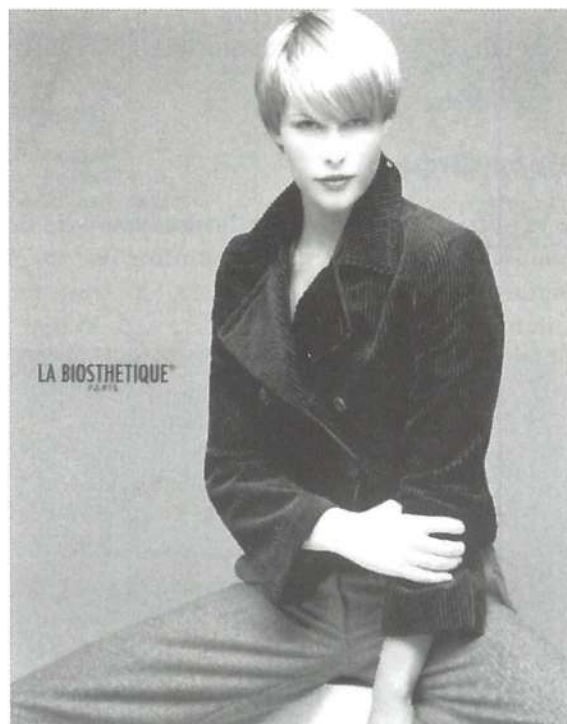


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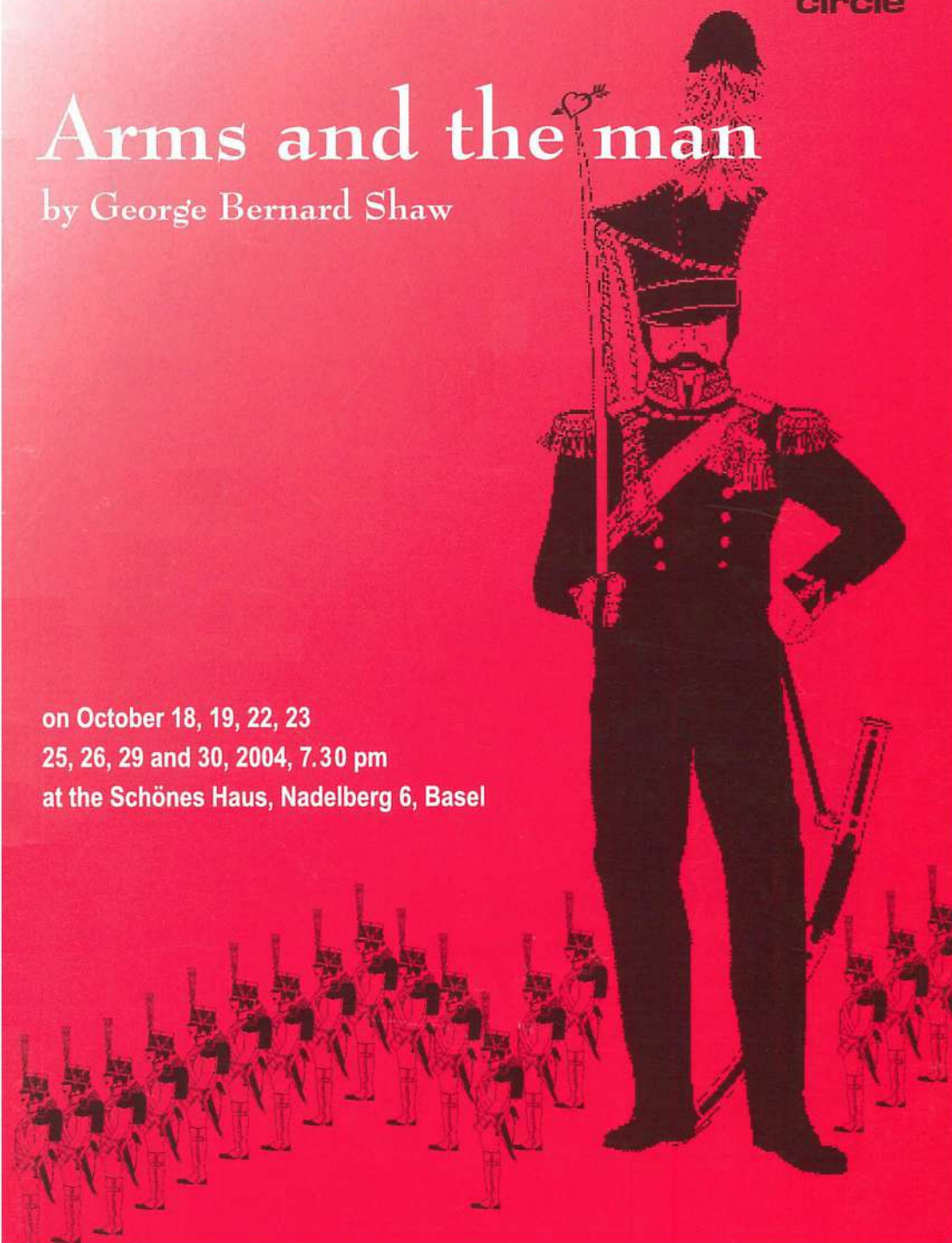
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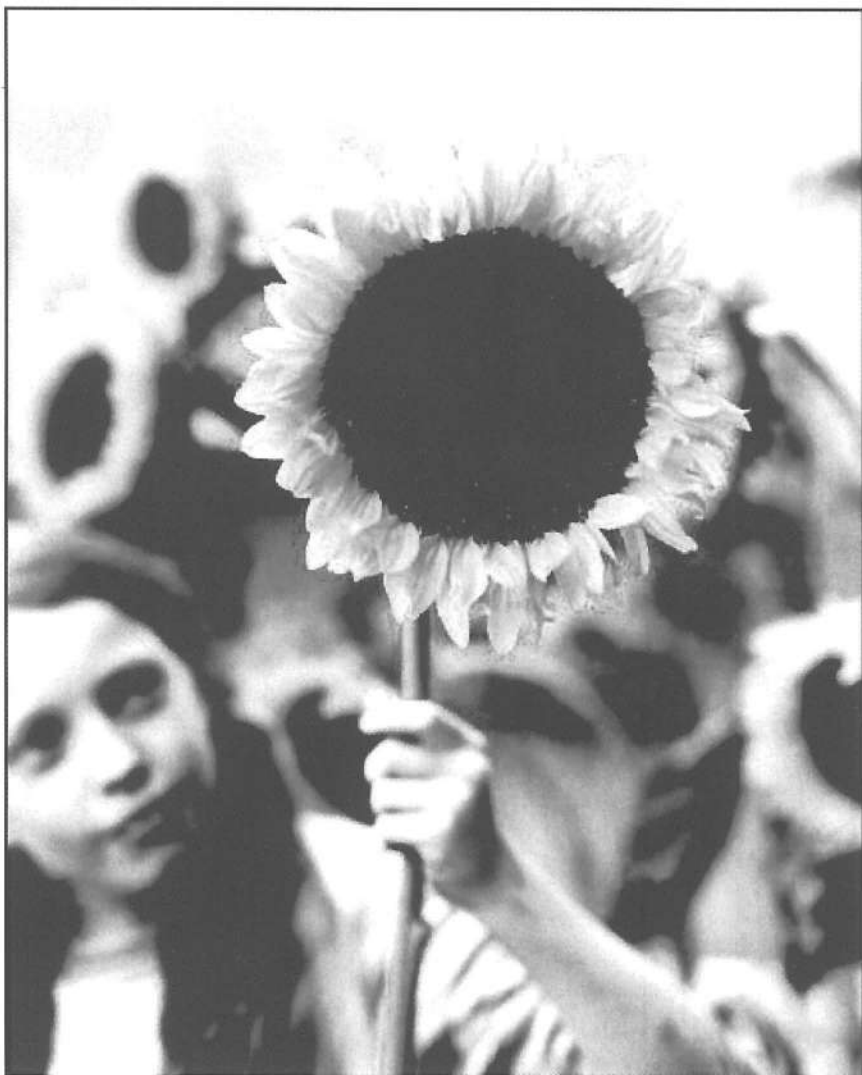


Arms and the man

by George Bernard Shaw

on October 18, 19, 22, 23
25, 26, 29 and 30, 2004, 7.30 pm
at the Schönes Haus, Nadelberg 6, Basel





We wish the Semi-Circle Basel good luck for its production.

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ARMS AND THE MAN

By George Bernard Shaw

Directed by Diana Zuger

XX

Cast (in order of appearance)

Raina	Lianne Gisler
Catherine	Joy Scherer
Louka	Jessica Philip
Bluntschli	Niggi Widmer
A Russian Officer	Allen Holland
Nicola	Eric Collino
Major Petkoff	Andrew Thompson
Sergius Saranoff	Michael Breckenridge

XX

The action of the play takes place at Major Petkoff's house in a small Bulgarian town near the Dragoman Pass in the period 1885-1886.

ACT ONE

Raina's bedchamber

Short Interval of approx. 10 minutes

ACT TWO

In the garden, 4 months later

MAIN INTERVAL of 20 minutes
with bar service

ACT THREE

In the library, later the same day

ARMS AND THE MAN (Director's notes)

Originally written in 1894, *Arms and the Man* deals much with the relationship between reality and idealism.

It is true that *Arms and the Man* is a comedy, but it is also about war. The setting of the play is in war-torn Bulgaria, and focuses not only on the romance between the young people of the play, but also on the atrocities that go on during wartime and the ability of people not so very far removed from these atrocities to ignore them completely.

This is the story of a young Bulgarian woman, Raina, whose attitudes about war and romance are shaken by the arrival of a self-professed Serbian army officer in her bedroom one night. Captain Bluntschli is being pursued by the army in which Raina's father is a top-ranking officer. She keeps the captain safe during the night and helps him regain his strength by feeding him chocolate, but any possibility of romance gets off to a rocky start due to her betrothal to Sergius Saranoff, one of her country's most decorated officers. He has given Raina a much different image of war than the one Bluntschli presents, and as her views of the world change, so too do those of her family and servants.

Shaw's writing handles all of this with a fair degree of humour. What starts out looking like a wartime story or political satire has become, by the evening's end, a more complex, interwoven story of truth, and how it savages (and salvages) relationships.

This is the Semi-Circle's third George Bernard Shaw production. One of our first play readings was *Heartbreak House* which was performed in this very same location back in 1976, and then 1987 saw a very successful production of *Pygmalion* performed at the Bäumlihof Gymnasium.

Map of Balkans 1870s-1880s



CHARACTERS



Raina Petkoff (Lianne Gisler):

I, Raina Petkoff, belong to the family of the Petkoffs, the richest and best known in Bulgaria. I am an only child and my father and mother have given me all that I desire. My father is fighting in the war against the Serbs with my betrothed Sergius Saranoff. Sergius is in my father's regiment and was chosen for me by my parents as a suitable match, but I hesitated at first before agreeing to the betrothal. First of all this war must end in a splendid victory for Bulgaria and our heroes must finally come home safely.

Major Paul Petkoff (Andrew Thompson)

I am a fortunate fellow, blessed with sturdy health due to not washing every day, plus a good, albeit opinionated, wife, who is current with social customs, a sweet, lovely daughter, and capable servants. We enjoy a comfortable living on a country estate and have recently established a library in our manor. I love my family and my country and would defend both of them to the death, though I would prefer not to have to do that, of course. I think that's about it. In any case, it will have to do.



Catherine Petkoff (Joy Scherer)

My name is Catherine Olga Petkoff. I have been married to my husband Paul for over twenty years and, although in some respects he is rather set in his ways, I love him dearly. We are delighted that our daughter Raina was finally betrothed to Major Sergius Saranoff before the war. When Sergius returns I shall make sure that their wedding is a splendid occasion that will further enhance our already significant position in society. Something else that I know will also arouse the admiration - and envy- of our friends is a little innovation that I have introduced into our household during Paul's absence. It is truly remarkable, but more than that I am not prepared to disclose.



CHARACTERS



Bluntschli (Niggi Widmer)

My Name-n-ysch Johann Jakob Bluntschli. Y bi z'Basel, in dr Schwyz, 1852, gebore worde. Do zue dere Zytt no niemert's dr Fuessball erfunde gha hett, und mr mi Bappe als Inhaber vo divärse Hotels kai spannend's Umfäld hett kenne biete, hanni mi zwunge gseh, dr Armee byz'trätte.

D' Vertaidigung vom Vaterland isch drby ehner im Hindergrund gstande, und scho gly ha-n-y mi als Söldner verdingt und bi so enere alte urschwyzerische Tradition gfolgt, und ha bi mehrere usswärtige Armee aghyyrt. Das hett drno derzue gfiehr, das y z Bulgarie g'landet bi.

(Translation on page 13)

Louka (Jessica Philip)

I was born to parents who were always very hardworking, but never had much money. In turn, I developed strong work ethics and have always been proud of who I am and the struggles I've endured. I am a servant in the Petkoff household, and although I am respectful in their presence, for fear of losing my position, I also secretly defy them. I defy anyone who treats me as their inferior. Nicola, another servant to the Petkoffs and to whom I'm engaged, is always telling me to be less proud, but I refuse. I'm not so much in love with him anyway. The Petkoff's daughter, Raina, is one I especially despise. She's the same age as me, and I resent her rich place in life - born into a well-to-do family. I do my best to bring her down at any opportunity. There is nothing anybody can do to stand in the way of what I want...



Sergius (Michael Breckenridge)

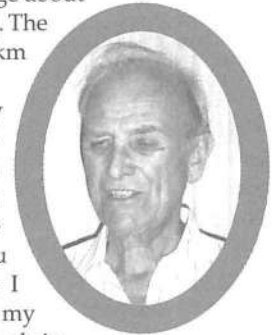
As the second son of a large family, barely supported by the estate which my father inherited, it was inevitable that I should join the army. I consider myself very modern, open to the most advanced influences. I see these clearly and find it hard to understand those who are not so perceptive. I am betrothed to the lovely Raina from a prominent family, and appear destined for a brilliant military career. But I am still uneasy in spirit. This all seems so preordained - am I really the master of my own fate?

CHARACTERS

Nicola (Eric Collino)

I was born in 1844 at Aldomirovitsi, a mountainous village about 10 km west of Slivnica and some 100 km north-west of Sofia. The Serbian border is about 60 km west as the crow flies, or 90 km by the winding road over the Dragoman Pass.

It was a hard life, keeping goats and chickens, trying to grow vegetables on poor soil. As the oldest of 3 brothers and a sister, it was my duty to leave home as soon as possible to help my struggling parents with some money remittances. I entered domestic service at 14, and served in three households before being engaged by my current, nouveau riche family where I settled for the last 10 years. Here I observed the foibles of everyone and learned how to use my situation to my advantage. These are troubled times. The lands in our region suffer the competing ambitions of Turkey, Russia and nations of Western Europe. Revolution and war are never far from our thoughts. But, knowing poverty, I try to lead a quiet life, keeping my head down but using my wits to avoid too much attention, trying to turn my lowly position to my own benefit, financial or social, by gently nudging my superiors into actions that may bring me some advantage.



Russian Officer (Allen Holland)

This young officer is a gentle soul who is trying to play the hand that has been dealt to him as best he can. He would rather make love than war, but he has been forced into the military by the government. However, he refuses to live a life of quiet desperation and is secretly helping those in need, including Serbs. He is also quite discreetly and cleverly undermining those who abuse their power. Unfortunately he has a weakness for women and whiskey.

Semi-Circle Wins Theatre Award!

In May the Semi-Circle took part in FEATS, the Festival of European Anglophone Theatrical Societies, held this year in Antwerp. The play submitted was *Feeding the Ducks*, directed by tonight's director, Diana Zuger, and previously performed as part of our evening of one-act plays in the Kindertheater. The competition sets a high standard, and there were many outstanding performances, but the award for Best Actor went to our Michael Clarke. Many other aspects of the directing and performance of the play were commented on favourably by the adjudicator. Our participation in FEATS was assisted by the sponsorship of NOVARTIS AG and SYNGENTA AG.

Directors of this production

Director (Diana Zuger)

A three-act play, a classic – what a challenge! When the play was chosen by the play selection committee (of which I was a member) I had no idea that I would find myself directing it. I went along to the auditions hoping maybe to get a part and ended up on the other side of the boards. Casting the play was not easy in the beginning but we finally got together a great group of players, even managing to recruit a genuine Swiss for the part of Bluntschli. It has been a very challenging play to stage especially in the Schönes Haus which has meant keeping the set to the very minimum. Of course without the team working with me (especially Sue, my assistant) I could never have attempted to do this and we are all sure that after the hard work and intensive rehearsals this will prove to be a very entertaining evening.



Assistant Director/Prompter (Susan Aeschbach-Jagger)

After treading the boards in Semi-Circle and Panto productions over the last couple of years, I have now taken on two different roles – those of assistant director and prompter. I joined the production rather late in the day, but have enjoyed immensely collaborating with Diana and the very enthusiastic cast in the many-faceted tasks involved in getting the show on the road. It's all a far cry from my primary school days when I wrote, directed and acted in my epic productions. At least in the *Arms and the Man* cast, we don't have any 10-year-old prima donnas!



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George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

George Bernard Shaw is the author of the play you are seeing tonight and is regarded by the Encyclopaedia Britannica as the most significant British playwright since the 17th century. What kind of a man was he?

Shaw was one of the intellectual giants of the early 20th century. Lenin described him as “a good man fallen among the Fabians”. Shaw had become the leading force in the Fabian Society, a middle-class Socialist group.

Shaw was born of protestant stock in Dublin, 1856. His father was impractical, intemperate and caused the financial decline of the family. His mother left her husband and went to London in 1875. Shaw, aged 20, followed her there a year later. For the next nine years he had no job, and his family lived in very precarious circumstances on a very small family bequest and his mother’s modest income as a music teacher. In the meantime, Shaw made half-hearted attempts to find employment while he spent his afternoons in the reading room of the British Museum pursuing a course of advanced self-education.

Shaw’s literary pretensions started with novels, at which he was singularly unsuccessful, abandoning the genre when he had written five of them. In 1885 he started writing for the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *The World* and became a distinguished critic in literature, drama and art. He lamented the embarrassing lack of modern social plays in the style of Chekhov, Ibsen and Strindberg, and set about rectifying the situation himself. He started with *Widowers’ Houses* in 1892. It made two performances. Shaw’s comment was: “I had not achieved a success, but I had created an uproar, and the sensation was so agreeable, I was resolved to try again.”

He married, in 1898, an Irish heiress, Charlotte Payne-Townshend, who had nursed him through a period of illness.

The incisive, if hilarious, political involvement of Shaw’s early plays brought him recognition on the continent, but his plays were largely ignored on the London stage. To counter this lack of success, in 1898 Shaw started publishing his own collections of plays, the first being *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant*.

Being publisher of his own plays gave Shaw an opportunity few playwrights have. He was able to put in long prefaces of discourses on his plays, diatribes against his various “demons”, including censorship, to which *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* had fallen foul, and an idiosyncratic attitude to punctuation which

amused your director and cast as they learned their lines.

William Butler Yeates asked Shaw to write for the already famous Abbey Theatre in Dublin. The result was *John Bull’s Other Island*, which Yeates then timidly rejected. But there was a special performance in London, in 1904, for Edward VII, when Shaw’s stage reputation was belatedly made in England.

Shaw’s career as a playwright spanned 60 years. Each of his plays was intended to present a problem and discuss it thoroughly, with brilliant dialogue and masterly wit and character reversal. In Bluntschli of *Arms and the Man*, instead of the dashing romantic stage hero, we have a mercenary who knows fear and hunger.

Shaw won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1925, following the acclaim of *Saint Joan*, produced in 1923, which many regard as his greatest achievement. But Shaw is equally famous for his comedies, of which *Pygmalion* (first produced in 1913, performed by the Semi-Circle in 1987) and *Arms and the Man* (first performed in 1894, and presented to you tonight) are probably his best known.

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The Balkans

The Balkans at the time of *Arms and the Man* was a dangerous place, and was even regarded as the powder keg of Europe.

There are always crises when an empire is breaking up and neighbouring powers and nations gaining freedom cast envious eyes at the resulting pieces. It is even more dangerous when the break-up is prolonged.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Ottoman Empire of the Turks, the "Sick Man of Europe", was disintegrating under its own mismanagement and corruption. The subject nations included Serbia and Bulgaria, itching to break free from the Turks. Neighbouring empires included Russia, who regarded herself as protector of the Slavs, and the Austrian Habsburg Empire, whose rulers were very worried about any nationalist liberation ideas infecting their own colonised nations and who were not adverse to a little territorial aggrandisement at the expense of the Turks. In the wings, jealously watching the European balance of power, was Great Britain, who saw Turkey as a valuable counter-weight to Russia and was very suspicious of the long-held Russian wish to control Constantinople (Istanbul), since this would threaten the British route to India.

One of Bulgaria's periodic revolts against the Turks was put down in 1876 with much bloodshed, causing revulsion in the west, and active intervention by the Russians, who proceeded to defeat the Turks in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878. The Russians then forced the Turks into the treaty of San Stefano in 1878 which granted the Bulgarians virtual independence in a state the Russians hoped to dominate. This was too much for the British, who could not countenance Russian control so close to Constantinople, and the treaty was never implemented. But the episode set alarm bells ringing with the Great Powers (they were all European in those days), and the Congress of Berlin was promptly convened within the same year.

The Serbs, further from Constantinople, had gained a kind of creeping independence from the Turks throughout the 19th century, partly by armed revolt and partly by diplomacy. They were sufficiently independent to fight alongside the Russians against Turkey in the war.

The Berlin Congress set about defusing the situation in the Balkans by, among other things, granting independence to the Serbs and, in effect, almost complete independence to the Bulgarians at the expense of the Turks.

But Bulgaria was disappointed with the allotted territory. It was less than she had received in the Treaty of San Stefano, and certainly less than she had held in her old empire days. Seven years later, the Bulgarians then grabbed a neighbouring piece of territory, Eastern Rumelia, which Serbia, also looking back to her own distant empire days, coveted as well. The war of 1885, in which our hero Bluntschli was involved, then broke out. The Bulgarians defeated the Serbs, their fellow Orthodox Slavs, but in doing so, annoyed the Russians, who were previously allied to the Serbs, and who could really do without this extra complication at a very sensitive time. Under Russian pressure, peace was proclaimed and recent gains were abandoned. The troubles in the Balkans went into a kind of hiatus till the early 20th century, when they flared up again and led to World War I.

Production Team

Production Manager.....	John Stafford
Director.....	Diana Zuger
Assistant Director and Prompter.....	Susan Aeschbach-Jagger
Stage Manager and Props.....	Helen Baldomero
Set Design and Construction.....	Robi Pipoz
Lights and Sound.....	Paul Chisholm, Michael Clarke, Bob Kenyon, Collette O'Neill, Jamie Sievert
Sound Effects.....	John Stafford
Make-up.....	Samira Bachir, Anne Breckenridge, Christine Mapes, Claire Spedding
Costumes.....	Angela Robinson
Stage Hands.....	Matt Breckenridge, Peter Berrie, Chris Morrison, Martin Palmer, Martin Spedding, Bob Williamson, Jean-Pierre Zuger, Tony O'Sullivan
Poster and Flyer Design.....	Yvonne Fenn
Publicity.....	David Foggetta, Jamie Sievert
Programme.....	Sue and John Stafford
Tickets.....	Suzan Wilson
Bar Manager.....	Mary Sinnott
Box Office/Bar.....	Veronika Berrie, Zuzana Cox, Neda Hakkak, Erica Kjekstad, Ann Maerki, Penny Rettig, Valerie Walder, Edda Williamson, Virginia Wittmann, Stephanie Nemeth-Parker
Usher.....	Sue Stafford
Photography.....	Ute Kessel and Eric Collino
Video.....	Michael Wilkinson

Thanks to Chris Fuehrer-Fries and Upstage, Berne for the loan of dresses.

Programme printed by WBZ Druckerei, Reinach

Translation of Bluntschli's biography:

My name is Johann Jakob Bluntschli. I was born in Basel in Switzerland in 1852. Since, at that time, football hadn't been invented, and my father, who owned a number of hotels, couldn't offer me any exciting prospects, I had no option but to join the army. Since I was not so concerned with defending my country, I followed the good old Swiss tradition of becoming a mercenary for various foreign armies. This is how I came to find myself in Bulgaria...

Music used in this performance:

Johann Strauss senior: Radetzky March

Edvard Grieg: "Morning" from Peer Gynt Suite

Pyotr Tchaikovsky: Waltz from Eugene Onegin.

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We challenge you to join us!

Don't be a faint-hearted chocolate soldier! The Semi-Circle is especially looking for young people with that bit of courage which would get them acting on stage or undertaking technical work such as lighting or stage management.

Tell your friends, too ...

New members, with or without experience, are always welcome. If you would like to join us, as an actor or as part of the technical crew, or even just to receive notice of our regular events, then please call our secretary, Suzan Wilson, on 061/823 0412, or visit our website, which is:
www.semi-circle.ch.

About The Semi-Circle ...

We would like to introduce ourselves to those of you who do not know us already. The Semi-Circle is a theatre group putting on top quality plays in the English language, and we have been doing it for some time! The group was founded more than a quarter of a century ago. In that time we have staged more than 70 productions ranging from comedies and musicals to dramas and classical plays. We put on full-length plays as well as the more experimental evenings of one-act plays.

A theatre production is a major event. It requires a lot of voluntary work by many people, not only by the actors and directors, but also by the backstage and front of house crew. The contribution of all is essential to a successful production. Why do we do it? Well, there are as many reasons as there are different kinds of people. Some do it for the sheer excitement of it and for love of the theatre, and for the feeling of pride that comes from putting together something special that is appreciated by the audiences we attract. Others mention the enjoyment they get out of it: mastering minor disasters, sharing in the triumphs, being part of the camaraderie and taking in the wonderful stimulation we get from participating in the teamwork that a production of this sort requires. It really is something to be experienced. It's a whole lot of fun most of the time!

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