

ENTERTAINMENTS

SHAVIAN COMEDY

"You Never Can Tell"

Repertory Success

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Fergus Crampton .. Royston Marcus
 Bohun, K.C. Bob Risson
 Finch McComas .. Frank O'Sullivan
 The Waiter Jum Pendleton
 Valentine Tom Stephens
 Phillip Clandon Jim Feigate
 Mrs. Clandon Gwen Campbell
 Dolly Clandon Patricia Trace
 Gloria Clandon .. Babette Fergusson

George Bernard Shaw has no rival in the deft use of caustic wit. Although "You Never Can Tell," which the Brisbane Repertory Players presented at His Majesty's Theatre last night, falls within the author's category of Plays Pleasant—and although it is a rollicking comedy—yet there are incessant thrusts in it of that mordant humour from which Shaw, even at his most benevolent, is never entirely free. In this comedy, for example, there is a biting lesson for mothers on how to bring up their children and a dangerous lesson for children on how to brush aside the humbug of their parents. As Mr. P. G. Wodehouse would say, the steel what's-his-name is successfully concealed within the velvet thingummy. And since there is a streak of malice in all men—and even in some women—the appeal of Shaw's malicious humour must always be general. That humour was well suggested by the players.

In the first ten minutes of this show it was clear that it would "go" and it looked improbable that there would be any amateurish work perpetrated—such as too often creeps into repertory performances, which pursuing art for art's sake, so to speak, are not bound by the commercial necessity of conforming to a standard. The opening gambit of Dolly Clandon (Patricia Trace) in the dentist's surgery gave the key to her quality of irresponsibility, piquancy, cheek, charm, and insight. From the jerking out of her tooth to the final curtain she never let her audience down, though she occasionally overplayed herself. She had the lightness of touch and the quickness of wit and speech without which this young female devil from Madeira is nothing.

Her twin Phillip (Jim Feigate) surely required the same lightness and swiftness—the same "tip and run" qualities. But he had them not. He was a little slow and heavy. This marred the perfect support one was due to expect

slow and heavy. This marred the perfect support one was due to expect in this pair. But this does not mean that Phillip did not make his points.

Jum Pendleton was the perfect waiter. He contrived those alternations between humanity and professionalism which make his part. The role of a waiter is usually an easy one to play. But this was no ordinary waiter. Demands in personality were made on him, and he was equal to them.

Gwen Campbell, as Mrs. Clandon did not impose herself on the audience as that shavian purveyor of uplift was manifestly intended to do by the author. Mrs. Clandon is a real presence, with her curiously divided watertight compartments inhabited by authoress and mother respectively. But in neither compartment did Gwen Campbell, though always on the competent level, become really impressive.

Babette Fergusson as Gloria began with an unobtrusiveness which was fitting, but which gave little promise of the superb quality she was to exhibit later. This was prophetic of the subtlety with which she managed the gradations between the emotional icicle and the warm-blooded woman to whom love came in spite of herself. She had the face for that early incarnation of poise and hauteur. She had, no less, the face for surrender when her defences were broken down. And she has a voice positively alluring in its modulation and control. She gave easily the finest interpretation of Shaw in the whole company—which is saying much.

What is true of Babette Fergusson, in the way of reticent beginning and ultimate rise applies, in a modified degree, to Tom Stephens, who played Valentine. As the commonplace young "Ivory snatcher" who was touched to passion by this seemingly frigid young woman with the pseudo-defences, he always was good.

Royston Marcus as Fergus Crampton made no mistake about it. He was quite definite in his bearishness and irritability—as sombre and brooding as some Soviet dictator, except when moved to the shouting pitch by his family. His consistency was admirable.

Bob Risson as Bohun and Frank O'Sullivan as Finch McComas made their contribution to an excellent performance, in which there was no really weak work. Miss Rhoda Feigate is to be whole-heartedly congratulated on her achievement as the producer. Her judgment, her sense of stagecraft and the fruits of her coaching were everywhere apparent.

The Wilston State School orchestra played incidental music. The house was crowded, as it well deserved to be. The play will be repeated tonight.