

Pygmalion
Saturday June 14th 2.30pm

Programme notes Acts 1, 2 & 3

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls and welcome to this production of Pygmalion, a major new revival of a centenary production, directed by David Grindley a Tony award winner.

Act 1, 2 and 3 will last for approximately 72 minutes followed by a 20 minute interval. Act 4 and 5 will be described by my colleague Sylvia and her programme notes will start 5 minutes before curtain up.

The title is derived from Greek Mythology and the story goes that King Pygmalion fell in love with one of his sculptures which came to life.

Pygmalion, written by Bernard Shaw, was originally staged in 1912 and it is one of the theatre's most entertaining and beguiling plays of gender and class and is perhaps best known as the inspiration for the musical 'My Fair Lady'. The aristocratic pompous and misogynistic Professor Henry Higgins makes a bet with his friend the mild mannered Colonel Pickering that he can transform a cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle into a lady and pass her off in high society. The Professor's mother attempts to keep Henry under control while this is going on and she is the only woman to whom he will listen. 'When she shouts,' Rule Lanoka quotes ' he clicks his heels and obeys straight away.'

Packed with a host of larger than life characters including Alfred Doolittle, Eliza's grasping dustman father and the giggly Freddy Eynsford- Hill, Pygmalion remains one of Shaw's most popular plays and a classic British drama; full of his trademark wit, style and humour.

Characters and costumes

The comedy drama is set in the Victorian period and the division of the classes is marked by the mode of dress. Tailored and smart for the upper and middle classes, working clothes, hand me downs and uniforms for the working classes.

Professor Henry Higgins. A specialist in dialect, somewhat distracted. He is slightly crumpled in a brown tweed three piece suit and polished brown boots, crisp white shirt and tie. Unruly hair but clean shaven.

Mrs Higgins Very self-possessed, tall and elegantly dressed in the height of fashion with immaculate upswept hair. Her dark pink satin dress has a front embroidered panel which is reflected in a loose back panel and she wears a long string of pearls and diamante drops in her ears.

Alfred Doolittle an elderly, cheeky dustman. A fitted hat with a back brim covers his head and shoulders. He wears an old dirty shirt, leather waistcoat and loose trousers that are tied at the knees with string to prevent rats running up his legs.

Colonel Pickering Similarly dressed to the Professor. His suit is smarter grey. A smaller bearded man, he has a military bearing and a mild manner.

Eliza Doolittle. Round about 18, she wears a black straw sailor hat, has unwashed, upswept hair and is generally dirty. She is independent and feisty. She wears a shoddy knee length black coat, with a brown skirt, grubby petticoats and rough apron. Her ankle boots are worn.

Freddy Eynsford Hill A smart but immature, man about town with a three piece suit and high collar and hat

Clara Eynsford Hill A would be modern lady. Her day wear is a fitted beige long buttoned skirt with a matching jacket and a small pert hat on her head.

Mrs. Pearce the faithful but belligerent housekeeper to the Professor. She wears a brown skirt and checked blouse with an occasional full apron.

Cast

Professor Henry Higgins	Alistair McGowan
Mrs Higgins	Rula Lenska
Alfred Doolittle	Jamie Foreman
Colonel Pickering	Paul Brightwell
Eliza Doolittle	Rachel Barry
Mrs Pearce	Charlotte Page
Freddy Eynsford Hill	Lewis Collier
Clara Eynsford Hill	Anna O' Grady

Act 1 Outside St Paul's Church

We hear applause from the nearby Covent Garden. It's 11.15 pm. It's raining. Pedestrians are running for shelter into the market and under the portico of St Paul's Church, where there are already several street traders, among them a lady, her daughter and son in evening dress. They are all peering out gloomily at the rain, from the shelter of central grey tall double doors, except one man dressed in a long gabardine mac with a sou'wester on his head, he has his back turned to the rest, and seems wholly preoccupied with a notebook in which he is writing busily.

Clara, Freddy and their mother Mrs.Eynsford Hill, Prof Higgins Col Pickering and Eliza are inadvertently thrown together in the storm.

Act 2 Professor Higgins's study, Wimpole Street.

Next day at 11 am. HIGGINS's laboratory in Wimpole Street.

The tall entry doors are on the left and the fireplace is central at the back of the grey wooden panelled room, along which are ranged numerous wax cylinders from the phonograph. A leather buttoned smoking chair is placed on the left next to a library table with sweets and papers littered on top. A leather backed dining chair is next to the chair and a monastery style table is end on to us on the right, which is being used as an untidy desk and has another chair drawn up to it. Two wall lamps above the fireplace provide a cosy glow to the room along with a lit desk lamp on the table beside the phonograph.

Eliza has found her way to Prof Higgins to ask for elocution lessons. Mrs Pearce becomes the unofficial nurse maid to Eliza and is not best pleased. Eliza's Dad calls on the gentlemen to extort some money for Eliza but he is up against a man of the world.

Act 3 6 months later in Mrs Higgins's Drawing Room, Cheyne Walk

It is Mrs Higgins's at-home day. Her elegant and opulent room, is in a flat in Chelsea.

The tall entry doors are now on the right and elegant semi stain glass veiled windows dominate the back of the room, in front of which is a writing desk and chair. There is a lamp on the table. A tapestry armchair and matching sofa are in the centre of the room with a butler table set with afternoon tea, drawn to the left of the sofa. Upright dining chair are set against the walls on the right, and left. A plain rug is laid in front of the sofa and an elaborately shaded standard lamp is at the back of the room on the left of the window.

Professor Higgins is seeking his mother's advice as regards Eliza and if she will help him to introduce her into polite society. He becomes a little boy again in her commanding presence and fiddles with the change in his pockets. Mrs Higgins agrees to conspire with him and a hilarious tea party ensues, watched over intently by the Professor.

Programme notes Acts 3 & 4

Welcome back to Act IV of Pygmalion by Bernard Shaw.

Its midnight, at the end of a summer's evening spent at the opera. We are in Professor Higgins's Laboratory as the door opens a tired Eliza enters, wearing a floor length rose pink Grecian style evening gown, white long elbow length gloves and cube heels. Her pallor is pale, contrasting with her dark hair which is in the fashionable up-do style of braided coils. A diamond necklace and matching earrings with silver plated chain mail evening bag complete the ensemble.

Both Higgins and Pickering are in 'white tie' evening dress. Removing their short black silk lined coats and top hats reveals a black suit with a white waistcoat over a stiff collard white shirt and white bow tie. Accessories are patent lace up dance shoes, long white scarf and white gloves.

Act V

Its' the following day, we are back in the Drawing Room at Cheyne Walk. Mrs Higgins, standing by her writing desk, is reading a letter. A cream lace shawl around her shoulders over her day dress.

Her Son is in his brown tweed three piece suit, the Colonel wears a light grey coloured morning suit. Later Eliza joins them, she is wearing an ankle length dark mustard coloured A-line dress with fitted sleeves, pale cream lace gloves, and brown ankle boots.

When Doolittle calls on Mrs Higgins he is looking very smart in black frock coat, grey waistcoat over a white starched collared shirt and small knotted tie. Wearing a black silk top hat, grey gloves and on his feet spats.

The second half begins with the sound of an operatic singer