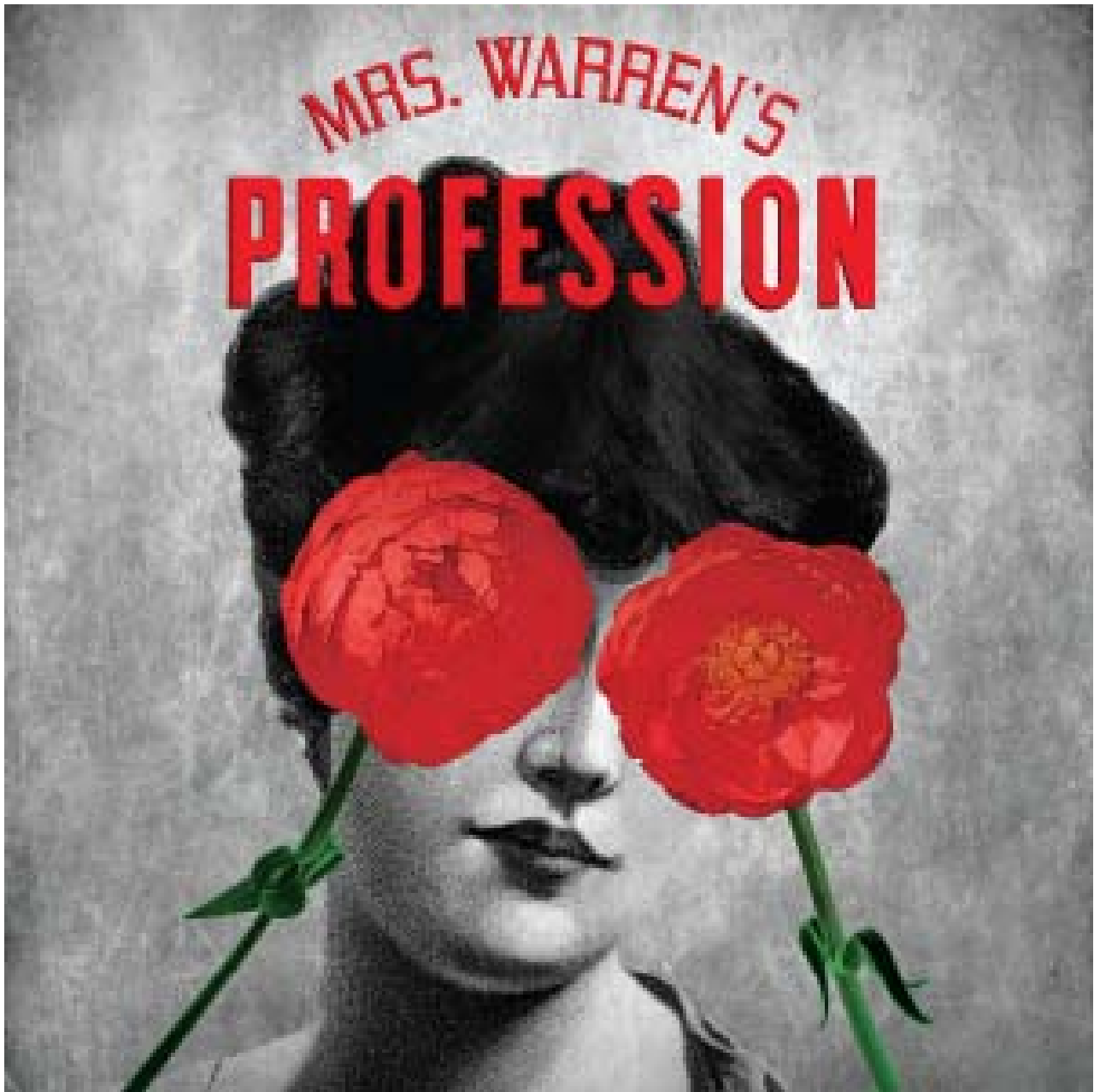


UPSTAGE



A PUBLICATION OF EDUCATION@ROUNABOUTTHEATRECOMPANY FALL 2010

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Interview with the Director: **Doug Hughes**



Why did you want to direct Mrs. Warren’s Profession? Did you bring the project to Artistic Director Todd Haines or did he suggest it to you?

DH: Mrs. Warren’s Profession is a play that has been on my list for years. It’s early Shaw, but I think it’s great Shaw. Cherry Jones and I have spoken intermittently over the last four years about plays we’d like to do together. When her term as president concluded on 24, I proposed Mrs. Warren as something we might do together at The Roundabout.

What do you think the play is about?

DH: The play is about secrets and lies. It’s about living one life while believing in another. It’s about the dishonesty and hypocrisy that are prerequisites for surviving and flourishing in a fallen world.

Why do you think G.B. Shaw’s plays are still viable for contemporary audiences?

DH: I believe that Shaw’s plays will remain viable for contemporary audiences as long as dishonesty and hypocrisy remain essential social skills.

How did you research the world of the play? What kind of research did you have to do in order to direct it?

DH: The most essential research was reading Shaw’s prose—THE INTELLIGENT WOMAN’S GUIDE TO SOCIALISM AND CAPITALISM, THE QUINTESSENCE OF IBSENISM, a great essay unpublished in his lifetime called TRUTH AND FICTION, his essay on parents and children. I also re-read Holroyd’s great biography. There was some research attached to the visual aspect of the production—Bloomsbury group stuff, the moving of the play forward into the tail end of the Edwardian era—but the crucial preparation was some saturation in his writing on social themes.

What did you look for in casting the actors? What traits did you need?

DH: Intelligence. Imagination. Rhetorical power. Wit. Courage. I’m always looking for these essential qualities in the actors with whom I work. A genuine appetite for the ferocious struggle underlying a supposedly civilized transaction is also helpful here. Cherry, Sally and the boys possess all of the above and more.

***It’s about the
DISHONESTY
and
HYPOCRISY
that are prerequisites for
surviving and flourishing in a
fallen world.***

**How will the play manifest itself visually?
How did you collaborate with your design team?**

DH: As mentioned above, I decided to set the play about fifteen years after its initial composition. I wanted to move it into the 20th century and away from Victoriana. The Victorians always take the rap for hypocrisy. I thought the Edwardians could stand a little scrutiny. Of course, since the play was banned from production at the time of its composition in 1893, we are essentially setting it in the era in which it first made its way to the stage. Arts and Crafts elements, the aesthetic movement, and Bloomsbury group artists such as Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell were also very influential as I worked with the great Scott Pask on the set.

The ending of the play is quite unsentimental given it was written in the late 19th century.

Do you sense that Vivie and Mrs. Warren are women ahead of their time?

DH: The play's ending is its masterstroke. I wouldn't say Vivie and Mrs. Warren are women ahead of their time. I'd say they are women of their time and of all time. Shaw was sufficiently bold to portray mother and daughter honestly, not sentimentally.

What inspires you as a director? Do you see other directors' work? Go to movies? Museums? Travel?

DH: I do everything you mention and I draw inspiration from all of those pursuits. At the moment, I am frantically collecting soon to be obsolete DVDs of the work of great film directors-Hitchcock, Wilder, Renoir, Melville, Ford, Hawks, Sturges and on and on. There's something about the miserly hoarding of all that brilliance on a shelf that both comforts and inspires me.

DOUG HUGHES (*Director*). Recent Broadway productions include *The Royal Family*, *Oleanna*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *Mauritius*, *Inherit the Wind*, *A Touch of the Poet*, *Frozen* and *Doubt*. This is Mr. Hughes' seventh production with Roundabout Theatre, where he serves as the resident director. He has directed on and Off-Broadway and for most of the nation's leading theatre companies. For his work on the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Doubt* he received the 2005 Tony Award for Best Direction of a Play. He has also received Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel, Outer Critics, Obie and Callaway awards for his productions.

CHRONOLOGY

A Selected Chronology of the Life and Works of George Bernard Shaw

Playwright

1856 George Bernard Shaw is born July 26 in Dublin to Protestant parents. He has two older sisters. His father is an unsuccessful grain merchant whose alcoholism leaves its mark on his son. His mother is a singer and the primary support of the family. As a boy, Shaw attends grammar school in Dublin.

1865

1866 Shaw's mother's music coach, George John Vandeleur Lee, moves in with the family in Dublin.

1869

World History

End of the Crimean War (1854-56) in which Britain and France support Turkey against Russian invasion. Florence Nightingale's promotion of sterile conditions in military hospitals during the Crimean War revolutionizes nursing.

Gustav Flaubert writes *Madame Bovary*.

(1857) British Parliament passes the Matrimonial Causes Act which establishes secular divorces and allows women to inherit or bequeath property, enter into contracts and protect earnings. Men are allowed to divorce wives on grounds of adultery, although women must prove an additional charge against husbands, such as desertion, cruelty or incest to secure a divorce.

British Women's Suffrage Committee is founded and dedicated to securing for women the right to vote.

Edouard Manet paints "Olympia" depicting a naked prostitute. It is one of several of his paintings of prostitutes.

One of several Contagious Disease Acts is passed in the British Parliament. The Acts are intended to curb the spread of venereal disease. In areas near military garrisons, authorities are empowered to arrest suspected prostitutes for examination by physicians for venereal disease. Clients are not subject to arrest or examination.

After the abolition of slavery and five years of Civil War, the U.S. enters a period of Reconstruction.

Feodor Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment* is published.

Girton College, the first residential college for

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| | | women, is founded at Cambridge University, although the University does not officially allow women to take exams. |
| 1870 | | British Parliament passes the Married Women's Property Act allowing women to keep earnings and inherit personal property independently of their husbands. Joint marital assets legally belong to the husband. |
| 1871 | Shaw leaves school at age 15 and works as a junior clerk in a real estate office in Dublin. | Fire destroys much of Chicago. Lewis Carroll writes <i>Through the Looking Glass</i> . George Eliot writes <i>Middlemarch</i> . |
| 1872 | | Newnham College, a second residential college for women, is founded at Cambridge University, although the University still does not officially allow women to take exams. |
| 1873 | Shaw's mother moves with Vandeleur Lee to London to pursue her singing career. She brings her two daughters with her, but leaves Shaw with his father. | Èmile Zola first defines his views of literary naturalism in books and on stage in his influential preface to his play <i>Thérèse Raquin</i> . British law extends women's parental rights to custody of their children in certain cases of divorce. |
| 1876 | Shaw's sister Elinor Agnes dies of tuberculosis at the age of 20. He leaves Dublin and joins his mother and sister Lucy in London. He ghost-writes music criticism for Vandaleur Lee. He will not return to Ireland for nearly 30 years. | Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone. At Little Big Horn, Sioux Indians defeat U.S. Army troops led by General George A. Custer. Richard Wagner's opera house at Bayreuth, Germany, opens with performances of his complete <i>Ring Cycle</i> . British women can be licensed as physicians for the first time. |
| 1879 | Shaw works for the Edison Telephone Company which installs telephones. 1879-1883, He writes five novels: <i>Immaturity</i> , <i>The Irrational Knot</i> , <i>Love Among the Artists</i> , <i>Being the Novel of Cashel Byron's Profession</i> , and <i>The Unsocial Socialist</i> . He can not find | Thomas Edison perfects the incandescent electric lamp. Henrik Ibsen writes <i>A Doll's House</i> . The British Zulu war is fought in Africa. |

publishers for them at this time.

- 1880 Shaw joins the Zetetical Society, organized to discuss social, political and philosophical issues.
- Auguste Rodin sculpts "The Thinker."
- Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta *The Pirates of Penzance* opens.
- Suspicion of abuses in Belgian brothels, such as recruitment and abduction of underage British girls, prompt the formation of the London Committee for Suppressing the Traffic in British Girls.
- 1881 Shaw suffers from a case of small pox. He becomes a vegetarian.
- U.S. President Garfield is assassinated. Chester Arthur becomes president.
- 1882 Shaw attends a lecture in London given by economist Henry George. Shaw claims that this lecture on tax policy changes the course of his life by bringing issues of economics and social policy to his attention.
- German scientist Rover Koch discovers the bacillus of tuberculosis.
- Robert Louis Stevenson writes *Treasure Island*.
- British Army invades and occupies Egypt.
- Commercial electrical system is used for the first time in New York City.
- British Parliament passes the Married Women's Property Act, granting married women the same rights over their property as unmarried women.
- Cambridge University officially recognizes women students, allowing them to take exams.
- 1884 Shaw joins the Fabian Socialist Society, an organization which advocates "the reorganization of society by the emancipation of land and industrial capital from individual and class ownership, and the vesting of them in the community for the general benefit."
- Henrik Ibsen writes *The Wild Duck*.
- Herbert Spencer's "The Man Versus the State" is published.
- Mark Twain writes *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
- He meets and befriends drama critic William Archer.
- British Parliament passes a Matrimonial Causes Act forgoing a two-year waiting period for women filing for divorce on grounds of desertion.
- His novel *The Unsocial Socialist* is serialized in *Today*.
- 1885 Shaw writes book reviews for the *Pall*
- In an effort to curb prostitution, British

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| | <i>Mall Gazette</i> . He also writes columns on art for <i>The World</i> . | Parliament passes the Criminal Law Amendment Act, raising the age of consent from 13 to 16 years, punishing prostitutes (but not their male clients) with fines and imprisonment and criminalizing homosexuality. |
| | His father dies. Mrs. Shaw, Lucy and Shaw do not attend the funeral. | Louis Pasteur develops the rabies vaccine. |
| 1886 | | British Custody Reform allows divorced mothers to regain custody of their children upon the death of their father. |
| | | British Contagious Disease Acts are repealed. |
| | | Paris Salon exhibition includes several of Edgar Degas' paintings of bathing prostitutes. |
| 1887 | Shaw speaks at a demonstration in Trafalgar Square on "Bloody Sunday." | Socialists demonstrating in London's Trafalgar Square are driven away by police on what becomes known as "Bloody Sunday." |
| | | Sir Arthur Conan Doyle publishes "A Study in Scarlet," his first Sherlock Holmes story. |
| | | André Antoine, establishes the <i>Théâtre Libre</i> (The Free Theater) in Paris. His productions epitomize the theories of naturalistic theater. |
| 1888 | 1888-90, Shaw writes music criticism for <i>The Star</i> under the pseudonym "Corno di Bassetto." | August Strindberg writes <i>Miss Julie</i> . |
| | | Vincent Van Gogh paints "Sunflowers." |
| | | A simple box camera with roll film is introduced by George Eastman, popularizing photography. |
| | | British women vote in county council elections for the first time. |
| 1889 | Shaw edits and contributes to an anthology of social criticism called <i>Fabian Essays</i> . | The Eiffel Tower is completed in Paris. |
| | He attends a performance of Ibsen's <i>A Doll's House</i> , the first of Ibsen's plays produced in London. | Henrik Ibsen writes <i>Hedda Gabler</i> . |
| | | <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> is established. |
| 1890 | 1890-94, Shaw is the music critic for <i>The World</i> . He writes under his own name. | 200 members of the Sioux tribe are killed at the Battle of Wounded Knee. |

- His lecture to the Fabian Society on the writings of Ibsen will form the basis for his study on Ibsen's drama to be published the following year.
- 1891 Shaw writes *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, a defense of Ibsen's dramas.
- 1892 Shaw writes his first play to be produced, *Widowers' Houses*. It is performed privately by the Independent Theatre Society. (Over his career as a playwright, Shaw will write more than 50 plays.)
- 1893 Shaw writes the plays *The Philanderer* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is banned by the censors for its treatment of the subject of prostitution. It is performed privately in 1902 but will not receive a public production in England until 1925.
- 1894 Shaw writes the play *Arms and the Man*.
- Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is published.
- Emily Dickinson's poems are published posthumously by her sister.
- The first motion picture is shown in New York.
- J.T. Grein opens his Independent Theater in London with a production of Ibsen's *Ghosts*.
- Tchaikovski composes the *Nutcracker* ballet.
- Oscar Wilde writes *A Woman of No Importance*.
- Henri Toulouse-Lautrec paints "At the Moulin Rouge."
- The British Independent Labour Party is founded.
- Henry Ford builds his first automobile.
- Anton Dvorak composes his symphony "From the New World."
- Sir Arthur Wing Pinero writes *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*.
- Arthur Schnitzler writes *Anatol*.
- U.S. Supreme Court upholds "separate but equal" public facilities for whites and blacks, legitimizing the racial discrimination of the "Jim Crow Era." (Reversed with Civil Rights Act of 1964.)
- Shaw's friends Sidney and Beatrice Webb publish their *History of Trade Unionism*.
- Rudyard Kipling writes *The Jungle Book*.
- The phrase "The New Woman" is used for the first time in an essay by Sarah Grand. It describes a new generation of non-traditional, college educated women.

- 1895 Shaw writes the plays *A Man of Destiny* and *Candida*.
 He begins writing drama criticism for *Saturday Review* which contains his condemnation of Victorian "well-made-plays" and of what he called the theater's "bardolatry" of Shakespeare.
 He begins a five-year correspondence with actress Ellen Terry. (Their letters are published in 1931.)
- 1896 Shaw writes the play *You Never Can Tell*.
 He meets Charlotte Payne Townshend, a wealthy Irish heiress who will later become his wife. She joins the Fabian Society.
- 1897 Shaw writes the play *The Devil's Disciple*.
 He is appointed city councilman of the borough of St. Pancras.
- 1898 Shaw writes the play *Caesar and Cleopatra*.
 He marries Charlotte Payne Townshend.
 A collection of Shaw's plays entitled *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* is published. *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is included in the volume.
- 1899 Shaw writes the play *Captain Brassbound's Conversation*.
- Anton Chekhov writes *The Sea Gull*.
 Auguste and Louis Lumière invent the "cinematographe," a motion picture camera in France.
 Sears, Roebuck and Company opens a mail-order business. Sears and Montgomery Ward will soon revolutionize the purchase and distribution of goods in America.
 Oscar Wilde writes *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
- Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* is produced in Paris.
 Oscar Wilde is sentenced to prison under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885.
 The Klondike Gold Rush begins in Canada.
 The first modern Olympic Games are held in Athens, Greece.
- The Moscow Art Theater is founded by Konstantin Stanislavski and Vladimir Nemirovitch-Danchenko.
 Great Britain celebrates Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, 60 years as queen of England.
- The Spanish American War: U.S. backs Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain.
 The Social Democratic Party is founded in Russia.
 H.G. Wells writes *The War of the Worlds*.
- The Irish Literary Theatre is founded by W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory.
 The Boer War (1899-1902): Dutch and English colonists battle to control territories in South Africa.
 First magnetic recording of sound is made.

- 1900 Shaw writes *Fabianism and the Empire, A Manifesto of the Fabian Society*. Queen Victoria dies, ending her 64-year reign of the British Empire. She is succeeded by Edward VII.
- Joseph Conrad writes *Lord Jim*.
- Carrie Nation leads temperance groups in violent protests against establishments which serve liquor.
- Guglielmo Marconi transmits the first radio message across the Atlantic Ocean.
- Max Planck formulates his quantum theory.
- 1901 Shaw adapts his novel *Being the Novel of Cashel Byron's Profession* into a play entitled *The Admirable Bashville*. Sigmund Freud writes *The Interpretation of Dreams*.
- He writes *Socialism for Millionaires*. U.S. President William McKinley is assassinated.
- Theodore Roosevelt becomes president.
- In China, the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901) against British rule is squelched by military force.
- 1902 *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is performed for the first time at the New Lyric Club in a private production by the Stage Society. Shaw writes "The Author's Apology" to *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, an essay to accompany the play. South Africa becomes a colony of Great Britain following a British victory in the Boer War.
- 1903 Shaw completes the play *Man and Superman*. Russian Social Democratic Party meeting in London is split between moderate *Mensheviks* and radical *Bolsheviks*.
- The Wright brothers make their first successful flight at Kitty Hawk.
- The Souls of Black Folk*, a collection of essays by W.E.B. Dubois, is published.
- The motion picture *The Great Train Robbery* is produced.
- 1904 Shaw writes the plays *How He Lied to* Anton Chekhov completes *The Cherry Orchard*.

Her Husband and John Bull's Other Island.

He campaigns for a seat on the London County Council as a progressive candidate, but he is defeated.

He provides most of the financial backing for the Royal Court Theatre venture of John Eugene Vedrenne and Harley Granville-Barker. After three years, the venture is a financial failure.

1905 Shaw writes the play *Major Barbara*.

Mrs. Warren's Profession premieres in New York. Arrest warrants for disorderly conduct are issued for the producer and for the actors. After several months of hearings, the charges are dropped.

1906 Shaw writes the play *The Doctor's Dilemma*.

He and his wife move to a country house in Hertfordshire. Known as "Shaw's Corner," it will become his life-long home.

He sits for a sculpture by Rodin.

He rides in a hot-air balloon piloted by Percival Spencer. The balloon crash lands near Cobham Common. Shaw is unharmed.

1908 Shaw writes the play *Getting Married*.

1909 His short play *The Shewing up of Blanco Posnet* is banned by the censors for blasphemy, and his play *Press Cuttings* is banned for its offensive portrayal of certain living persons.

He writes the play *Misalliance*.

He testifies before Parliament's Joint

Max Weber writes *The Protestant Ethic and the Birth of Capitalism*.

Giacomo Puccini composes his opera *Madame Butterfly*.

John Millington Synge writes *Riders to the Sea*.

Alfred Einstein formulates his Special Theory of Relativity.

Russian troops open fire on St. Petersburg workers on "Bloody Sunday."

U.S. troops are sent to Atlanta, Georgia, to quell race riots in the South.

Earthquake devastates San Francisco.

Upton Sinclair writes *The Jungle*.

John Galsworthy writes *The Man of Property* and *The Silver Box*.

Ford Motor Company produces the first Model "T".

Maurice Maeterlinck writes *The Bluebird*.

Italian poet Emilio Marinetti publishes his futurist manifesto.

Select Committee on Dramatic
Censorship.

- 1910 Shaw writes the play *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*.
British King Edward VII dies; he is succeeded by George V.
Halley's Comet passes safely by the earth during its 84-year cycle despite widespread fears that it would destroy the planet.
- 1911 Shaw writes the play *Fanny's First Play*.
In China, revolution overthrows the Manchu dynasty (in power since 1644). The Chinese Republic is proclaimed.
G.K. Chesterton writes *The Innocence of Father Brown*.
- 1912 Shaw writes the plays *Androcles and the Lion* and *Overruled*.
The British luxury liner *Titanic* sinks during its voyage to America. 1,500 passengers die.
British miners strike for higher wages and improved working conditions. The strike staggers the British economy.
- 1913 Shaw writes the plays *Pygmalion* and *Great Catherine*.
His mother dies.
The Armory Show, an international exhibit of modern art, opens in New York City.
Suffragettes demonstrate in London.
Dock workers in Dublin and Liverpool strike.
D.H. Lawrence writes *Sons and Lovers*.
- 1914 Shaw writes *Common Sense About the War*.
He plays a role in a film, *Rosy Rapture—The Pride of the Beauty*.
Austrian declaration of war on Serbia sparks several counter-declarations across Europe, marking the official beginning of World War I (1914-18).
James Joyce writes *The Dubliners*.
- 1915 Shaw writes the playlets *The Inca of Perusalem* and *O'Flaherty, V.C.*
The first fighter plane is constructed.
Margaret Sanger is jailed for writing *Family Limitation*, her first book on birth control.
D.W. Griffith's controversial film *The Birth of a Nation* is produced.
- 1917 Shaw writes the plays *Heartbreak*
October Revolution in Russia brings Nikolai

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| | <i>House</i> and <i>Annajanska</i> . | Lenin and the Bolsheviks to power. |
| | He visits the British army on the Western Front. | U.S. enters World War I. Congress authorizes a military draft. |
| | | Prohibition of liquor becomes law in the U.S. (1917-33). |
| 1918 | | In Great Britain women over the age of 30 gained the right to vote. |
| 1920 | Shaw writes the play <i>Back to Methuselah</i> . | 19 th amendment to the U.S. Constitution grants women the right to vote. |
| | Shaw's sister Lucy dies. | The "Red Scare" begins in the U.S. resulting in nationwide federal raids and mass arrests of suspected anarchists, Communists and labor agitators. |
| | | Tristan Tzara introduces Dadaism in France. |
| | | Eugene O'Neill writes <i>Beyond the Horizon</i> . |
| 1923 | Shaw writes the play <i>Saint Joan</i> . | Marcus Garvey, a noted black activist for civil rights, is imprisoned for mail fraud. |
| | | Adolf Hitler writes <i>Mein Kampf</i> (<i>My Struggle</i>) while imprisoned in Germany. |
| 1924 | Shaw is heard on the radio for the first time. | The Labour Party comes to power in Great Britain. Prime Minister James MacDonal, once an executive member of the Fabian Society, appoints two other Fabians to high government positions. |
| | | J. Edgar Hoover is appointed director of the Bureau of Investigations (later renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigations). |
| 1925 | Shaw is awarded the Nobel Prize in literature. | F. Scott Fitzgerald's <i>The Great Gatsby</i> is published. |
| | <i>Mrs. Warren's Profession</i> receives its first professional production in London. | Charlie Chaplin directs and stars in <i>The Gold Rush</i> . |
| | | British Guardianship and Infants Act recognizes the equal parental rights and responsibilities of both mothers and fathers. |

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| 1928 | Shaw writes <i>The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism</i> . | Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin. Voting age for British women is lowered to 21. |
| 1929 | Shaw writes the play <i>The Apple Cart</i> . He speaks at the International Congress of the World League for Sexual Reform. | Worldwide economic depression. Unemployment and drought plague urban as well as rural areas. British Prime Minister MacDonald is re-elected. He appoints 20 Fabians to government positions (including eight cabinet positions). |
| 1931 | Shaw visits the Soviet Union where he meets Joseph Stalin, Maxim Gorki and Konstantin Stanislavski. He publicly expresses his admiration for Soviet Communism. His lectures to the Fabian Society are collected in an anthology, <i>Essays in Fabian Socialism</i> . | Al Capone is jailed for income tax evasion. Construction of New York City's Empire State Building is completed. Labour Party loses control of British Parliament. Fabians lose their government positions. |
| 1932 | Shaw and his wife travel around the world, stopping for his only visit to the United States. In New York he lectures on "The Future of Political Science in the United States." He writes a fable, <i>The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God</i> , and the play <i>Too Good to be True</i> . | Franklin Roosevelt is elected president of the U.S. Aldous Huxley writes <i>Brave New World</i> . The baby of Charles Lindbergh is kidnapped. Bonus Marchers (U.S veterans seeking early redemption of military bonus certificates) are driven out of Washington D.C. by military force. |
| 1934 | Shaw writes the plays <i>The Millionairess</i> , <i>The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isle</i> and <i>The Six of Calais</i> . | Hitler becomes leader of Germany. Stalin's first purge of the Communist Party begins. |
| 1936 | Shaw writes <i>The King, the Constitution, and the Lady</i> and the play <i>Geneva</i> . | British King George V dies. His son Edward VIII abdicates the throne to become the duke of Windsor. George Kaufman and Moss Hart write <i>You Can't Take It With You</i> . |
| 1939 | The screenplay for the film version of Shaw's <i>Pygmalion</i> receives an Academy Award. | Following Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia, World War II begins in Europe (1939-45). |

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| | He writes the play <i>In Good King Charles' Golden Days</i> . | John Steinbeck's <i>Grapes of Wrath</i> is published. |
| 1941 | The Shaw Society is founded in London. | Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor draws the U.S. into World War II. Orson Welles' film <i>Citizen Kane</i> is first shown. |
| 1943 | Shaw's wife Charlotte dies after a long illness. | WWII continues. Allied forces under General Eisenhower defeat the fascist Axis army in North Africa. Russian army defeats Germans at Stalingrad. Italian army surrenders to Allied forces. |
| 1944 | Shaw's <i>Everybody's Political What's What?</i> is published. | WWII continues. D-Day invasion of Normandy. Tide turns toward an Allied victory in 1945. |
| 1946 | Special performances and exhibitions mark Shaw's 90 th birthday. | War begins in Indochina between Vietnamese nationalists and French colonial powers. Winston Churchill declares that an "iron curtain" has fallen across Europe. |
| 1947 | Shaw writes the play <i>Buoyant Billions</i> . | India gains independence from British rule. Tennessee Williams writes <i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> . Albert Camus writes <i>The Plague</i> . |
| 1948 | Shaw writes the play <i>Farfetched Fables</i> . | The Jewish state of Israel is established in part of the former British controlled territory of Palestine. |
| 1949 | Shaw writes a puppet show, <i>Shakes Versus Shav.</i> , the autobiographical <i>Sixteen Self Sketches</i> and the play <i>Why She Would Not</i> . He makes provisions in his will for the development and promotion of a new, phonetic alphabet. | The Korean War begins (1949-52). The South African government adopts Apartheid as official policy, sparking decades of social and racial unrest. |
| 1950 | George Bernard Shaw dies on November 2 at the age of 94. His ashes, together with his wife's, are scattered in their garden. | U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy warns President Truman that communists and their sympathizers have allegedly infiltrated the State Department. |

The Playwright:

George Bernard Shaw as We Knew Him: Shaw Through the Eyes of his Friends and Acquaintances

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G.B.S. has a fund of dry Irish humour that is simply irresistible. He is a clever writer and speaker—is the grossest flatterer I ever met, is horribly untrustworthy as he repeats everything he hears, and does not always stick to the truth, and is very plain like a long corpse with dead white face—sandy sleek hair, and a loathsome small straggly beard, and yet is one of the most fascinating men I ever met.

Edith Nesbit, letter to Ada Breakell, August 19, 1884

Bernard Shaw is a marvelously smart witty fellow with a crank for not making money. I have never known a man use his pen in such a workmanlike fashion or acquire such a thoroughly technical knowledge of any subject upon which he gives an opinion. As to his character, I do not understand it. He has been for twelve years a devoted propagandist, hammering away at the ordinary routine of Fabian Executive work. ... He is an excellent friend—at least to men—but beyond this I know nothing. I am inclined to think that he has a "slight" personality—agile, graceful and even virile, but lacking in weight. Adored by many women, he is a born philanderer. A vegetarian, fastidious but unconventional in his clothes, six foot in height with a lithe, broad-chested figure and laughing blue eyes. Above all a brilliant talker, and, therefore, a delightful companion.

Beatrice Webb, diary entry, September 17, 1893

[Shaw is] an excellent man; he has no enemies; and none of his friends like him.

Oscar Wilde, letter to Shaw, September 25, 1896

It is positively because he is quick-witted that he is long-winded.

G. K. Chesterton, 1909

I found Bernard Shaw wonderfully patient at rehearsal. I look upon him as a good, kind, gentle creature whose "brain-storms" are just due to the Irishman's love of a fight; they never spring from malice or anger. It doesn't answer to take Bernard Shaw seriously. He is not a man of convictions. That is one of the charms of his plays—to me at least. One never knows how the cat is really jumping. But it jumps. Bernard Shaw is alive, with nine lives, like that cat!

Ellen Terry, *The Story of My Life*, 1908

Oh dear me—it's too late to do anything but accept you and love you—but when you were quite a little boy somebody ought to have said "hush" just once.

Mrs. Patrick Campbell, letter to George Bernard Shaw, November 1, 1912

Few persons understand Mr. Shaw. He is a great man, a dreamer of wonderful dreams, an idealist and an individualist who is always striving and working to lift others to the high plane of his own thoughts and beliefs. He is not the blatant, bombastic person of the popular conception. He is bashful and retiring, quiet and reserved by nature. But he does not let this part of his nature overrule him. He sweeps it aside by might of will when he must, and when he thinks it is the only way to propagate his ideas and beliefs. At all other times—most of the time, too—and because it is natural he is a man the direct opposite of what the world thinks. Mr. Shaw is a Socialist and believes implicitly in all the doctrines and tenets of Socialism. He has been a Socialist for thirty years and became one after he had listened to the words and teachings of Henry George, one of your famous Americans. ... Since then my husband has preached and written Socialism, and this, with the fact that he is an atheist, a vegetarian, a firm believer in women's rights, going so far as to espouse the feminist movement, and his fearless pen, have all tended to form the popular opinion of him.

Charlotte Shaw, *Boston Post*, April 29, 1914

I am tempted to call him the most uncompromising, not to say fanatical, idealist I have ever met. His life has been dominated by, and devoted to, a system of interwoven ideals to which he is immovably faithful. His sense of right and wrong is so overmastering that he carries it into regions—such as that of personal hygiene—which most people are apt to regard as morally indifferent. And his ideals, if sometimes a little crankish, are for the most part high and humane. He sometimes fights for them with a ferocity that appears like unscrupulousness: but this appearance is due to the fact that his perceptions are warped by the intensity of his feelings: the mirror of his mind does not accurately image the external object. His will is always intent on the good as he sees it; and that I take to be the essence of a high morality. Having known him for forty years, I say without hesitation that his greatest moral failing, in my judgment, is (or was) a certain impishness, a Puck-like Schadenfreude [pleasure in the discomfort of his enemies], to which he would sometimes give too free play. Apart from this, there is no man for the fundamentals of whose character I have a more real respect.

William Archer, *Bookman*, December, 1924

Shaw has always been a brilliant speaker as well as a provocative writer. During the early years of the Fabian Society he spoke constantly at public meetings, drawing crowded audiences. He always gave of his best, whether there were two thousand listeners or only twenty. That is the hallmark of the true artist.

J.R. Clynes, *Memoirs*, 1937

From your box of tricks you have taken countless puppets which, whilst resembling men, are not of flesh and bone, but consist entirely of spirit, wit, and grace. You make these gracious puppets dance in a little world guarded by the Graces who allow no resentment to enter in. Whoever has glanced into this little world, sees the world of our reality in a new light; he sees your puppets blending into real people.... You have been able, as no other contemporary, to effect in us a liberation, and to take from us something of the heaviness of life.

Albert Einstein, to George Bernard Shaw

The Playwright:

Shaw on Shaw

Reprinted with permission from the *Guthrie Theater*. Belinda Westmaas Jones, play guide editor.

For ten years past, with an unprecedented pertinacity and obstination, I have been dinning into the public head that I am an extraordinarily witty, brilliant, and clever man. That is now part of the public opinion of England; and no power in heaven or on earth will ever change it. I may dodder and dote; I may potboil and platitudinize; I may become the butt and chopping-block of all bright, original spirits of the rising generation; but my reputation shall not suffer; it is built up fast and solid, like Shakespeare's on an impregnable basis of dogmatic reiteration.

Shaw, *The Saturday Review*, 1898

I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no "brief candle" to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment; and I want to

make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

Shaw, "Art and Public Money," *Sussex Daily News*, March 7, 1907

I am of the true Shakespearean type: I understand everything and everyone and am nobody and nothing.

Shaw, letter to Frank Harris, June 20, 1930

He will fill his fountain pen with your heart's blood, and sell your most sacred emotions on the stage. He is a mass of imagination with no heart. He is a writing and talking machine that has worked for nearly forty years until its skill is devilish. ... All his

goods are in the shop window, and he'll steal your goods and put them there too.

Shaw (on himself), letter to Mrs. Patrick Campbell, November 8, 1912

My father was an ineffective, unsuccessful man, in theory a vehement teetotaller, but in practice often a furtive drinker. ... [My mother's] musical activity was of the greatest importance in my education. I never learnt anything at school, a place where they put "Caesar" and "Horace" into the hands of small 18 boys and expected the result to be an elegant taste and knowledge of the world. I took refuge in total idleness at school, and picked up at home, quite unconsciously, a knowledge of that extraordinary literature of modern music, from Bach to Wagner, which has saved me from being at the smallest disadvantage in competition with men who only know the grammar and mispronunciation of the Greek and Latin poets and philosophers. Thus the habit of freedom, which most Englishmen and Englishwomen of my class never acquire and never let their children acquire, came to me naturally.

Shaw, "Who I Am, and What I Think," *Candid Friend*, May 11, 1901

I was driven to write because I could do nothing else. In an old novel of mine—Cashel Byron's Profession—the hero, a prizefighter, remarks that it's not what a man would like to do, but what he can do, that he must work at in this world. I wanted to be another Michael Angelo, but found that I could not draw. I wanted to be a musician, but found I could not play—to be a dramatic singer, but had no voice. I did not want to write: that came as a matter of course without any wanting. I began, after the fashion of the sons of commercially unsuccessful middle-class men, by spending from my fifteenth to my twentieth year in an office—the office of an eminent Irish land agent (of all professions! —in Ireland, it is a profession, pursued under fire occasionally) who honourably appreciated the fact that I was intelligent; that I did not steal his money; and perhaps also that I did not take the faintest interest in his business, knowing well that my destiny did not lie in that direction. At 20, I resigned my prospects as a man of business, and blindly plunged into London.

Shaw, *Nine Answers*, 1923

The Playwright:

The Prophet and the Jester: Comments on the Works of G.B. Shaw

Reprinted with permission from the Guthrie Theater. Belinda Westmaas Jones, play guide editor.

The world insists upon regarding as a humorist the man who says irrefutable things that hurt. The king's jester was the only man in the kingdom who dared talk treason, and he was regarded as a fool because it would have been dangerous to admit his sanity. In our day, when the many-headed Demos is king, the man must be insane who persistently flouts him. It has become impolite to knock down him who reproaches us with our sins. We grin a ghastly smile when charged with being thieves and liars, and say, "In sooth, the man is a humorist! Otherwise politeness would prevent his making such preposterous statements," but all the while we are ill at ease. ... And so, in the parlance of the day, the man Shaw is a humorist. Scarcely do we say satirist, because that would be to admit some

justification for his ironies. He turns everything topsy-turvy, say the friends of the status quo—his world is like the house of upside-down, where visitors walk on the ceilings, and chairs and tables hang from the floor above their heads, and the distorting mirrors invert the spectators.

M., "Introduction," to *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant*, 1898

In the dramas of George Bernard Shaw, which deal almost wholly with the current conflict between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, it is but natural that the characters should fall broadly into two general classes—the ordinary folks who represent the great majority, and the iconoclasts, or idol-smashers. ... In all of the Shaw plays the necessary conflict is

essentially one between old notions of conduct and new ones.

H.L. Mencken, *George Bernard Shaw: His Plays*, 1905

Recognize that a passion for purity, gentleness, truth, justice, and beauty is the force at the base of all his teaching, and you will find his message one of the most tonic of our time.

Scott Dixon, "The Innocence of Bernard Shaw," *The Bookman*, September, 1913

[George Bernard Shaw is awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature] for his work which is marked by both idealism and humanity, its stimulating satire often being infused with a singular poetic beauty.

from the Nobel Prize awarded in 1925

It should be clear by now that Shaw is a terrorist. ... The Shavian terror is an unusual one, and he employs an unusual weapon—that of humor. This unusual man seems to be of the opinion that there is nothing fearful in the world except the calm and incorruptible eye of the common man. But this eye must be feared, always and unconditionally. ... The Shavian terror consists of Shaw's insistence on the prerogative of every man to act decently, logically, and with a sense of humor, and on the obligation to act in this manner even in the face of opposition. He knows very well how much courage it takes to laugh about the ridiculous and how much seriousness it takes to discover the amusing.

Bertolt Brecht, "Ovation for Shaw," (published in *Modern Drama*, September, 1959), originally written to celebrate Shaw's 70th birthday in 1926

A survey of Shaw's artistic life-work goes a long way to answer the question as to the part played by Shaw's Socialism in his art. It has given him a first-rate problem to solve, and a standpoint from which to approach it. Translated into aesthetic terms one may say Shaw's Socialism has endowed his work with the priceless gift of dramatic tension. ... And it is this quality alone which gives Shaw's dramatic work at its best its true greatness. If Shaw sometimes succeeds in bridging the gulf between a dark past and a dim future, if he resurrects great figures of history and finds moving words for

visions of a new world, this is, above all, due to the powerful tension between his Socialist convictions and the unyielding resistance of reality.

Erich Strauss, *Bernard Shaw: Art and Socialism*, 1942

One or two of Shaw's generalizations about drama do help us to an understanding of his plays. One is that there are only two dramatic characters, the long-haired aesthete and the clown. The statement is naughty, for it is either too vague to be exactly applicable or too dogmatic to be true. Yet it opens the door to an understanding of Shaw's characters, at least the male characters, and the way they are contrasted. A still more pregnant remark is that the drama, though now degenerated to a rant and a situation, began as a dance and a story. Shaw has brought dance back into the drama, not directly, to be sure, but in the lively rhythm of his lines and in the musical, rather than "well-made" structure of his scenes; and, precisely by minimizing plot, he has brought back stories to the stage by way of lengthy narratives. ... The chief mark of Shavian prose is its use of ironic antithesis and juxtaposition. Contrary to what one expects from a propagandist, Shaw not only shows the liberal's sense of the other man's point of view. He has a sense of every conceivable point of view, and can pack all the points of view into one long sentence, which climbs by parallelisms and antitheses to a climax, and then sinks with the finality of a conqueror to a conclusion which Shaw will not allow you to evade. In its course the Shavian sentence, still more the Shavian paragraph, looks in all possible directions. For Shaw sees the world as what [William] James called a multiverse, and that is unusual in a satirist, who is customarily something of a monomaniac.

Eric Bentley, *The Playwright as Thinker: A Study of Drama in Modern Times*, 1946

*Some of the air we breathe now has GBS in it, a little mountain oxygen that has somehow penetrated the fog. And where this mountain air comes from there is nothing small, nothing mean, nothing vindictive and cruel; it knows the sun of wit and wisdom and great cleansing winds of doctrine. J. B. Priestley, *Interviews and Recollections*, 1946 No one can write about ideas without creating persons to express them; but it is one thing to have*

an idea in a head and quite another to place it in a play. It takes a mastermind to do that so that it will appeal to the imagination of an audience. Shaw and Ibsen are masters of this fancy. Shaw's plays are packed with punches for all kinds of reforms, yet there's hardly one of them that isn't glittering with the fanciful guile of a dramatist.

Sean O'Casey, *New Statesman and Nation*, April, 1950

I have known few people whose pleasures were so almost exclusively pleasures of the intellect. What he liked was conversation, wit, imagination, a new idea, a new experience, a new book of philosophy, and of course a good deal of music and a little poetry. Give him those, and he was content. ... The great majority of comedians have not quite enough real wit to carry them through; when it runs thin they eke it out with a bit of indecency or perhaps spite, and get their laugh with most audiences. But Shaw, though he speaks freely of everything, never falls back on such mean second bests. Has there ever been a satirist so free from personal malice? He would make violent political attacks, of course, and denounce innocent public men as fools or villains. But that was for public reasons, and, when charged with intolerance, he made the surprising answer: "Who am I that I should be just?" This is not so absurd as it sounds. He never wrote as a judge, always as an accuser or an advocate. He attacked the things he considered wrong, showed them up as ridiculous, illogical, oppressive; he vividly over-stated his case against them. It was for others to pronounce judgment.

Gilbert Murray, *Drama*, Spring, 1951

Shaw is impatient with the insignificance of most human speech, most human thought, and most human preconceptions. It's not that his characters are not people, it is that they aren't insignificant people the way people usually are. When you strip from the human being everything that is not of significance, you may get a valid moment out of him, a valid set of speeches, a valid set of attitudes, but in the normal naturalistic concept, they aren't real because the bulk of reality is, of course, its utter boredom, and its insignificance, and its irrelevancy, and Shaw is absolutely uninterested in that. ... You read Shaw's plays and see how rarely

people get off the subject; and that's what I mean when I say that it isn't psychology he is following, it is the theme.

Arthur Miller, "Morality and Modern Drama, interview by Phillip Gelb, *Educational Theatre Journal*, October, 1958

Shaw was able to re-create the sexual charm of both men and women to a degree unequaled by any English dramatist except Shakespeare. ... Of all the reversals in Shavian drama, this is inevitably the most famous: the reversal in the roles of the sexes. Shaw once committed himself to the view that all superior women are masculine and all superior men are feminine.

Eric Bentley, "Foreword," *Plays by George Bernard Shaw*, Signet Classic edition, 1960

No aspect of Shaw's accomplishment in the modern theater was more important than his creation of a modern rhetorical drama, a rhetorical drama of impassioned ideas. ... The rhetorical drama of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a drama of passions and sentiments, not ideas. It used language, like action, for the externalization of emotion—and its conventions granted emotion a complete expressibility. The actor's part was conceived as a succession of states of feeling, and he acted Joy, Grief, Fear, Anger, Pity, Scorn, Hatred, Jealousy, Wonder, and Love, uttering all the while the mighty language commensurate with his emotion. ... The tendency of Shaw's playwriting was not toward "passion incarnate," but toward a drama of incarnate ideas. Nevertheless, he also needed a verbal medium, a theatrical convention which would express ideas that no human being could pour out, and express them in a manner thrilling, startling, and electrifying; and for this he bypassed contemporary modes of both fashionable and avant-garde playwriting and drew upon the obsolete rhetorical drama of the passions. To convert the medium to his own purposes—a formidable task on the face of it—Shaw simply made ideas into passions of the mind.

Martin Meisel, *Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theater*, 1963

There were two Shaws. One was the prophet with doctrine in his head; the other was the jester with a joke on his lips. He explained that, when he began to preach, he found no listeners. So he did some mental clowning in order to attract an audience. If he stood firmly with his feet on the ground or the platform he had no audience. If he stood with his head on the floor and his feet in the air the public thought that he might deserve a laugh and even some attention. So, as a devoted missionary, he was ready to be also the agile mountebank and he found that the trick worked. ... In his first playgoing he had despised the glamour of theatrical trappings and the romantic twaddle of the public's favorite plays. But none the less he must have quietly, almost secretly, enjoyed himself. And later, amid all the drudgery of Socialist propaganda, it occurred to him that the twaddle might possibly be replaced by the truth. Then, if the truth could be communicated with the warmth of the players' stage instead of with the austerity of the lecturer's dais, it would reach a large public who might come to be converted instead of a small one most of whom had come to applaud what they already believed. ... They were the people to be won. In the Socialist meeting-hall he met only the elect; in the theater were the electors—fools perhaps, but fools with votes.

Ivor Brown, *Shaw in His Time*, 1965

It is the combination of actor and critic, of clown and prophet that makes him unique in literature. His was not simply the gaiety of the great artist, like Shakespeare, or Cervantes; it was as if a great teacher like Socrates or Christ, or Buddha could not resist the temptation to diversify his sermons with somersaults.

Hesketh Pearson, *Bernard Shaw, a Postscript*, 1975

The Shavian comedy of ideas is full of ideas on all kinds of subjects, but the revolutionary aspect of its comic structure is tied most essentially to its ideas on women. ... If the traditional pattern of conflict is between the spontaneous desires of the young and the stiff resistance of the old, with the marriage of young lovers as the goal and the triumph, the relation of this theme to traditional society is easy to see. The desired conclusion is simply wedding, a

reciprocal process by which society accedes to lovers and they to society. At this point the young ones begin to become old ones; the very triumph by which they have forced society to accept and legitimize their union integrates them into the structure of legal and social institutions. The young lover, once wedded, becomes a shareholder in the status quo, an old father in the bud. There could be no more perfect expression of traditional society than this ending that implies an eternal recurrence of the same patterns generation after generation. ... The order of society, in this view, is tantamount to an order of nature. That is where Shaw breaks off from the tradition, and that is where the unromantic woman, the individualized woman of his plays, becomes by her very existence a revolutionary theme. Shaw sees society, and even nature, as capable of genuine evolution, of an escape from recurrence, and his comedy reflects that view in its very structure. Both the nature of the conflict and the nature of its resolution differ in Shaw from the traditional comic pattern, even when the events of the plot seem most conventional. Both thought and character in the Shavian drama proclaim the possibility of radical change, for they defy law itself, not just some abuse of the law. They defy custom itself, not just some perversion of custom. ... In comedy the most complete rejection of tradition is a play that ends with its leading characters not getting married and treats this ending as a rapturous fulfillment. There is one whole category of Shavian courtships in which the woman escapes from marriage and from the tyranny of love with the same swoon of relief that drops other women into a lover's arms.

Barbara Bellow Watson, *Fabian Feminist: Bernard Shaw and Woman*, 1977

Although Shaw distrusted rationalists as a species, he had a profound conviction that the future of man rested heavily on his use of his intellectual tools—his self-awareness, his wisdom, above all his drive to know more about himself and his world. By demanding that his audience bring "mind and conscience into the theater," by stimulating thought and self-criticism, he was furthering that self-knowledge. It is safe to say, I think, that Shaw was more interested in provoking self-analysis and skepticism, in disturbing the complacency of all

those who took their values and beliefs for granted, than in promulgating any well-defined philosophical system.

Robert F. Whitman, *Shaw and the Play of Ideas*, 1977

All Shaw's prose produces an effect of determined clarity, and it is this clarity that causes our ears to prick up: he is obviously saying something important or he wouldn't be making such an effort. And the air of optimism is a consequence of the directness. Inability to express ourselves makes us feel depressed and defeated—a gloomy conviction that the world is too complicated for our limited powers of assimilation. Kafka's effects of nightmare are produced by piling up dreamlike ambiguities and complications until the mind is hypnotized into a sense of helplessness. Shaw's clarity produces exactly the opposite effect, for it is obviously inspired by a conviction that any problem will yield to a combination of reason, courage and determination. "The brain will not fail when the will is in earnest." No matter what Shaw happens to be saying—whether he is talking about human evolution or municipal trading—it is this underlying tone of sanity and optimism that produces the exhilarating effect.

Colin Wilson, "A Personal View," *The Genius of Shaw*, edited by Michael Holroyd, 1979

The switch from action to discussion, that Shaw detected in Ibsen's work, corresponds with the fundamental Fabian approach to social change. Named after Fabius Cunctator, the Roman general who defeated Hannibal's superior forces by avoiding battle, the movement sought to reform society from within, by education, rejecting the violence of open revolution. And when carried over into drama, this commitment to the political effectiveness of intellectual persuasion is exactly analogous to resolving a play's action through dialogue. ...By inventing the "play of ideas" Shaw created a prototype that set the conditions for a whole line in modern theater, in England as well as abroad, from Bertolt Brecht and Edward Bond (both of whom labeled their work "rational drama") to Joe Orton. In extending the logic of argument to deconstructing and theatricalizing self-reference, he anticipated principles that have become associated with postmodernism. However, always a pragmatic playwright, Shaw seems to have concluded that these experiments were too far ahead of his time.

Christopher Innes, "Nothing but talk, talk, talk—Shaw talk: Discussion Plays and the Making of Modern Drama," *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, 1998

The Playwright:

Shaw and Economics by Patrick McKelvey

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"The gambling spirit urges man to allow no rival to come between his private individual powers and step-mother Earth, but rather to secure some acres of her and take his chance of getting diamonds instead of cabbages. This is Private Property or Unsocialism."

—George Bernard Shaw,
The Economic Basis of Socialism

Born to a working-class family in 1856 (his father was a grain merchant, his mother a singer), George Bernard Shaw came of age within an intellectual landscape grappling with the devastating effects of capitalism, which emerged simultaneously with the Industrial Revolution. This series of technological

innovations (steam power, machine tools, railways, etc.) between the late 1700s and mid-nineteenth century facilitated England's transition from an agrarian economy to an urban, industrial, manufacturing one. England's class system, previously characterized by the landed gentry and the servant class, witnessed the rise of a middle class. Meanwhile, working-class laborers toiled for unconscionably long shifts in dangerous environments (such as the whitelead factory Mrs. Warren mentions), only to go home to the inadequate housing their meager incomes could provide. Labor unions were outlawed in England from 1799-1824, but by the late nineteenth century,

they accumulated enough clout to make workers' rights a priority in the national political agenda. This rapid change also inspired some classics in socialist economic theory whose ideas resonate in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, including Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867) and August Bebel's *Women and Socialism* (1883). Marx subscribed to the labor theory of value, which insists that the value of a product should equal the amount of labor required to produce it. Capitalism poses a challenge to this theory because employers sold their goods for greater than their labor value; thus the end result of one's labor was not just a product, but also excess capital. The very success of capitalism, Marx insisted, requires the middle and upper classes who control the means of production (ie, owned a factory), to exploit their employees' labor for the accumulation of their own personal wealth. Therefore, Marx called for the proletariat to seize the means of production as a means of redistributing wealth. Bebel, a leader of the South German Worker's Union, was instrumental in both popularizing Marxist theory in Germany and

emphasizing gender. In order to successfully thwart the strength of capitalism and reimagine a more equitable social structure, Bebel argued women's labor and concerns needed to be foregrounded. Shaw, an avowed socialist, was particularly sensitive to the plight of women in a capitalist society, as is evident not only in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, but also in a later work, the book *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*, and various political essays and lectures. He was a member of the Fabian Society (founded 1884), a group of political writers and lecturers dedicated to the gradual permeation of socialist practices into democratic society in England and abroad. They rallied for such socialist measures as the establishment of a minimum wage and universal access to healthcare, social reforms that remain political headlines today. The Fabians were influential in the creation of the Labour Party, which remains the primary leftist political party in the United Kingdom, and the London School of Economics, an institution originally dedicated to researching and combating economic inequality.

The Play:

Characters and Synopsis

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CHARACTERS

Vivie Warren, 22, Cambridge graduate
Mrs. Warren, her mother
Mr. Praed, an architect
Sir George Crofts, Mrs. Warren's business partner
Frank Gardner, 20, Vivie's friend
The Rev. Samuel Gardner, his father

SETTING

Late summer afternoon in a small town in Surrey.

STORY

Vivie Warren, an emancipated, sharply intelligent and self-sufficient Cambridge graduate, discovers, first, that her mother has risen from poverty to her present affluence through prostitution and, second, that she continues to be a direct beneficiary of a chain of European brothels. As the play unfolds, Vivie has to come to grips with her mother's long-kept secret. How is she expected to handle the truth? Shaw's sparkling wit and clever dialogue keep us guessing at each turn of the story, as the

stark questions about social justice, sexual relationships, and parent/child conflicts posed by the play lead the characters (and the public too) to seek suitable answers. The play's humor reverses our expectations about the characters and their situations and implicitly surprises us into examining our own attitudes toward women, marriage, work and, broadly speaking, commerce and commodities. When it first appeared, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* challenged the complacency of the public and subverted such ingrained notions that prostitution was a "Great Evil." Shaw included the comedy in "Plays Unpleasant," his collection of frank indictments of the social conditions at the end of the 19th century. Today, the comedy remains one of his most provocative works, not only a biting exposure of the Victorian tightly-bodiced moral dogmas but also a vivid reminder that there are still economic and social pressures that force individuals into questionable choices and unlawful behavior and other who benefit by exploiting them.

The Play:

The Genesis of the Play

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1893 Shaw writes Mrs Warren's Profession.

As to Mrs Warren's Profession, it came about in this way. Miss Janet Achurch [an actress and friend of Shaw's] mentioned to me a novel by some French writer [Yvette by Guy de Maupassant] as having a dramatisable story in it. It being hopeless to get me to read anything, she told me the story, which was ultra-romantic. I said, "Oh, I will work out the real truth about that mother some day." In the following autumn I was the guest of a lady [Beatrice Webb] of very distinguished ability—one whose knowledge of English social types is as remarkable as her command of industrial and political questions. She suggested that I should put on the stage a real modern lady of the governing class—not the sort of thing that theatrical and critical authorities imagine

such a lady to be. I did so; and the result was Miss Vivie Warren. ... Mrs. Warren herself was my version of the heroine of the romance narrated by Miss Achurch. The tremendously effective scene—which a baby could write if its sight were normal—in which she justifies herself, is only a paraphrase of a scene in a novel of my own, Cashel Byron's Profession (hence the title, Mrs Warren's Profession), in which a prize-fighter shows how he was driven into the ring exactly as Mrs. Warren was driven on the streets.

Shaw, letter to The Daily Chronicle, April 28, 1898

The play progresses bravely; but it has left the original lines. I have made the daughter the heroine, and the mother a most deplorable old rip.

... The great scene will be the crushing of the mother by the daughter. I retain the old roué, but keep him restrained by a continual doubt as to whether the heroine may not be his daughter. The young lover's father, an outrageous clergyman, is in the same perplexity, he also being an old flame of the mother's. The lover is an agreeable young spark, wholly good-for-nothing. The girl is a quite original character. The mother, uncertain who the girl's father is, keeps all the old men at bay by telling each one that he is the parent. The second act is half finished and wholly planned.

George Bernard Shaw, letter to Janet Achurch, (whom he wanted to play Vivie), September 4, 1893

1894 The play is banned from public performance on the London stage by England's offician censor, the Lord Chamberlain.

The mischief lies in the deliberate suppression of the other side of the case: the refusal to allow Mrs. Warren to expose the drudgery and repulsiveness of plying for hire among coarse and tedious drunkards. All that, says the Examiner [the censor] in effect, is horrifying, loathsome. Precisely: what does he expect it to be? Would he have us represent it as beautiful and gratifying? His answer to this question amounts, I fear, to a blunt Yes; for it seems impossible to root out of an Englishman's mind the notion that vice is delightful, and that abstention from it is privation. At all events, as long as the tempting side of it is kept towards the public, and softened by plenty of sentiment and sympathy, it is welcomed by our Censor, whereas the slightest attempt to place it in the light of the policeman's lantern or the Salvation Army shelter is checkmated at once as not merely disgusting, but, if you please, unnecessary. Everybody will, I hope, admit that this state of things is intolerable; that the subject of Mrs. Warren's profession must be either [taboo] altogether, or else exhibited with the warning side as freely displayed as the tempting side.

Shaw, "The Author's Apology" accompanying Mrs Warren's Profession, 1902

1898 The play is published in a collection of Shaw's plays called Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant.

It's much my best play; but it makes my blood run cold: I can hardly bear the most appalling bits of it.

Ah, when I wrote that, I had some nerve.

Shaw, letter to the actress, Ellen Terry, May 28, 1897

1902 The play is produced privately by London's Stage Society at the New Lyric Club.

[The] production of Mrs. Warren is one of those exploits which startles everyone by its apparent daring, but which is really perfectly safe. No play of mine has made me more friends. ... There is no money in Mrs. Warren; and it ought not to be played for money. But there are other considerations which make it well worth playing. If you can get Candida... into the evening bill, and then, when its novelty has worn off, stir up public consciousness to its depths by a few matinees of Mrs. Warren, you will not be forgotten in a hurry.

Shaw, letter to T.H.S. Escott, January, 1902

Mrs Warren's Profession has been performed at last, after a delay of only eight years; and I have once more shared with Ibsen the triumphant amusement of startling all but the strongest-headed of the London theater critics clean out of the practice of their profession. ... Do not suppose, however, that the consternation of the Press reflects any consternation among the general public. Anybody can upset the theater critics, in a turn of the wrist, by substituting for the romantic commonplaces of the stage the moral commonplaces of the pulpit, the platform, or the library.

Shaw, "The Author's Apology," accompanying Mrs. Warren's Profession, 1902

1905 The play opens in New Haven, CT and in New York City. In New York, the opening night is sold out. Black market tickets go for up to \$30 each. New York critics rail against the play as being indecent. After the first performance, arrest warrants on charges of disorderly conduct are obtained for the cast, although only the house manager is actually arrested. The cast is ordered to appear in court. The production is closed down after its first performance. After several months, those involved are acquitted of all charges.

In the opinion of the police, prostitution is a permissible subject on the stage only when it is made agreeable. In my opinion the numerous plays

in which it is made agreeable should be counterbalanced by plays in which its sordid cause is exposed.

Shaw, letter to *The Sun*, New York, November 1, 1905

How can I bring my wife to a country [U.S.A.] where she cannot obtain rooms at a hotel without producing her marriage certificate and showing it to all the other guests, and where, because she believes Mrs. Warren's Profession to be a righteous play, she can be dragged to the nearest police court, bullied, insulted, and told that if she does not take herself and her husband out of the city in twenty four hours, she will be charged in general terms with indecency?

Shaw, letter to James Douglas, May 9, 1907

1910s and 1920s

Before many of Shaw's plays, including Mrs. Warren's Profession, were produced in Great Britain, they were translated into German and French and produced on stages across the European continent. I found myself a successful and respected playwright in the German language

whilst the English critics were still explaining laboriously that my plays were not plays, and urging me, in the kindest spirit, to cease my vain efforts to enter a profession for which Nature had utterly unfitted me."

Shaw, program note to *Jitta's Atonement*, Shaw's translation of a play by Austrian playwright Siegfried Tebitsch, 1925

1925 The play receives its first public performance in London.

The ban on performances of the play has long since been withdrawn; and when it is performed the critics hasten to declare that the scandal of underpaid virtue and overpaid vice is a thing of the past. Yet when the war [World War I] created an urgent demand for women's labor in 1914 the Government proceeded to employ women for twelve hours a day at a wage of five ha'pence an hour. It is amazing how the grossest abusers thrive on their reputation for being old unhappy far-off things in an age of imaginary progress.

Shaw, postscript to his preface to Mrs. Warren's Profession, 1933

The Play:

"I Call it a Masterpiece": Shaw on the play

Reprinted with permission from the [Guthrie Theater](#). Belinda Westmaas Jones, play guide editor.

I believe that any society which desires to found itself on a high standard of integrity of character... should organize itself in such a fashion as to make it possible for all men and all women to maintain themselves in reasonable comfort by their industry without selling their affections and their convictions. At present we not only condemn women as a sex to attach themselves to breadwinners, licitly or illicitly on pain of heavy privation and disadvantage; but we have a great prostitute classes of men: for instance the playwrights and journalists, to whom I myself belong, not to mention the legions of lawyers, doctors, clergymen, and platform politicians who are daily using their highest faculties to belie their real sentiments: a sin compared to which that of a woman who sells the use of her person for a few hours is too venial to be worth mentioning; for rich men without conviction

are more dangerous in modern society than poor women without chastity. Hardly a pleasant subject, this!

I must, however, warn my readers that my attacks are directed against themselves, not against my stage figures. They cannot thoroughly understand that the guilt of defective social organization does not lie alone on the people who actually work the commercial makeshifts which the defects make inevitable, and who often, like... Mrs. Warren, display valuable executive capacities and even high moral virtues in their administration, but with the whole body of citizens whose public opinion, public action, and public contribution as ratepayers alone can replace... Mrs. Warren's profession with honorable industries guarded by a humane industrial code and a "moral minimum" wage.

George Bernard Shaw, preface to *Plays Unpleasant*, 1898

As for the play in general I don't care a brass farthing whether it's about prostitution or what it's about; I call it a masterpiece because many of its scenes are intensely dramatic, and some of its "repliques" are dramatic "Trouvailles"[he is claiming that some of the lines are dramatic gems].

Shaw, letter to William Archer, January 27, 1900

[My]first play Widower's Houses could only have been written by a Socialistic economist; and the same thing is true of Mrs Warren's Profession. Indeed, in all the plays my economic studies have played as important a part as a knowledge of anatomy does in the works of Michael Angelo.

Shaw, letter to Archibald Henderson, June 30, 1904

Play Mrs Warren's Profession to an audience of clerical members of the Christian Social Union and of women well experienced in Rescue, Temperance, and Girls' Club work, and no moral panic will arise: every man and woman present will know that as long as poverty makes virtue hideous and the spare pocket-money of rich bachelorhood makes vice dazzling, their daily hand-to-hand fight against prostitution with prayer and persuasion, shelters and scanty alms, will be a losing one. ...

Read the first report of the Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes [report to Parliament, 1889]; read the Report on Home Industries (sacred word, Home!) issued by the Women's Industrial Council [1897]; and ask yourself whether, if the lot in life therein described were your lot in life, you would not rather be a jewelled Vamp. ...

I simply affirm that Mrs Warren's Profession is a play for women; that it was written for women; that it has been performed and produced mainly through the determination of women that it should be performed and produced; that the enthusiasm of women made its first performance excitingly successful; and that not one of these women had any inducement to support it except their belief in the timeliness and the power of the lesson the play teaches. ...

Nothing would please our sanctimonious British public more than to throw the whole guilt of Mrs. Warren's profession on Mrs. Warren herself. Now the whole aim of my play is to throw that guilt on the British public itself. ... The notion that prostitution is created by the wickedness of Mrs. Warren is as silly as the notion—prevalent, nevertheless, to some extent in Temperance circles—that drunkenness is created by the wickedness of the publican. Mrs. Warren is not a whit a worse woman than the reputable daughter who cannot endure her. Her indifference to the ultimate social consequences of her means of making money, and her discovery of that means by the ordinary method of taking the line of least resistance to getting it, are too common in English society to call for any special remark. Her vitality, her thrift, her energy, her outspokenness, her wise care of her daughter, and the managing capacity which has enable her and her sister to climb from the fried fish shop down by the Mint to the establishments of which she boasts are all high English social virtues. ... It is no defense of an immoral life to say that the alternative offered by society collectively to poor women is a miserable life, starved, overworked, fetid, ailing, ugly. Though it is quite natural and right for Mrs. Warren to choose what is, according to her lights, the least immoral alternative, it is none the less infamous of society to offer such alternatives. For the alternatives offered are not morality and immorality, but two sorts of immorality. The man who cannot see that starvation, overwork, dirt, and disease are as anti-social as prostitution—that they are the vices and crimes of a nation, and not merely its misfortunes—is (to put it as politely as possible) a hopelessly Private Person. ...

The good of mentioning [subjects such as are addressed in Mrs Warren's Profession] is that you make people so extremely uncomfortable about them that they finally stop blaming "human nature" for them, and begin to support measures for their reform.

Shaw, "The Author's Apology" accompanying Mrs Warren's Profession, 1902

Mrs. Warren's Profession ought not to be produced with out a word of warning to keep the wrong

people away from it. Yet it is very difficult to frame a warning that will not attract the wrong people and keep away the right people. The slightest suggestion that the play is a scandalous one, unfit for young people to witness, will attract those who like licentious entertainments. Yet those are the very people who are disappointed and disgusted by Mrs Warren's Profession, because it takes the one subject that they desire to make romantic and attractive, and makes it sordid and even horrifying. And it rouses their conscience, which they expect the theatre to keep fast asleep for them at all times.

What is worse, the same sort of suggestion will keep away the thoughtful and earnest people whose support alone makes the firm public handling of such a subject possible. The play is simply a study of prostitution; and its aim is to shew that prostitution is not the prostitute's fault but the fault of a society which pays for a poor and pretty woman's prostitution in solid gold and pays for her honesty with starvation, drudgery and pious twaddle. Now there are people with whom you can discuss such subjects, and people to whom you cannot mention them. The patrons of prostitutes form the main body of the latter class; and the women who are engaged in rescuing women from prostitution are the backbone of the former. Get the rescuers into the theatre and keep the patrons out of it; and you need have no fear about the reception of the play.

There is one point on which you were naturally anxious when we discussed the play in London; and that was, as to the presence of young people at performances. I can reassure you as to that from actual experience. Everybody old enough to understand the play will be the wiser and safer for seeing it. Their juniors will learn nothing from it prematurely. As you know, I have labeled the play unpleasant, and put a terrible couplet from Blake's "Auguries of Innocence" on the title-page of the separate edition to prevent anyone from buying the play as a present for children or a school prize or any of the other astonishing and incredible things that people often do with books which they have never read, when there is a reputable author's name on them. ["The harlot's cry from street to street/ Shall weave Old England's winding sheet"] But those wise parents who, knowing how

effectually innocence protects itself, let their children read what they please, soon assured me that Mrs Warren's Profession is actually a favorite with children. ...

I should say, therefore, that the young people are the only people who will enjoy the play if anybody brings them to see it in ignorance of its character. Their elders will not enjoy it. It was not written to produce enjoyment, nor even the Aristotelian catharsis of pity and terror, but to make people stop knocking women down and then blaming them for being "fallen." If I have done this with a brutal hand, I do not feel in the least disposed to apologize. I neither saw nor see any reason to be gentle or pleasant with people whose enthusiasm for "purity and morality" stops short of paying a living wage for them.

Shaw, letter to Arnold Daly, November 15, 1904

As regards the play, we have no further explanations to offer except that it is a mistake to suppose my business is to teach moral lessons. My business is to interpret life by taking events occurring at haphazard in daily experiences and sorting them out so as to show their real significance and interrelation. Nothing in ordinary life tells a man when buying a box of matches he is driving some woman at the other end of New York, whom he never saw and never will see, on to the streets. My play teaches him that. Having learned it he can draw what moral lesson he is capable of from it.

Anybody who believes he would draw better ones or be a better man from believing that the sole relation between him and the woman at the other end of New York is merely the relation between two wholly disconnected social facts, one a highly moral respectable one, and the other a vicious, disgusting one, is—excuse the phrase I am going to use, and which I am using in a scriptural sense, not expletively—a hopelessly damned fool.

Shaw, letter to *The Sun*, New York, November 12, 1905

It still remains as true as it was in 1894 that we praise female virtue highly and pay it poorly, and pay female vice highly whilst we deplore it verbally.

We flog foreign white slave traffickers of the male sex (thus protecting Mrs Warren against male competition); but we do not raise the wages of women to the point at which they would be independent of prostitution. That is the root of the matter.

Shaw, letter to the *Evening Standard*, London, September 15, 1924

In short, Mrs Warren's profession is a vested interest; and when a woman of bold character and commercial ability applies to herself the commercial principles that are ruthlessly applied to

her in the labour market, the result is Kitty Warren, whom I accordingly present to you. You will hear her justify herself completely on those principles. Whether you and I, as citizens and voters, will be able to justify ourselves, on higher principles than those of commerce, for having made her justification not only possible but unanswerable, is another matter. I cannot pretend to feel easy about it. Can you?

Shaw, program note to a performance of *Mrs Warren's Profession*, March, 1926

The Play:

"No Easy Solutions": Comments on Mrs. Warren's Profession

Reprinted with permission from the [Guthrie Theater](#). Belinda Westmaas Jones, play guide editor.

*The play of Mrs Warren's Profession is concerned with a coarse mother and a cold daughter; the mother drives the ordinary and dirty trade of harlotry; the daughter does not know until the end the atrocious origin of all her own comfort and refinement. ... Undoubtedly the upshot is that a brothel is a miserable business, and a brothel-keeper a miserable woman. The whole dramatic art of Shaw is in the literal sense of the word, tragicomic; I mean that the comic part comes after the tragedy. ... Mrs Warren's Profession represents his only complete, or nearly complete, tragedy. There is no twopenny modernism in it. ... Mrs. Warren is as old as the Old Testament: "for she hath cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her; her house is in the gates of hell, going down into the chamber of death." Here is no subtle ethics... for even those moderns who think it noble that a woman should throw away her honour, surely cannot think it especially noble that she should sell it. Here is no lighting up by laughter, astonishment, and happy coincidence. ... The play is a pure tragedy about a permanent and quite plain human problem; the problem is as plain and permanent, the tragedy is as proud and pure, as in *Oedipus* or *Macbeth*.*

G.K. Chesterton, *George Bernard Shaw*, 1909

Mrs Warren's Profession has had the distinction of being the most discussed theatrical work of many

years. It was unreservedly condemned by a number of prominent citizens of both sexes who had not read it, and by civic authorities who could not understand it even if they had.

*It may be said that it contains one of the most moral lessons ever prepared for the theater. No man or woman can read it without feeling that it has accomplished its manifest purpose of driving home the real responsibility for the existence of Mrs. Warren's profession. Polyandry, always much more unnatural than polygamy, in its strict sense never exists to any great extent save where economic conditions compel it. Those who palter with the evil, and profess a desire more or less sincere for its extinction, must seek the explanation of its existence elsewhere than in passion or vice. It is the most conventional profession in the world, and Mrs. Warren is the one really conventional person in the play. Her standards of conduct, her belief in her maternal prerogatives, her insistence upon continuing the work which she is used to, all are thoroughly in accord with the shibboleths of the day. In the three "Unpleasant Plays," [*Widower's Houses*, *The Philanderer*, and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*] dealing with economic, social, and moral relations, Shaw has delivered the most direct blow yet leveled by the stage against the cowardice of social compromise. Up to this time he has done little to suggest the order which shall succeed. Let those who regard his work as negligible because they consider it humorous remember that laughter*

may be the presage of the social earthquake. A change is coming, whether soon or late—a revolution, whether orderly or destructive—and Bernard Shaw is its Voltaire.

M., "Introduction," to *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant*, 1898

[The dramatist] concerns himself, in brief, with things as he sees them. The preacher deals with things as he thinks they ought to be. Sometimes the line of demarcation between the two purposes may be but dimly seen, but it is there all the same. If a play has what is known as a moral, it is the audience and not the playwright that formulates and voices it. A sermon without an obvious moral, well rubbed in, would be no sermon at all. And so, if we divest ourselves of the idea that Shaw is trying to preach some rock-ribbed doctrine in each of his plays, instead of merely setting forth human events as he sees them, we may find his dramas much easier of comprehension. ... [A]nd so, if they are ever to discharge their natural functions, the Shaw dramas must stand as simple plays. Some of them, alackaday! bear this test rather badly. Others, such as Mrs. Warren's Profession and Candida, bear it supremely well.

H.L. Mencken, *George Bernard Shaw: His Plays*, 1905

As far as conscious intention goes, all Shaw's plays might bear the title he gave to three of them—Plays for Puritans—for that intention is to show romance transcended by a higher-than-erotic purpose. It is a classic intention—an application, really, of the traditional conflict of love and honor, with honor winning hands down. ... In the first instance, Vivie Warren's revolt represents Shaw's rational rejection of capitalism, but the play culminates in a scene that has no necessary connection with economics—a scene of family crisis, a scene in which a daughter rejects her mother. Which, after all, is archetypal Shaw: instead of the emotions of lover and mistress, he renders the emotions of parents and children, and particularly the emotion of the child rejecting the parent. ... Vivie Warren is already a Saint Joan in that the experience Shaw gives her is that of being desolated. It is the experience he felt most deeply—presumably because it was the experience he had most deeply experienced. In any event, the two long scenes

between Vivie and Mrs. Warren are emotional playwriting such as England had not seen for a couple of centuries. ... Shaw combined the themes of prostitution and incest in order to make quite a rational point: our mad society draws back in horror from incest, which is certainly not a pressing menace..., while it encourages prostitution, which is a virulent social pestilence. But both themes have a resonance far beyond the bounds of intellect.

Eric Bentley, "Foreword" to *Plays by George Bernard Shaw*, Signet Classic edition, 1960

[In Mrs Warren's Profession] the big recognition scene occurs at the end of Act II and then the rest of the play shows the characters reacting to the new situation. In a conventional well-made play the heroine might have rejected her mother in Act II on discovering that she was a "fallen woman" and then would have come to accept her by the end of the play because she was a good woman in spite of everything. ... In the submerged play that Mrs Warren's Profession is competing with, this would be a perfect final curtain scene, but for Shaw the revelation and reconciliation are at the beginning of the serious action, not the end. Vivie accepts her mother as a former brothel-keeper and then rejects her as a conventional mother: a nice reversal of traditional expectations. There is another reversal of expectation, too, that also takes the form of a false ending. In Act III Vivie discovers that she may be the half sister of Frank Gardner, the young man who wishes to marry her. Frank is carrying a rifle, which Vivie aims at herself after this revelation—but the episode, which would also make an excellent climax to the submerged melodramatic courtesan play, is insignificant in the development of Shaw's play. Shaw raises the issue of incest in order to tease the audience by dropping it as trivial and irrelevant. Mrs Warren's Profession, after the "final curtains"; of the second and third acts, proceeds to its main business, Vivie's selfliberation in Act IV. This final act can be seen as an ironic epilogue to the rest of the play, turning the melodramatic comedy of Act II and melodramatic tragedy of Act III into the tragicomedy of Vivie's common-sense rejection of her artistic acquaintance, her suitor, and her mother. ... Once the comic and tragic plots have been used up then the play goes off in its own direction.

J.L. Wisenthal, *ELH (English Literary History)*, volume 50, number 1, Spring, 1983

Mrs Warren's Profession suggests that we all live more or less on immoral earnings. The cast is largely made up of prostitutes and their clients: Sir George Crofts the big-time client; the old vicar who has sold himself for his benefice and turned from rake into sanctimonious humbug; his son Frank, who is the nearest to an authorial presence in the play, almost selling himself in marriage to Vivie; even Liz, the unseen sister of Mrs. Warren, who has used sex as the means to respectability in a cathedral town. ... Shaw's case is that there are two ways of preventing the present from repeating the errors of the past: love and work. In love we forget, are reborn, speak like infants, and there is hope of doing better. Then the good moment goes, for the world is not lovable. But if what we call love also supplies the future generations, it is work that decides what sort of life those generations will follow. Instinct tells us whether we should love, and what work we should do; and will-power gives us the vitality to carry this work through. Love had had no shortage of propaganda, so in Mrs Warren's Profession, Shaw places his emphasis on the gospel of work and against the religion of love.

Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw*, volume I, 1856-1898, *The Search for Love*, 1988

In labeling Mrs Warren's Profession an "unpleasant" play Shaw brazenly broadcast his intention that his audience "go home thoroughly uncomfortable," for the word unpleasant, to the reticent Victorian, implied not merely a displeasing or dislikable subject but an unsavory one, unfit to be mentioned among decent people. Shock, however, was a prime weapon in Shaw's arsenal of theatrical munitions. ... It was not in itself the subject of prostitution that initially troubled the censors, British and American. They had licensed many plays in which the theme was introduced. It was, rather, Shaw's suggestion that prostitution was defensively preferable to "legitimate" alternatives open to poor women, and his introduction of the still largely taboo subject of incest, that aroused their ire. Audiences a century later are no longer easily shocked, but it would have pleased Shaw immensely to know his play can still make them uncomfortable.

Dan Laurence, Literary Advisor to the Shaw Festival, Study Guide for Shaw Festival Production of *Mrs Warren's Profession*, 1990

The play, like this century, moves steadily from a simple, pastoral setting to a highly controlled urban environment. And within that shifting environment Shaw's women are forced to grapple with the uncomfortable challenges of independence. Even after she has achieved economic control of her own life, Mrs. Warren cannot bear to lose the source of control (her brothels). Even with education as the key to economic independence, Vivie cannot control her life without exercising the most monumental control over her emotions and her relationships with others. Mrs Warren's Profession offers no easy solutions, no politically correct answers to the challenges facing men and women in this century. It makes us think about questions as uncomfortable today as during the golden summer of Edwardian England.

Glynis Leyshon, Director's Note in the program of Shaw Festival Production of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, 1990

Mrs Warren's Profession is no more a work "about" prostitution as a social crime than Ghosts is "about" syphilis as a communicable disease. The real dramatic tension in this early play of Shaw's arises from its inner action, which might be described as the ambiguous and inconclusive spiritual education of Vivie Warren. ... In essence, this is a play for the twentieth century, not for the nineteenth. Its open, muted ending—the image of Vivie delving into the great sheaves of paper on her desk in order to lose herself in work—is perfectly Chekhovian in the contrariness of its signals: despair and contentment, disillusionment and hope for the future. A recurrent pattern in Shaw's writing emerges for the first time in Mrs Warren's Profession. As in many of his later works, the events in this early play become stages in a spiritual education—a cumulative process of disillusionment that leaves its subject decimated but stronger and more resilient, better able to bear life without illusion.

Frederick J. Marker, "Shaw's Early Plays," *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, 1998

The Play:

Mrs. Warren and Vivie Debate "Doing the Right Thing" Selected Quotes from the Play

Reprinted with permission from the *Guthrie Theater*. Belinda Westmaas Jones, play guide editor.

Editor's Note.

In the play, the worlds of two generations of women clash in the conflict between Mrs. Warren and her daughter Vivie. Throughout the play both women articulate their strongly held views on how best to conduct their lives in the circumstances they were born into, and in that debate lie the major themes of the play. Finally, the women part, unable to reconcile their different philosophies—as Mrs. Warren observes in exasperation, "Lord help the world if everybody took to doing the right thing!" What follows is a selection of quotes from the play

MRS. WARREN

Of course it's worth while to a poor girl, if she can resist temptation and is good-looking and well conducted and sensible. It's far better than any other employment open to her. I always thought that it oughtnt to be. It cant be right, Vivie, that there shouldn't be better opportunities for women. I stick to that: it's wrong. But it's so, right or wrong; and a girl must make the best of it. ... Don't you be led astray by people who don't know the world, my girl. The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good to her. If she's in his own station of life, let her make him marry her; but if she's far beneath him she cant expect it: why should she? It wouldn't be for her own happiness. Ask any lady in London society that has daughters; and she'll tell you the same, except that I tell you straight and she'll tell you crooked. Thats all the difference. (Act II)

VIVIE

Everybody has some choice, mother. The poorest girl alive may not be able to choose between being Queen of England or Principal of Newnham; but she can choose between ragpicking and flowerselling, according to her taste. People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get

on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they cant find them, make them. (Act II)

MRS. WARREN

But you don't know all that that [having money] means: youre too young. It means a new dress everyday; it means theaters and balls every night; it means having the pick of all the gentlemen in Europe at your feet; it means a lovely house and plenty of servants; it means the choicest of eating and drinking; it means everything you like, everything you want, everything you can think of. And what are you here? A mere drudge, toiling and moiling early and late for your bare living and two cheap dresses a year. (Act IV)

VIVIE

I dont think I'm more prejudiced or straitlaced than you: I think I'm less. I'm certain I'm less sentimental. I know very well that fashionable morality is all a pretence, and that if I took your money and devoted the rest of my life to spending it fashionably, I might be as worthless and vicious as the silliest woman could possibly be without having a word said to me about it. But I don't want to be worthless. I shouldn't enjoy trotting about the park to advertise my dressmaker and carriage builder, or being bored at the opera to shew off a shop windowful of diamonds. (Act IV)

MRS. WARREN

You think that people are what they pretend to be: that the way you were taught at school and college to think right and proper is the way things really are. But it's not: it's all only a pretence, to keep the cowardly slavish common run of people quiet. Do you want to find that out, like other women, at forty, when you've thrown yourself away and lost your chances; or wont you take it in good time now

from your own mother, that loves you and swears to you that it's truth: gospel truth? Vivie: the big people, the clever people, the managing people, all know it. They do as I do, and think what I think. I know plenty of them. I know them to speak to, to introduce you to, to make friends of for you. I don't mean anything wrong: that's what you don't understand: your head is full of ignorant ideas about me. What do the people that taught you know about life or about people like me? When did they ever meet me, or speak to me, or let anyone tell them about me? the fools! Would they ever have done anything for you if I hadn't paid them? Havnt I told you that I want you to be

respectable? Havnt I brought you up to be respectable? And how can you keep it up without my money and my influence and Lizzie's friends? (Act IV)

VIVIE

There is nothing I despise more than the wicked convention that protects these things by forbidding a woman to mention them. And yet I cant tell you. The two infamous words that describe what my mother is are ringing in my ears and struggling on my tongue; but I cant utter them: the shame of them is too horrible for me. (Act IV)

The Play:

The Oldest Profession By Emily Mann

Reprinted courtesy of McCarter Theatre Center

Prostitution was rampant in late Victorian England, and a source of considerable attention for reformers. Prostitutes were generally working class girls drawn to the work for economic reasons. The “respectable” work available to women at the time—in factories, domestic service, and restaurants—was extremely poorly paid, physically exhausting, sometimes dangerous, and generally unpleasant. Sex work, while far from ideal, was relatively lucrative, and often more comfortable. The range of work varied considerably, from women who picked up the occasional client to make ends meet and supplement their meager earnings, to expensive high end courtesans. Most prostitutes “retired” by age twenty-five, and it was entirely possible for them to later marry (sometimes to men they had met through their work who were above them in social class).

While prostitution was not illegal in Victorian times, England was far less comfortable with the practice than its continental neighbors. The chief of police in Brussels, where Mrs. Warren has one of

her houses, was so blasé about prostitution as to recommend that licensed brothels be located in convenient places for the benefit of the customers, while England was the last country in Europe to adopt licensing regulations for prostitutes. The Contagious Diseases Act of 1864 required prostitutes to submit to medical exams, and compulsory treatment in locked wards if they were found to be infected (the same rule did not extend to their customers). Twenty years later, in keeping with its general discomfort with prostitution, England was the first European country to repeal its licensing regulations with the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, which also criminalized brothels and the procurement of women to work in prostitution. By 1895 when our production of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* takes place, this law was in full force, and while the act of prostitution remained legal most of the activities surrounding it were not and it was seen a serious problem by society.

Glossary:

A Glossary of Selected Terms from *Mrs. Warren's Profession*

Reprinted with permission from the *Guthrie Theater*. Belinda Westmaas Jones, play guide editor.

actuarial calculations: calculations for insurance and annuity premiums, reserves and dividends.

"...work at actuarial calculations and conveyancing." (Act I)

Anarchist: one who rebels against any authority, established order or ruling power; anarchy as a political movement has been around since ancient Greece, but as a modern philosophy organized during the mid-19th century and took active form (Chicago's Haymarket Square Riot in 1886 and the shooting of President McKinley by anarchist Leon Czolgosz in 1901); many artists were attracted to anarchism (and anarchists to the arts) and its central ideas of freedom, equality and mutual aid.

"You know, my dear Miss Warren, I am a born anarchist." (Act I)

Archbishop of Canterbury: administrative head of the Church of England. "You wouldn't cut the Archbishop of Canterbury..." (Act III)

Assizes: periodical itinerant court sessions in English counties at which London judges heard civil and criminal cases too difficult or significant for local magistrates. "The perjury at the Winchester assizes is deplorable." (Act I)

Attitudinizing: assuming an affected mental attitude, a pose. "This morning I find you attitudinizing sentimentally..." (Act III)

Baronet: the British titled class were divided into two groups: the peerage (dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts and barons) held titles that were hereditary, made up the House of Lords and usually had lots of land and wealth. Below the peerage was the gentry, at the top of which were baronets, a kind of upper middle class of their time. A baronetage was hereditary and baronets were addressed as "Sir," but they didn't sit in the House of Lords. Below the baronetcy was the knighthood, which was not hereditary but also addressed as "Sir." "And a baronet isn't to be picked up every day." (Act II)

battle royal: a heated dispute, where the last one standing is the winner. "I strongly suspect there will be a battle royal when my mother hears of my Chancery Lane project." (Act I)

beneficed clergyman: a clergyman who receives the revenue from an endowment. "I never saw a beneficed clergyman less sober." (Act III)

boarded out: placed in the care of someone else, such as a foster family or a boarding school. "I have been boarded out all my life." (Act I)

broomsquires: broom makers; the village of Tadley, Hampshire, was known for its broom-making into the 1920s. During the mid-19th century, most of the cottages in Tadley were owned by gypsies, a rare example of the Roma giving up their travelling life. Tadley's history is associated with superstition and the supernatural. At the end of the last century, it was known to have a witch whose specialty was tying ponies' tails into knots to confound their owners. "The broomsquires are far worse." (Act I)

cads: men who act with deliberate disregard for others' feelings or rights. "...and it makes precious short work of the cads who do." (Act III)

cant: trite opinions or sentiments, especially the insincere use of pious words. "and no cant about this religion or that religion..." (Act III)

caution: one that astonishes or commands attention. "But she's rather a caution, isn't she?" (Act II)

Cheek: nerve, gall, chutzpah. "...a nice, healthy two inches thick of cheek all over you." (Act II)

church school: in 1811, members of the Church of England established the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales in order to ensure the poor

children of Britain could read the Bible. Eventually Sunday schools and weekday schools were established, and by 1839 the schools were getting support from Parliament. "We both went to church school—" (Act II)

conveyancing: drawing up deeds, leases or other writings for transferring the title to property. "...work at actuarial calculations and conveyancing." (Act I)

Croakers: people who talk forebodingly, dismally. "...the world isn't such a bad place as the croakers make out." (Act III)

dash it: slang euphemism for "damn" or similar curse (originated early 19th century). "But I say—wait—dash it!" (Act III)

devilling: generally working for another who takes the credit and remuneration; the lowest apprentice on the totem pole in a printer's office is called a devil, for instance. "...to start there to-morrow earning my own living by devilling for Honoria." (Act I)

Duke of Beaufort: the dukedom of Beaufort is one of the most highly respected in Britain, descending from John of Gaunt (son of Edward III), father of Henry Bolingbroke, later Henry IV; the sons of the Beaufort family were from a marriage that was legitimized after their births, so they have never been able to make a successful claim to the throne. "He built that place down in Monmouthshire for the Duke of Beaufort—" (Act II)

Duke of Belgravia: the head of a highly placed family; Belgravia is one of the most exclusive parts of London, near Buckingham Palace. "...my mother's cousin the Duke of Belgravia,..." (Act III)

Duke of Wellington: Arthur Wellesley Wellington (1769-1852), soldier and politician, best known for defeating Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo (1815). He was prime minister from 1828 to 1830 but he wasn't a popular politician, as his temperament and indifference to others' opinions put him at odds with others. He was nicknamed the Iron Duke by his soldiers. He was not an easy man

to intimidate—his reply to a discarded mistress, who threatened to publish the love-letters he had written to her, was "Publish and be damned!" "Did you ever hear the story of the Duke of Wellington and his letters?" (Act I) "The old Iron Duke didn't throw away £50—not he." (Act I)

Ecclesiastical Commissioners: members of the Church of England principally responsible for the distribution of revenue; includes the two archbishops, all the bishops, the deans of Canterbury, St Paul's and Westminster, the lord chancellor, the lord president of the council, the first lord of the treasury, the chancellor of the exchequer, the home secretary, the lord chief justice, the master of the rolls, two judges of the admiralty division and certain laymen. "...because the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have a few publicans and sinners..." (Act III)

Facer: a sudden often stunning check or obstacle. "But what a facer for me, Praddy! I can't marry her now." (Act IV)

Fee: most skilled work was learned through formal or informal apprenticeships, in which the apprentice earned no or very low wages with a master or expert and usually paid a fee to the master. An expert with a good reputation could ask for a substantial fee to take on an apprentice. "...and got initiated into the business without a fee into the bargain." (Act I)

Freemasonry: natural fellowship based on some common experience. "Viv: there's a freemasonry among thoroughly immoral people..." (Act III)

Gipsies: nomadic people found throughout the world with a shared ethnic origin and language (Romany); they often make their livings as metalworkers, musicians, horse dealers, auto mechanic and fortunetellers; much mythology surrounds the Roma people, both romantic and derogatory. "The gipsies, I suppose?" (Act I)

gov'nor: governor; informally, one's father; address to a strange man, a superior or an employer. "Yes, gov'nor: all right: presently." (Act I)

"Well, Vivvums: what do you think of my governor?" (Act II)

Greenhorn: an inexperienced or unsophisticated person. "...and helping her as well as a greenhorn could." (Act I)

Heath: an extensive area of rather level, open, uncultivated land usually with poor coarse soil, inferior drainage and a surface rich in peat or peaty humus; found in Surrey among other places in Britain. "...what it is to stray over the heath on a summer night with my Vivie." (Act II)

high Cambridge degree: after women received general permission in 1881 to take exams at Cambridge University, the next step was to give titles for the degrees the women achieved as opposed to just the certificate from their schools. Two tries in 1887 and 1897 were defeated. So, in 1894, Vivie has done the work but not really received the B.A. that her male colleagues received. "...she has what amounts to a high Cambridge degree..." (Act I)

Humbug: deception, pretense, affectation; stuff and nonsense. "—they can't keep up the polite humbug..." (Act III)

Inexorable: relentless; not to be persuaded. "No use groaning: I'm inexorable." (Act IV)

Lady Crofts: in marrying a baronet, Crofts' wife would take on the title of Lady Crofts. "I want to settle down with a Lady Crofts." (Act III)

lead poisoning: lead is one of the oldest chemical toxins—reports of lead poisoning date to ancient Greece and high levels of lead have been found in ancient Egyptian mummies. Levels gradually increase in the body and eventually reach a point where symptoms and disability occur. Lead can particularly harm the central nervous system, kidneys and blood and symptoms include cramping, constipation, diarrhea, nausea, fatigue, headaches and muscle weakness. Substantial exposure can lead to seizures, paralysis, coma, swelling of the brain and death. Lead poisoning was common among the

working poor in Victorian England. "...until she died of lead poisoning." (Act II)

magazine rifle: a gun with a supply chamber to hold cartridges (as opposed to a shoot-reload rifle). "*He carries a light sporting magazine rifle*". (stage directions, Act I)

mater: mother; from the Latin, *mater*, for mother; chiefly a British usage ca. 1859. "How do, mater? Mr Praed's been here this half hour, waiting for you." (Act I)

moiling: working hard, implies taxing physical labor. "...toiling and moiling early and late for your bare living..." (Act IV)

M.P.: Member of Parliament. "Well, that was founded by my brother the M.P." (Act III)

music hall: theatrical entertainment featuring song, dance, pantomime and comic sketches which originated in inns and taverns and catered mostly the middle and lower classes. At its peak, in the 1880s, music hall was the television of its day. Hundreds operated in London alone, and most city dwellers visited them every week. "What do you say to Richmond, and then a music hall, and a jolly supper?" (Act IV)

off my peck: not hungry; peck is slang for food or grub; if one is peckish, one is hungry. "—completely off my peck, in fact." (Act II)

pater: father; from the Latin *pater*; chiefly a British usage; to an old man, it's a respectful form of address. "You're not intellectual or artistic: are you, pater?" (Act II)

patrimony: inheritance from one's father. "He has had his patrimony; and he spent the last of it in July." (Act II)

Philistine: a person disdainful of intellectual or artistic values. "Viv is a little Philistine." (Act IV)

Phillipa Summers: possible reference to Phillipa Fawcett, the Newnham student who in 1890 was ranked above the senior wrangler, i.e. the top male

student in the mathematical tripos. "The papers were full just then of Phillipa Summers beating the senior wrangler." (Act I)

plump out: abruptly; openly. "...and then I said, plump out, that I couldn't stand any more of it..." (Act I)

prospectus: a statement describing an enterprise such as a business that is distributed to prospective buyers, investors or participants. "Here: let me draft you a prospectus." (Act IV)

Providence: God, divine guidance. "...and leave the rest to Providence." (Act III)

public-house: an inn providing food and lodging for travelers and the general public, usually licensed to sell ale and wine; newer (18th century) and more common definition is a tavern or house whose primary business is selling alcohol on the premises; also from the 18th century definition is a brothel. "Once let out the word hotel and everybody says you keep a public-house." (Act III)

Purgatory: place or state of temporary suffering or misery; from the place where according to Roman Catholic doctrine souls may make satisfaction for past sins and so become fit for heaven. "...simple purgatory for shy and sincere souls!" (Act I)

Rap: the least bit (derived from a very small coin "without a rap"). "I don't care a rap about that." (Act I)

razzle-dazzle: a frolic, a spree; riotous jollity with much confusion; a slang word probably from the U.S. that appeared around 1890. "and I never go regularly on the razzle-dazzle as you did..." (Act I)

read law: study law. "I've come down here by myself to read law—" (Act I)

rector: a clergyman of the Church of England in charge of a parish is entitled to all the tithes from the parish (aka fully beneficed); referred to as "Reverend." "He's rector here." (Act I)

Roman father: perhaps a reference to the High Church; one part of the Anglican Church, especially at this time, followed the Roman rites very closely except as they related to the Pope and were often made fun of because of their close association with the Roman Catholic Church liturgy; the term also quickly identifies Frank's father as clergy. "Staying with my father." "The Roman father?" (Act I)

Rooks: a common European bird, similar in size and color to the American crow. "Why, the very rooks in the trees would find me out..." (Act IV)

Saturday half-holiday: in the later Victorian era, the work day on Saturday usually ended mid-afternoon. "Viv: let's go and enjoy the Saturday half-holiday somewhere..." (Act IV)

scullery maid: girl who worked in the scullery, where dishes and cooking utensils were washed and stored and other messy kitchen work was done; the very bottom of the servant hierarchy (scullion, a generic term for male or female scullery workers, was used as a term of abuse). "That clergyman got me a situation as a scullery maid ..." (Act II)

siphons: bottles which hold carbonated water to make whisky and sodas. "...order a barrel of whisky and a few hundred siphons." (Act III)

The Standard: an earnest, progressive newspaper of its day. "...*he has placed the morning papers, is reading The Standard.*" (stage directions, Act III)

stay him out: outstay; stay longer than. "We can continue our conversation after his departure for Italy. I'll stay him out." (Act IV)

stony broke: slang, penniless. "He's stony broke in consequence; and so am I." (Act I)

temperance restaurant: restaurant where alcohol was not served. "...as a scullery maid in a temperance restaurant..." (Act II)

three score and ten: 70 years old; score = 20 years "And he won't die until he's three score and ten;" (Frank, p.69)

Tripes: honors exams introduced by Cambridge University early in the 19th century in order to establish higher academic standards; they were named after the three-legged stools used at disputations, the oral defense of a thesis. "...that I could distinguish myself in the mathematical tripos..." (Act I)

turned a hair: given a sign of distress or disturbance. "He hasn't turned a hair:" (Act III)

Tutor: a graduate, typically a fellow (one of the governing body) of a college, who supervised an undergraduate. Essentially, the tutor is responsible for the undergraduate's course of study as a type of academic advisor and instructor. "Mrs Latham, my tutor at Newnham, told my mother..." (Act I)

two pins: slang, very little; as in "I don't care two pins"—cares not at all. "For two pins I'd take that gun from you..." (Act III)

whitelead: a heavy poisonous basic carbonate of lead that is marketed as a powder or as a paste in linseed oil, has good hiding power and is used chiefly in exterior paints. "One of them worked in a whitelead factory twelve hours a day..." (Act II)

workhouse: Parliament passed the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 that provided for the building of workhouses for the poor. They were intended to be harsh and hostile so that only the truly destitute would seek refuge in them. Many residents/inmates were of very poor health due to lack of nutrition, unclean facilities and overcrowded conditions and many died in the workhouse. "...and nothing to look forward to but the workhouse infirmary." (Act II)

wrangler: wranglers got their name from the style of argument at an oral defense of a thesis; one definition of "wrangler" is one who engages in argument or debate. First and third wranglers in this case would be among the top honors students in math at Cambridge. The senior wrangler would be the best of the best. "It was perfectly splendid, your tying with the third wrangler." (Act I) "The first wrangler is always a dreamy, morbid fellow..." (Act I)
"... of Phillipa Summers beating the senior wrangler." (Act I)

Glossary:

Shaw's Allusions

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"A power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness, eh?" (Act III): a quote from Matthew Arnold's essay "Literature and Dogma" (1873) which has been interpreted to mean a power from God which is constantly ready to reinforce good impulses.

"He either fears his fate too much,/ Or his deserts are small,/ That dares not put it to the touch,/ To gain or lose it all." (Act II): from the poem "My dear and only love" by James Graham, Marquis of Montrose (1612-1650).

"...because the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have a few publicans and sinners..." (Act III): (publicans) the licensee/owner of a public house.

"...not a fool in the ordinary sense: only in the Scriptural sense..." (Act IV) Proverbs 1.7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline;" but perhaps as likely is that he's giving his own interpretation—as a clergyman's son—of what scripture says about the fool.

Glossary:

The "Sovereigns in her Purse: Notes on Victorian Currency

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Editor's Note: There are several references to money in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. What follows is a brief chart outlining the system of currency in use in Victorian England and also comparisons of Victorian and present day monetary value.

| | | |
|----------|-------------------------|------------|
| farthing | ¼ of a penny | copper |
| pence | penny | silver |
| twopence | two pennies | silver |
| sixpence | six pennies | silver |
| shilling | 12 pence ("bob") | silver |
| crown | 5 shillings or 60 pence | silver |
| pound | 20 shillings/240 pence | gold/notes |
| guinea | 21 shillings | gold/notes |

farthing: a quarter of a penny, the least amount.
"...when I walked in and told her I hadn't a farthing in the world." (Act IV)

Twopence: two pennies, practically nothing.
"...without either a profession or twopence to keep her on." (Act II)

one and sixpence: one shilling and six pennies = 18 pence; 18 pence in the late 19th century is approximately equivalent to £3.80 or about \$6 today. "Scrubbing floors for one and sixpence a day..." (Act II)

four shillings: approximately £10 (\$16) today.
"...serving drinks and washing glasses for four shillings a week..." (Act II)

nine shillings: approximately £23 (\$36) today.
"...twelve hours a day for nine shillings a week..." (Act II)

18 shillings: two shillings less than a pound; approximately £46 (\$72) today. "...kept his room and the three children neat and tidy on eighteen shillings a week-" (Act II)

Sovereigns: gold coins worth a pound or 20 shillings.
"...elegant and comfortable, with a lot of sovereigns in her purse." (Act II)

£50: approximately £3100 (\$4,850) today.
"I did it for £50." (Act I)

£200: approximately £12,420 (\$19,400) today.
"£200 would have been nearer the mark." (Act I)

four hundred a year: approximately £24,800 (\$38,700) today. "I shall have only four hundred a year." (Act IV)

£40,000: approximately £2,484,100 (\$3,883,000) today. "I put not less than £40,000 into it, from first to last." (Act III)

35 per cent: by way of comparison, two common investments at the time paid 2 per cent (land) and 5 per cent (the funds, or the national debt) per year. "Wind up a business that's paying 35 per cent in the worst years!" (Act III)

Glossary:

Places Mentioned in the Play

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Brussels: capital of Belgium; In 1879, puritan anti-vice campaigners discovered that British women were being held against their wills in the state brothels of Belgium. On May 1, 1880, Josephine Butler published an emotional attack on the most

sensational aspect of the trade, child prostitution, alleging that "in certain of the infamous houses in Brussels there are immured little children, English girls of from 10 to 14 years of age, kidnapped ... by every artifice ... known only to the wealthy men

who are able to pay large sums of money for the sacrifice of these innocents.” Unwittingly, she had planted the seeds of W.T. Stead’s “Maiden Tribute” campaign of 1885, which was a large force behind the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 that strengthened laws against child prostitution. “...my mother has lived in Brussels or Vienna and never let me go to her.” (Act I)

Buda-Pesth: Budapest; capital and cultural center of Hungary, located on the Danube River; it was originally two settlements, Buda, a formerly Roman then Christian settlement, and Pest, a Slavonic settlement. They maintained fairly separate identities until they united officially as “Buda-Pest” in 1872, although the hyphen disappeared quickly. Shaw is probably just using an old spelling. “...one in Berlin, one in Vienna, and two in Buda-Pesth.” (Act III)

Cambridge: university in Cambridge, England, established by students who left Oxford in conflict with townspeople in the early 13th century. Extension lectures during the late 19th century were often associated with attempts to provide professional teaching and examinations for girls through local exams. Two colleges for women were established in 1869 (Girton) and 1872 (Newnham) to prepare their students for the Tripos, and the first women were examined in 1882. Attempts to make women full members of the University were repeatedly defeated until 1947. From the 1860s, Colleges began slowly to permit their Fellows to marry. This had a profound influence on Cambridge society and on the topography of the town when houses came to be built to accommodate the new families. “...ever since your magnificent achievements at Cambridge—” (Act I)

Chancery Lane: street running north-south between Fleet Street and Holborn, the two major east-west thoroughfares in London. The Public Record Office, built 1896, was the most noteworthy building, to supplement another building on Fetter Lane in housing state papers and legal records. “I was really at Honoria’s chambers in Chancery Lane every day...” (Act I)

down from London: Haslemere is about an hour south of London. “Your mother arranged that she was to come down from London...” (Act I)

Fitzjohn’s Avenue: street popular with artists in Hampstead, a northern borough of London. “...on an invitation from some artistic people in Fitzjohn’s Avenue.” (Act I)

Haslemere: city about an hour south of London; the opening of the London to Portsmouth railway in 1859 brought many people to Haslemere and the area to enjoy the lovely countryside and healthy air. Among these were famous artists, writers and scientists such as Alfred Lord Tennyson, Conan Doyle, George Bernard Shaw, George Eliot and Professor Tyndall. “...on the eastern slope of a hill a little south of Haslemere in Surrey” (stage directions, Act I)

Holborn Viaduct: waterworks which served South London; created in the 1860s to improve the approach to the City of London from the west via the steep-sided Holborn Hill and over the Fleet valley; Holborn Viaduct was not very far from Chancery Lane. “I start in an hour from Holborn Viaduct.” (Act IV)

Horsham: largest town in a beautiful rural area in southeast England about 50 miles from London, close to many picturesque villages. Buildings here date from Elizabethan times, many with stone roofs, one of Horsham’s past industries. A whole street of historic buildings dating from the 15th and 16th centuries still stands, lined with timber-framed and tile-hung houses. “...and that I was to come over from Horsham to be introduced to you.” (Act I)

Lincoln’s Inn: oldest of the four Inns of Court near the western boundary of London that housed barristers and their law offices as well as dining halls for the barristers and their law students. It was where barristers met, ate and debated. The inns had sole power to call lawyers to the bar. “*The chimneys of Lincoln’s Inn and the western sky beyond...*” (stage directions, Act IV)

the Mint the Royal Mint was near the Tower of London (its previous location) at Tower Hill in

London. "...a widow and had a fried-fish shop down by the Mint..." (Act II)

Monmouthshire: county in southeastern Wales bordering England to the west. "He built that place down in Monmouthshire for the Duke of Beaufort—" (Act II)

National Gallery: national collection of Western European painting from the 13th to the 19th centuries, on show 360 days a year free of charge. The nucleus of the collection was formed in 1824 with the purchase by the House of Commons of 38 pictures from John Julius Angerstein's collection. "They took me to the National Gallery, ..." (Act I)

Newnham: Newnham College began as a house for five students in Regent Street in Cambridge in 1871. Lectures for ladies started in 1870 and demand prompted Henry Sidgwick, one of the lectures' organizers, to rent a house in which young women could live. As demand increased Newnham established a number of halls and grew steadily into the early 20th century. Newnham's founders allowed their students to work at their own level. In tailoring the curriculum to the students Newnham found itself at odds with the other Cambridge college for women, Girton, whose founder believed that equality could only be expressed by women doing the same courses as the men on the same timetable. The University as an institution at first took no notice of the women and arrangements to sit examinations had to be negotiated with each examiner individually. In 1882, however, a general permission was negotiated. A first attempt to secure titles of women's degrees was rebuffed in 1887 and a second try in 1897 went down to even more spectacular defeat. "Mrs Latham, my tutor at Newnham, told my mother..." (Act I)

Ostend: popular port city in Belgium; developed as a fashionable seaside resort during the 19th century; across the Channel from Britain, it was the "railway gateway to Europe." "Your spirits would absolutely fly up at the mere sight of Ostend." (Act IV)

Primrose Hill: sloping meadow with hilltop views of London purchased from Eton College in the early 1840s and made into a public park; ordinary folk

were then denied access to parts of nearby Regent's Park; in the northern borough of (current-day) Camden. "He's gone to play cricket on Primrose Hill." (Act IV)

Redhill: town in Surrey; during the late 1830s, the main London to Brighton railway was built running directly through what is now Redhill Town Centre. By 1841, trains were running via Redhill en route to Brighton on a daily basis. Redhill really began to boom, providing housing and facilities for railway workers and users alike. "It's only some fresh folly, like the barmaid at Redhill." (Act I)

Richmond: picturesque London borough with beautiful rural surroundings. "What do you say to Richmond, and then a music hall, and a jolly supper?" (Act IV)

Surrey: largely residential county of southeast England. "...on the eastern slope of a hill a little south of Haslemere in Surrey." (stage directions, Act I)

Tintern Abbey: founded in Monmouthshire by Cistercian monks in 1131 A.D., the abbey was enlarged the next century and finally completed in the 14th century. It was dissolved in the 16th century and is pretty much a ruin now. William Wordsworth wrote a poem about Tintern Abbey's ruins in 1798. "...for the Duke of Beaufort—Tintern Abbey they call it." (Act II)

Venice: flooded city of canals in northern Italy; a great influence on art, architecture and literature during the 18th century. "You will not say that if you come with me to Verona and on to Venice." (Act IV)

Verona: city in northern Italy; of architectural interest to Praed in Verona were the Roman Arena and theater. "You will not say that if you come with me to Verona and on to Venice." (Act IV)

Vienna: Vienna has long been a leader in music and architecture and was often considered the gateway between east and west; during the 19th century, Vienna was under the rule of the Hapsburg

monarchy and was the capital of the Austro-Hungarian empire until the end of World War I. "...my mother has lived in Brussels or Vienna and never let me go to her." (Act I)

Waterloo Bridge: a bridge across the Thames originally intended to be named Strand Bridge, the name was changed to commemorate Wellington's victory over Napoleon in 1815 at Waterloo. Waterloo Road runs from Waterloo station south of the Thames across Waterloo Bridge and into the Strand. "...Lizzie'd end by jumping off Waterloo Bridge." (Act II)

Waterloo station: train station opened in 1848 on the south bank of the Thames in Lambeth. "and then I went to the bar at Waterloo station:" (Act II)

Winchester: former capital of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex, the city remains prominent in Britain as a center of learning. Built on the bank of the river Itchen in Hampshire, 65 miles south of London, it contains one of the world's great cathedrals which dates to shortly after 1066; the cathedral contains the remains of Saint Swithun, King Canute, Jane Austen, and Isaac Walton among others. "The perjury at the Winchester assizes is deplorable." (Act I) "She's living down at Winchester now, close to the cathedral..." (Act II)

Activities:

Suggested Discussion Topics from the Guthrie Theater

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1. Shaw once said of his plays, "Indeed, in all the plays my economic studies have played as important a part as a knowledge of anatomy does in the works of Michael Angelo." What economic theories did Shaw embrace? What evidence of these theories do you find in his plays, specifically in *Mrs Warren's Profession*?
2. Define prostitution. Consider the broader definition Shaw alludes to in his preface to *Plays Unpleasant* when he includes "lawyers, doctors, clergymen, and platform politicians" in the group. Give examples of how this broader definition of prostitution is explored in the play. Does Vivie escape this tendency?
3. What does Vivie inherit from her mother? Consider tangible assets as well as character traits and associated guilt and social stigma. Discuss this as a metaphor for one generation's inheritance, for better or worse, from the last. Discuss in this context Vivie's rejection of her mother's way of life.
4. Consider the implication that Vivie has been "contaminated" by her mother's choices. Argue for or against this implication as it applies in the play as well as in your own experience.

Activities:

Suggested Activities from the Guthrie Theater

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1. Search current newspapers and magazines and make note of television and radio reports and commentary on issues relevant to this play. Share any interesting parallels you may find between the play and today's world. Comment on the continuing struggle with important human problems from generation to generation. Why do you suppose such old problems still haven't been solved?
experiences in school, articulates your views and suggestions about education.
2. In the following paragraphs, taken from an essay which Shaw called "Treatise on Parents and Children," Shaw reveals some of his very strong, and very negative, opinions about the education system of his day. His opinions were informed by his own dismal experiences in school. Read the following paragraphs and react to them. Do you share any of Shaw's views? On what points do you disagree. Alone, or in groups, create a "treatise" which, based on your
Excerpt from Shaw's "Treatise on Parents and Children":
[T]here is, on the whole, nothing on earth intended for innocent people so horrible as a school. ... With the world's bookshelves loaded with fascinating and inspired books, the very manna sent down from Heaven to feed your souls, you are forced to read a hideous imposture called a school book, written by a man who cannot write: a book from which no human being can learn anything: a book which, though you may decipher it, you cannot in any fruitful sense read, though the enforced attempt will make you loathe the sight of a book all the rest of your life. With millions of acres of woods and valleys and hills and wind and air and birds and streams and fishes and all sorts of instructive and healthy things easily accessible, or with streets and shop windows and crowds and vehicles and all sorts of city delights at the door, you are forced to sit, not in a room with some

human grace and comfort or furniture and decoration, but in a stalled pound with a lot of other children. ...

The abler a schoolmaster is, the more dangerous he is to his pupils unless they have the fullest opportunity of hearing another equally able person do his utmost to shake his authority and convict him of error. At present such teaching is very unpopular. It does not exist in schools; but every adult who derives his knowledge of public affairs from the newspapers can take in, at the cost of an extra halfpenny, two papers of opposite politics. Yet the ordinary man so dislikes having his mind unsettled, as he calls it, that he angrily refuses to allow a paper which dissents from his views to be brought into his house. ... The result is that his opinions are not worth considering. A churchman who never reads *The Freethinker* very soon has no more real religion than the atheist who never reads *The Church Times*. The attitude is the same in both cases: they want to hear nothing good of their enemies; consequently they remain enemies and suffer from bad blood all their lives; whereas men who know their opponents and understand their case, quite commonly respect and like them, and always learn something from them. ...

The most important simple fundamental economic truth to impress on a child in complicated civilizations like ours is the truth that whoever consumes goods or services without producing by personal effort the equivalent of what he or she consumes, inflicts on the community precisely the same injury that a thief produces, and would, in any honest State, be treated as a thief, however full his or her pockets might be of money made by other people. ...

If there had been a school where children were really free, I should have had to be driven out of it for the sake of my health by the teachers; for the children to whom a literary education can be of any use are insatiable: they will read and study far more than is good for them. In fact the real difficulty is to prevent them from wasting their time by reading for the sake of reading and studying for the sake of studying, instead of taking some trouble to find out what they really like and are capable of doing some good at.

George Bernard Shaw, "A Treatise on Parents and Children," preface to *Misalliance*, 1909

Activities:

Web Quests from the Guthrie Theater

Reprinted with permission from the Guthrie Theater. Belinda Westmaas Jones, play guide editor.

1. Search the web for information on the "New Woman" as this designation emerged in Great Britain in the late 19th century. Define "New Woman." What issues were important for women at this time? Who are some of the spokespersons for and opponents of this movement? What made them important players for or against the movement? What events, legislative landmarks, protest movements, impacted this age of change? Collect quotes which illuminate issues surrounding the changing roles of women at the turn of the twentieth century. Share your research with others and discuss this play, its themes and characters, in terms of your understanding of the changing roles of men and women at the time it was written.
2. Search the web for information about George Bernard Shaw. Topics to consider may include his life story, his social and political viewpoint, his plays, current productions of his plays, his essays. Many sites provide collections of quotes which have become part of our collected wisdom.

Activities:

Questions about the Characters and Play from McCarter Theatre Center

Reprinted courtesy of McCarter Theatre Center

1. Did you personally identify with any of the characters in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*? Who? Why? If no, why not?
2. Ask students if they feel that *Mrs. Warren's Profession* has an ending that could be described as happy? Ask them to defend their responses with evidence from the play/performance.? Traditionally, a comedy revolves around a family or community that falls into chaos and which is restored to order by a play's end; comedies usually concluded with a wedding (the ultimate sign of stability and harmony). Consider Shaw's conclusion of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*? Ask your students Shaw's intention might have been with such an ending?
3. Ask students to consider who Shaw was intending to criticize or hold up for scrutiny with *Mrs. Warren's Profession*? Ask them to consider who would have been the audience to Shaw's play in 1894 had he been able to have the play performed? Can students recall moments or locate passages in the play which seem directly intended to critique Shaw's audience? Would the audience have identified personally with any of the characters in the play? Would these depictions have been considered favorable? Ask the students to compare and contrast the audience for the McCarter production (including themselves) to Shaw's original audience.
4. Ask students to consider the relationship between Mrs. Warren and Vivie. How is this mother-daughter relationship typical to parent-child relationships from their own experience? How is it unusual? How much are Vivie and Mrs. Warren's conflicts related to Mrs. Warren's "profession" and their specific situation, and how much are they related to the universal gap between generations?

Activities:

Questions about the Style and Design of the Production from McCarter Theatre Center

Reprinted courtesy of McCarter Theatre Center

1. Was there a moment in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* that was so compelling or intriguing that it remains with you in your mind's eye? Write a vivid description of that moment. As you write your description, pretend that you are writing about the moment for someone who was unable to experience the performance.
2. Did the style and design elements of the production enhance the performance? Did anything specifically stand out to you? Explain your reactions.
3. How did the production style and design reflect the themes of the play?
4. What mood or atmosphere did the lighting design establish or achieve? Explain your experience.
5. How did the sound design enhance your overall experience?
6. Did the design of the costumes and makeup serve to illuminate the characters, themes, and style of the play? How?

Activities:

Updating/Adapting Activity from McCarter Theatre Center

Reprinted courtesy of McCarter Theatre Center

Have your students match wits and issues with Shaw by engaging them in the adaptation and updating/modernization of a dramatic moment from *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. Working in small groups, students should choose one of the following dramatic moments from the play for present-day adaptation (or they may adapt a dramatic moment from the play of their own choosing):

- Act II: The “great scene” between Vivie and Kitty Warren.
- Act III: Vivie and Crofts scene.
- Act IV: Vivie’s and Frank’s brother-sister scene.
- Act IV: The final scene between Vivie and Kitty Warren.

In addition to choosing a dramatic moment for adaptation, each group of adaptors should update

the time setting of the play to the present and may alter the location of where the story of the play unfolds. Adaptors should feel completely free to modify the characters and dialogue accordingly for the play’s new context. (Changes might include alterations in gender; for example, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* might become *Mr. Warren's Profession*, Vivie might become Victor, and Frank, Frannie, etc.)

Once completed, conduct readings of each adaptation followed by a class discussion (urge your students to focus their analysis and critique on the adaptations themselves and not the performance of its reading). Ask your students if there was an adaptation that they thought was best. Ask them to explain why it is that they found it to be superior to the other adapted dramatic moments.

education

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