



Society : LADS  
Production : Pygmalion  
Date : 28<sup>th</sup> March 2019  
Venue : Lopping Hall  
Report by : Lindsey Kennedy

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## [Play Report](#)

**The show:** Thank you for inviting me to your production of Pygmalion. I was delighted to be able to attend. The story is well known, not least for its romanticised musical version, My Fair Lady. Having played the role of Eliza many many years ago, I was familiar with a lot of the text which seemed to be the same. I was so looking forward to seeing this on stage and I was not disappointed.

**Choice of Play:**

I totally understand the choosing of this play with 14 parts of varying size, a good cross section of male and female parts, and a well written script. The scene changes could have caused a great deal of problems but you seemed to simply accommodate these effortlessly.

**Production:** The play was first performed in London in 1914 and the play was set a little earlier. This production had great depth and thoughtful direction with a simple, but effective, cleverly thought through set.

**Continuity:** The play moved quickly and effortlessly along. There was one hiccup with loss of words and an incorrect name for someone but these were minor things and quickly forgotten.

**Director:** Jean Cooper directed this wonderful piece and, to me, it was a study in how to do so. Each character seemed to have been choreographed. There were no snarl ups, or overcrowding: everyone had their space in which to perform and it just worked beautifully. Each character knew precisely what their job was and how to do it. I really marvelled at how seamless the whole play was from beginning to end. This, on the whole, appeared to be a very experienced cast and one, I am sure, you enjoyed working with.

**Principals:** Eliza Doolittle was played by Sarah Hudson. A huge role and one that is coveted by many. It is demanding, not least because of its size, but also the consistent cockney accent, then posh with cockney interjections which decreases as the play goes on. You captured Eliza at every turn. You portrayed a cheeky playful cockney attitude at the beginning, coupled with seeing an opportunity not to be missed. It was almost possible to see the cogs whirring round in your mind as to your next move and that was relayed to the audience. It seems so minor but, I would have liked you to have been a little more disheveled in the opening scenes until Mrs. Pearce got hold of you, but as I said this was so minor given the rest of your performance. I so enjoyed the first scene in Mrs. Higgins' drawing room. Your timing and annunciation were spot on and even

though we all knew what was coming, we waited with baited breath, having been titillated by you until led to the climax ‘Walk? Not bloody likely’. Your expressionless face whilst expounding about your family was superb until we reached the denouement which you timed brilliantly. Moving through the play your fondness for Higgins was cloaked, very cloaked and it was clear yours was a business arrangement rather than a romantic one, which I understand from the programme notes is exactly what Shaw had written. You moved from the cockney sparrow effortlessly to the charming, well-groomed aspiring Eliza, not only in accent, but also physically. You scrubbed up well and your countenance matched. Yours was a great performance and although I know you were suffering from a throat infection we, the audience, would never have known. Very many congratulations.

**Professor Higgins** was played by Christian Mortimer. Congratulations to you. What a tour de force. Your quick, fast talking, energy filled and, exhausting, performance was something to watch. You, to me, really got under the skin of this character as Shaw had wanted and hydrated it in a way I had not previously seen. Although your delivery was fast, I understood and could hear every word. You wove into your portrayal idiosyncrasies that one might imagine Higgins would have and maintained them throughout, adeptly strutting about the stage but never getting in the way of others (nor they of you). Your characterisation could have irritated but it didn’t and worked so well as a juxtaposition to Colonel Pickering. The relationship you developed with each character was plausible and almost palpable, particularly with the Colonel and your mother, Mrs. Higgins. I really do feel you managed, as the programme notes say, to portray Higgins as a likeable tyrant and bully. You were so caught up in the end result, that how to get there didn’t really matter. Congratulations.

**Colonel Pickering** was played by Howard Platt. What a suave, sartorially elegant Colonel you were. A real foil to Christian Mortimer’s Higgins. Your measured delivery and steadfast composure was wonderful to watch. Your relationship with Higgins felt true and profound. Again all your dialogue could be heard clearly and your considerable experience shone through with your effortless moves and complete security in your own ability. I would have liked a bit more sympathy from Pickering towards Eliza but that was more from the written word than characterisation. Very well done on a memorable performance, you were in no way a second string to Higgins as can often be the case.

**Alfred Doolittle** was played by Graham Milne. This is also a role with many long speeches, particularly the beginning of the second half. The perfect Doolittle, ‘he’s a stereotype of a bombastic barfly...with an oratorical twist’. Not surprisingly I couldn’t have put it better than Shaw. You were clearly spoken and you looked the part, again perhaps a smudge here and there on the face and hands would have looked good but I am splitting hairs. You completely understood your character and I particularly liked your moment (well, several) when expounding about winning all the money cleverly, unwittingly, emphasizing the very reason why you had won. Congratulations!

**Mrs .Higgins** was played by Karen Rogers. Another well formed and carefully thought through characterisation. Karen looked the part and easily retained her composure whilst dealing with the chaoticness of her son and his idiosyncrasies. You were

sophisticated, strong, elegant and like everyone else in this play, we could hear every word.

**Mrs Eynesford-Hill** was played by Wendy Butler. I really enjoyed your interpretation of the financially strapped Mrs Eynesford-Hill. You were upper class (without being snooty) approachable, and likeable. Your delivery was clear and well timed and you very much looked that part. The relationship with your children was delightful and you appeared to be every bit the family.

**Clara Eynesford-Hill** was played by Lizzie Tucker. A lovely fresh joyful performance. A bit of a double act with her mother not understanding the lack of family wealth whilst pursuing the upper class life. Your clear delivery was excellent.

**Mrs. Pearce** was played by Val Jones. An accomplished performance which I enjoyed very much. You were dower and stern with a soft centre. Your delivery was excellent and the maintenance of your Scottish accent was first rate.

**Parlourmaid** was played by Cathy Naylor. Again a lovely portrayal of a working maid in a posh house.

**Freddy Eynesford Hill** was played by Marcel Kay. A much smaller role than in the musical version. You looked very smart and you fitted in well with your mother and sister.

**Costumes:** The costumes were superb, well thought through and of the period. Wigs and jewelry were of the period and enhanced the whole production.

#### ***Set and Props:***

The set was designed and built by Garry Cooper. The set for me was a triumph. The Portico of St Paul's worked so well. I watched with baited breath as to how the columns would be dealt with but it was so cleverly designed with the top part being reeled upwards and the columns being taken off. The transition to the second act was smooth and cleverly done with members of the cast and stage crew all dressed in black LADS polos. It was like watching a ballet, each piece of furniture having its precise position and each member of the crew knowing precisely where to go. There were no collisions or hold ups. However, it was the change from Higgins Laboratory to Mrs Higgins Drawing Room which left me open mouthed. The whole set changed from a masculine dark room to a lovely light feminine drawing room with flats being swung round to reveal a recessed area, a garden room and lovely light decoration. It was all so very clever.

***Lighting & sound:***

The lighting and sound were well operated and without hitch. The incidental music was well chosen but unobtrusive. Congratulations to Sarah Biggs in her operation.

***Front of House:***

Again, I enjoyed a warm welcome meeting Jean Cooper once more.

***Programme:***

The programme was well laid out, easy to read and had interesting notes regarding Shaw, his views and the play. I enjoy looking at the photos of the cast and seeing how they look in “real life”! The NODA insignia was on the front cover as usual.

***General:***

I really enjoyed coming along to LADS once more. Thank you for inviting me. I hope the rehearsals for Handbagged are going well.

Lindsey Kennedy  
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