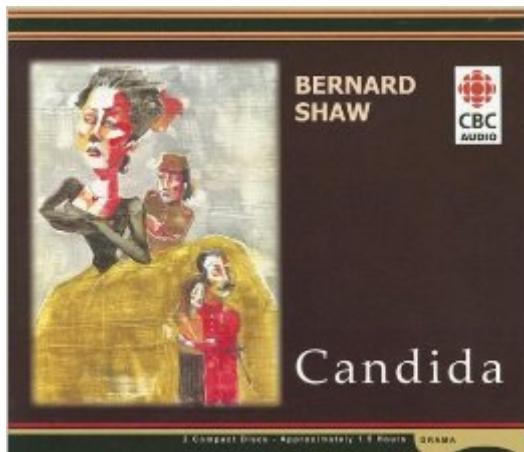


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Candida (Shaw Festival)



Synopsis

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Book Information

Series: Shaw Festival

Audio CD

Publisher: Cbc Radio Canada; Unabridged edition (February 28, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0660195453

ISBN-13: 978-0660195452

Product Dimensions: 0.2 x 4.8 x 5.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Like many writers at the turn of the 20th Century, Shaw was very much interested in "the woman question," for women were becoming increasingly independent and more of a challenge to men in both public and private spheres. Although he also addressed these issues in such other plays as PYGMALION and MAN AND SUPERMAN, CANDIDA is perhaps his clearest statement on the subject. Written in 1894, it is a statement that has proven timeless. It is easily among the favorite performance pieces of world theatre. The plot is quite simple. The Rev. Morrell is a minister with a taste for reform--and he has had the good fortune to marry the perfect wife, a remarkable woman named Candida who has a talent for smoothing every path she encounters. One of the paths to which she has turned that talent is that of Marchbanks, a poetic young man who is the grip of all the emotional turmoil delayed adolescence implies. But Marchbanks has fallen in love with Candida, and when he informs her husband of this all hell breaks loose. Throughout much of the play Morrell and Marchbanks engage in a series of brilliantly written duels over Candida, each of them

espousing what Candida means to them and what they can give her, arguing through numerous philosophical issues in the process. But neither gentleman has actually troubled to consult Candida herself; when they eventually lay the issue before her and insist that she decide between them, she responds in a way that not only demonstrates how little they know of her, but how little they know about both women and the world in general.

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