE

The greatest difficulty in describing my approach to the production of Arms and the Man lies in the need to acknowledge and communicate highly personal, spontaneous responses to the script, responses which necessarily serve as the basis of individual artistic choices. These "feelings," and the choices that stem from them, lie in the realm of personal taste and style, and though they can sometimes be explained and supported, they cannot completely be justified from research; they simply exist: and their existence largely defines the role and value of the director as the artistic centre of a given production. In a sense, therefore, I assume that certain instinctive responses are valid *a priori* and examine only the methods used to realize them on stage.

My first readings of Arms and the Man left me amused and buoyant, enchanted by its wild energy and its bold and brazen comedy. I did not feel that it was a play which spoke seriously to me or raised novel or weighty issues. In my initial thesis proposal (see Appendix I) I commented, "It would stretch the credibility of anyone to suggest that Arms and the Man offers notably profound political or social insights to an audience today ... it is a light, amusing comedy of situations and types." Subsequent research has led me to see and appreciate more fully Shaw's

serious intentions in this script and, in turn, to see that this serious purpose had not been realized even in Shaw's time. All this has served to deepen my understanding of the play and its workings, and to provide support for my own first reactions, yet it is my initial responses which have remained as the lodestone for this production; it can be demonstrated that Shaw's serious interpretation of Arms and the Man did not work, but it is my own reading of the script which has led me to approach this play solely as an entertaining, "unserious" comedy.

The first and most fundamental choice which I have made about this production, then, is to play Arms and the Man as a romantic farce with the aim of amusing the audience; any serious messages arising from the production are secondary. As I have suggested earlier, for me this decision means that I will keep the play outside the realm of realism and allow the exaggeration of the character types to prevent the audience members from becoming emotionally involved in the play, thus allowing them to respond fully to the comic elements. But within this generally "unreal" style, which for our purposes I will call farcical, there are innumerable degrees and shadings ranging from a very slight departure from realism to the broadest possible farce; the decision of where to set the play within the spectrum of farcical style is largely a matter of personal taste and not of interpretation. My own choice, which will necessarily remain general, and subject to change and development, is to sail fairly close to the realistic, being only as farcical as is necessary to maintain comic distancing, and ignoring many possibilities for wilder comedy. This choice is based simply on my own tastes in theatre, which

tend towards the understated, whatever the genre; as a result of this preference, my experience has leaned to the realistic modes and away from extravagant stylization and theatricality in production. I feel that, by its nature, Arms and the Man requires a fair amount of farcical exaggeration to be successful, but I have not set out to add any more than seems necessary.

As I have established previously, the central motif of Arms and the Man is the split between the romantic and the realistic, or more specifically, the destruction of the romantic view by the realistic. The most important function of the mise en scene of this play must be to clarify and amplify this fundamental romantic/realistic dichotomy, both thematically to support the script and to provide the basis of the "audience superiority" humour, which results from the perception of the gap between romantic delusion and reality. How I set out to achieve this primary purpose will be the focus of the subsequent discussions of my approach to the mise en scene, looking specifically at the costumes, settings and lighting, and at physical staging (blocking). However, it is necessary to preface these discussions by saying that beneath everything there is assumed a basic comic approach to the staging, an attempt at a general style conducive to audience laughter and enjoyment. Obviously one cannot determine, concretely and absolutely, what it is that makes a staging suitable for comedy but there are a few principles which I consider fundamental. First, the staging must be on a human scale, throwing the primary focus onto the characters and allowing for a sense of closeness and intimacy between the actor and the audience. In keeping with Bergson's idea that

we laugh only at other people, we can say that the small world of men is the realm of the comic whilst the huge and the monumental is the setting of tragedy. Second, there must be an essential lightness to the physical elements of the comic mise en scene; squat, heavy settings are usually oppressive and tend towards the monumental. Third, there must be a feeling of warmth of colour on stage, in the settings and costumes and especially in the lighting, which affects everything else; icy blues and whites seem particularly cold and dead and are not suited to comic staging. And last, I believe that comedy calls for a brightness of lighting (illumination) which nearly always allows for an absolutely clear view of the characters; to laugh at someone's behaviour we must be able to see it. These principles, which I take to be common to all comic staging, are the assumed underlying starting point of the mise en scene of Arms and the Man.

PERIOD

The first issue to arise concerning the staging of this play is that of historical period. The play is set in Bulgaria in 1885/86, during and immediately following the Serbo-Bulgarian War fought through that winter. My early readings of the script led me to believe that this was an imaginary war set in some sort of randomly-chosen Ruritania, invented to allow for the presentation of different comic types through the warring parties; it certainly did not seem important that the action had been built around this particular, obscure Balkan conflict, a hiccup in history which conveys no special meaning or significance to an audience of today.

Shaw's own comments concerning the importance of historical accuracy in Arms and the Man confirm my belief that it is the romantic/realistic types, and not the details of period and place which are most important to this play.¹ Our perceptions of the romantic and the realistic are shaped by many influences, probably most notably Hollywood, much more than by accurate historical knowledge. Therefore, I am looking for an "old-timey" period feel to the costumes and sets, but am interested in historical accuracy only in so much as this period, with its rich blend of native Bulgarian, Russian, Turkish and Viennese influences, provides a stimulating starting point from which to approach the show.

SET

In Shaw's descriptions of the various settings of Arms and the Man we find a physical metaphor for the central action of the play; as the dreamy romantics come around to a realistic view of themselves and their world, so the setting moves from the romantic to the realistic: Act One takes place in the richly-appointed bedroom of the lovely Raina, lit by the moon and soft candlelight; Act Two is set out of doors in a beautiful mountain garden, an image only somewhat spoiled by the presence of laundry drying on the flowers and hedges; the third act is in the pathetic library about which we have heard so many wonderful things. This development from the beautiful, romantic first act to the all-too-disappointingly realistic final act, is the primary concern of my approach to the set, and all other considerations give priority to clarifying and emphasizing this progression.

In particular I feel that three completely separate and different sets are needed to best illustrate this, and this is my foremost requirement. The lighting of the three acts, moving from the candles and moonlight of the opening, through the clear morning sun to tired afternoon illumination through the library windows, will also be used to play up the romantic-to-realistic progression.

Because the need for three separate scenes is greater than the need for full and complete sets, I am prepared to accept a certain suggestive realism and fragmentation in the mise en scene should three full sets prove too costly. However, the various pieces of setting called for in the script, such as furniture and windows and doors, should be authentic, solid and functional. The reason for this is simple but fundamental to this production. I believe that it is necessary to use genuine physical elements if a fragmented setting is to represent a real space and not draw attention to its own conventionality; a real door can suggest a real room whilst a door painted onto a flat suggests a theatrical illusion. I have already suggested that the humour in Arms and the Man stems from the audience seeing characters behave inappropriately as a result of their various mistakes and foibles. But this behavior is inappropriate only within a recognizable environment; the farther one moves from a familiar world the harder it becomes to see any behaviour as out of place. Therefore, it is important to me that the sets for Arms and the Man be used to suggest a real space, whether they are complete box sets or consist only of selected pieces.

We can see that there is great potential for comedy in graphically illustrating the gap between the Petkoffs' imagined grandeur and the reality of their situation. They see their house as magnificent because it "is the only private house that has two rows of windows" (35) and a staircase indoors; the audience should see it as a quaint, if pleasant, home in a mountain village. As well, the Petkoffs are determined to import into their home objects and customs, from Vienna and elsewhere, which they consider to be the height of sophistication and taste. There is much humour in the incongruity of an electric bell, a library and other such commonplace trappings of the "big city," which are quite out of place in a this rustic Bulgarian home, being the source of misplaced pride for the Petkoffs and their household. My intention in this production is to play up these gaps between illusion and reality strongly and clearly, without going so far as to become ridiculous or grotesque. The feeling I seek is one of people trying to be genteel and graceful against their natures and therefore never quite succeeding; somehow something is always wrong in what they do.

COSTUMES

On stage nothing gives a clearer idea of how a character sees himself and wishes to be seen by others than does his manner of dress, and so the costuming in Arms and the Man should be used to help to clarify the distinction between the romantics and the realists. Through the course of the play there are differing patterns of behavior in individuals which

easily lend themselves to representation in costume; at the most basic level the difference is between those who dress, and behave, for effect, and those who do not. The nature of the costumes themselves can illustrate this division, through varying amounts of richness and formality, and so too can the manner in which the costumes are worn and used. In this way it is possible for me to get a good image of each character through his or her costume. For example, Petkoff wears his uniform from the army, but is clearly uncomfortable in it, always looking to get out of it and into his old coat. Therefore, I see him in a uniform which perhaps looks like it doesn't belong on him, and which he can undo and loosen onstage as part of his role. As well, his old coat should not be flashy or elegant, but subdued and very well worn. Sergius, on the other hand, delights in playing the soldier, hero and gentleman; as Shaw says, he "posts himself with conscious dignity" (45) and shows off his uniform at all times. Therefore, for Sergius a uniform which fits immaculately and looks absolutely natural on him is obviously best. Contrasts in costume style and usage are evident both between characters and within characters. By way of example, not only is there a distinction between the formal and grand dress of Raina and the more simply attractive Louka in Acts Two and Three, but also between the way Louka uses her dress when serving Catherine and when flirting with Sergius. By using costume in this way, character is revealed and the central romantic/realistic dichotomy is emphasized.

Just as elements of the setting seem incongruous and are a source of humour, so some aspects of costuming can be used to point up the

difference between "proper" style and that of the Petkoffs. In particular, the ladies' dresses and **maquillage** can be used to show them as women trying too hard to emulate elegant society. A certain sense of excess must be seen in the romantics, not only in the ladies but in Sergius as well; he is too posed and perfect, too magnificent to be taken seriously. Of course, all this is seen against the less-than-grand settings, which adds to the audience's perception of inappropriate behavior. Yet, extremes must be avoided; this is a romantic comedy with attractive young people being attracted to each other, and there is no room for caricature or the grotesque.

PHYSICAL STAGING

The basic distinction drawn between characters who pose and those who do not serves as the basis for my approach to the patterns of stage movement in Arms and the Man. The difference between the behaviour of the romantics and the realists can be described as the difference between the self-conscious and the spontaneous, the posed and the relaxed, between public performance and private "living," between the unnatural and the natural. This difference translates into a distinction between formal, conventionalized, "stagey" movement and logical, motivated blocking.

For a play setting up these opposites our choice of venue is most fortunate. The University Theatre (U.T.) is something of a mixed theatre

form, containing in one space a proscenium stage with a thrust stage before it. These sharp contrasts create a constant tension within the theatre between the width of the proscenium and the roundness and depth of the thrust, the result being that neither form of staging (thrust or proscenium) can completely assert itself in the U.T.; cutting off the playing area at or around the proscenium line limits the force of the arch and pushes the theatre towards a thrust staging, but the wide picture-frame behind never disappears altogether. For my purposes this dynamic is clearly appropriate: the more posed and romantic the behavior of characters, the more they move into rigid proscenium style blocking; the more relaxed and natural, the more they move in thrust stage patterns.

The approach to the staging was not actually first conceived in these terms, but was instead the product of other more specific observations and decisions about the nature of self-conscious versus spontaneous movement. For example, I decided that someone posing would be likely to move always to a symmetrically balanced position on stage, thus both creating a "perfect" picture and getting into good position to see and be seen. Someone moving naturally, on the other hand, would move according to the dictates of necessity, comfort or convenience, and would not be concerned with balance. Continuing on from this, someone who is posing will always seek to maintain a suitable distance from others to allow for their being properly seen whereas someone relaxed and natural will base choices of proximity on the demands of the moment. The image of the romantics living in a continuous series of still photographs, set against that of the realists living in moving pictures seems appropriate.

These sorts of principles and patterns, representing the posed and the natural, seem to fit well into the styles of proscenium and thrust blocking.

Using these two basic types of blocking, seen against essentially symmetrical, balanced sets, it is possible very clearly to illustrate the extremes of the romantic and the realistic, the posed and the natural. Indeed, these opposites can be juxtaposed in the movement of a single character, to much comic effect. The rapidly changing situations and roles of Catherine in Act Two provide some spectacular flip-flops: chasing Raina off stage, Catherine moves naturally and asymmetrically; receiving Louka haughtily, she plants herself in a suitably balanced pose of authority; finding that Bluntschli has returned, she loses her composure and moves frantically, and asymmetrically; receiving Bluntschli she greets him formally in a balanced pose, but immediately moves him out of sight of the house, completely destroying the symmetry; Petkoff enters and Catherine plays the perfect hostess from a balanced, posed position; and so on. This kind of repeated, rapid variation of styles begins to create a sense of the mechanical in the movements of a character, thus generating laughter in the audience. Of course it is quite possible to create a balanced stage in a thrust blocking, and an unbalanced picture within a proscenium staging is very easily produced, so I cannot equate my basic patterns too directly with these labels; it is at either extreme, the most gushingly romantic and the most brutally realistic, that the proscenium and thrust headings best apply: Sergius and Raina stand at centre stage, faces craned out to the audience, as they swear their "higher love" (49); Bluntschli lurks in the upstage corner, facing the door, as he prepares to

surprise his would-be attackers. (26) In these polar opposites we find the ends of the spectrum within which I am working.

Much of the action in Arms and the Man is played out in small, two person scenes, which easily lend themselves to symmetrical/asymmetrical differentiation. Another frequent motif, however, is of pairs of characters split by third parties; Sergius and Raina in particular are always being pushed or held apart, by Petkoff, by Louka, by Catherine and, most significantly, by Bluntschli. This pattern lends itself logically to blocking in triangular forms, in which the "intruder" divides the couple, splitting the others in two. This works especially well when the couple is already playing on a flat, proscenium-style plane, and the third takes his logical place between them where he can see and hear them both. In this formation, one may hold an equilateral triangle, thus balancing the picture and the forces, or one may alter the triangle by moving either the couple, together or singly, along the horizontal plane, using the third character as a pivot point, or alternately, by moving the upstage pivot between the couple; by changing the balance in the triangle these movements very effectively illustrate shifts in allegiance, affection and so on. So, for example, when Bluntschli is the subject of battle between Raina and Sergius, or when Bluntschli is trying to reconcile the other two, he is positioned so as to be equidistant from each of them. When Bluntschli is defending Raina he moves towards her, creating something of a "two-on-one" situation; when he is attempting to aid and advise Sergius, he moves towards him. And, when Sergius or Raina attempt to elicit support from Bluntschli, they move towards him. The result is a

constantly changing, highly expressive stage picture based entirely on mutable triangles. These triangular patterns are also well suited to the diagonal axes of the thrust stage, and are both efficient and aesthetically pleasing; they serve as the basis for much of my staging.

CASTING CONSIDERATIONS

The roles in Arms and the Man do not require, and will not support, deep psychological study; they are types, with certain characteristics built into them. This places a particular burden on the actors to fit their respective character types, both physically and as personalities. In preparation for casting I have tried to record some sense of the requirements and demands of each role. The following I would consider to be my basic casting notes for this show.

Raina: An easy versatility is required to play this role, which moves very quickly and easily from extremes of pretentious romantic grandness to barefaced, often disarming, honesty. It is significant that Bluntschli mistakes Raina, who is twenty-three years old, for a girl of seventeen; it is not simply her physical appearance which leads him to this miscalculation. Raina is a child, a beautiful, energetic, capable and brave young lady who has not yet fully come to terms with the realities of herself and her world. Like all of the romantic-minded characters, she plays out her life as a role, rather than living it. The grand manners of her romantic role will need a commanding voice and presence (she is,

after all, a consummate "performer") whilst her realistic side must combine a winning innocence and charm with a quite common coarseness. On stage Raina should have a youthful and radiant face which, even when made up fully in Acts II and III, should look vigourous and radiant despite the excess of the **maquillage**.

Catherine: Shaw gives a wonderful description of Catherine as "a woman over forty, imperiously energetic, with magnificent black hair and eyes, who might be a splendid specimen of a wife of a mountain farmer." (20) Catherine is the matriarch, the lioness who rules over her home and household, intimidating all around her; clearly she strides comfortably about in the pants of the family. Yet Catherine, with pretensions to gentility and high-society graces, "is determined to be a Viennese lady," (20) and here she fails completely. Her coarse, country manners, more at home in a market-place than a society salon, are constantly peeking through her veneer of style; her tea-gowns and electric bells cannot cover up her pushy, greedy, snobby, nouveau-riche nature. Catherine must have a commanding presence on stage, capable of impressing the actors and audience alike. The ability to play a grand style is also important, if only as a point of departure for the character.

Louka: Louka is a Balkan soubrette, a very recognizable saucy, sexy maid with goals above her station and with the cunning and attractiveness to achieve them. She catches Sergius like a master angler, fighting hard one instant, easing off the next, using all her strengths and his weaknesses to full advantage. This bold, daring character is obviously appealing, both

physically and as a personality; Sergius, like the audience, is as attracted to her spirit as to her body. The actress should be young, pretty and fiery. But there is also another, unpleasant side to Louka which can be downplayed but never completely eliminated. Even allowing that she is young and full of youthful vigour and ambition, Louka is selfish and cold in her treatment of Nicola; however distant a relationship she and Nicola may have, there is still a sharp edge to her, and the actress playing Louka must have something of this hardness in her.

Bluntschli: Bluntschli, Shaw's anti-hero in Arms and the Man, is a difficult role to cast from student actors. First of all, he is older than the other "young" characters, being thirty-four years old and far more seasoned than the twenty-three year old Raina (and Sergius, who I see as her approximate contemporary). Thirty-four is not an age which can be easily imitated or caricatured, in the same way as extreme old age; there are virtually no physical "clues" available for an actor. Instead age must be communicated through maturity of voice and manner, both being somewhat fuller and gentler than those of younger characters. Bluntschli must exude a quiet self-confidence, being a man so sure of himself that he doesn't feel the need to prove himself before others. And, of course, Bluntschli must have a suave, articulate sense of humour, a good-natured "coolness" about him. A man looking slightly older than the average 18-22 year old student, with a mature voice and relaxed manner, would be ideal.

Russian Officer: In his very brief appearance, we see two quite different aspects of this young officer. He enters the room "with soft, feline

politeness and a stiff military carriage" (27) and plays the gracious and suave gentleman for the ladies. But after his men fire up the balcony, narrowly missing Raina and himself, his smooth-as-silk bearing is shattered, exposing the tired and scared soldier beneath. Physically the actor should be young and handsome, very much like Sergius.

Nicola: This older servant provides the greatest problem in terms of a student cast. His age, although only vaguely alluded to by Raina who calls him "a middle-aged servant man," (79) seems to be somewhere between those of Bluntschli and the senior Petkoffs. The complete straightman, Nicola has virtually no humour of his own and seems to be a purely practical, unemotional character. The difficulty will lie in finding an actor both able to play the necessary age and capable of being straight and calm without also being cold or boring; I believe that, in many ways, this is the most difficult and unforgiving of the roles in Arms and the Man.

Petkoff: Major Petkoff, the highest-ranking Bulgarian Army officer, richest man in his town and patriarch of his household, is a big, loveable, old softy. For all his fuming and threatening, for all his desire to be seen as fierce and fiery, he is really a happy fellow with simple tastes and no ambitions to speak of; he likes to feel "in command," but he is in fact quite happy to leave the business, of the family and of the war, to others, especially to his wife, Catherine. Petkoff is a simple, though not boorish, man without pretensions towards delicacy of manners and behaviour, although he is quite as proud of his possessions as anyone. The actor

playing Petkoff must be powerful and energetic, capable of great blustery explosions, but above all he must be immediately and constantly likeable to the audience like a slightly younger version of a friendly grandfather. His age I see as early fifties.

Sergius: Sergius is the arch-romantic hero, the dashing cavalry officer and gentleman, grand in everything he does. His actions and movements are deliberate, poised and mannered, patterned after his models from Byron and Pushkin and the opera. His manner of speech, too, is elevated and artificial, both in tone and, in particular, in choice of phrase; John A. Mills writes in his book Language and Laughter: Comic Diction in the Plays of Bernard Shaw, that Sergius' "persistent substitution of the clichés of rhetorical and poetic contrivance, for the simpler words and patterns of ordinary prose discourse"² is an important source of comedy in the play. An actor playing Sergius must look glorious and be able to play this heroic style wonderfully and completely; there must be something to Sergius which impresses all the ladies. The other, childish side of Sergius which is revealed when his grand manner breaks down, should not be difficult, as this is simply an opposite characteristic and one well within the range of student actors. Sergius, I believe, is younger than Bluntschli, perhaps in his mid-twenties.

The relative importance of the various characters in Arms and the Man can be clearly illustrated by the relative stage-times of each of them; priority casting will proceed on this premise. Their stage-times, expressed as percentages of the whole play and based on a uniform

reading of the script, are as follows: Raina, 72%; Bluntschli, 60%; Sergius, 50%; Louka, 40%; Catherine, 36%; Petkoff, 33%; Nicola, 13%; Russian Officer, 2%.

NOTES

¹"George Bernard Shaw, Shaw: An Autobiography: 1856-1898, ed. Stanley Weintraub (New York: Weybright, 1969) 288-9. In an interview titled "Ten Minutes with Mr. Bernard Shaw," To-Day (London: 28 April 1894), Shaw addresses the question of historical accuracy in Arms and the Man, saying directly and rather humourously:

But my play is not an historical play in your sense at all. It was written without the slightest reference to Bulgaria. In the original MS. the names of the places were blank, and the characters were called simply The Father, The Daughter, The Stranger, The Heroic Lover, and so on. The incident of the machine-gun bound me to a recent war; that was all. My own historical information being rather confused, I asked Mr. Sidney Webb to find out a good war for my purpose. He spent about two minutes in a rapid survey of every war that has ever been waged, and then told me that the Servo-Bulgarian was what I wanted. I then read the account of the war in the Annual Register, with a modern railway map of the Balkan Peninsula before me, and filled my blanks, making all the action take place in Serbia, in the house of a Serbian family. I then read the play to Stepniak, and to the Admiral who commanded the Bulgarian Fleet during the war. ...He made me change the scene

from Serbia to Bulgaria, and the characters from Serbians to Bulgarians, and gave me descriptions of Bulgarian life and ideas, which enabled me to fit my play exactly with local colour and character. I followed the facts he gave me as closely as I could, because invented facts are the same stale stuff in all plays, one man's imagination being much the same as another's in such matters, whilst real facts are fresh and varied. So you can judge exactly how far my historical conscience goes...

²John A. Mills, Language and Laughter: Comic Diction in the Plays of Bernard Shaw (Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1969) 68.

CHAPTER III

PRODUCTION

III. PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION DIARY

April 13/20, 1985:

First meetings with Philip (Philip McCoy, my thesis production supervisor). Discussed first impressions of the play based on early readings, structural analysis and preliminary critical research. Mise en scene discussions focus on the essential roughness of the world of the play (this is not an operetta) and on the contrast between this roughness and the pretensions of the Bulgarians. Structurally, french scene analysis shows a pattern of rising action through each act; Philip emphasizes that this must be reflected in pacing. Also, contrasting "public" scenes and private "tete-a-tete's" seems an important motif. First estimates of running times for the three acts are 26 minutes, 31 minutes and 41 minutes respectively; I will keep both intermissions. Initial feelings are that **Bluntschli**, **Nicola**, **Petkoff** and **Catherine** must be somehow believably older than 18 to 22 year old students.

May 2:

Based on further discussions with Philip, I've circulated four pages of initial thoughts for the designers and technical staff (see Appendix II). I have tried to give a clear direction whilst still leaving the fullest possible

range for creative and original ideas, and I hope that it will get Sheila (Sheila Richardson Lee, Faculty Costume Designer) and Cathy (Catherine Cowan, MFA-student Designer for Setting and Props) excited and enthusiastic. Sheila is off to the East for a few weeks, so they'll have time to mull over my notes. I have not specifically discussed my desire for basically symmetrical and warm-coloured sets, but this can wait.

May 15:

An initial meeting with Philip, Sheila, Cathy, and Jim (J. James Andrews, Faculty Production Manager, Sound Designer and Cathy's advisor for this show). Basically just a casual talk, discussing some details of my notes and, more to the point, how we like to work in our respective areas. Generally, things seemed clear and well-understood: I said that I wanted to keep to mainly balanced sets at or around the proscenium line, and that I wanted to work within fairly warm colour ranges; we agreed that we'd use accurate historical period as a starting point but that we'd not feel at all tied to details. I told Cathy that I needed rough sketches or models when discussing set ideas, instead of just ground plans or verbal descriptions; Cathy said that she likes to scratch down ideas from the start, so we should get on famously! My tendency to try to interrupt the flow of these initial design ideas only when I see a problem, earned somewhat awkward public criticism from Philip; he pointed out that the result of my approach is that I seem mostly negative or silent. He's quite right, although now I worry that encouragement may seem forced! We will meet again in two days to get into deeper discussion.

May 17:

A massive meeting with designers, advisors, James Dugan (Faculty Producer and Head of Department), Costumers, and Tech Staff. I felt a bit like a Panda expected to mate as I tried to talk about set ideas with Cathy (as did she, I believe) — two little people trying to be loose and creative with an audience of ten — this won't work. I announced that Pat O'Rourke (U of Calgary Faculty member) was to play **Catherine** and Alan Robertson (U of Calgary Dean of Fine Arts) **Petkoff**; the response was most enthusiastic. It was agreed that every effort would be made to keep the shops informed about design and casting so that they could do any preliminary work they wished, but not before Sheila and I meet tomorrow to examine books on period costume and choose a silhouette for the dresses. As well I'll meet soon with Cathy alone and discuss the set further. I'm off for Europe May 22, so the next few days will be important.

May 18:

Met with Sheila. I began by emphasizing that we were looking for an old-timey period feel and texture but that characterization requirements (especially romantic-realistic split) would outweigh any desire for historical accuracy. So, for example, both **Sergius** and **Petkoff** will be in red uniforms "a la charge-of-the-light-brigade," rather than one in red and one in blue, as would be more accurate. **Louka** I would like to see as sexy and attractive to a modern western audience, despite authentic peasant patterns which offer rather dumpy models. For the ladies' dresses we chose a roughly 1885 bustle outline, prominent but not extreme.

May 19:

Met with Cathy. We again looked over the notes, emphasizing the idea of romantic to realistic progression through three different sets. Repeated my desire to work with sets at or around the proscenium line, which Cathy agreed to, recognizing that the upstage of the U.T. (University Theatre) has atrocious sightlines and feels distant and separated from the audience as a whole. I also repeated my desire for basically symmetrical sets, which Cathy queried. I explained that my vision of the play required that I be able to contrast extremes of symmetry and asymmetry in the staging, which are both most clearly seen against symmetrical settings. Also, patterns in this play involve couples, and couples split by others, so I went on to say that I felt that this play lent itself to strong, easily manipulated triangular groupings of characters; besides, I like the look of triangles on stage. All these conditions are helped by symmetry. I found myself having to explain what I considered to be basic principles of thrust staging, especially on a deep thrust like the U.T. I emphasized the strong diagonal axes (X-shaped) and the need to generate movement along these lines of force. (This shape lends itself to triangular blocking!) Also I discussed the need to think in terms of vertical composition, with downstage areas needing to allow for fairly low positions for stationary actors ... i.e. low benches, floor seats, etc. Cathy seemed pleased to have these principles discussed. No firm ideas yet, but a solid foundation.

May 20:

An informal lunch meeting at Sheila's home. After too much to eat and drink, we all three chanted out my basic principles and needs; I guess I've repeated them enough!

June 27:

3:00 p.m.: Back from Europe, I met Sheila to see sketches. These are all black and white, many taken directly from photos we've seen before. **Russian Officer** and **Nicola** seem fine (colour approval pending, of course); **Louka** may need to be a bit sexier; **Bluntshli** is fine in a plain but smart uniform (technically infantry); for **Sergius** a spectacular lifeguard's uniform with much braiding and decoration (very Errol Flynn), with a plainer version of the same for **Petkoff**. The dresses for **Raina** and **Catherine** are coming; I've chosen bits from several sketches which Sheila will work towards. Despite my requests, Sheila seems unwilling to provide me with a colour-bar, showing the colour range within which she will work. Designs are due in less than a week for approval.

7:00 p.m.: Meeting with Cathy to discuss set. She has some very useful sketches drawn which help our discussions. She has a plan to use a single, heavy-wood frame for all the acts, into which wall pieces, windows, etc., are added. Behind all of this she has drawn an imposing dark backdrop of mountain outlines. My questions as to how my initial notes emphasizing three separate sets had led her to this were answered in terms of financial constraints, which I can't understand since I've said that settings can be fragmentary. Cathy's ideas are visually exciting and wonderfully creative but seem quite out of line with all that we've said so far. I agree tentatively to pursue the idea, providing that Cathy manages to downplay the wooden-frame unit and stress the complete difference of the three sets, and that we maintain the basic symmetry (I don't want the Act One french door on one side, for instance). As well, I point out that the mountains are far too oppressive; this is a comedy!

July 3:

Meeting with Cathy and Jim at my apartment. We are looking at more detailed problems in Cathy's ideas when I realize that she is not discussing solid wall pieces inside the frame but floating, turnable plugs which touch the frame only by pins. I object, saying that this both creates a theatricality, which I don't want at all, and throws focus onto the frame unit. Cathy says that this frame is the visually unifying aspect of the set as a whole, the through-line ... I don't want a through-line!! I want three different sets! As it seems this frame idea cannot accomplish this, we must start afresh. Design approval was due yesterday.

July 8:

An initially frustrating meeting in the U.T. with Cathy, Sheila and Jim eventually leads to some constructive interaction about the set. Cathy seems very tense and guarded, unwilling to be pulled too far from her initial ideas. She has come up with an idea of using the same wall units (reversed) for Acts One and Three; this holds great promise and needs only minor adjustment. Cathy objected when I vetoed any notions of a scaled down or miniature house for Act Two; she said that all alternatives would be too costly. I suggested that we try using the vomitorium entrance as the entrance to an imaginary house, a less-than-perfect compromise which I'd previously discussed with Philip. Progress came quickly and easily after this. I expressed concerns about the need to limit the size of the playing areas; certain crosses along dominant axes were almost 35 feet long — too slow for comedy! Following the meeting I typed up a memo of the main points ... let's not step backwards anymore! We agreed

not to meet for a week to give Cathy time to do new sketches. Sheila's sketches are late because she's hurt her neck and isn't able to draw.

July 16:

We have a basic set which satisfies all my physical staging requirements, in a rough form at least. Now more detailed sketches and models are needed ... we are behind schedule now. Sheila has some sketches, but very few done in colour. I ask both designers for a colour-bar: none is available. Cathy is to draw Acts One and Three for Friday.

July 19:

General meeting with Cathy, Sheila, Philip, Jim and Mike (Mike Taugher, Staff Technical Director and Lighting Designer). Minor changes and adaptations; notably Act Three wall-ends turned in, narrowing the area. We agree that I shall have the right to place furniture pieces as I see fit. Still no real notion of colour from Sheila or Cathy; Sheila especially seems to be planning to base her renderings on her fabric shopping, not vice versa. I tell her that I'd rather have her ideas to depart from if necessary ... she's most reluctant. Everything is behind schedule from the design point of view.

August 6:

Expressed my concerns over lack of either model or full renderings to Cathy and Jim. Both are coming, but now design drawings are behind schedule and must be completed.

August 14:

Met with Cathy and Jim in Jim's office. Saw and approved basic ground-plan and rough elevations (not shop drawings). I need reduced ground-plans to block on and a model or at least full renderings. G-plans to be copied very soon.

August 26:

Still without groundplans to block on, and still without model or colour renderings. A trip to U.T. shop reveals Act Two doors being built without my seeing shop drawings in advance. I feel very much that I'm not in control of the mise en scene process, nor able properly to visualize the set and surroundings ... Ultimatum from Philip and myself: Cathy must present all by September 3rd. After two months I've no three-dimensional feel for the show, and now I must cast the show in ten days time!! Costumes by now are underway and far more concrete. Sheila has bought various fabrics; a bit greeny at times but generally acceptable. **Catherine's** Act Three dress works especially well, with just the right amount of excess and gaudiness. Gerri (Gerri Hemphill, Staff Production Coordinator) tells me that Deb Adie will stage-manage for us; this is a great relief, as she's an intelligent and reliable veteran. Groundplans are finally copied from shop blueprints.

August 30:

Met with Gerri and Deb to discuss how we'd approach rehearsals, auditions, etc. Deb has good design instincts and I will make every effort to keep her informed and involved with mise en scene developments ...

obviously we are scrambling somewhat now, and Deb can help out and take some responsibility in design matters in my absence; this will be especially important once K2 starts up at the end of September and I'm unavailable during days. [From late September on I served as Assistant Director and Climbing Supervisor for Theatre Calgary's production of K2 during the days.] I realized today, during a discussion with James Dugan involving my concerns about the designs and my frustration at the situation, that we have made no plans for a poster and that proofs are due in ten days! I call Doug McCullough (U of Calgary Faculty Designer), deciding that both Sheila and Cathy are too busy to take on this job right now; Doug very graciously agrees to do something for us on short notice.

September 3:

A mass meeting for all concerned in the costume shop to see final renderings of sets and costumes. The costume renderings are all approved and admired; since the material was bought before many of the sketches were coloured in there is a great deal of accuracy and precision. The set model is all white and only half-built, and the renderings are incomplete in shape and colour. I approve what I can but refuse to comment on colour and so on until all is complete. Philip and I voice our complaints, not with the substance of the work, but with its being so long overdue.

September 4:

Trip to Spy Hill (Properties Warehouse) to see furniture. Again, I can only point vaguely at odd shapes; how these things fit in I do not yet know. Auditions this evening, with good turnout and several possibilities for

most roles. I read most people in different roles, trying to judge their adaptability and general talent as much as physical suitability.

September 6:

Production meeting. I give out preliminary rehearsal schedule which works around **Catherine's** Monday teaching commitments. I state that I wish to see all shop drawings before things are built, as has not so far been the rule. Auditions again this evening. My dog died this afternoon, so we had a slightly more serious set of readings! A first meeting with Joyce (Joyce Doolittle, Faculty Co-Director of Cymbeline) and Grant (Grant Reddick, Faculty Co-Director of Cymbeline), who have been auditioning their show from the same pool of actors as myself, reveals surprisingly few conflicts. I trade a possible Louka, for a virtually free choice of all others.

September 10:

Met with Cathy. I have moved the furniture of Act One around a bit to tighten things up and to move more strongly onto axis lines. The basic stage space is clear enough now, but still no sense of colour, detail or tone. Read through of play with cast in Reeve Theatre. Since I've found that young actors are often very uncomfortable with the idea of playing "types," my plan is to start off treating the play fairly realistically and then to adjust it as necessary towards the farcical. I talk about the characters as people and invite individual questions from the actors. I also say that we will start by putting the show on its feet (blocking) and then will look to characterization, etc. **Petkoff** is immediately strong and

supportive, a great example for the others. **Bluntschli**, on the other hand, is cause for immediate concern with his sloppy diction, and I tell him that this will be a priority.

September 11:

A meeting to approve a rendering of Act One suddenly became much more; Cathy arrived with the renderings of all three acts finished! In one hour we move farther than in the past few weeks. Colours need changing and warming, carpets need to be augmented but most is good. Tonight we blocked Act One. Smooth and quick; I am impressed with the business-like attitude of the cast. We have time to run it through; it seems clear and precise.

September 12:

Blocked Act Two. Pacing out the blocking beforehand, I decide that we must move the flagstone circle upstage by four feet; we haven't time to retape the floor, so we're a bit rough. Again, all is smooth and quick. Rehearsal costumes came in today; men are fine, ladies need bustles.

September 13:

Ran through Acts One and Two. We take some time to discuss preliminary characterization beforehand, and at the close of each act I give the actors some points to ponder. Generally I'm very pleased, although **Catherine** is very meek; we must seek the lioness in her role. I set aside time for warm-ups at the start, but this was wasted. Next week I'll lead a warm-up with the group. Also preliminary make-up meeting with Sheila and John (John Cox, Faculty Make-up Supervisor).

September 15:

Blocked and ran Act Three. Again I moved the furniture quite a bit from the groundplan. Got through whole act and had time to work characters a bit afterwards.

September 16:

Monday, so no **Catherine**. Worked **Bluntschli-Raina** scenes and understudies in same. My greatest worry with **Bluntschli** is his tendency to become manic and muggy on stage; today this was very frustrating. Raina is coming along very well. Production meeting shows us to be on course and running fairly smoothly. Cathy will bring me drawings as they are ready; this piecemeal approach makes it very difficult to connect everything in my head and relate it to my initial concepts, but time makes this necessary. Cathy is now working wonderfully, with speed and confidence.

September 17:

Frustrating work on Act Two. Evidence of actors learning lines by rote, without meanings. Sloppy readings and movement slow us and we don't finish it all. **Catherine** is now beginning to rise to her part a bit. Did a group warm-up but found little interest, so I probably won't bother continuing them. Approved the Act One ottoman plans during rehearsal.

September 18:

Good work on Act One, with some details filling in from Monday's rehearsal. **Louka** is weak and replaced for tonight by an understudy.

Bluntschli is becoming increasingly stubborn and difficult; he also seems very slow in taking purely technical direction. I feel today that the farcical aspects of the play want to take over altogether, as well they should, I suppose. A few more days of character work and then we'll pick up the comic pace. A lighting and sound meeting with Jim and Mike, which included the approval of the backdrop plan with Cathy, has set out the ground work necessary. Lighting will follow the romantic to realistic progression, moving from candle to daylight whilst always staying "warm." We also discuss ways of solving the problem of the candles being left onstage at the end of Act One. We decide that **Raina** will carry off the S.L. candle when she fetches her mother and return without it. Then only the bedside candle must be blown out. We decide to record the Act One sound effects instead of doing these live; next Monday in Reeve, to be precise. We want to go from a romantic, classical feel in the opening music towards peasantry, slavie music at the ending; Jim and I will look for music.

September 19:

Super rehearsal of Act Three, with all sorts of good humour and fun. Worked scene by scene and then ran the act through. We are moving all the time towards a quicker, cleaner style of delivery (I think **Petkoff** sets the example here!). Great work from **Bluntschli**, finally, with the older, wiser aspects of the character coming across for the first time; I notice that his diction improves greatly as he relaxes. Actors are having trouble walking on our many overlapping rugs; this will need to be solved. I saw and approved shop sketches for several more furniture pieces during rehearsal this evening.

September 20:

Worked end of Act Two and bits of Act Three. **Louka**, who has been very mousey up to now, improved a lot with coaching. **Raina** was sick today and went home early, leaving me to work the **Louka-Nicola** and **Louka-Sergius** scenes in Act Three.

September 22:

Run through for tech staff. Act Two is strong, Acts One and Three drag beneath the weight of "realistic" acting. Time has come to pick things up and make it funny!

September 23:

Made sound recordings in Reeve and worked scenes from the middle of Act Three. **Louka** is slow and somber, draining the life from the show, though I cannot yet tell whether the problem is acting-related or due to the medical condition of the actress (anorexia nervosa). **Petkoff** continues to be a great leader for the cast on and off the stage.

September 24:

Raina and **Catherine** are ill. Rehearsed understudies and approved last of the furniture drawings. Began work on **K2** today.

September 25:

Whole cast arrives for rehearsal but both **Catherine** and **Raina** look and sound absolutely terrible; I fear a flu epidemic in the cast. If only to acknowledge their determination in showing up at all, we run Act Two

then send them home at 8:00 p.m. I work the two person scenes again, but I've done about all of this I can.

September 26:

Rehearsal cancelled due to illness of **Catherine** and, more seriously, periodic near-collapses of **Raina**. Fitting of **Raina's** dress goes well but the actress seems very weak.

September 27:

Rehearsal cancelled due to illness. **Catherine** tells me she's been advised by her doctor that this could last for weeks! **Raina** tells me that they suspect that she has mononucleosis!! Whatever happens, this was to have been a crucial week of transition; now it is almost completely lost.

September 29:

An off-book run-through of all three acts after almost a week off. Predictably things were rough and stumbly, but I am impressed with the obvious hard work of the cast. The play is slow and sluggish, too weighted with character and motivation. **Louka** and **Nicola** are especially low on energy. At the end of the run I tell the cast we will now be starting to pick things up, fill in business and make the show funny.

September 30:

Act One scene work with principals and understudies. **Bluntschli** is really starting to calm down and "play" himself, which helps us greatly in finding the charming side of his character. We work at speeding the long

speeches up without losing their sense. A very quick production meeting shows that all is on schedule; notably, the light plot is done and music choices are gradually firming up. (We have abandoned Mozart for the opening as being too stately and "Viennese." Jim has found various pieces by Offenbach which have lovely romantic overtones.) We will meet soon to finalize music choices.

October 1:

Began with scene work from Act One, then we worked Act Three. We brought in many of the actual props, such as Petkoff's hookah, etc. We are trying to speed delivery and clean up loose moments but now things seem to be moving too slowly on the stage; the movement seems somehow ponderous and laboured. We have great fun with the middle section involving Raina, Sergius and Bluntschli and the battles but the Louka-Nicola (and Louka-Sergius) scenes are extremely flat and damaging. I cannot seem to get consistent energy from Louka, whose medical problems are beginning to seriously hinder our work.

October 2:

Scene work, Act Two. Nothing greatly new today; we worked on doing things Better!

October 3:

Ran play. Pieces are improving and moments are being discovered, but it still feels like a dinosaur, without the momentum to stay alive. Fundamentally everything makes sense and works, but it seems laboured.

I worked a while with **Louka** and **Nicola**, trying to fire up their sullen scenes; it is clear that I must do something to liven up **Louka** soon.

October 4:

Again worked Act Two, with special attention to **Sergius**, who has started to develop a nice manner and bearing as the swaggering soldier, but keeps trying to inject self-knowledge and sensitivity into the role, which are fatal to his comic function. Especially his automatic "I never withdraw," must not seem either considered or steeped in self-parody. The act, as a whole, was better, but the **Louka** scenes, which began well, fell apart near the end of rehearsal. The actress must eat more to have the needed energy.

October 6:

Run of show. Slow, dull and agonizing! Philip came to watch for the first time and made some very clear and useful criticisms. Firstly he commented that while the blocking worked well interpretively, there were times when patterns for meaning should be sacrificed to pacing considerations. Secondly he observed that **Louka** was not simply low on energy; as he said: "You have seven actors playing Shaw and **Louka** playing Strindberg!" I believe that he is right on both counts. We have a good, logical base in our blocking, which must not become too rigid. Also, I must find a way to get **Louka** out of her sullen, overly realistic acting.

October 7:

Production meeting reveals all going well. Mike is focusing lights this week in the U.T. and says that we may be able to move to the U.T. early

(on Friday). Met with Jim to listen to sound tapes. I am happy with almost all of the music choices, except for the cue which comes with the first vision of Raina on the balcony; we need more excessive romance here. A very exciting rehearsal this evening; I was onstage much more than I had been before, now, very conscious of the need for enthusiasm and energy. We go through Act One, trimming, cutting, tightening. **Raina's** four step march away from **Bluntschli** becomes a quick turn-out, for example. Also we begin to add bits of funny "business," some of which are quite extravagant, such as having **Raina** loom over **Bluntschli** as he tells his story of the cavalry charge. Immediately the act picks up enormously and really runs well. I shall do the same with the other acts.

October 8:

Act Two work. The enthusiasm I'm feeling about the improvements is catching on, and we fly through, editing and reblocking. In particular, I abandon a more realistic, spread-out final tableau in favour of a quick, snappy, "proscenium-type" picture. I go to great lengths to make **Louka** much more openly sexual and flirty; this kind of wide, "Hollywood-starlet" behaviour moves the actress out of her realistic style and goes a long way towards giving her the needed comic energy. Again, the whole act is much improved.

October 9:

Act Three. Same process. I completely reblock the "photograph" scene. I throw out symmetrical balancing in this scene (despite its logic) in favour of a much funnier arrangement of a type suggested by Philip. **Petkoff**

now holds centre stage whilst the others cluster about in humourous little groups. The blocking is crisper and tighter now, but still fundamentally the same. Very few of the slower, painful moments remain, although **Louka** (and **Nicola**, who plays off her) remains barely powerful enough.

October 10:

Prior to a full run of the show, I discuss for the first time with the actors the concept of the acts rising in pace and energy to their ends. A very good and funny run is the result, except that **Louka** has taken three giant steps backwards and kills all of her scenes with **Sergius** and **Nicola**. Basically the mood is jovial, and this is helped by the news that we will move tomorrow to the U.T., instead of Sunday. Also, Jim has found a super piece of music for the opening cue in Act One. We now move from Offenbach Overtures (the "Barcarole") through rather playful slavic pieces by Liszt and Dvořák, to native Bulgarian peasant dances.

October 11:

First run in U.T. The sets, under work lights, look ghastly, but they are nowhere near finished. Enthusiasm is high and we have as good a run as could be hoped for first day on set. At the end I comment that the run had been a bit flat, but basically let it go at that.

October 13:

Worked scenes with **Bluntschli**, **Louka**, **Nicola** and **Sergius** before the rehearsal. We are now into runs every night so I haven't much time to work specific pieces any longer. The run is technically accurate but flat and slow (again, especially **Louka**). Still adjusting to new space, I suppose.

October 14:

Set light cues with Mike and Jim plus crew. Things go quite well; I am basically happy with the mood and tone. I keep asking for more warmth and more light, and Mike keeps calling for shape and shadows: it becomes a good-natured game. The backdrop is not yet ready to light.

October 15:

Sound levels set in morning. The gunshots sound muffled and "recorded," but Jim plays with the controls and somewhat solves this. A few cues need re-editing to fit the timing of the action onstage, but we will wait until after a run of the **Russian Officer** section. Evening run brings in a rough set of light and sound cues, which for the most part miss their marks, sometimes so completely as to be quite amusing. The actors are still flat and sloppy, and their backstage behaviour is far too casual. Louka seems to be getting into a pattern of beginning strongly and then falling apart; if she doesn't eat more she won't be strong enough. I give the cast specific notes and tell them that we need renewed effort.

October 16:

Another awful run; worse than ever in fact. The energy is low, and especially dropping in Act Three, which seemed to last forever. Philip, who has come again to watch, emphasizes the importance of a continuous build to the end of the acts, and especially to the end of the play. The action must be constantly accelerating, he says, and the Louka scenes kill the momentum. I speak most sternly with the actors following the run; this is the first time I've felt the need to really chastise them. Next run I

shall call out from the house whenever they drop volume or pace. I give no specific notes. Props and set dressing were not finished as due so notes will wait 'til tomorrow.

October 17:

Costumes/cue to cue/set and props approval. We work the live backstage sounds from Act One, using **Petkoff** as "the voice in the crowd." Then cue to cue whilst examining costumes and props. Cues work well, with some effort. Costumes mostly look wonderful, except that they almost all need breaking down. Preliminary wigs also look fine. As far as set goes, there are many details to be fixed, but basically the problem is Act Two, which is far too bright and pink; it becomes an eyesore. Furniture needs breaking down a bit; Act Three table needs a lot of work to make it foreign to the library. A serious problem arises; the mother of **Louka** calls; she says that **Louka** has lost a lot of weight and could soon be hospitalized unless the weight-loss is halted. I must discuss this with Philip and James Dugan.

October 19:

In discussions this morning we decide to go ahead and try to use **Louka**, for our sake and especially for hers. However we notify our understudy and tell her to be ready, just in case. I write **Louka** a note, telling her that she must eat before each act, under the supervision of Gerri Hemphill, if she wishes to remain in the show. It seems to work, for the run is super, with the pace brisk and snappy and everything working. The **Louka** scenes were the best they've ever been, and with occasional

encouragement from myself, the cast really drove to the finish of the play: most satisfying. The tech staff has done an amazing job, solving literally dozens of minor set problems in one day. Mike has got the backdrop working, for the most part, and it looks fine. Acts Two and Three are to be repainted this weekend. Preliminary make-up needs a lot of individual adjustments but John is responsive and helpful. **Bluntschli** in Act One looked particularly ghoulish tonight; this must be fixed.

October 20:

Dress Run. Publicity and Archive photos taken today, before and during run. Acts Two and Three sets look much better now with their new darker and dirtier paint jobs. Mike and Jim have removed the white cloth "snow-caps" from the backdrop and replaced them with beams of light, which look quite smart. Again I call out a few times during the run, but basically all is looking good.

October 21:

Final Dress. With a small audience of friends invited by the cast, the show plays wonderfully. It seems smart, slick and lively. Since I will not be present for much of the run [**K2** commitments], I ask Deb (Stage Manager) to give notes today; she gives only a few, but the **right** few!

October 22:

Preview. Audience of about 150 people. All should have been fine, but the show is really down again. **Catherine** seems sick or tired, for she is dragging the whole show down. From the opening with **Raina** and

Catherine, the audience's interest was lost. After the show the cast gathers for notes, and I ask **Catherine** if all is well, since she seemed slow. To my utter amazement, she replies that, based on the response of her friends who watched last night, she had decided to slow the play down. After weeks of work on picking up the pace, **Catherine**, a veteran, says this before a young and impressionable cast! All I can do is tell her that the show failed because of her playing at that pace and hope for the best (although I do tell **Raina** to simply cut off **Catherine's** lines if she's slow during the opening scene tomorrow). Tech cues are all fine, costumes and make-up fine, sets are fine; if we play as we did October 21st, all will be fine.

October 23:

Opening. We're fine.

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WORKS CITED

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APPENDIX I

THESIS PROPOSAL

[A brief production proposal submitted along with other titles to the Head of the Department of Drama for consideration as part of the 1985-86 Mainstage Season: 10 December 1984.]

Arms and the Man by George Bernard Shaw (1894)

Cast:

5 M and 3 F

Set:

The three acts of this play are set in three different parts of the Petkoff house: Raina's bedroom, the back garden and the Library. Settings could be fragmentary.

Costumes:

Set in a vague, unfamiliar period (Bulgaria 1880's), Arms the the Man allows a certain freedom from strict accuracy; a mix of country and military fashions, combined with an awkward attempt at elegance, is the crucial "feel" required. Several of the characters will require two complete costumes: for Raina and Catherine, nightdresses and day wear; for Bluntschli, a torn, dirty uniform and a clean, proper one. (Total costumes: 10 + one coat.)

Special problems with the mise en scene:

The greatest difficulty presented by Arms and the Man probably lies in the need for three sets. As I have said above, props, trimmings and furniture, changed between acts, might allow for sufficient differentiation. As these changes will doubtlessly need to take place before the audience, some sort of choreographed "scene-change show" will be required.

Rationale:

It would stretch the credibility of anyone to suggest that Arms and the Man offers notably profound political and social insights to an audience today. To be sure there are comments on war and heroism to be found within the script but they certainly are not the driving force behind it.

Arms and the Man is a light, amusing comedy of situations and types. It is a crowd pleasing work by one of the modern giants which provides fun and technically challenging roles for young actors.

APPENDIX II

DIRECTOR'S NOTES FOR THE DESIGNERS FOR ARMS AND THE MAN
(2 MAY 1985)

DIRECTOR'S NOTES FOR THE DESIGNERS FOR ARMS AND THE MAN
(2 May 1985)

To: Cathy Cowan, Sheila Lee, Mike Taugher, Jim Andrews, Jim Dugan, Shelly Schweider, Lisa Roberts, Audrey Ott, Philip McCoy, Bob Moore.

From: Brian Baxter.

These are my initial ideas about the play.

THEME AND ACTION MOTIFS:

"Mockery! Mockery everywhere! Everything I think is mocked by everything I do."

So says Sergius, the dashing cavalry officer, as he sees his dream-world evaporate in the face of hard fact. Arms and the Man deals with the clash of two antithetical worlds, the **romantic** world of ideals and heroes, of "Byron and Pushkin and the Opera" (all mentioned by the characters), and the **realistic**, prosaic, everyday world of ordinary human beings. It is a conflict not only **between** characters (Sergius vs. Bluntschli) but also **within** characters, as they try to reconcile their ideals with their lives. These colliding opposites struggle, twist and turn, and eventually come together into a new and happy synthesis.

The design elements, as well as the staging, should serve to emphasize and clarify the distinctions between these opposites: romantic and real.

For all its intellectual interest, Arms and the Man is still a romantic comedy, with boys meeting girls, with all kinds of funny problems, and with reversals, leading to a couple of happy marriages. It is important that we always keep this in mind. But within this overall structure we can begin to perceive various thematic patterns and action motifs running throughout the play: all can be seen to stem from the central opposition of the romantic and the realistic, or, in more physical terms between the **public** and the **private**:

PUBLIC

public "performance"
 posed
 professed "truths"
 what seems to be going on
 "distancing"
 "higher love"
 self-conscious action

PRIVATE

private "behaviour"
 relaxed
 forbidden "secrets"
 what's really going on
 intimacy
 physical attraction
 spontaneity

These distinctions begin to blur and overlap, particularly in Act Three.

SPECIFIC NOTES ON THE MISE EN SCENE:

The mise en scene should serve to emphasize the distinctions between the romantic and the realistic. What follows are some more specific ideas on how this may be accomplished, as well as a listing of my basic requirements.

PERIOD:

The play is set in Bulgaria in 1885/86 at the time of the Serbo-Hungarian War. Bulgaria had only recently gained independence from the Turkish Empire and had, under the sponsorship of Russia, become a sovereign state at the Congress of Berlin of 1878. Thus we find an interesting blend of cultural influences:

native Bulgarian (Serbian)
 Turkish
 Russian
 Austro-Hungarian (Viennese)

This last is perhaps the most "emulated" style when the Bulgarians are attempting to be fashionable. I would like basically to follow an authentic period style. It may, however, be necessary to "English" the play a bit if the authentic style seems **too** far from our own expectations for the 1880's.

SETTING:

1. Separate settings for each of the three acts are needed; there will be an intermission between each act to allow for changes. There is a clear and definite progression through the acts from romantic to realistic. Act One is late at night in Raina's bedroom, lit by candles and moonlight, filled with dark wood, fur, et cetera; Act Two is in the garden, in the fresh morning, in a picturesque mountain village, but with the laundry on the bushes; Act Three is inside the terribly anti-climactic Library (after what the characters have told us about it). For this progression to be most clear, three separate and different sets are needed.

SETTING (Continued):

2. Physical elements of the setting, as described in the script, should be real and functional, in so far as possible (ie. the door, window, balcony, and curtains in Act One). I do not want to pantomime or fudge any of this sort of thing. As well, I believe that the staircase in Act Two (leading from the house to the garden) is necessary in some form.
3. The world of this play is not large or grand; this is not a great house full of servants. Instead it is a "grand house" only because it is "the only private house with two floors and a staircase **indoors**" in the town. Much of the humour of the play lies in the disparity between the way the Bulgarians see themselves and the way they are perceived by Bluntschli, and by the audience. Their world may be picturesque and have a certain rustic charm, but it is devoid of the grandeur they attribute to it.
4. The high style and "culture" of the Petkoffs (Bulgarians) is all imported, brought back from Sophia and Vienna, from novels and trips to the Opera; it attempts to imitate "society" as they have seen it. I would imagine this is a source of comedy, if their "collected" bits of "society" somehow do not fit with their rougher native environment (ie. the Library, and the electric bell). This incongruity should be **subtly**, but definitely played up.
5. I believe that the set for Act One should clearly be an upper floor, as the balcony business is important.

COSTUMES:

1. I do not see costumes mirroring the progression of the set from romantic to realistic. However, in keeping with the central theme, costuming should provide contrasts along those lines, both between characters and within characters. For example:
 - A. Raina in her grand dress versus the simple but attractive Louka.
 - B. Raina in her nightdress versus the torn and bloody Bluntschli (a most striking image — a coup de theatre).
 - C. Sergius posing and beautiful in his uniform versus Petkoff, who just wants to get out of his.
 - D. Sergius in his ornate uniform versus the neat but subdued Bluntschli later in the play.
 - E. Sergius posing, in the thralls of "higher love" versus Sergius relaxing from these strains.
 - F. Catherine as she greets Petkoff versus Catherine as she greets Sergius.

As these examples indicate, the costumes should allow not only for basic contrasts in style, but also for differing manner and bearing by given characters within a scene.

COSTUMES (Continued):

2. Apart from the social/cultural sources mentioned in the section on Period (Austro-Hungarian, Russian, Turkish, and native Serbian), certain other influences or sources should, or could, be considered in costuming:

Late or Neo-Romanticism (Rostand, etc.)
 Opera and Operetta styles of the late 19th Century.
 Folk/Peasant, or Naif styles, especially for the servant.

In particular, I believe the Opera and Operetta sources should be considered as a model for the grand romantic costumes and manners of Sergius and Raina.

3. Consideration should be given to the idea that certain characters are uncomfortable in certain roles and that this is reflected in the fit and manner of wearing their dress. For example, it is clear that Petkoff just wants to be out of his uniform when he gets home; presumably he never really belongs in it. Sergius, on the other hand, clearly is made for his uniform and it should sit magnificently on him. This principle should be explored for its comic potential.

4. As suggested earlier, the costumes should provide for some sort of variation (looseness versus tightness) to reflect the posed and the natural modes of individual characters.

SOUND AND SPECIAL EFFECTS:

1. Some sort of music will be used through the intermissions and for pre-show, although I have not decided about this yet. As well, some sort of "outdoor" sounds might play through Act Two. Beyond this, there will be no environmental sound.

2. Attention should be given soon to the difficulties of the sound plot in Act One, particularly to the need for gunshots, shouting, et cetera. Every effort must be made to create as real and **urgent** an atmosphere as possible.

3. I would like to strive to create the "bullet through the window-pane" effect in Act One, if at all possible, as I believe this is an important coup de theatre, telling us a great deal about Raina and the others. I do not really know what is involved, but ideally it, like the sound, should be spectacularly realistic if possible.

LIGHTING:

1. Apart from saying that the lighting should complement the romantic versus realistic theme of the play, I would like to leave specific discussion of lighting to a time after initial discussions with the scene and costume designers.

TWO SPECIAL NOTES:

1. Although I have not mentioned the character Nicola, I would place him in the "realistic" side of things, so far as costume is concerned. The Officer who appears briefly in Act One can wear all or parts of Sergius' costume, to save making a completely different outfit: casting can procede to accomodate this.

2. I realize, on reading over this, that the tendency, particularly in the matter of setting, seems to be toward a heavily naturalistic style, with **real** walls, and **real** doors and **real** furniture. This is not necessarily so: I don't have in mind three complete box sets filling the proscenium arch in each case: a certain fragmentation is possible within an open space. I would expect to play the action slightly above or below the University Theatre curtain line: I would not object to characters being in view of the audience as they advance to their entrance points, so long as this can be treated as a consistent convention of the staging.

REQUIRED SET PIECES AND PROPERTIES:

- Act I: Doorway from house
Window with Shutters and Curtains
Balcony (with night scene)
Bed with bedside table and backing
Main Seat (Ottoman)
The "Sergius Shrine" piece (Chest of Drawers)
The Christ Shrine
Dressing table with mirror(s)
- Act II: Table
Three chairs
Gate to Stableyard
House Entrance **or** CLEAR pathway/staircase leading to house
Bushes with Laundry
Hedge or fencing near gate
- Act III: Doorway from house
Desk/Table with two chairs
Three Seats (in script: Window seat, Ottoman and Armchair)
Bookshelf with tattered books
Trophies of war and chase
Some window(s)
Stove **NOT** needed for staging (I am not against it; I just don't need it!)

APPENDIX III

PROGRAM

PROGRAM



FACULTY OF FINE ARTS

THE DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA
PRESENTS**ARMS AND THE MAN**

by George Bernard Shaw

Directed by Brian Baxter

Set Design by Catherine Anne Cowan
Costume Design by Sheila Richardson Lee
Lighting Design by Michael Taugher
Sound Engineering by J. James Andrews
Poster Design by Douglas T. McCullough

8:00 P.M.
THE UNIVERSITY THEATRE
OCT. 23-26; OCT. 30 - NOV. 2

CAST (in order of appearance)

RAINA	Elizabeth Stepkowski
CATHERINE PETKOFF	Patricia O'Rourke*
LOUKA	Vicki Graham
CAPTAIN BLUNTSCHLI	Lon Alexander Parker
RUSSIAN OFFICER	Kevin Rothery
NICOLA	Brendan Lavery
MAJOR PAUL PETKOFF	Alan Robertson*
MAJOR SERGIUS SARANOFF	Gerald Hertz

The action takes place at Major Petkoff's house somewhere in Bulgaria, about 1885.

Act One: Raina's Bedchamber

Act Two: The Garden

Act Three: The Library

There will be two fifteen-minute intermissions.

*Ms. O'Rourke and Mr. Robertson appear by permission of Canadian Actors' Equity Association.

UNDERSTUDIES:

Bluntschli/Sergius: Kevin Rothery

Raina/Louka: Ann Roy-Poulsen

Special Thanks for:

Costumes: John Vozniak and Son Furriers Ltd.
Banff Centre

Props: J. V. Theatre Productions Ltd.
Dale Christensen and Don Maxwell

Hairstyles: Nicholas at James

Direction by Brian Baxter is a thesis project in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts - Theatre, under the supervision of Philip McCoy.

Set design by Catherine Anne Cowan is a thesis project in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts - Theatre, under the supervision of Sheila Richardson Lee.

STUDENT ASSISTANTSHIPS:

Technical: Leo Wieser, Vicky Stewart-Burgoynes

Properties: Patti Pon, Deborah Adie

Wardrobe: Kevin Rothery

Makeup: Tara Ryan

PERMANENT PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT

For the Department of Drama

Producer	James Dugan
Production Manager	J. James Andrews
Technical Director	Michael Taugher
Production Coordinator	Gerri Hemphill
Costumer	Lisa Roberts
Properties Master	Shelly Schwieder
Makeup Designer/Supervisor	John Cox
Assistant Costumers	Kathleen Douglas
	Stephanie Woods
Assistant Technical Director	Stewart Stefansson
Assistant Makeup Supervisor	Beverly Ott
Office Manager	Audrey Ott
Production Secretary	Kathy McHugh
Accounts Secretary	Cori Peters
Department Secretary	Susan Farmer

For University Theatre Services

Operations Manager	Ken Hewitt
Set Construction and Technical Production	Normand Bouchard, Tim Clinton, Martin Herbert, Thomas F. Legg Dave Lynes, Don Monty, Bernie Varem
House Manager	Janice McNulty
Publicity Coordinator	Noreen Cooper

STUDENT PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager: Deborah Adie

Assistant Stage Managers: Carolyn Decelle, Steph Parker, Ann Roy-Poulsen

Assistant Lighting Designer: Pat Christensen

RUNNING CREWS

Lights: Penelope Erickson
 Sound: Barry Arnst
 Wardrobe: Paul Brown, Hilda Doherty, Shirley Jorgenson, Suann Kovatch
 Properties: Dawn Erickson, Joanne Kuryk, Lillian Messer, Chris Enright
 Set: Ian Matthews, James Harbeck, Sue Bain, Michelle Kuhn, Leslie Alexander, Heather McCarthy
 Makeup: Stephen Buoninsegni, Michael Weicker, Doug Plaxton
 Box Office: Shane Predy, Rob Heschl, Cathy Myles, Greg Curtis, Judith Betzler, Jo-Ann Gaudry, Emily Forrest, Linda Baker, Claire Hill, Vicki L. Graham, Elizabeth Dunbar

PRODUCTION CREWS:

LIGHTS, COSTUMES, SET, PROPERTIES

Patti Pon, Tina Rasmussen, Kevin Rothery, Guia Klimowicz, Paul Brown, Hilda Doherty, Darcy L. Lackten, Tony Munch, Linda P. Baker, Lesley Lockhart, Suann Kovatch, Annette Say, Patricia Collier, Rob Cunningham, Susan Laing, Monika Wenzel, Carma Webber, Shirley Jorgenson, Claire Hill, Vicki Graham, Miriam McKenna, Tracey Taube, Dawn Erickson, Maureen Schwindt, Michelle Bee, James Harbeck, Leo Wieser, Joanne Kuryk, Ruth Anne Smith, Lillian Messer, Caroline Sorge, Jill Armstrong, Doug Curtis, Linda Deslauriers, Lee Gray, Suzette Mayr, Rhonda Drebit, Robin Russell, Peter Cline, Karen Moffat, Heather McCarthy, Chris Enright, Greg Curtis, Emily Forrest, Noreen Henders, Leslie Poulin, Doug Plaxton, Leah Meredith, Ed Jin, Kathy Venour, Owen Thompson, Pam Matthews, Mike Mathison, Susie Lauer

APPENDIX IV

REVIEWS

Production is right on the mark

By ANDREW PENNER
Staff Writer

George Bernard Shaw would be proud.

Brian Baxter and his capable cast pulled off a coup last night with a majestic — and virtually vaudevillian — performance of *Arms and the Man* at the University Theatre.

The play was meant by Shaw to be a satire of war, honor and social ambition — and Baxter milked the script for every laugh hidden within its folds.

From the moment that Elizabeth Stepkowski made her appearance as the youthful, romantic Raina Petkoff, it was clear that Baxter knew how to get the best from both script and players.

Whether making cow-eyes at Lon Parker's Captain Bluntschli or being frightfully correct with her fiancé Major Sergius Saranoff (Gerald Hertz), Stepkowski gives her character just enough flair to render herself ridiculous.

Yet it would have been all for nothing had her comedic cohorts been less able than herself to carry off Shaw's delightful comedy of many errors.

However, everyone — from the Russian Officer played by Kevin Rothery to Major Paul Petkoff himself (paternally played by Alan Robertson) — was right on the mark.

Beginning with Bluntschli's retreat from the victorious Bulgarian army in the bedroom of Raina — who is the daughter of Major Petkoff (Bulgaria's leading officer) — *Arms* scathingly reveals the idiocy of all that we hold dear.

Shaw's slicing wit

Whether it is the romanticism of war, or the pseudo-aristocracy of the middle-class bourgeoisie, nothing can stand in the way of Shaw's slicing wit.

It is during their first meeting that Raina and Bluntschli start what turns out to be a most unusual relationship.

Both are unfailingly polite in their conduct to each other —

carrying it so far as Bluntschli offering to surrender himself so as not to disturb Raina's rest.

Combine that with the attempts by Raina's parents to appear aristocratic (their family history in the town goes back almost 20 years) and you have a comedy sure to please.

And please it does. Except for Bluntschli and the servants, they are all overly dramatic in everything they do.

The contrast that the more down-to-earth characters display is astonishingly effective — especially when they are able to manoeuvre the others by preying upon their eccentricities. Right down to the ending — whose predictable corniness drew groans from the crowd — Baxter's production of *Arms and the Man* is marvelous.

The production is playing until Nov. 2.

Uneven acting mutes Shaw's parody of war

By Kate Zimmerman
(Herald staff writer)

Fine sets and elaborate costumes are the strong points of the U of C's production of *Arms and the Man*.

In terms of talent, the cast is unevenly balanced. Good acting by Equity professionals Patricia O'Rourke and Alan Robertson make the decent but obviously amateur acting by most of the other performers look worse than it actually is.

O'Rourke and Robertson play mother and father Petkoff, who, with their daughter Raina (Elizabeth Stepkowski), inhabit one of Bulgaria's finest households — in their opinion. The fact they have a "library" (actually a sitting room with a few paperbacks on a shelf) is cause for endless pride.

The Petkoffs think they are hot stuff until a cynical Swiss professional soldier (Lon Alexander Parker) puts them in their place.

In *Arms and the Man*, Shaw mocks romanticism, traditional views of heroism and the etiquette of war.

The final battles of a war between the Bulgarians and the Serbs are taking place during the play. Raina's fiance, Sergius, leads his regiment into victory through sheer stupidity, but is lauded as a hero for it by Raina and her mother.

The Swiss soldier, on the other hand, unheroically seeks mercy from the enemy's womenfolk rather than face slaughter in the street. He cares nothing for being noble — self-preservation is more important. On the

ARMS AND THE MAN by George Bernard Shaw. University of Calgary drama department production, directed by Brian Baxter. Performances continue at the University Theatre Wednesday through Sunday.

battlefield he stuffs his pockets with chocolate rather than ammunition, because food is something he really needs. It is this soldier, Bluntschli, who represents Shaw's views in the play.

Arms and the Man is a clever piece which has stood the test of time. In this period when children are wearing camouflage gear, adults are playing war games and revenge movies are all the rage, a work that makes fun of the heroics of war is more than relevant — it's a relief.

It's unfortunate that this production isn't strong enough to really get Shaw's points across. While most of the cast have a good grip on the conscious melodrama required to make the play funny, they are weak in other areas. For instance, an assortment of accents ranging from Russian to French to flat Canadian appears amongst these Bulgarians, and at least one actor (Gerald Hertz as Major Sergius Saranoff) adopts a variety of them.

Vicki Graham's interpretation of the tarty servant girl, Louka, is quite good.

But the part of Raina has been questionably cast, with Stepkowski appropriately coy but not vulnerable enough to appear to be 17 (or anywhere



Dean Bicknell, Calgary Herald

Cynical Swiss soldier taints Raina's view of war

near that age), as one character suggests of her. Stepkowski's grasp of the comedy inherent in her role is good, but she's a little too worldly for this part.

He is supposed to be about 35 years old with a medium build

and "bronze curls." Parker is probably no older than 25, very thin and dark. And while he has a certain wry charm, he does not have the stage presence to provide a strong contrast to the Petkoff hypocrites.

U of C Shaw provides disarming entertainment

Arms and the Man
reviewed by Andrea Black

Having been intensely bored by previous productions of George Bernard Shaw's plays, I found *Arms and the Man* a welcome surprise. The University Drama Department has produced a smooth and enjoyable production of this farcical Shaw play. There are several notable performances (and several weak ones), complemented by a worthy technical effort of set and costume.

Around the turn of the century, a young Bulgarian woman, Raina Petkoff, shelters a fugitive Swiss, Captain Bluntschli who is fighting for the Serb enemy forces. Raina, initially, is in love with a pompous Bulgarian, Major Sergius Saranoff. Bluntschli eventually leaves Raina's shelter and a treaty is declared, "A peace with no friendly relations". Raina, her mother Catherine, and a servant, Louka, spend most of the play trying to keep Saranoff and Major Paul Petkoff (Raina's father) from finding out that Raina ever sheltered Bluntschli for whom she now begins to feel great affection.

Patricia O'Rourke and Alan Robertson, play well off each other, creating likable feisty characters, Catherine and Paul Petkoff. They add a certain maturity to the university production. O'Rourke is a good physical actor with a strong voice allowing her to give a consistently fine performance.

The younger actors in the cast, on the most part do a fine job with gold stars going to Gerald Hertz as the pompous buffoon Major Sergius Saranoff and to Lon Alexander Parker as Captain Bluntschli, the cynical Swiss who hides a heart of sheer romance. Parker's finest moment occurs when he tries to stay awake through sheer exhaustion.

Sadly and noticable, however, two weak performances are given by Vicki Graham and Brendan Lavery as the two servants Louka and Nicola. Their delivery falls very short of the mark. Vicki Graham, who carries off Louka's physical flirtations nicely, destroys her movements whenever she opens her mouth to speak a line. She is required at one point to speak with a Russian accent, but instead of gulping down the accent and the juice of the moment, she only takes a

tentative sip. Brendan Lavery speaks far too quickly and neglects to inflect any meaning into Shaw's delicious lines about what a good servant should be.

Elizabeth Stepkowski as Raina, gives an adequate performance throughout Acts 2 and 3; her shining moments are definitely in Act 1 when we are just becoming acquainted with her.

The period costumes are beautiful and I am so glad to see that at last a director

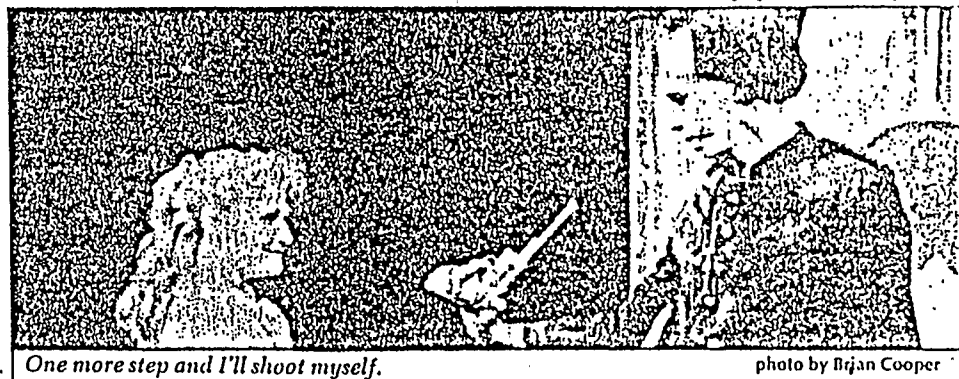
doesn't feel that constant need to update everything to present day fashions. The actors should, however, be made to look more comfortable with their swords, which banged about quite a bit.

The three sets, a sitting bedroom, a garden courtyard, and a library are quaintly crafted, very charming, and heighten the actors' movements. There were, unfortunately, some awkward moments with the terrace

doors in Act One and some tripping over the carpet in Act Three.

Brian Baxter's direction is smooth and the blocking close to faultless, although Raina has too far a distance to walk when she must light a lamp in Act One. The moment of silence at this point was too long.

Arms and the Man, on the whole, is a delightful production and a welcome respite from the tensions of midterms, term papers, and daily reality.



Review of *Arms and the Man*. *Gauntlet* (U of Calgary) 31 October 1985; 16.