

eue

montreal repertory theatre

VENUS OBSERVED

by

Christopher Fry

in this issue

MRT's NEW BUILDING

MAJOR BARBARA, by GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

THE PLAY'S THE THING

BITS AND PIECES

NOVEMBER 1957 • VOLUME XXIX • NUMBER 1

ctj



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to pore over your Royal-Liverpool Agent's umbrellas.



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MRT'S NEW BUILDING —

A DAY-DREAM COME TRUE

It would seem that 1957 is a propitious year for theatre in Montreal. Twelve months ago not one of our town's legitimate theatres operated in its own quarters. Only touring companies from elsewhere found proper theatres to receive them.

Today there are four theatre "homes" downtown. Le Théâtre de la Comédie Canadienne and Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde have taken up tenancy in the Gaiety and Orpheum Theatres. The Montreal Studio and Drama Club and the Montreal Repertory Theatre by accident find themselves neighbours in converted premises.

Financing for these four major projects has been arranged differently in each case but despite the varied backgrounds, all enterprises are—or soon will be—in the business of creating stage entertainment.

The Montreal Repertory Theatre was fortunate in being offered the Closse Street buildings of the Navy League of Canada's Montreal Branch. MRT was unfortunate in that its bank balance was not black enough to attempt all the renovations and decorating it would have liked.

Private campaigning has produced several substantial donations. Many other contributions to the Building Fund have been unsolicited. (In the next issue of Cue, proper acknowledgment of all donors will be made.) The Arts Council of Greater Montreal has provided a little ballast against unforeseen circumstances, and at least enough renovations have been completed to permit MRT's 28th season to begin.

So, even if we cannot present a beautifully appointed building and declare casually that every last nook and cranny is "Ready, Aye Ready", we are at least proud to have all our activities under one downtown roof.

As the days go by, additional campaigning will, we hope, make further renovations and decorations possible. There is a lot of "prettying up" to be done.

We believe that we have made a good move and that as the weeks go by our choice will be confirmed. If this proves to be so, then eventual purchase of the property should be our aim.

Of such stuff are day-dreams made. Still it is comforting to reflect that four Montreal theatre organizations have recently seen part of their day-dreams come true.

— Bruce Raymond



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MAJOR BARBARA

by GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

*"one of the most remarkable plays
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DESMOND MACCARTHY

Shaw, articulate and explosive, was prepared to write or talk about anything. He had, as far as one may judge, a point of view about everything. He seemed to know exactly what he thought about the smallest or largest subject to catch his attention and never to need time for contemplation or digestion.

Who has not been told, and accepted without too much thought, that the poor we have always with us? Shaw's lively intelligence seized on this apparently inoffensive tenet and sent off a rocket of sparkling indignation. Poverty, he crackled, is a sin. Voluble is always, he wrote *Major Barbara* to expound his theory.

Ignoring the dialectical flaw of assuming a thing to be bad in itself because it is the cause of evil, Shaw reasons in *Major Barbara* that poverty is the worst of crimes because it breeds the most sins against society.

Barbara Undershaft, one of the most passionate of Shaw's galaxy of women, is a major in the Salvation Army. Hers is a real dedication to the alleviation of suffering amongst the poor. It is the religion by which she lives.

Barbara's father, Andrew Undershaft, is an arms manufacturer of fabulous wealth, obscure background and rampant individualism. He has been separated from his wife and children for many years. (Odd how one finds this family

separation theme recurring in Shaw's plays. Shaw's own parents, of course, lived apart from the time his mother left Dublin for London.) Lady Britomart, Barbara's mother, decides to consult her husband on their children's future, because both Barbara and her sister have become engaged to men who are unable to support them.


Both Andrew Undershaft and his daughter are people of strong convictions, deeply rooted in each case in a naturally religious nature. Barbara's religion is the religion of pity and humility. Undershaft's gospel is based on his theory that poverty is responsible for crime and that, therefore, a man is justified in committing any other crime in order to avoid it for himself. Cursed are the poor, he says, in effect, and keep on cursing them until they rise in rebellion against their own miserable state. Teach reform to the rich, and revolt to the poor is Undershaft's platform.

Now, philosophical reasoning, particularly illuminating, aggravating, artful reasoning from the mind of a genius such as G.B.S., is fascinating reading, but not satisfactory drama. Shaw, the artist, was far too shrewd a theatrical craftsman to allow his theme in *Major Barbara* to be played out on an intellectual level. In a mounting atmosphere of tension, Shaw's first act closes on a bargain.

"If I go to see you tomorrow in your Salvation shelter", Andrew challenges Barbara, "will you come the day after to see me in my cannon works?"

Barbara warns her father: "Take care. It may end in your giving up the cannons for the sake of the Salvation Army." Andrew's reply is, "Are you sure it will not end in your giving up the Salvation Army for the sake of the cannons?"

(continued on page 6)



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(continued from page 5)

Act II is set in the Salvation Army shelter. Here is a collection of those miraculous "Shavian" types which are as universally recognized in the present generation as Dickens types were known to earlier generations. They are creations of a caricaturist: the result of a few wickedly telling strokes, constantly repeated. But where the average satirist is at least occasionally bitter and sometimes even vituperative, Shaw, social reformer as well as satirist, manages to make even his most outlandish characters basically sympathetic. No matter how outrageously they behave, they are not people we loathe or despise.

At the shelter, Barbara's sinners are lining up to be saved, but the shelter itself is tottering on the brink of financial ruin. Money is desperately needed to carry on the work. In a magnificent scene of Shavian paradoxes, news arrives that Lord Saxmundham has offered them £5,000 if they can find other subscribers to make the total up to £10,000. Andrew Undershaft immediately guarantees to do so. As jubilation and thanksgiving fill the air at the shelter it dawns on Barbara that the whole sum of money will be the result of profits made on whisky and gun manufacturing: on drunkenness and slaughter. To her horror she realizes that the army will be drawing its support from the evils it is crusading to destroy. Even Barbara's fiancé, a witty and benevolent professor of Greek whom her mother has accused of joining the Salvation Army in order to worship Barbara, is prepared to welcome the proffered money as a miracle. Barbara's faith in the value of her life's work collapses. Figuratively, she tosses her Salvation Army bonnet over the windmill.

When Barbara visits her father's cannon factory she receives a further shock: she discovers that ideal conditions have

(continued on page 13)

HON. JUSTICE

E. FABRE SURVEYER

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THE PLAY'S

THE

THING

by MYRON GALLOWAY

It is a fairly obvious fact to the casual observer that Canada is at last becoming conscious of live theatre as an entertainment medium. Theatre groups all over the country are emerging from the shadows of Church basements and the cheerless atmosphere of school gymnasiums and seeking new quarters in abandoned movie houses, reconverted stables, outmoded recreation centres or whatever other buildings are available where minor miracles may be wrought by major renovations. Curious as it may seem this is an indirect result of television. Seeing images on a screen has become a form of home entertainment and no longer requires a trip to the local cinema with its attendant inconvenience. Seeing actors in the flesh has become a novelty which makes going to the theatre to see a play and possibly meet old friends during intermissions, no matter what the inconvenience, something of a festive occasion for the average citizen.

By all accounts we are on the threshold of a new era. *Something* had to happen to tear people away from the repetitious patterns on their deep image cathode tubes, the wide range frequencies of their Hi Fi sets and the nostalgic remembrance of things past reflected by their colour slide projectors. The theatre *could be that something*. I say *could be* because of course so far there has been no panic at any box office, nor have printers, to my knowledge, been deluged with orders for S.R.O. signs. Audiences are building slowly and they are being extremely selective, as well they might be;



depending largely on newspaper reviews and word of mouth reports. They are curious though.

What happens from now on depends entirely on what the Canadian theatre has to offer them. No one is duty bound to support any enterprise, however commendable if it does not live up to expectations. We have passed the stage where we can expect to get by on the basis of the theatre being: "not bad considering it's Canadian" which is a big step forward. Stratford is a success because it is able to compare favourably, if not to surpass, theatre anywhere in the world. It has set a standard which must be upheld throughout the country if the theatre hopes to remain alive and continue to attract audiences in greater numbers. We still have a long way to go.

During the past few years it has become possible for actors to make a living acting in Canada. Very few, we admit, but the number is increasing. Television, the step-parent of this new situation, has again been largely responsible.

The serious shortage — the real threat to the future of Canadian theatre, as I see it, is the lack of Canadian playwrights. We may have new buildings — all the actors we need, and even enough directors to keep things going, but without playwrights we have no theatre. By this I do not mean to suggest a Nationalistic approach to its establishment; nor even that plays should have Canadian

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PRODUCTION STAFF

STAGE MANAGER: Ronald P. Naylor

PROPERTY MISTRESS: Marguerite Priddey

SOUND: Donald Mactaggart

MAKE-UP: Catharine Bensley

ASST. TO THE DIRECTOR: Lilian Trudel

ASST. TO STAGE MANAGER: René Schmidhauser -
Gabor Apor

PROPERTIES ASSISTANTS: Tibor Aczel - Jerry Dodds -
Eric Kosky

WARDROBE ASSISTANTS: Eve Draper -
Georges Steinbeck

ELECTRICAL ASSISTANTS: John Ford -
Ronald de Groot

PROMPTERS: Arthur Bell - Shirley Harrison

FRONT OF HOUSE

MANAGER: Leslie Blake

HOSTESS: Viola Esdon

CREDITS

Settings painted by LEO BRISSET
Additional Lighting Equipment, from JACK A. FROST COMPANY
through Independent Productions, Reg'd., Montreal.

ABOUT THE CAST

PETER SYMCOX (*director*) spends ~~much~~ his time as a set-designer at CBC and has put that talent to use in this production as well as undertaking his first directorial chore for MRT. His last appearance with MRT was as the parson in *Lady's Not for Burning*. He has also directed for the Lachine Civic Theatre.

CHRIS WIGGINS (*Hereward*) has been awarded 4 Best Actors trophies in Drama Festivals, including the Henry Osborne Trophy for his performance of King Magnus in Shaw's *The Apple Cart* in 1955. He has done countless radio and TV shows and appeared with Crest Theatre, Brae Manor and the Mountain Playhouse among others. This is his first appearance with MRT.

LOUIS TURENNE (*Edgar*) is a Winnipeg actor who made his first appearance with MRT in *The Lady's Not For Burning*. He has also played locally at North Hatley, the Drama Festival, and this summer he was with a French company in Percé, in the Gaspé, and has done *Radisson* for the CBC.

GRIFFITH BREWER (*Herbert Reedbeck*) has acted with Everyman Players, C.A.T., McGill University Dept. of English, where he was Drama Professor, Brae Manor, and has been in countless radio productions. He has appeared with MRT in *Saint Joan* and *The Crucible*.

DONALD MCGILL (*Capt. Fox Reddeman*) studied in Europe and played with London Little Theatre and various groups in Toronto. He directed *Devil's Disciple* for MRT and has acted at the Mountain Playhouse.

WILLIAM ROBERT FOURNIER (*Dominic*) last appeared at MRT as *Androcles*, in *Androcles and the Lion*. He has played with

the Lachine Civic Theatre, TNM, Grosvenor Productions and the CBC, both Radio and TV. He was also seen in the Montreal Festival, in *King Lear* and *Saint Joan*.

JOHN HEMPSTEAD (*Bates*) was last seen with MRT in *The Lady's Not For Burning*. He has appeared with Everyman Players, Grosvenor Productions and at North Hatley. He has been seen and heard regularly on CBC-TV and Radio.

DIANA FISH (*Rosabel Fleming*) has appeared with the Lachine Civic Theatre, Everyman Players, and spent a summer at Stratford. She last appeared with MRT as Alizon in *The Lady's Not For Burning*.

KAY TREMBLAY (*Jessie Dill*) has most recently been appearing in the Studio's production of *The Reluctant Debutante*. This summer she was at North Hatley, Mountain Playhouse where she took a back seat to her children who played in *Life with Father*, and directed in the Town of Mount Royal. Her last play for MRT was *The Remarkable Mr. Penny-packer*.

MIGNON ELKINS (*Hilda Taylor-Snell*) is a RADA scholarship winner who played in English repertory theatre before coming to Canada. Here she has had leading roles with the Mountain Playhouse, Trinity Players and Grosvenor Productions. Her last appearance with MRT was in *Androcles and the Lion*.

RITA ROY (*Perpetua*), a Montrealer, has gained her theatrical experience backstage and onstage. She has learned the practical side of production as prop girl, set painter, prompter, wardrobe mistress and stage hand. She has played with Trinity Players, Grosvenor Productions, Mountain Playhouse, Brae Manor and Joy Thompson's Tent Theatre. She last appeared with MRT in *The Apple Cart*.

Jeudi soirée 28 novembre 1957

The Montreal Repertory Theatre

presents

CHRISTOPHER FRY'S

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Directed and Designed by **PETER SYMCOX**

Costumes Designed by **RICHARD LORAIN**

Lighting Designed by **KEN WITHERS**

THE PLAYERS

(in order of their appearance)

HEREWARD, The Duke of Altair CHRIS WIGGINS
EDGAR, his son, The Marquis of Charlock LOUIS TURENNE
HERBERT REEDBECK, his Estate Manager GRIFFITH BREWER
CAPTAIN FOX REDDLEMAN,
butler, ex-lion tamer DONALD MCGILL
DOMINIC, Reedbeck's son WILLIAM ROBERT FOURNIER
BATES, footman, ex-burglar JOHN HEMPSTEAD
ROSABEL FLEMING DIANA FISH
JESSIE DILL KAY TREMBLAY
HILDA TAYLOR-SNELL MIGNON ELKINS
PERPETUA, Reedbeck's daughter RITA ROY

ACT I

The Observatory Room at Stellmere Park, the Duke's Mansion.
The morning.

ACT II

Scene 1. The Temple of the Ancient Virtues, Stellmere Park.
That afternoon.

Scene 2. The Observatory Room. That night.

ACT III

The Temple. An hour or so later.
There will be two intervals of ten minutes each.

November 20-23, 26-30, 1957.

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The Community Players Theatre Library is once again in order and ready to operate from its new quarters in MRT's Closse Street Building. It surprised even the regular library workers to find what a respectable collection we have as we look at it standing on new shelves.

Some 4,000 items on the theatre and its allied arts are at the disposal of anyone interested in reading plays (old, middle-aged and newly-born); in looking at biographies of theatre notables; in studying text-books on the history, development or practical techniques of the theatre, or in making a survey of Shakespeare's period, contemporaries and drama.

Library hours are now 2 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. on Mondays, 5 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays. We hope the late afternoon periods will make it easier for office workers and students to take advantage of the highly specialized collection which the library has built up once more since the Guy Street fire. Multiple copies of plays are available to play-reading or producing groups, either locally or by express outside Montreal.

Membership fees are \$2.00 per season for individuals, \$5.00 for groups wishing to borrow multiple copies. If you have not belonged before, you will probably enjoy a visit in our new location enough to take out a membership.

Membership renewals for 1957/58 are now due, and will be particularly welcome this year, owing to the expense of our new shelving and equipment.

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ACTIVITIES-----AND OTHERS

Western Regional Drama Festival: The Festival will be held from February 3-8th, 1958. The preliminaries will be taking place in January. All groups desiring information should contact either the Co-Chairman of the prelims, Norma Springford, at WE. 5-9325; or the Secretary, Françoise Conan, 3819 Calixa-Lavallee, UN. 1-3811 (loc. 2551).

McGill Players' Club will present its annual (theatre in the round) show in the McGill Union Ballroom, 690 Sherbrooke St. W., from November 26-30 inclusive. The production will be *The Master Builder*, by Henrik Ibsen. Directing will be Mrs. Norma Springford.

McGill University English Department will be presenting its annual production

in Moyses Hall from December 5-7 inclusive. This year's play will be Sophocles' *Antigone*, starring Valerie Jamieson and directed by Jack Sommers, a newcomer to the drama professorial post at McGill.

National Ballet of Canada is now at Her Majesty's Theatre for its annual run of two weeks, November 18-30. This year's repertoire of nine ballets includes the full-length version of *Swan Lake*. This version is included in the repertoire of only two other companies in the world. Balletomanes will have an opportunity of seeing one of these other versions in January when the Royal Ballet appears at the St. Denis Theatre.



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(continued from page 6)

settings, although there is no reason why they should not. But as long as we are able to present only warmed over versions of plays which have come into existence through the combined creative efforts of foreign actors, scene designers and writers, we can never hope to achieve any stature of our own; nor will our audiences be granted the privilege of developing a standard of values of their own.

What is really needed is an interest taken in the situation by the large number of Canadian television writers who are turning out scripts in many cases much superior to those of American television writers. American agents, during the past few months have been making forays into Canada in search of Canadian writers.

To quote my own agent who has been here on more than one occasion on such a mission: "American producers find the Canadian script writer much less limited and much more literate than the American ones."

Writing for television, while it does have the attraction of being highly lucrative, is, because of the medium, extremely limiting. Canadian writers have been able to develop a dramatic technique, with thanks again to television, but despite the greater latitude permitted regarding subject matter on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation than that permitted by the American networks, limitations do exist.

In the first place a writer's choice of subject is governed by a sponsor's atti-

tude, to say nothing of his product. The writer must always bear in mind that he is little more than an advertising copy writer. He does not have to mention an actual commodity, but he must remember that nothing he says can be in anyway controversial, otherwise his sponsor will lose customers and the whole object of the script is to keep people warm for the commercials. The theme of the television play must be a reasonably ordinary one—the plot must be simple. There is no time for the development of characterization with any depth, nor for sub-plots. Except in rare instances — so rare I have never encountered one as yet — the play must have an upbeat ending, or, in other words, everything must come out all right; otherwise the viewers may be too depressed to consider brushing their teeth with a particular tooth paste or buying that shining automobile. They may simply feel that life's just not worth it — so they must be left with a contented feeling at all costs.

On the other hand the theatre offers few limitations to the perceptive writer. There is practically no subject he may not tackle and explore. He can write realistically or surrealistically or dabble in the realms of fantasy. His satire can bite. His barbs can sting. His poetry can unashamedly avoid the crass and the cliché. And he does not have to write with a stop watch in one hand.

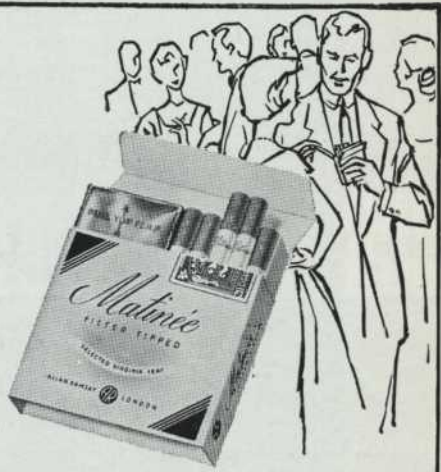
What happens next depends on the Canadian writer. The theatre has had a long and difficult birth, but it is alive. To stay alive it must be fed with the material that will give it bone and sinew and allow it to mature.

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MRT Bits and Pieces

Donald McGill directs next play, Shaw's *Major Barbara*. Theatre-goers will remember his exciting production of *A Devil's Disciple* for MRT, a few years ago.

December should prove to be an unusual month in the 28 years history of MRT. On December 26th, MRT will collaborate with the Montreal Grand Opera School, with a production of Menotte's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, under the direction of Irving Guttman and Robert Savoie . . . Casting is now underway for MRT's third play of the current season, *The Bad Seed*. This will be the second of three plays to be directed by Peter Symcox this year . . . Wonder if Montreal's proposed concert hall and theatre will be forthcoming under the new civic administration? . . .

Our new building has made possible the introduction of a proper apprenticeship training plan. We believe our plan to be the best on the continent. These apprentices (12 is the limit this year) all have had previous experience in the theatre. During this season, they will be gaining more knowledge by working on a different aspect of the theatre (eg. properties, box-office, etc.) for each production. In return they receive five hours' free tuition a week in MRT's School. Several of these apprentices come from theatres in Europe, including Belgium, Hungary and Switzerland . . .

By the way, all the apprentices join with MRT in expressing their sincere condolences to fellow-apprentice, Ronald de Groot from Belgium, upon the recent death of his wife . . .

The Montreal Studio and Drama Club got off to a wonderful start with its production of *The Reluctant Debutante*.

We are delighted at the number of organizations who have expressed an interest in the MRT building. Present and future tenants include The Montreal Theatre Ballet, The Montreal Grand Opera School and Studio Six.

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been created for the workmen. Here, she finds a new faith by which she can live—freed, she claims, from the "bribe of bread." The play closes with Shaw's peculiar brand of laughter underscored by irony.

Major Barbara according to Desmond MacCarthy, is "one of the most remarkable plays put upon the English stage." It is a stunning thought, to me, to realize that its sparkle and fun and good-humour have so far escaped the eye of the musical comedy adapters on Broadway.

—Beatrice Munro Brown

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DIRECTED BY DONALD MCGILL

COMMENCING JANUARY SEVENTH



Bernard Shaw's hit, recently revived by Charles Laughton, about a munition-maker who can't find a foundling to inherit his empire, and of his Salvationist daughter, Barbara, whose "young man found religion" in order to be near her. A controversial and exciting play.

The best
of the Brews



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