

AUCKLAND
THEATRE
COMPANY

ASB
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MINDFOOD SEASON OF

MRS WARREN'S PROFESSION

BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

ADAPTED BY ELEANOR BISHOP, WITH THE CAST. ORIGINAL POETRY BY HADASSAH GRACE.

ATC EDUCATION PACK

Thanks to our supporters.



Auckland Theatre Company receives principal and core funding from:



ATC Creative Learning also thanks the ATC Patrons and the ATC Supporting Acts for their ongoing generosity.

VENUE

ASB Waterfront Theatre, 138 Halsey Street, Wynyard Quarter, Auckland City

SCHOOL MATINEE PERFORMANCE

Tuesday 15 May 2018, at 11am

RUNNING TIME

2 hours and 20 minutes, including a 20-minute interval.

POST-SHOW FORUM

Takes place in the theatre immediately after the performance with the cast (15 – 20 minutes)

SUITABILITY

This production is suitable for Year Levels 11 - 13.

ADVISORY

Contains strong language, sexual references and strobe lighting.

PLEASE NOTE

Eating and drinking in the auditorium is strictly prohibited.

Please make sure all cell phones are turned off and

Please don't bring school bags to the theatre

Photography or recording of any kind is STRICTLY PROHIBITED.

CONTENTS

SYNOPSIS	4 – 5
ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT	6
ABOUT THE DIRECTOR	6
TALKING TO THE DIRECTOR	7
DESIGN	8
POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES	9
READING AND RESOURCES	10
ATC CREATIVE LEARNING	10
CURRICULUM LINKS	10
PRODUCTION PHOTOS	11 – 15

MINDFOOD SEASON OF
**MRS WARREN'S
PROFESSION**
BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

**Adapted by Eleanor Bishop, with the cast.
Original poetry by Hadassah Grace.**

CAST

Mrs Kitty Warren — **Jennifer Ward-Lealand**
Sir George Crofts — **Stephen Lovatt**
Rev. Samuel Gardner — **Cameron Rhodes**
Vivie Warren — **Karin McCracken**
Frank Gardner — **Jack Buchanan**
Praed — **Tawanda Manyimo**
Liz — **Hadassah Grace**

CREATIVE

Playwright — **George Bernard Shaw**
Director — **Eleanor Bishop**
Set and Costume Designer — **Tracy Grant Lord**
Lighting Designer — **Jennifer Lal**
Sound Designer — **Te Aihe Butler**

PRODUCTION

Production Manager — **Joel Crook**
Company Manager (Maternity Cover) — **Eliza Josephson-Rutter**
Stage Manager — **Ruth Love**
Assistant Stage Manager — **Gina Heidekruger**
Technical Manager — **Nik Janiurek**
Design Coordinator — **Rachael Walker**
Lighting Operator — **Zach Howells**
Sound Operator — **Philip Jones**
Flytechs — **Jamie Blackburn** and **Nik Janiurek**
Props Master — **Amy Snape**
Wardrobe Supervisor — **Mary Poor**
Set Construction — **2Construct**

ATC CREATIVE LEARNING

Associate Director: Lynne Cardy
Youth Arts Coordinator: Nicole Arrow
Teaching Artists: Freya Boyle and Ella Gilbert

SYNOPSIS

ACT 1

It's New Year's Eve and Vivie Warren, a recently returned graduate from Oxford University, is staying on her own at her mother's swanky bach in the Coromandel Peninsula. Mrs Warren's old friend Praed, a cool, classical musician, arrives meeting Vivie for the first time. They discuss her achievements at Oxford (she has won a top prize for a Law undergraduate) and turn to the topic of her mother. Vivie tells him she hasn't seen her yet and hints that they are quite estranged, telling Praed that her mother is full of secrets.

Mrs Warren suddenly arrives with another old friend, Sir George Crofts. Like Praed, Crofts has never met Vivie before and while she and Mrs Warren are in the kitchen he presses Praed for information about Vivie's father. Kitty (Mrs Warren) has never disclosed who it is and while Crofts suspects it could just as well be him as any other man, he feels uncomfortable because he also finds Vivie attractive.

Vivie's boyfriend Frank arrives, carrying a rifle. He is surprised to see Praed who he knows from clubbing in Auckland, and is excited to hear that Mrs Warren is at home, but before he meets her his father Reverend Samuel Gardner appears. The Reverend owns the Bed and Breakfast accommodation next door. He is reluctant to come inside, instead discussing Vivie's merits with Frank who declares he wants her for her brains and her money. When his father admonishes him for shallowness Frank reminds him that he once confessed to paying a 'mistress' \$10,000 to keep her quiet. Before the Reverend can leave Mrs Warren appears, recognising him immediately as Sam Gardner. He calls her by another name – Mrs Vavasour – and she quickly corrects him.

ACT 2

Later that night a New Year's party is in full swing. Frank is drunk and tries to flirt with Mrs Warren before they are joined by Crofts and the Reverend, who tell them that Praed and Vivie are down at the beach. The party discuss Frank's desire to marry Vivie – and Mrs Warren quizzes him about his lifestyle. It is obvious to everyone that Frank has no career, no money, and little prospects. Frank is singing as Praed and Vivie appear with junk food they've picked up from the local petrol station. As the others head inside, Vivie flirts with Frank, telling him that she hopes she will never turn out like her mother and her friends.

Crofts has been watching them. Mrs Warren confronts him, and he announces that he would like to marry Vivie. Mrs Warren is not impressed and calls him 'sleazy' before the Reverend appears saying it is time to go home. Reluctantly all the men leave.

Alone at last, Vivie confronts her mother about her lifestyle; she wants to know why she won't talk about what she does for a living, she wants to know who her father is. Mrs Warren assures her it is none of the men at the party and then confesses to Vivie that as a younger woman she was very poor and was drawn into stripping and prostitution by her sister Liz. Vivie is initially appalled that her mother and her Aunt were part of 'that business' but then Liz appears and changes the cozy reality of the scene. She walks on the coffee table smashing glasses and talks directly to the audience about sex work (the 'that' in 'that business'). As Liz recites poetry about her experience as a sex worker, Vivie and Mrs Warren repeat excerpts of their previous conversation, and the two dialogues weave together until Liz leaves and Vivie is united with her mother, having gained a deeper understanding of her background, and why she made the choices that she did about her profession.

ACT 3

The next morning at the Reverend's house Frank gives his father a hard time for being hungover. Praed appears and tells them Mrs Warren and Vivie will soon come to visit. The Reverend is worried about how long they will stay but before he can come up with a plan to move them along, they arrive. The adults soon go off to look around the property leaving Vivie and Frank alone. Frank teases Vivie about her new-found fondness for her mother and flirts with her before Crofts appears. Crofts, fresh from a swim, dismisses Frank and when they are alone he proposes marriage to Vivie. She is disgusted by his proposal, and even more upset when he reveals that not only is he her mother's business partner but their business (a string of brothels) is successful and ongoing. They argue and suddenly Frank appears with a rifle. He threatens Crofts with it, but Crofts is unafraid. He tells them that they share a Father – the Reverend – and they are half brothers and sisters, then leaves.

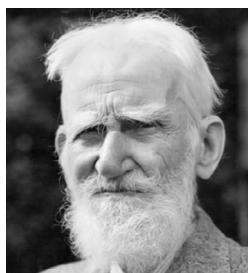
Liz appears watching the scene. Vivie is cross with Frank for bringing the rifle – she tells him she's leaving immediately – to go to work in a Law Firm in Auckland. As Frank chases after her Vivie and Liz come together and strip; Liz to a stripper's costume and Vivie to her underwear. At the end of this sequence Vivie dresses in her work clothes – a conservative suit.

ACT 4

Vivie is in the Law office where she now works. Frank is there – he's been looking for her. He wants her back, he wants to go out on the town. He tries to convince Vivie that there is no truth to what Crofts told them, that his father has denied it. Vivie tells him that regardless of the truth she doesn't want to be with him. Praed appears – he wants Vivie to visit Europe with him. She isn't interested. She confides in both men about her mother's business partnership with Crofts, showing them images of their brothels. She tells them that she must now face her mother – to say goodbye for the last time. She leaves, and Frank tells Praed he can't marry her now that he knows what her mother does. Praed is unimpressed by this. They both leave as Mrs Warren, Vivie and Liz appear together.

Mrs Warren, Vivie and Liz argue about sex work. Mrs. Warren's position is that poverty and a society that condones it constitutes immorality. She asserts that life in a brothel is preferable to a life of grinding poverty as a factory worker. Vivie acknowledges her mother's courage in overcoming her past but rejects her continued involvement in prostitution. Their arguments are interspersed with sequences where Liz performs a lap-dance first on Frank, and then on Vivie, whilst revisiting and repeating dialogue from previous scenes in the play.

Finally, Liz dresses in overalls and Vivie severs her relationship with her mother, the two sisters leave and Vivie is left alone.



GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw wrote more than 60 plays during his lifetime and was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1925. Shaw was born on July 26 1856 in Dublin, Ireland. In 1876, he moved to London, where he wrote regularly but struggled financially. In 1895, he became a theatre critic for the Saturday Review and began writing plays of his own. His play *Pygmalion* was later made into a film twice and the screenplay he wrote for the first version of it won an Oscar.

Shaw's first plays were published in volumes titled *Plays Unpleasant* (containing *Mrs Warren's Profession*) and *Plays Pleasant* (which included *Arms and the Man*, *Candida*, *The Man of Destiny* and *You Never Can Tell*). The plays were filled with what would become Shaw's signature wit, accompanied by healthy doses of social criticism.

Although *Mrs. Warren's Profession* was written in 1893 (the same year women in New Zealand won the right to vote) it not performed until 1902 because of government censorship.

In defense of the play Shaw said he wanted to "draw attention to the truth that prostitution is caused, not by female depravity and male licentiousness, but simply by underpaying, undervaluing, and overworking women so shamefully that the poorest of them are forced to resort to prostitution to keep body and soul together."



ELEANOR BISHOP

Eleanor is a writer and director who makes socially engaged performances that seek to untangle complex systems of oppression through active participation by audiences. Her pieces often blend classic plays, text from media coverage, documentary interviews, live camera and sustained personal engagement with an ensemble of actors and designers. She has worked as an assistant director for The Builders Association, Big Art Group and as a directing intern at The Wooster Group. From Wellington, she received her BA in Theatre (Honors) at Victoria University of Wellington and in 2016 she graduated with an MFA in Directing at Carnegie Mellon University's School of Drama in Pittsburgh, USA where she studied as a John Wells Fellow and a Fulbright Scholar. Eleanor has worked in New Zealand as a freelance director, and co-director of The PlayGround Collective (with Eli Kent & Robin Kerr) whose work across site-specific, new writing and participatory forms toured to arts festivals and venues nationally. She directed many of Eli Kent's early plays: *The Intricate Art of Actually Caring*, *Tinderbox* and *Like There's No Tomorrow*.

TALKING TO THE DIRECTOR...

What drew you to adapt *Mrs Warren's Profession* in this way?

The seed of this production came from *BOYS*, an adaptation of *Foreskin's Lament* I wrote and co-directed with Julia Croft for Auckland Theatre Company's *HERE & NOW Festival* last year. Media reporting on the assault of a stripper by members of the Chiefs rugby team formed a section of the piece, and during my research I read some of Hadassah Grace's eloquent writing on the Chiefs and her own experiences as a stripper.

I had debated prostitution law reform as a high school debater and was proud that New Zealand decriminalised sex work in 2003. In 2015 Amnesty International announced their support for the decriminalisation of sex work and prominent feminists such as Lena Dunham came forward to oppose the proposal. Gloria Steinem reiterated her comments that sex work was 'commercialised rape'.

I am drawn to investigate the thorny issues within contemporary feminism and the treatment of sex work remains one today, despite clear evidence that decriminalisation makes sex workers safer and reduces stigma. In New Zealand, despite having decriminalisation, sex work can still be seen as morally suspect, or problematic, and workers still suffer from high amounts of stigma as the media discussion of street-based sex workers in South Auckland and Christchurch will attest.

In this production I wanted to examine sex work, and the questions it raises for all of us about women, work, the body, capitalism, consent, agency and 'respectability'. In working on this piece, my affection for George Bernard Shaw has only grown. I am continually startled that he wrote this progressive and prescient play over a hundred years ago.

Can you describe the process of adapting the script?

I did a structural treatment of the script before I went into designing the show with Tracy Grant Lord. In this treatment I identified that I wanted to disrupt Shaw's script at the end of the first half and the end of the second half. These were the scenes where Mrs Warren and Vivie argue about the nature of sex work and this is where I wanted to add contemporary perspective. I wanted to add a third character here of Liz. Once I had cast Hadassah Grace in the role, we worked together on weaving her poetry into Shaw's text. With these foundational elements in place, the last thing to come was the updating of Shaw's language. I did several passes at this before rehearsal and in rehearsal with the cast we went through each scene line by line and made offers for lines that didn't work today. This helped us flesh out the characters with the actors.

I'm always interested in how the political and the personal rub up against one another. In Shaw's play the debate about sex work is framed between mother and daughter. The tragedy of Mrs Warren and Vivie parting ways also represents to me the tragedy of the divisions within modern feminism. It's important that women support one another's choices.

“ I am drawn to investigate the thorny issues within contemporary feminism... ”

DESIGN

Whilst considering the design of the show, set and costume designer Tracy Grant Lord and Eleanor discussed the implications of shifting the action to New Zealand today. They settled on a bach in the Coromandel as Mrs Warren's holiday home, represented by:

- a modernist (box-like) dwelling
- changing backdrops to reflect the landscape and changing time of day
- a strip of AstroTurf (fake grass)
- a gate

The box (a black void with double-sided mirrors on either side), also becomes the yoga room at the Reverend's Bed and Breakfast, a strip club and later, Vivie's office in town.

Eleanor says: The original play begins on a "Summer afternoon in a cottage garden" and ends in an office with "electric light". Vivie's journey is from naiveté to knowledge. The world she knows - represented by the landscape, is literally ripped away from her. The black void represents what living in the patriarchy feels like, violent, lonely, an unending abyss.

Sound and light also follow Vivie's journey from innocence to knowledge throughout the play. The bright midsummer 'naturalistic' lighting of the opening scenes give way to intense pink and red haze- infused lighting when Liz appears at the end of the first half of the play. Towards the end of the play, when Vivie finally faces her mother, the 'electric light' is amplified with several strobe effects during the lap-dance sequences.

Sound designer, Te Aihe Butler, was also interested in reflecting Vivie's expanding understanding throughout the play. He uses two contrasting worlds of sound; the natural setting (diagetic or organic sound) and Vivie's mind (non-diagetic or found sounds). In the diagetic world at the beginning of the play we hear native birds, distant shorelines, cicadas and crickets. When Liz appears, Te Aihe brings in overt fuzzes and textures, at odds with the natural sounds. Jennifer, Karin and Hadassah, who play Mrs Warren, Vivie and Liz are all wearing radio mics throughout the play. This means that during their argument scenes, the meta-theatrical moments when Liz is involved, Te Aihe is able to warp their voices, bring up the volume and overlay music to build a heightened sense of reality.

“ The black void represents what living in the patriarchy feels like, violent, lonely, an unending abyss. ”

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES



Thinking about the performance, recall moments, scenes or specific characters or themes that stood out for you. It could be something you saw or heard, something you enjoyed, or even something that confused you. What was it about it that you remember most?

- As a class, brainstorm these moments/scenes/characters/themes.
- As a class, discuss the impact these moments had on you.
- How would you describe the play to a friend? Work with a partner to describe the show in one paragraph, one sentence and three words!



Make a list of the Production Technologies; Set, Lighting, Costume, Props, or specific effects (eg: haze) used in this production.

- How was it used?
- What impact did it have?
- If you were to re-stage a scene of your choice what would you do differently? And why?

Make a list of Drama Elements (Action, Tension, Mood, Time etc), and Conventions (monologues, direct address etc), used in this production.

- How were they used?
- What impact did they have?
- Why do you think the director/designer made these choices?



Extension activity:

- Eleanor Bishop is concerned with contemporary feminist issues. What social issues do you think are important to talk about today?
- If you were to stage a play to highlight one issue how would you do it? Would you adapt a classic play in a new way or write or devise something original? In groups come up with a pitch for your production that highlights a specific issue. Present it back to the class.
- What are you still wondering about Auckland Theatre Company's production of *Mrs Warren's Profession*? Contact us with your questions! Email nicole@atc.co.nz

READING AND RESOURCES

Eleanor Bishop thanks the academics who shared their research with her: Lynzi Armstrong and Gwyn Easterbrook-Smith of Victoria University, and Carisa Showden and Pani Farvid of Auckland University.

For more, check out:

Sex work is integral to the feminist movement | Tilly Lawless, TED Talk

Instagram: @Jaqthestrripper

New Zealand Prostitutes Collective <http://www.nzpc.org.nz/>

Zoe Lawton #metoo blog, law in New Zealand <https://www.zoelawton.com/metoo-blog.html>

Find out more about Eleanor Bishop and her work here:

<http://www.eleanorbishop.org/>

<http://pantograph-punch.com/post/they-have-some-shit-to-say>

<http://pantograph-punch.com/post/sex-and-desire-body-double>

There are many online resources about George Bernard Shaw.

We used: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Bernard-Shaw>

ATC CREATIVE LEARNING

– ENCOURAGING ACTS OF IMAGINATION

Whether we are unpacking a play, creating a new work, or learning new skills we are encouraging habits of thinking that foster acts of imagination to take place.

ATC Creative Learning promotes and encourages teaching and participation in theatre and acts as a resource for secondary and tertiary educators. It is a comprehensive and innovative arts education programme designed to nurture young theatre practitioners and audiences.

ATC Creative Learning has direct contact with secondary school students throughout the greater Auckland region with a focus on delivering an exciting and popular programme that supports the Arts education of Auckland students and which focuses on curriculum development, literacy, and the Arts.

CURRICULUM LINKS

ATC Education activities relate directly to the PK, UC and CI strands of the NZ Curriculum from levels 5 to 8. They also have direct relevance to many of the NCEA achievement standards at all three levels.

All secondary school Drama students (Years 9 to 13) should be experiencing live theatre as a part of their course work, Understanding the Arts in Context. Curriculum levels 6, 7 and 8 (equivalent to years 11, 12 and 13) require the inclusion of New Zealand drama in their course of work.

The NCEA external examinations at each level (Level 1 – AS90011, Level 2 – AS91219, Level 3 – AS91518) require students to write about live theatre they have seen. Students who are able to experience fully produced, professional theatre are generally advantaged in answering these questions.









