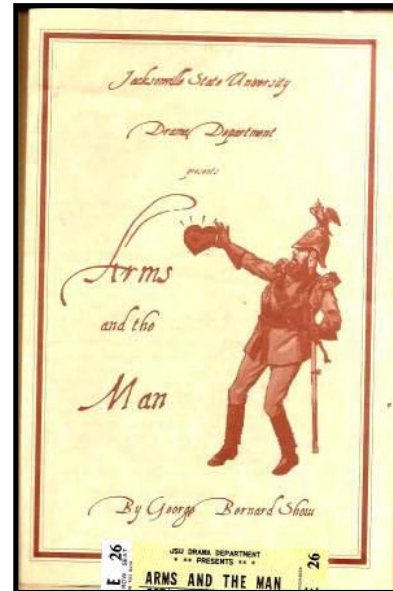


ARMS AND THE MAN by George Bernard Shaw

This was another production of Jacksonville State University. Some time ago, I attended this evening event and found it very enjoyable.

To begin with the writer, George Bernard Shaw was of Irish descent; born in Dublin in 1856. Among his greatest recognitions was winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925. First a theater critic, then a novelist, and finally a playwright, Shaw's themes often dealt with deviation from convention – replete with idealism influenced undoubtedly by strong views of society and, in particular, the treatment of the *working class*. Much more can be found in several Web pages to include Wikipedia; but to set the tone for the subject play, consider the quote from Act III:

"You're not a man, you're a machine."



The backdrop or setting for the play is a war of the time period 1885. The first character, a young woman, is engaged to a "hero" and soldier of one army. In the opening scene, she is alone in her room when suddenly a soldier from the other army bursts into her room. Pleading for help (or safe harbor), he is able to find her heart amid the obvious conflict (enemies of the war). In this unlikely but benevolent act (of compassion), she wins his love, his devotion; and though she was at first repulsed by his cowardice, she is now somewhat attracted to him.

Time passes...

Her fiancé returns from war to resume their courtship; but he has found another love elsewhere within the estate. At around the same time of his return, the enemy soldier also returns to this estate – not as an enemy of war, but as a suitor for the young woman, his heroin.

In the acts to follow, the somewhat *love triangle* is cleared-way for true love that developed between the two apparent enemies – the woman and the "other army's" returning suitor. Amid the initial impression of weakness or cowardly conduct in the enemy soldier, the once-enemy soldier wins the love of the woman by his open and honest expression of his feelings – in contrast to the fiancé who has

developed another love-interest though betrothed to the young woman.

Considering the writer (and what little I know of him), the quote (given above) is probably in keeping with his sentiments and political position on such social matters to include war. He admittedly used his voluminous writing to convey his views regarding social problems and prejudices as observed – and perhaps experienced – during his lifetime.

So much more could be offered about the talents and accomplishments of this man. Though his parents separated when he was still a teen, he was able to find his gift of writing and to use it to educate and entertain the world.