



William Lee and Phyllis Seago proved that romance was "box office" for the drama school of 1933. The couple's counterparts in 1963 are Grover Miskovsky and Linda Rainwater (insert).



## New Era for the the first "Arms and the Man" stage 30 years before students

To members of the cast, the Holmberg Hall opening of the March production of *Arms and the Man* was the climax of another series of strenuous rehearsals, rewarded by curtain calls and good reviews. Campus fine arts buffs noted the play as the beginning of the annual "Focus on Fine Arts" festival. For those directing this season's spring drama tour, the campus presentation was the last stop for a road show (partially financed by the Alumni Development Fund) which had visited Cushing, Bristow, Vinita, Miami, Claremore and Ardmore.

But, perhaps for only a handful of others, George Bernard Shaw's comedy brought back nostalgic memories of earlier play-going days on the campus, when the first edition of *Arms and the Man* opened in Holmberg Hall auditorium 30 years ago.

One person with plenty of reason to reminisce is Rupel J. Jones, regents professor of drama, who directed the first O.U. rendition of the Shaw play on May 12, 1933—three years after Jones had been named director of the 5-year-old drama school, a post he held until retirement last July. The set design for the first *Arms and the Man* production was a replica of the one used at Millikin University, Decatur, Illinois, where Jones had directed the same play the year before he came to the University. One of his students at Millikin, Phyllis Seago, '34fa (Mrs Temple Bailey of Altus) continued her dramatic studies with Jones when she transferred to O.U. and played a major role in the Playhouse version of the Shaw play.

Other members of the original O.U. cast were Joan Colburn, '34fa (Mrs. Robert T. Atkinson, San Clemente, California); Lucille Tway, '35fa; William Cope, '34fa; Julius Einhorn, '35fa; William Wylie, '33; C. W. Viseur, '33bs, '36m.ed, and William Lee, '33.

"I didn't think I could remember back that far," Jones commented as he identified the players from 1933 pictures taken by the late campus photographer Roy E. Heffner (accompanying this article). "I've lost touch with almost all of these people.

"I haven't seen Joan Colburn since she left school, but I do recall that she was a remarkable talent who had professional

# Same Shaw

appeared on the O.U.  
 revived it for "Focus"



acting experience before coming here. She's an aunt of Bucky Bollman, one of our current students . . . After he left O.U., Bill Cope later became a dramatics coach at the Oklahoma College for Women, but I don't know where he is now . . . Bill Lee, I remember, was a six-footer and a popular, good looking, easy-going guy. I last saw Lee when he was stationed at the old South Navy Base during World War II . . . I guess, of the entire cast, Mrs. Bailey is the only one whom I see occasionally. She's quite active as an alumna."

Creation of the Jones-directed *Arms and the Man*, like Playhouse productions before and after, required considerable hard work and ingenuity. Eye-appealing costumes had to be made, props of various sizes constructed and sets designed. In charge of lighting was John W. Dunn, at that time a member of the drama faculty, who now is director of the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority. Live music was provided by the WNAD Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Milton Dieterich. Scenic designer Larry Hayden added his own personal touches of authenticity to the show, such as attaching thousands of wood shavings to the set's frame walls to give them a rough stucco appearance.

Seeing this celebrated play repeated years later on the same stage brought a special thrill to Jones. When *Arms and the Man* was restaged, players and production techniques had changed, but the charm of Shaw's satire, of course, remained the same—a romantic tale of late-19th century Bulgaria, dashing men and beautiful women sporting colorful dress and spouting caustic witticisms of the playwright.

The 1963 presentation was directed by O.U.'s able professor of drama Charles C. Suggs, '40fa, another of Jones' former students. Mrs. Helen F. Lauterer, professor of drama, was her usual highly competent self in designing the costumes; Ray Larson, assistant professor of drama, planned the settings, assisted by Max Weitzenhoffer, Oklahoma City graduate student, and A. Laurence Mortensen, associate professor of drama, directed the lighting.

(continued)



Breaking into a lady's bedchamber is frowned upon in any time period, especially when that lady is engaged to another man. Neither Lucille Tway (top photo) nor Patti Fisher appear to fancy the sudden intrusion by the revolver-bearing soldiers, William Cope (top) and Don Bristow.

By CHARLES LONG

1933 photos from the Roy Heffner Collection

1963 photos by John Yack

the cast was different, the scenery little, but Shaw's wit and rib-tickling



Bright Bulgarian costumes worn in 1933 by C. W. Viseur and Joan Colburn (top photo) were quite similar to those donned in the Shaw renovation 30 years later by Fred Bieler and Sandra Lain.

A well-seasoned cast had pretty Patti Fisher, Midwest City junior, fourth runner-up in the 1962 Miss Oklahoma contest, in the leading role of Raina, previously portrayed by Miss Tway. Fred Bieler, Jersey City, New Jersey, junior, and Sandra Lain, Washington, D.C., senior, were Major and Catherine Petkoff, whose lines had been delivered in 1933 by Viseur and Miss Colburn. Grover Miskovsky, Oklahoma City junior, succeeded Lee as the gallant soldier, Sergius Saranoff, and Don Bristow, Cushing graduate student, followed Cope in the role of Captain Bluntschli.

Linda Rainwater, Tulsa freshman, and Jon Jarmes, Norman senior, were seen as the servants in the Petkoff home, roles once played by Miss Seago and Wylie, and Joe McCord, Oklahoma City freshman, assumed Einhorn's part of a Russian officer.

The only major change in the set was a reversal of physical properties. For example, the fireplace in the Petkoff home was seen at the right of the stage in 1933 and at the left in 1963. In place of the symphony orchestra, music was played over the drama school's new sound system, a gift from the Alumni Development Fund being used for the first time this year.



## nd costumes had changed umor remained the same

That *Arms and the Man*, one of Shaw's earliest works, has maintained its popularity is of great interest to Director Suggs.

"The realistic quality of the play is in Shaw himself, always looking ironically at the realities of human nature," Suggs explains. "He is the realist; his characters are mountebanks. . . . The classical definition of his function is the chastening of morals by ridicule.

"Our cast was fascinated by this play even though it is rather difficult to perform," Suggs says. "And, despite the fact it is about 70 years old, the lines are not outdated. It is interesting to note that some of the words were changed, such as 'truthful' for 'straightforward.'

"Pacifism in the play may be somewhat different than before, but nothing has changed in Shaw's attack on phony romantics, and at the same time, his show of respect for genuine romance.

"A play of any value, such as *Arms and the Man*, seems to stay alive through the years," Suggs contends. "I don't know the answer to this. Perhaps it's because although the circumstances surrounding people may change, the people themselves do not change."



April, 1963



Time has failed to change the dashing Sergius Saranoff, who continues to woo the beautiful Raina just as ardently as ever before. Their romance in Holmberg Hall began with Lucille Tway and Bill Lee in the roles and was renewed by Patti Fisher and Grover Miskovsky (insert).

A mother's understanding or rebuke? Perhaps only Shaw knows, but it is certain that Lucille Tway received the same lecture from Joan Colburn (left) that Sandra Lain is giving to Patti Fisher (below).

