Baylor Theater to present Shaw's "Man and Superman"

"Man and Superman," a comedy created by playwright George Bernard Shaw, will be presented by the Baylor Theater through Saturday at 7:30 p.m. at the Hooper-Schaefer Fine Arts Center at Baylor University.

The play is directed by Patricia Cook, associate professor of theater arts, and concerns man-woman relationships in England during the early 1900s. The principal character — Jack Tanner — is a man who is intent on escaping the clutches of all females, but eventually is trapped by a cunning woman, Ms. Cook said. "Shaw wanted to show that women were just as big men-chasers as men are women-chasers," Ms. Cook explained. "Jack thinks women try to use men, and therefore, he avoids them. He is convinced that if all men everywhere placed their intellectual and moral appetites above their sexual appetites, they could eventually give birth to a sort of "superman" race. This is what Shaw seriously believed, and it's the point he tries to make in the play, even though he does it in a humorous way."

The woman who finally wins over Jack Tanner is Ann Whitfield. Their relationship is played against another love story between two friends of theirs, with the Victorian moods of early 20th century England as a backdrop. "Tanner eventually discovers, once he has been won over by Ann, that he is really just an ordinary man, not a superman able to resist love," Ms. Cook said. "To Shaw, all women wanted only one thing: to get married and have children. Once they got that, men were doomed. Shaw believed women would do anything to reach this goal. He thought women were extremely powerful in this regard, and because of that, he was afraid of them."

The part of Jack Tanner is played by Brent Blair, a native of England, and Ann Whitfield is portrayed by Renee Cox of Eagle Pass.

Ms. Cook said the play contains some ideas that were shocking at the time Shaw wrote it, but it remains one of his best-known works. "It's also one of his wittiest," she said.

"This is a play for people who like wit and humor and like to think. It's a combination of a comedy and a romantic love story."

In addition to some colorful costumes of the period, Ms. Cook said an authentic 1902 Ford is driven on stage during several scenes.

Tickets for "Man and Superman" are $4. For more information, contact the Baylor Theater box office at 755-1861.