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PRESENTS

George Bernard Shaw's
ARMS AND THE MAN
Directed by Colman Domingo

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George Bernard Shaw's **ARMS AND THE MAN**

Directed by **Colman Domingo**

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

THE CAST

CAPTAIN BLUNTSCHLI	PHILLIP JAMES BRANNON
RUSSIAN OFFICER / STAGE DIRECTIONS	ALLEN DARBY
RAINA PETKOFF	ALLIE MARIE EVANS
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MAJOR SERGIUS SARANOFF	ARIEL SHAFIR
LOUKA	AVANTHIKA SRINIVASAN
NICOLA	LIAM VINCENT

CREATIVE TEAM

PLAYWRIGHT	GEORGE BERNARD SHAW
DIRECTOR	COLMAN DOMINGO
VIDEO DESIGNER & EDITOR	LUIS GARCIA
DRAMATURG	JOY MEADS
VOCAL SUPPORT	CHRISTINE ADAIRE
CASTING	ALLIE MOSS
STAGE MANAGER	CHRIS WATERS

ARMS AND THE MAN STAFF

PRODUCTION MANAGER	JACK HORTON
INTERIM GENERAL MANAGER	AMY DALBA
COMPANY MANAGER	SABRA JAFFE
VIDEO CONTENT PRODUCER	BERYL BAKER

A.C.T. PRODUCING TEAM

ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR	ANDY CHAN DONALD
GENERAL MANAGER	LOUISA LISKA
DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION	MARTIN BARRON

THE CONTENT OF THIS GUIDE IS DEVELOPED BY **HANNAH CLAGUE** AND **LIVIAN YEH**

The Actors and Stage Manager employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

The videotaping or making of electronic or other audio and/or visual recordings of this production, or distributing recordings on any medium, including the internet, is strictly prohibited.

ABOUT THE PLAY (SYNOPSIS)

Between a hero and a mercenary*, who would you choose? In 1885's Bulgaria, young heiress Raina finds herself in the thrillingly romantic situation of finding Bluntschli, a fleeing enemy soldier-for-hire, in her room. Raina is engaged to a Bulgarian war hero but risks her reputation to shelter Bluntschli, despite his annoying habit of undercutting her grand speeches with inveterate pragmatism. When the conflict ends, Raina's fiancé comes home just as the mercenary reappears. Will Raina choose the hero or the cynic? Set against the backdrop of the Serbian-Bulgarian War, *Arms and the Man* is a comedy of manners about the limits of romance and the unexpected allure of practicality.

*A mercenary is a soldier hired for service in the army of a foreign country (*Merriam Webster*)

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

George Bernard Shaw was an Irish dramatist and critic. Born in Dublin in 1856, he moved to London in 1876 to establish his writing career. From 1895 to 1899, he wrote theater reviews for *The Saturday Review*. *Arms and the Man*, written in 1894, was the first of his work to bring him financial success, followed by *Candida* and *The Devil's Disciple*. During his lifetime, Shaw wrote over sixty plays, including *Man and Superman* (1902), *John Bull's Other Island* (1904), *Major Barbara* (1905), *Pygmalion* (1912), and *Saint Joan* (1923). His plays covered a wide range of themes, and explored contemporary social tensions. He was a vocal opponent of World War One, believing it a waste of young life and a source of corruption from the capitalist system. His stance greatly damaged his image, and there was even talk of him being tried for treason. He believed that plays are only as good as the ideas in them, and said that theater must be "a factory of thought, a prompter of conscience," and an "elucidator of social conduct." In 1925, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature. He passed away in 1950, and his ashes were scattered at Shaw's Corner in Hertfordshire, England.

INSIDE THE WORLD OF *ARMS AND THE MAN*

From Director Colman Domingo

COLMAN DOMINGO is a Tony, Olivier, Drama Desk, and Drama League Award -nominated actor, director, writer, and producer. He is a Juilliard School creative associate and on faculty of the Yale School of Drama. He has starred in films such as Barry Jenkins's *If Beale Street Could Talk*, Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln*, Lee Daniels's *The Butler*, Ava Duvernay's *Selma*, and Nate Parker's *Birth of a Nation*, and stars on AMC's *Fear the Walking Dead* and guest stars on HBO's *Euphoria*. His plays and musicals include *Dot* (Samuel French), *Wild with Happy* (Dramatist Play Service), and *A Boy and His Soul* (Oberon Books), the Tony Award -nominated Broadway musical *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical*, and the history-making musical *Light's Out: Nat King Cole* at Geffen Playhouse. He is a recipient of the Lucille Lortel, Obie, Audelco, and GLAAD awards for his work. He is currently writing a new musical for the Young Vic in London and hosting his digital series *Bottomless Brunch at Colman's*, which is in its third season on AMC.com.

On His Artistic Choices

I decided to eschew any dialects or constructs that creatives have been seduced by when they examine this brilliant comedy of manners. Casting is absolutely culturally conscious. I had no interest in attaching dialects that would undervalue the casting specifics of my company. I wanted my company to bring all that they are to their roles.

On Why This Play is Relevant Today

[I had] zero interest in presenting this play as if it were a piece of history. It is now. It is relevant. We are always at war. We are always searching for love. We are always examining our place in the world. And with a dry wit and a sense of the ridiculous is the way that we can truly unpack who we are.

Historical Background on the Serbo-Bulgarian War

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Serbo-Bulgarian-War>

A Brief Biography of George Bernard Shaw

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1925/shaw/biographical/>

Video on the Byronic Hero from PBS:

<https://www.pbs.org/video/the-byronic-hero-isnt-it-byronic-tbhr6r/>

PRE-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. Take a few minutes to write three expectations you have for this play on a piece of paper. Consider: What do you think the story will be about? How do you think the actors will perform it? What will the visual element of the performance look like? What will the audio element sound like? Do you think you'll enjoy it? What do you imagine your reaction to this play will be? Keep this paper nearby to look back on after the performance.
2. Often, we will hear stories about people before we ever meet them --a grandmother might tell tales of eccentric Great Uncle Ron's shenanigans when they were children or an older friend might warn of how strict next year's math teacher will be. However, when we eventually meet those people, they don't always match our expectations of them --Uncle Ron might turn out to be a very timid man, or next year's math teacher might be the easiest grader you've ever had. Reflect on a time when the expectations you held before you met someone didn't match who they actually turned out to be. What led you to expect them to be one way? Why do you think that expectation didn't match who they actually were? Did you learn anything from this experience that changed how you get to know people now?
3. *Arms and the Man* is set in 1885, during a war between Serbia, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire over control of a section of land. This play is one of many pieces of art that explore themes of war --even children's and young adult books like *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* revolve around war. Think about other books, movies, or plays you've read or seen that feature big conflicts between two groups of people. What was that piece of art trying to teach you about humanity, about good vs evil, or about how we handle conflict? Why do you think a playwright might choose to set their play during a war?

POST-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. Now that you've seen the play, pull out your paper with your expectations from beforehand. Go through each expectation, and mark a check next to ones that turned out to be correct, and an "X" next to ones that were incorrect. How was this play and your reaction to it different than you expected? Was it helpful to attend the performance with a clear set of expectations? What could be the risks of entering experiences with too many expectations?
2. The director of a play helps to shape actors' performances and has a big role in deciding how to interpret the play for their production. For example, they might consider whether the play will be set in the time period in which it is written, or adapted to a modern setting. They might decide whether the actors cast in the play should reflect the playwright's original vision or whether there is room to challenge assumptions about who should play each role. Usually, the actors in *Arms and the Man* would perform the piece with a British accent, or dialect. In this production of *Arms and the Man*, however, director Colman Domingo decided not to have the actors speak in British dialect, but with their own accents. What impact did this decision have on the performance? If you were the director, how might you interpret an older, classic play like this one to make it more relevant today?
3. Some characters in *Arms and the Man* hold a romanticized idea of war, imagining handsome men heroically performing acts of valor. Do any of the characters change their minds about the glamour of war over the course of the play? What causes this change? What do you think the playwright George Bernard Shaw is trying to convey to his audience about war?
4. At the beginning of the play, Raina idolizes Sergius, calling him "just as splendid and noble as he looks" (Shaw 8). By the end of the play, her opinion of him has changed. Think about someone you used to look up to as a role model, someone whom you no longer relate to or idolize quite so much. What changed your opinion of them? Why do you think it's important to reflect on our role models as we get older?

ACTIVITY: PLAYING VERSIONS OF YOURSELF

California State Arts Standards:

Prof.TH:Cr3 b. Explore physical, vocal, and physiological choices to develop a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant to a drama/theatre work.

Prof.TH:Re8 a. Analyze and compare artistic choices developed from personal experiences in multiple drama/theatre works.

8.TH.Pr6 Perform a rehearsed, scripted scene from a drama/theatre work for an audience.



Ariel Shafir as Sergius in A.C.T.'s *Arms and the Man*. Photo courtesy of Ariel Shafir.

Raina meets her chocolate cream soldier twice in two very different circumstances. The first time, he's a nameless enemy soldier, battered and in need of lifesaving help. The second time, he's Captain Bluntschli: a military officer, a respected friend and advisor, and an honored guest.

In this virtual reading of *Arms and the Man*, both versions of the chocolate cream soldier appear in just two dimensions, similarly placed on your computer screen. However, the actor playing him makes the contrast between the scared man hiding in Raina's room and Captain Bluntschli clear. What does the actor playing Captain Bluntschli do physically or vocally to distinguish these two iterations of his character from one another?

Now, it's your turn to explore two different versions of yourself and find ways to present them distinctly in your virtual classroom.

1. On a piece of paper, draw two columns. Label each one with a different version of yourself, two different sides of your personality. These will be your two characters for this activity. Think about how you might behave or feel differently in different situations: Do you behave differently when at the dinner table versus when hanging out with friends? Does a different version of you arrive at church on Sunday than the version who slept in until noon on Saturday? Are you confident and outspoken in math class but feel out of place and timid in art class? For example, you could label your columns "Elizabeth the Hardworking Student" and "Lizzie the Chilled Out Weekend Gamer." Be creative!
2. In each column, brainstorm a list of ten traits about each version of yourself. These could be personality traits like "funny," "timid," or "adventurous," or they could be physical traits like "well-dressed," "slouching," or "brown-eyed." Try to make the two lists as distinct as possible --this will help you act out your characters more easily later!
3. In small breakout groups of two students, try on both of your characters! Choose which student is A and which is B, then perform each of the scenes (listed at the end of this activity) twice, once while embodying each version of yourself. Try to make your two characters as distinct as possible by thinking about:
 - a. Voice: how does each of your characters sound? Does one speak in a high-pitched voice, and the other low? Does one speak quickly and the other slowly? Does one have an accent? A raspy voice?
 - b. Body: how does each of your characters move? Is one energetic and rigid, the other laidback and lethargic? How does each character use their hands? Their face?
 - c. Costume: what does each of your characters look like? Does one character wear their baseball cap forward, and the other to the back? Does one have their hair down and able to be fiddled with, while the other has it pulled back?
 - d. Camera angle: how do each of your characters show up to class? Does one character sit straight up, in the middle of their Zoom box? Does the other slouch down, so they're barely visible off to the side of the screen? Does one get very close to the camera, while the other is farther away?

ACTIVITY: PLAYING VERSIONS OF YOURSELF CONT.

When you get to the end of the scene, try to continue the conversation, in character.

4. After you have tried out all three scenes twice each, once for each of your characters, choose one scene and one pair of characters to perform for your class. Choose the character that is the most distinct, the most dynamic, and the most fun for you to embody. Rehearse the scene! Try to make your character the most exaggerated version of this side of you as you can. How loud can you get? How quiet? How big can you make your gestures or facial expressions?
5. After rehearsing, come back to the full group and perform your scenes for one another. If you're on Zoom, those not performing can turn off their cameras, and everyone can select "Hide Non-Video Participants" so that only the two people "onstage" can be seen. Make sure to applaud and show support for your classmates' brave performances!
6. Once everyone has performed, reflect on the activity.
 - a. How did it feel to exaggerate two distinct parts of yourself? Were you able to make them noticeably different from one another? Did both characters feel authentic to who you are?
 - b. Do you think you are a chameleon in real life, changing the way you present in different scenarios? What are the benefits to having the ability to bring out different aspects of yourself in different situations? What are the challenges?
 - c. Do you think acting over video platforms like Zoom or GoogleMeet is harder or easier than acting in-person, on a stage? Is there any advantage to being able to control exactly what the camera angle sees? Any disadvantage? Do you notice yourself thinking more about how you appear on camera than you would in real life?



George Bernard Shaw. Photo courtesy of Wikipedia Commons.

SCENES FOR PARTS 3-5

Scene 1:

A: Get out of here.
B: I think I'll stay.
A: You are not supposed to be here.
B: And you are?
A: Are you serious?
B: Are you?
A: Just leave already.
B: You first.
A: ...
B: ...

Scene 3:

A: What are you doing?
B: Can't you tell?
A: Well, I think so but--
B: It should be obvious.
A: You shouldn't--
B: I know.
A: I mean, I really wish you wouldn't...
B: You should have thought of that.
A: Is this because of what I did?
B: ...
A: ...

Scene 2:

A: Shoot!
B: Oh no...
A: I told you to be careful!
B: I was! It just happened.
A: Here, let me see... UGH.
B: Wait-- Where are you going?
A: For help.
B: And leaving me here?
You can't leave me here!
A: ...
B: ...