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the shewing up of
blanco posnet
and
androcles & the lion

BERNARD SHAW



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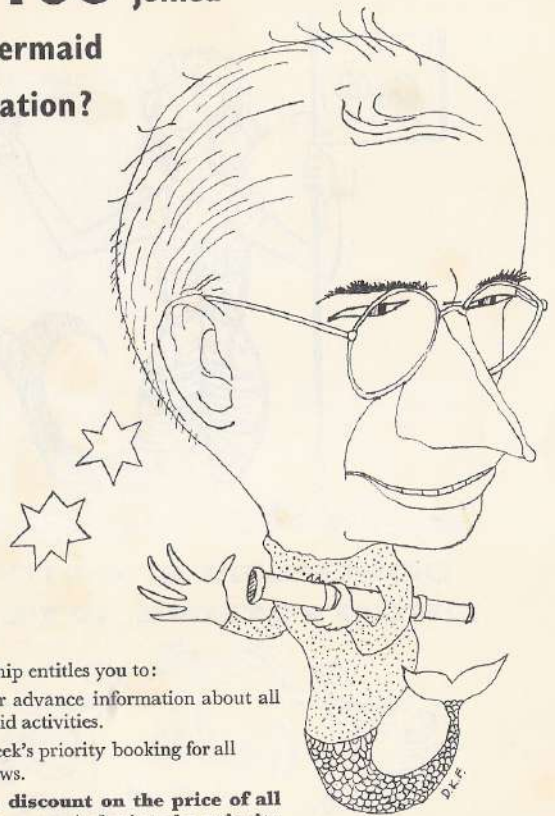
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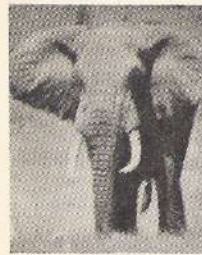
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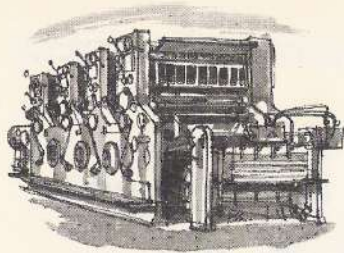


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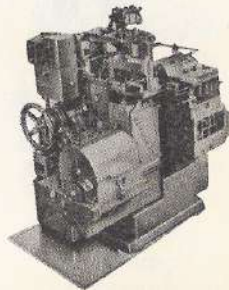
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Presents Two Plays by Bernard Shaw

The shewing-up of Blanco Posnet

(a sermon in crude melodrama)

and

Androcles and the Lion

(a fable play)

Directed by FRANK DUNLOP

Designed by ROY NOAKES

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Tuesday 3 October 1961

The Mermaid Theatre Trust gratefully acknowledges financial assistance
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Shaw's answer to 'Peter Pan'

A Note on 'Androcles and the Lion' by HESKETH PEARSON

We owe this play partly to Shaw's dissatisfaction with the work of a fellow-dramatist. 'When *Peter Pan* was in its first great vogue,' he told me, 'Max Beerbohm caricatured Barrie reading it to a circle of elderly people and children. The elderlies were beaming with enjoyment: the children were all asleep. I agreed, and wrote *Androcles* to show what a play for children should be like. It should never be childish; nothing offends children more than to play down to them; all the great children's books, *The Pilgrim's Progress*,

'SING IT! MAKE MUSIC OF IT!'



Shaw gives some lessons in vitality during the rehearsals of *Androcles*. With him are Harley Granville-Barker and Lillah McCarthy

Gulliver, Robinson Crusoe, Andersen, Arabian Nights, and Grimms' Fairy Tales, were written for adults.'

Originally a music-hall sketch, *Androcles* became what Shaw called 'a religious harlequinade, suitable for children of all ages,' and he allowed Granville Barker to open a season with it at St James's Theatre on 1 September 1913. As a rule Shaw produced his own plays, but he was busy just then and left the job to Barker, who had practically invented the restrained school of under-acting that superseded the flamboyant style suitable for Shaw. Consequently, when Shaw turned up at the final dress rehearsal, he

Continued on page 11

HESKETH PEARSON, one of the most celebrated of modern biographers, is author of *Bernard Shaw: His Life and Personality* (Methuen), described by James Agate as 'this masterpiece of biography', and of biographies of Gilbert and Sullivan, Oscar Wilde, Beerbohm Tree, Disraeli, and Charles II among others. He played Metellus in the first English production of *Androcles and the Lion*, and was a close friend of Shaw.



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witnessed a quiet naturalistic performance of a drama that called for declamation in the Shakespearean manner, and he spent some time in changing the whole tone of the show. 'Sing it! Make music of it!' he implored the cast: 'And I want Verdi, not Debussy.'

The grown-up children in the audience enjoyed the play, but most of the dramatic critics were highly offended, their notices being peppered with such phrases as 'cheap', 'offensive', 'insulting', 'nasty', 'infantile', 'flippant', 'cynical', 'insincere', 'impudent', 'outrageous', 'crude', 'repulsive' and 'blasphemous'.

Shaw answered his critics: 'I know that most people do not believe that Christians were really killed in the arena at all, and are shocked at the idea of their being callously called to their deaths as numbered turns in a variety entertainment by a vulgar call-boy, instead of simply being painted by Royal Academicians as being politely led up to heaven by angels with palm branches. And it gives me an extraordinary satisfaction when the shrieks of these poor creatures prove that I have brought them face to face for the first time with the grim reality of persecution and their own daily complicity in it, and perhaps hurt their eyes with a flash of the unbearable radiance of real religion.'

'Androcles' is NOT a Comedy—says G.B.S.

In a programme note for the first American production of *Androcles*, Shaw wrote: 'The author of *Androcles and the Lion* received one of the worst shocks of his life when an American editor published its text under the heading 'A Comedy'. It is not a comedy: it is precisely what the author calls it, A Fable Play; that is, an entertainment for children on an old story from the children's books, which nevertheless contains matter for the most mature wisdom to ponder.'

'Androcles'—the first productions

Androcles and the Lion was first produced at the Kleines Theatre, Berlin, on 25 November 1912. Its English premiere was given by Granville Barker at the St James's Theatre, London, on 1 September 1913 with the following cast: Megacera, Clare Greet; Androcles, O. P. Heggie; The Lion, Edward Sillward; Centurion, H. O. Nicholson; Captain, Ben Webster; Lavinia, Lillah McCarthy; Lentulus, Donald Calthrop; Metellus, Hesketh Pearson; Spintho, J. F. Outram; Ferrovius, Alfred Brydone; Ox Driver, Ralph Hutton; Call Boy, Neville Gartside; Editor, Herbert Hewetson; Menagerie Keeper, Baliol Holloway; The Emperor, Leon Quartermaine; Secutor, Allan Jeayes; Retiarius, J. B. Turnbull.



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Looking at the Lions

by BERNARD SHAW

'A Christian martyr was thrown to the lions not because he was a Christian, but because he was a crank: that is, an unusual sort of person. And multitudes of people, quite as civilized and amiable as we, crowded to see the lions eat him just as now they crowd the lion-house in the zoo at feeding-time, not because they really cared twopence about Diana or Christ, or could have given you any intelligent or correct account of the things Diana and Christ stood against one another for, but simply because they wanted to see a curious and exciting spectacle.

'You, dear reader, have probably run to see a fire; and if somebody came in now and told you that a lion was chasing a man down the street you would rush to the window. And if anyone were to say that you were as cruel as the people who let the lion loose on the man, you would be justly indignant. Now that we may no longer see a man hanged, we assemble outside the jail to see the black flag run up. That is our duller method of enjoying ourselves in the old Roman spirit. And if the Government decided to throw persons of unpopular or eccentric views to the lions in the Albert Hall or the Earl's Court stadium tomorrow, can you doubt that all the seats would be crammed, mostly by people who could not give you the most superficial account of the views in question. Much less unlikely things have happened.

'It is true that if such a revival does take place soon, the martyrs will not be members of heretical religious sects: they will be Peculiars, Anti-Vivisectionists, Flat-Earth men, scoffers at the laboratories, or infidels who refuse to kneel down when a procession of doctors goes by. But the lions will hurt them just as much, and the spectators will enjoy themselves just as much, as the Roman lions and spectators used to do.'

[The above is an extract from Shaw's epilogue to *Androcles and the Lion*]





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HEATHER JENNER

Shaw versus the Censor

A Note on 'The Shaving-Up of Blanco Posnet'

by HESKETH PEARSON

One of Shaw's activities as a playwright in the early part of this century was to campaign against the Censor, and he experienced great difficulty in gaining the support of the other playwrights, to say nothing of the leading actors. For some years Beerbohm Tree, proprietor of His Majesty's Theatre, had pestered Shaw to write

NO! IT'S NOT BLANCO POSNET!



This curious picture is not an open-air dress-rehearsal of *Blanco Posnet* - it was taken during the shooting of a mysterious cowboy film made, and seemingly discarded, by James Barrie. From left to right: Lord Howard de Walden, William Archer, Sir James Barrie, G. K. Chesterton, and Bernard Shaw.

a play for him on Don Quixote. But Shaw had no desire to write a variation on a theme by Cervantes, and at last presented Tree with a one-act melodrama for performance at a Charity matinee. 'I am rather clever at fitting actors with parts,' he told Ellen Terry: 'I wrote a perfect triumph of this made-to-measure art for Tree in *Blanco Posnet*, and he was simply shocked by it, absolutely horrified.'

Continued on page 21

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The Cast

In order of appearance

The shewing-up of Blanco Posnet

Babsy	SALLY MILES
Lottie	CLARE KINSON
Hannah	MARJORIE LAINE
Jessie	JOSEPHINE TEWSON
Emma	GAYNOR OWEN
Elder Daniels	ALAN MACNAUGHTAN
Blanco Posnet	RONALD FRASER
Strapper Kemp	JEREMY SPENSER
Squinty	ROGER KEMP
Peemy Evans	JILL BENNETT
The Sheriff	GAL MCCORD
Foreman of the Jury	FRANK WINDSOR
Nestor	DANIEL THORNDIKE
Waggoner Jo	PETER PROWSE
Woman	ANNA BURDEN

Androcles and the Lion

The Lion	GAL MCCORD
Megaera	JOSEPHINE TEWSON
Androcles	DAVY KAYE
Centurion	DANIEL THORNDIKE
The Captain	EDWARD DE SOUZA
Lavinia	JILL BENNETT
Lentulus	JEREMY SPENSER
Metellus	RICHARD HAMPTON
Spintho	ALAN MACNAUGHTAN
Ferrovius	PETER PROWSE
Ox-Driver	RONALD ROBINSON
The Call Boy	ROBIN FERRIDAY
The Editor	FRANK WINDSOR
The Menagerie Keeper	ROGER KEMP
The Emperor Caesar	RONALD FRASER
Secutor	JONATHAN BURN
Retiarius	CLIVE ELLIOTT

Other parts in both plays are played by Howard Daley, Barry Dimock, Carol Ann Feltz, Naomi Goldberger, Bruce Gray, John Hughes, Ian McDermott, Raymond Ross, Norma Shebbeare, Caroline Smith, Donald Sutherland, Matthew Vaughan, Ron Welling.



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 Programme editor Gerald Frow
 Production photographs by Morris Newcombe
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<i>Manager</i>	HARRY THOMPSON
<i>Production Manager</i>	E. R. TODDS
<i>Production Assistant</i>	ANTHEA LYNEX
<i>Stage Director</i>	IAN MCDERMOTT
<i>Stage Manager</i>	RONALD ROBINSON
<i>Assistant Stage Managers</i>	IRENE TAPAHRN, CAROLINE SMITH and RON WELLING
<i>Chief Electrician</i>	DAVID KAYE
<i>Stage Carpenter</i>	ANDREW MCFARLANE
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<i>Assistant to the Producer</i>	BETTY CROWE

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Shaw versus the Censor cont.

Discussing the episode with Tree, and later with Shaw, I gathered that the actor was shocked by Blanco Posnet's description of God as 'a sly one', 'a mean one', who 'plays cat and mouse with you', and scandalized by Blanco's statement that Feemy had immoral relations with every man in the town, including the Sheriff, a remark that would make the stalls rise in a body and walk out of the theatre. 'So much the worse for the stalls,' said Shaw. If those bits about God and the prostitute were cut, Tree said he would consider the play. 'If you cut a single syllable of a single sentence, I shan't consider letting you play it,' replied Shaw.

Tree was rescued by the Censor, who refused to pass the play, which was produced by Lady Gregory at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, in the teeth of official opposition, during Horse Show Week, August, 1909. Re-submitted to the Censor, the author was informed that if he omitted the passages about God the Lord Chamberlain's licence would be granted. On which Shaw commented: 'All the coarseness, the profligacy, the prostitution, the violence, the drinking-bar humour into which the light shines in the play are licensed, but the light itself is extinguished. I need hardly say that I have not availed myself of this licence, and do not intend to.'

Eventually the Lord Chamberlain's nerves, shattered by the perusal of Ibsen's *Ghosts* and *Damaged Goods* by Brieux, rallied under the repeated shocks of the modern drama, and licences were granted for the public performances of *Mrs Warren's Profession* and *Blanco Posnet* by Shaw.

'Blanco Posnet'—the first productions

Having been banned by the Censor from public performance in London (on the grounds of blasphemy), *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet* was first produced by Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on 25 August 1909. On 5 December the same year, Lady Gregory and Yeats, in conjunction with the Stage Society, produced the play in London's Aldwych Theatre. The Stage Society, being a private club, was outside the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain. The play, both in London and Ireland, was cast from the Abbey Theatre Company, the first players including Fred O'Donovan as Blanco; Arthur Sinclair and J. A. O'Rourke, Daniels; Cathleen Nesbitt, Hannah; J. M. Kerrigan, Kemp; Sara Allgood, Feemy; and Maire O'Neill as The Woman.

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G.B.S. – A potted biography

1856 Born 26 July at 3 Upper Synge Street (now 33 Synge Street), Dublin.

'What was done to me in my childhood was nothing at all of an intentional kind. I wasn't spoiled; and I wasn't helped.'

1871 Enters a firm of Dublin land agents where he becomes chief cashier.

1876 Leaves Ireland to join his mother and sister in London.

1878/9 Writes his first novel *Immaturity* – not published until 1930.

'In the last two years, I have not filled any post, nor have I been doing anything especially calculated to qualify me for a business one . . . I wrote a few articles, but they were not accepted, and did not deserve to be . . . I also studied harmony and counterpoint, and finally I wrote a novel . . . It cost me five months' labour, and I have no means of publishing it when it is finished.'

1879/80 Joins the Edison Bell Telephone Company where he becomes manager of the Way-Leave Department.

'I was, I believe, the only person in the entire establishment who knew the current scientific explanation of telephony.'

1880/83 Lives on his parents and writes four more novels – all of them rejected. Failure seems complete.

'No, thank you; no more novels for me. Five failures are enough to satisfy my appetite for enterprise in fiction.'

1884 Joins the Fabian Society.

'I have just drafted an Election Manifesto for the Fabian Society. It is still far from complete; yet it runs to 11,600 words . . . Whether the society will swallow it or not I cannot say . . . But if they will not have it, I can still publish it on my own account as a personal election manifesto, I being a party of one.'

1886 Becomes Art Critic to *The World*.

1890 Becomes Music Critic to *The World* (5 guineas a week).

'It is the capacity for making good or bad art a personal matter that makes a man a critic. The artist who accounts for my disparagement by alleging personal animosity on my part is quite right: when people do less than their best, and do that less at once badly and self-complacently, I hate them, loathe them, detest them, long to tear them limb from limb



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and strew them in gobbets about the stage... The true critic... is the man who becomes your personal enemy on the sole provocation of a bad performance, and will only be appeased by a good performance.'

1892 His first play, *Widower's Houses*, is performed by the Independent Theatre Society.

'It is clear that I have nothing to do with the theatres of to-day: I must educate a new generation with my pen from childhood up - audience, actors, and all, and leave them my plays to be murdered after I am cremated.'

1895 Becomes Theatre Critic of *The Saturday Review* (at 6 guineas a week). 'In this world you must know ALL the points of view, and take one, and stick to it... The theatre is my battering ram as much as the platform or the press: that is why I want to drag it to the front. My capers are part of a bigger design than you think: Shakespeare, for instance, is to me one of the towers of the Bastille, and down he must come.'

1897 Becomes a vestryman in the Vestry of St Pancras.

'... it is good for me to be worked to the last inch while I last; and I love the reality of the Vestry... after the silly visionary fashion-ridden theatres; but the machine, Shaw, is not quite perfect yet...'

1900 *Candida* first produced in London.

1902 Writes *Man and Superman*.

1904 Stands as Progressive Candidate for St Pancras South in the LCC elections - is defeated.

The Vedrenne-Barker season opens at the Court Theatre, Sloane Square. Shaw is established as the leading playwright in London.

'My plays are mixtures of seventeenth century rhetoric, of modern thought and of that barbarous English humour which shocked Voltaire in Shakespeare. They are full of politics, religion, biology, and all sorts of terrestrial things except adultery.'

1906 Shaw moves to Ayot St Lawrence.

1909 *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet* produced in Dublin.

1913 *Androcles and the Lion* produced at the St James's.

1914 *Pygmalion* becomes a sensational success in London.

1923 Writes *St Joan*.

1926 Receives the Nobel Prize for Literature.

1946 Shaw's 90th birthday.

'My life has rushed through very quickly: I have seen very little of anyone who has not worked with me. Except with my wife, I have no companionships: only occasional contacts, intense but brief.'

1950 2 November. Shaw dies at the age of 94.

CHOICE WINES

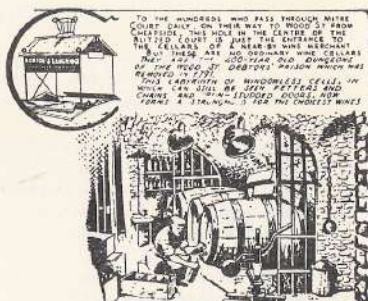
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The Mermaid Theatre

Riverside Restaurant



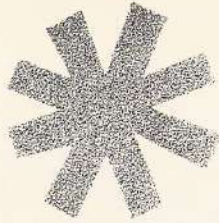
The restaurant is open daily (except Sundays) from 12.00 noon to 2.30 pm and from 6.30 pm to midnight. Dine before or after the show. *It is fully licensed. Last orders taken 11.30 pm.* It is wise to book a table. You can do this at the Reservation Table in the foyer, or by ringing City 2835. Please notify us if you decide not to take up your reservation. Table d'hôte meals are now being served at 12s 6d and 17s 6d.

AND NOW

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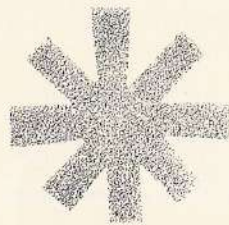
A new all-in ticket priced at 1 guinea and giving you a seat in the theatre PLUS a three-course meal in the Riverside Restaurant is now on sale at the box office.

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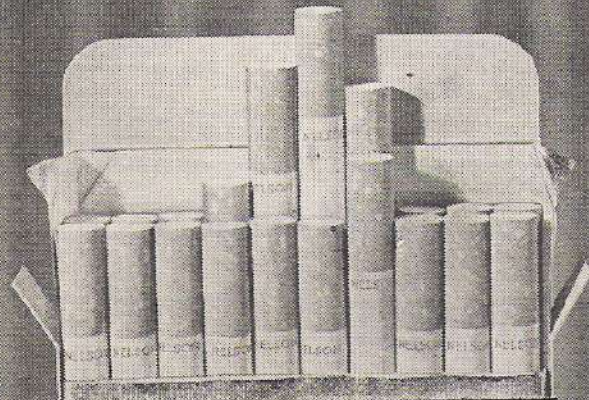


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