



Man and Superman (Penguin Classics)

By George Bernard Shaw

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Shaw began writing MAN AND SUPERMAN in 1901 and determined to write a play that would encapsulate the new century's intellectual inheritance. Shaw drew not only on Byron's verse satire, but also on Shakespeare, the Victorian comedy fashionable in his early life, and from authors from Conan Doyle to Kipling. In this powerful drama of ideas, Shaw explores the role of the artist, the function of women in society, and his theory of Creative Evolution. As Stanley Weintraub says in his new introduction, this is "the first great twentieth-century English play" and remains a classic exposé of the eternal struggle between the sexes.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

How tantalizing to hear Ralph Fiennes (*The English Patient*, *Schindler's List*) but not be able to see him! And hear him one does in his role as Jack Tanner, the antihero of Shaw's 1905 classic drama *Man and Superman*. Fiennes is a veritable mouthpiece--and a frequently sarcastic one at that--for the burning issues on Shaw's philosophical and social laundry list: the state of the English working class, the arms race, women's rights, unwed mothers, the evils of industry and capitalism, and English morality in general. The seriousness of the discussions is tempered by delightful Shawian wit ("There are two tragedies in life. One is to lose your heart's desire. The other is to gain it."), which prevents the dialogue from collapsing under its own weight, although it does teeter at times. The four-act play, directed by the esteemed Peter Hall for BBC Radio, begins in the English countryside and ends in the mountains of Spain after a curious detour to Hell, where, in act 3, the famous dream sequence unfolds and the main characters take on such roles as Don Juan and the Devil to further hash out the meaning of existence, the definition of life force, and the power of the female sex. This is a spirited production of Shaw's imperfect but intellectually challenging work. (*Running time: 225 min; four cassettes*)

From the Inside Flap

Man and Superman was the first drama to be broadcast on the BBC's Third Programme on October 1st, 1946. To celebrate Radio 3's 50th anniversary, the play has now been directed by Sir Peter Hall, and preserved for all time in this lush audio dramatization.

"A comedy and a philosophy," *Man and Superman* is based on the Don Juan theme and, using all the elements from Mozart's Don Giovanni, Shaw reordered them so that Don Juan becomes the quarry instead of the huntsman. Boasting an outstanding cast including Ralph Fiennes, Juliet Stevenson, Dame Judi Dench, John Wood, Nicholas Le Prevost and Paul Merton, this four cassette release includes an exclusive interview with director Sir Peter Hall.

About the Author

Dublin-born George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was an active Socialist and a brilliant platform speaker. He was strongly critical of London theatre and closely associated with the intellectual revival of British drama. Dan H. Laurence has edited Shaw's *COLLECTED LETTERS* and *COLLECTED PLAYS* with their Prefaces. He was Literary Advisor to the Shaw Estate until his retirement in 1990. Professor Stanley Weintraub teaches at the Institute of Arts and Humanistic Studies at Penn State University.

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