

Tour De Force Theatre Company Ltd presents

PYGMALION by George Bernard Shaw

The Company:

Gabrielle Douglas	-	Eliza Doolittle
James Franklin	-	Henry Higgins
Victoria Strachan	-	Mrs Pearce, Mrs Higgins, Bystander, Hostess
David Sayers	-	Colonel Pickering, Mrs Eynsford-Hill
Andrew Mathys	-	Freddie, Alfred Doolittle, Neppomuck
Peter Joucla	-	Director
Peter Case	-	Assistant Director
Roger Moon	-	Musical Arrangements
Nancy Betton	-	Costumes
Set Construction	-	Andy Nichols
Lizette Druka	-	Set – artwork

Special thanks to Delia Remy, Madeleine Bowyer,

Directors Notes.

I am delighted to have the opportunity of directing George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion once again.

Written in 1913, it is a play about a professor of phonetics who makes a bet that he can train a cockney flower girl called Eliza Doolittle to pass for a duchess at an ambassador's garden party.

The story of how Eliza succeeds in transforming her accent and her manners, and the problems this creates for her, is familiar to many. The play was adapted first into a musical – My Fair Lady and then a film of the same name, starring Rex Harrison and Audrey Hepburn.

I first directed Pygmalion in 1996, adapting the play for a cast of five, and adding original incidental music. The production has since been performed in Japan, Germany, France and a dozen other countries, and is always a favourite, particularly for students who are grappling with the English language.

My aim with this production is to bring out the comedy in a delightfully clear and refreshing way, highlighting the visual elements of the drama as much as the dialogue. I hope too that the production underlines the deeper themes of the play which deal with language, class and equality. Eliza wishes to speak proper English in order that she may get a better job and prospects, but as she steps into the world of upper class London society she finds she is lost and rejected and afraid of the future. The climax of the play focuses on her relationship with the enigmatic Henry Higgins and it is in the final scene where Eliza finds her real voice and is able to decide on her destiny.

A British theatre director John Dexter recently suggested that the theme of Pygmalion is '*..the creation of a woman of independence*' and I am very much of a similar opinion.

Several years ago, Tour De Force Theatre performed 'Pygmalion' in Kuwait in the very week that women's groups were demonstrating in the streets, demanding the right to vote. Our performances caused a minor stir. Parts of it had to be censored for fear of offending religious groups. But the message was never lost and I was delighted that the piece inspired discussion and debate. Once again, the play was as potent as it was when it opened in London in 1914.

I hope very much that it continues to entertain and to provoke.

Peter Joucla.

Pygmalion - synopsis of scenes.

SCENE ONE.

A group of strangers shelter from the rain one evening, beside a church in London, 1912. As the conversation goes on we are introduced to Eliza Doolittle, a poor girl selling flowers, who meets Freddie, a handsome young upper class man. We meet Professor Higgins, who is noting down the variations of London accents he hears. By chance he meets a fellow expert in phonetics, a Colonel Pickering who he invites to his house in Wimpole Street.

Eliza meets Higgins and is intrigued by his claim that he can teach anyone to speak English how it should be spoken.

SCENE TWO.

Higgins is at home, sharing his knowledge of accents with his new friend Pickering. Eliza enters wanting lessons in English because she wants to get a job in a flower shop, rather than selling flowers in the street, and she knows she can only do this if she loses her working class accent. Higgins claims that he is such a good teacher that in six months, he can turn Eliza into a refined lady with the ability to speak English so perfectly that she can pass herself off as a princess. Pickering bets him he can't and Higgins takes on the challenge. Eliza is taken away and washed and prepared for her first lesson.

Eliza's father, a poor working class dustman called Alfred Doolittle, arrives at the house. Having discovered that these two rich and educated men are interested in keeping Eliza for six months in order to transform her into a respectable lady, Alfred decides that as Eliza's father, he should be paid something in return. Higgins is at first amazed by the man's outrageous demands but then gives in to the Alfred Doolittle's charm. Doolittle leaves with five pounds and the lessons with Eliza continue.

SCENE THREE.

Time has passed and Higgins decides to test Eliza out on his mother. He takes Eliza to his mother's house to see if his mother can still detect in Eliza's speech and behaviour, traces of her poor, uneducated, working class background. Eliza tries hard to speak properly and behave as a sophisticated and well-educated upper class lady, but fails gloriously.

INTERVAL

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE.

After many more months of gruelling teaching, Eliza is finally taken to the Summer Ball to be tested. If none of the guests suspect she is anything other than a refined and cultured upper class lady, Higgins will win his bet.

Arriving at the ball Higgins meets an ex-student, a Hungarian interpreter called Neppomuck who is now also an expert on accents. Pickering is worried that such an expert would be able to tell that Eliza was a fraud.

But Eliza puts on a brilliant performance and convinces everyone at the ball, including Neppomuck, that she is so well-spoken and so sophisticated that she must be nothing less than a royal princess.

SCENE TWO.

Back in Wimpole Street, Pickering congratulates Higgins on winning the bet. But Higgins is dismissive. Eliza happens to overhear as Higgins reveals that he was bored with the whole idea and that far from being a fantastic achievement by Eliza, he considers it to have been a silly and pointless exercise. Eliza is deeply hurt and furious. She accuses Higgins of treating her heartlessly. They argue and fight. She had been made to feel like a toy that Higgins has played with and now discards. She has lost all self-respect. She can't go back to her old, poor working class friends and now feels rejected by Higgins and the high society he represents. Finally she decides to leave his house. Once outside, she bumps into Freddie, who has been in love with her from the first moment he saw her. She accepts his kisses and kindness.

SCENE THREE.

Eliza has arrived at Mrs Higgins house in search of advice and support. Henry Higgins and Pickering turn up, looking for Eliza. Eliza hides from them at first, while Mrs Higgins tells her son off for being so thoughtless and uncaring with regard to Eliza. Eliza's father Alfred Doolittle turns up, also looking for Eliza. He has come into a fortune and now feels obliged to do the middle class thing and marry the woman he has been living with. He wants Eliza to be there at the wedding that afternoon. Eliza finally reveals herself and after agreeing to go to the church with her father, has to decide what she should do after. Should she return to Wimpole Street and remain with Higgins or stick to her plan of leaving him?

Henry Higgins and Eliza are left alone to sort it out. In a long emotional argument, we discover that Eliza is very fond of Higgins but has hated his coldness and his lack of affection for her. Higgins admits that he has grown used to her company, but still they argue. Then the penny drops. Eliza realises that her new education has given her the power, the confidence and the skills to be free from the dependence on men. Eliza knows that if she goes back to live with Higgins, he will continue to bully her and treat her like a mere flower seller in the street, and she will throw away the rights and opportunities she has gained from her education.

Convinced that she can become a teacher herself, Eliza turns and goes, leaving Higgins alone in the garden, equally convinced that she will be much more likely to end up marrying Freddie.

Characters in the play.

I believe that the best plays have the best characters and 'Pygmalion' is no exception.

What kind of man is Henry Higgins? No actor wishes to ape the famous performance given by Rex Harrison in the film *My Fair Lady*. They must find their own truth. Higgins must be an insensitive bully. But his bullying must not make him heartless, for if we thought he could never fall in love, the story would not be interesting. Higgins has the best line in play and it sums him up well.

'What is life but a series of inspired follies? The difficulty is to find them to do. Never lose a chance; it doesn't come every day. I shall make a duchess of this draggletailed guttersnipe.'

Eliza is also a difficult role to play. The character must change from an innocent child to a worldly adult, from a *'squashed cabbage leaf'* to a princess. Yet the audience must believe that she is same person from beginning to end.

Freddie is the son of Mrs Eynsford Hill and appears to fall in love with Eliza the first moment he sets eyes on her. In the sequel to *Pygmalion*, Shaw suggests that Eliza will have a choice. She will look forward either *'to a lifetime of fetching slippers, or to a lifetime of Freddie fetching hers.'* This gives us an idea of the sort of man he is.

Henry Higgins' accomplice - Colonel Pickering is also a complex and fascinating character. At the end of the story Eliza claims that it is he and not Higgins who has taught her all the important things she needs to know.

Then there is Alfred Doolittle, Eliza's father, who inherits a fortune and suddenly -like his daughter - moves from a world of rags to one of riches. But in the final scene he realises that the money will not make him happy because it is, after all, only money.

Miss Pearce is Professor Higgins' long serving housemaid, who constantly has to cope with the professor's eccentric behaviour and his rash desire to engage in mad follies.

Mrs Higgins is as hot-headed as her son Henry, but is nevertheless able to remind her son of his foolishness. When Eliza runs away, it is to Mrs Higgins that she seeks comfort. Mrs Higgins is the character who tries hardest to make Henry understand his responsibilities to Eliza. She identifies the central problem caused by her son's desire to pass Eliza off as a princess and win the bet. She points out that Higgins has given Eliza –

'..the manners and habits that disqualify a fine lady from earning her own living without giving her a fine lady's income.'

George Bernard Shaw

He was born in Dublin on 26th July, 1856. His father, George Carr Shaw was also an alcoholic and therefore there was little money to spend on George's education. George went to local schools but never went to university and was largely self-taught.

After working in an estate office in Dublin, Shaw moved to London in March, 1876. Shaw hoped to become a writer and during the next seven years wrote five unsuccessful novels. He was more successful with his journalism and contributed to *Pall Mall Gazette*. Shaw got on well with the newspaper's campaigning editor, William Stead, who attempted to use the power of the popular press to obtain social reform.

In 1882 Shaw heard Henry George lecture on land nationalization. This had a profound effect on Shaw and helped to develop his ideas on socialism. Shaw now joined the Social Democratic Federation and its leader, H. H. Hyndman, introduced him to the works of Karl Marx. Shaw was convinced by the economic theories in *Das Kapital* but was aware that it would have little impact on the working class. He later wrote that although the book had been written for the working man,

"Marx never got hold of him for a moment. It was the revolting sons of the bourgeois itself - Lassalle, Marx, Liebknecht, Morris, Hyndman, Bax, all like myself, crossed with squirearchy - that painted the flag red. The middle and upper classes are the revolutionary element in society; the proletariat is the conservative element."

Shaw became an active member of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), and became friends with others in the movement including William Morris, Eleanor Marx, Annie Besant, Walter Crane, Edward Aveling and Belfort Bax. In May 1884 Shaw joined the Fabian Society and the following year, the Socialist League, an organisation that had been formed by Morris and Marx after a dispute with H. H. Hyndman, the leader of the SDF.

George Bernard Shaw gave lectures on socialism on street corners and helped distribute political literature. On 13th November he took part in a demonstration in London that resulted in the Bloody Sunday Riot. However, he always felt uncomfortable with trade union members and preferred debate to action.

By 1886, Shaw tended to concentrate his efforts on the work that he did with the Fabian Society. The society that included Edward Carpenter, Annie Besant, Walter Crane, Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb believed that capitalism had created an unjust and inefficient society. They agreed that the ultimate aim of the group should be to reconstruct "society in accordance with the highest moral possibilities".

The Fabian Society rejected the revolutionary socialism of the Social Democratic Federation and was concerned with helping society to move to a socialist society "as painless and effective as possible". This is reflected in the fact that the group was named after the Roman General, Quintus Fabius Maximus, who advocated the weakening the opposition by harassing operations rather than becoming involved in pitched battles.

The Fabian group was a "fact-finding and fact-dispensing body" and they produced a series of pamphlets on a wide variety of different social issues. Many of these were written by Shaw including *The Fabian Manifesto* (1884), *The True Radical Programme* (1887), *Fabian Election Manifesto* (1892), *The Impossibilities of Anarchism* (1893), *Fabianism and the Empire* (1900) and *Socialism for Millionaires* (1901).

In his pamphlets George Bernard Shaw argued in favour of equality of income and advocated the equitable division of land and capital. Shaw believed that "property was theft" and believed like Karl Marx that capitalism was deeply flawed and was unlikely to last. However, unlike Marx, Shaw favoured gradualism over revolution. In a pamphlet, that he wrote in 1897 Shaw predicted that socialism "will come by prosaic installments of public regulation and public administration enacted by ordinary parliaments, vestries, municipalities, parish councils, school boards, etc."

Shaw worked closely with Sidney Webb in trying to establish a new political party that was committed to obtaining socialism through parliamentary elections. This view was expressed in their Fabian Society pamphlet *A Plan on Campaign for Labour*.

In 1893 Shaw was one of the Fabian Society delegates that attended the conference in Bradford that led to the formation of the Independent Labour Party. Three years later Shaw produced a report for the Trade Union Congress (TUC) that suggested a political party that had strong links with the trade union movement. In 1899 Shaw served on the TUC committee that looked into the best way to mobilize the political power of the labour movement.

On 27th February 1900 the Fabian Society joined with the Independent Labour Party, the Social Democratic Federation and trade union leaders to form the Labour Representation Committee (LRC). The LRC put up fifteen candidates in the 1900 General Election and between them they won 62,698 votes. Two of the candidates, Keir Hardie and Richard Bell won seats in the House of Commons. The party did even better in the 1906 election with twenty nine successful candidates. Later that year the LRC decided to change its name to the Labour Party.

George Bernard Shaw wrote several plays with political themes during this period. This included *Man and Superman* (1902), *John Bull's Other Island* (1904) and *Major Barbara* (1905). These plays dealt with issues such as poverty and women's rights and implied that socialism could help solve the problems created by capitalism.

Like many socialists, George Bernard Shaw opposed Britain's involvement in the First World War. He created a great deal of controversy with his provocative pamphlet, *Common Sense About the War* (1914).

Shaw's status as a playwright continued to grow after the war and plays such as *Heartbreak House* (1919), *Back to Methuselah* (1921), *Saint Joan* (1923), *The Apple Cart* (1929) and *Too True to be Good* (1932) were favourably received by the critics and 1925 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

Shaw continued to write books and pamphlets on political and social issues. This included *The Crime of Imprisonment* (1922), *Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism* (1928) and *Everybody's Political What's What* (1944). George Bernard Shaw remained committed to the socialist cause until his death on 2nd November, 1950.

Cast:

ANDREW MATHYS (Freddie/Alfred Doolittle/Neppomuck)

Andrew trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. His recent work as an actor/musician include *Amiens* in "As You Like It" and *Slender* in "Merry Wives of Windsor" (European tours), *Schlomo* in "Fame the Musical" (European tour), *Grasshopper* in "James and the Giant Peach" at the Polka Theatre, Wimbledon, "Die tote Stadt" at the Royal Opera House in London, "Titus Andronicus" at Shakespeare's Globe, "Cinderella" (Lyric Hammersmith), "Love's Labour's Lost" at the Rose Theatre and *Eilif* in "Mother Courage" (UK tour). He is very much looking forward to the "Pygmalion" tour and visiting so many interesting countries!

JAMES FRANKLIN (Henry Higgins)

James trained at Bretton Hall College. His past theatre credits include: *Hermie* in 'Crabbit! The Musical (Halyon productions); *Prospero* in 'The Tempest' and *Green Knight* in 'King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table' (both for Chapterhouse Theatre Company); *Benedick* in 'Much Ado About Nothing' (Struts and Frets Theatre Company); *Dick Whittington* in 'Dick Whittington', *Quasimodo* in 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame', *Beast* in 'Beauty and the Beast' *Cowardly Lion* in 'The Wizard of Oz', *Captain Hook* in 'Peter Pan' and *Genie* in 'Aladdin' (all for M&M Theatrical Productions). James has also directed two productions of 'Pinocchio'. He hopes you enjoy this production.

VICTORIA STRACHAN (Bystander/Mrs Pearce/Mrs Higgins/Hostess)

Hailing from Glasgow; Victoria trained at the Poor School, graduating in 2007. Prior to that, she gained an MA [Oxon] in English Language and Literature at Somerville College, Oxford University. Theatre work includes: *Ronee* in 'Progress' [Union Theatre], *Max* in 'Reasons to Hide' for Theatre Lab Company, *Baba* in 'The Serpent's Wedding' [Southwark Playhouse], *Vicky* in 'Always so free' [New End Theatre], *Sister Sara* in 'Rokeya's Dream' for Tara Arts, *Catherine* in 'Boston Marriage' [Pacific Playhouse], *Madeline* in 'Foundation Stone' [Nottingham Albert Hall], *Polly* in 'Last Days of Lorraine Forrest' for Vital Stages Theatre Company. Her television and film credits include: 'Crisis Control' [BBC], 'Revealed: Britain's Nazi King' [Channel 5], 'Bad Science' [Schemata Productions], 'Channel 6' [National Film Theatre]. She is thrilled to be working on Pygmalion; her first production with Tour de force Theatre and ADG Europe.

DAVID SAYERS (Colonel Pickering/Mrs Eysnford-Hill)

David trained at The Poor School, London. His theatre credits include Edward in 'Sherlock Holmes' (German Tour), Dad in 'The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark,' Toad in 'Wind in the Willows' and Larry in 'Closer' (UK Tours). His film and TV credits include: 'The Bill' (Thames Talkback), 'Casablanca-Bing Brother' (BBC), 'Badinage' (Celestial Pictures) and 'The Sweet Shop' (MWS Media). Last year his theatre company Time and Tide staged their first production, 'Frightmare – Tales of Horror and Hysteria' and also performed at the Brighton Fringe Festival 2010. You can find out more about Time and Tide at <http://www.timeandtidetheatrecompany.com>

GABRIELLE DOUGLAS (Eliza Doolittle)

Gabrielle trained as an actor at Rose Bruford College. To date her roles in theatre include The Queen in *The Point*, Curley's Wife in *Of Mice and Men*, Ensemble in *Return to the Forbidden Planet* (Queens Theatre, Hornchurch); Reitse in *The Dead Fiddler* (New End Theatre); Princess Flora in *The Tinderbox* (London Bubble Theatre Company); Nancy in *Oliver Twist* (TNT Theatre); Helen Stoner in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (Theatre en Anglais); Mabel Chiltern in *An Ideal Husband* (Heartbreak Productions). She is delighted to be playing the role of Eliza Doolittle.

PETER JOUCLA (Director/Musical Director)

Peter studied Performing Arts in London. He worked as a teacher and lecturer in colleges in England and Holland before moving full-time into theatre. He was musical director of 'L'Amfiparnaso' for Trestle Theatre Company, and more recently for a production of 'A Midsummer Nights Dream' at Northampton Theatre Royal. He has directed a wide number of productions, for adults and young people and for the Edinburgh Festival. In 1995 he fell upon the American Drama Group, and toured for several years as an actor, most notoriously as *Bill Sikes* in the original production of 'Oliver Twist' and then as *Boxer* in 'Animal Farm.' Since then he has founded Tour De Force Theatre Company, based in the UK, and as Artistic Director has directed over thirty five touring productions in both English and French, including Oscar Wilde's 'The Importance of Being Earnest,' George Orwell's '1984', J.B. Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls' and 'Le Petit Prince' by St Equéry In addition to theatre, Peter is a published author, focusing mainly on work for young people.

Tour De Force Theatre Company Limited

We have been producing highly original theatre projects in English and in French for over ten years, all of which tour to large scale venues throughout Europe, the Middle and Far East. We have recently moved into a large studio space in London's fashionable East End, where we are beginning to develop exciting collaborations with a wide range of creative organisations and groups, working in a wide variety of genres.

Full details of our studio projects, touring productions, together with photos, reviews and educational notes, can be found on our website:

www.tdftheatre.com

- Oh, and Tour De Force is currently collaborating with Robert Nichol from Just Audio to make classic English Literature recordings available free on-line. Do take a look at his website:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/JustAudio2008>