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a world premiere

next in todd theatre
opening april 21

w. david hancock's the puzzle
directed by nigel moister

don't miss the annual one-act new play festival
opens april 22 @ 11pm

curated by erica nagel
todd lobby
the ur international theatre program

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ur supporting the arts

the university of rochester international theatre program presents

major barbara

by george bernard shaw

directed by brooke o'harra
set design by justin townsend
costume design by michael mekoven
lighting design by peter ksander
sound design & original music by brendan connelly
video design by bilal khan
voice & acting coaching by ruth childs

production staff
production stage manager
daniel mauro
assistant stage managers
shawnessy dusseau/props
april tulloh/props
anette sham/lights
amy bender/sound
master electrician
jon poon
assistant master electrician
rob mygatt
audio-visual intern
mike caputo
props masters
david pascoe & n. miya sylvester
wardrobe interns
carol faden
anna crisolo
ezela salazar
technical intern
jeff monheit

this production lasts 2 hours & 45 minutes, including two 15 minute intermissions
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1856, into a lower-middle class family. His mother worked as a professional singer and his father was a failed corn merchant and an alcoholic. Shaw spent his teenage years with his father (after his parents separated) and worked as a clerk while finishing school; both situations he hated passionately. Eventually he moved to London with his mother and sister, relying on them for income while struggling to become a published author and journalist.

Shaw began as a writer of prose, completing five novels. It was, however, as co-founder of the Fabian Society that he found his first true calling.

The Fabians were an English socialist movement and Shaw began to write politically and to develop an aggressive speaking style under their influence. He also began to develop as a critic, specifically of music and drama (he was to become one of the greatest, most influential and prolific critical writers and thinkers on all subjects the English-speaking world has ever seen, championing the cause of Wagner, Ibsen, and women’s voting rights, well ahead of his time). About this time, too, he began writing deeply political and confrontational plays, most of which were produced abroad or under the auspices of small private societies.

During the First World War, after writing a heated pamphlet, Common Sense About the War, which exposed the war-mongering on both sides of the conflict, Shaw became one of the most controversial (and, indeed, hated) men in England (in echoes of our own age, criticism of the war was seen as “unpatriotic”). After the war, however, Shaw’s reputation began to blossom.

He was a “theatre of ideas,” both philosophical and political. His plays dealt with controversial issues: prostitution (Mrs. Warren’s Profession), class (Pygmalion), money and religious morality (Major Barbara), and were preceded in their published versions by lengthy prefaces in which Shaw voiced his political and social themes, concerns and opinions. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925 for work “marked by both idealism and humanity, its stimulating satire often being infused with a singular poetic beauty,” and had a Shaw Festival established in England (and in Canada) in his honor. Shaw continued writing prolifically until the age of ninety-four, when he fell off a ladder while pruning a tree, dying just a few days later. His plays have remained continually in the theatrical repertory, and have been made into films and musicals (Pygmalion becoming the famous My Fair Lady). Shaw even won an Oscar in 1938 for his screenplay for Pygmalion!

Hints of Shaw’s personal beliefs are evident in most of his work. He was a socialist, a vegetarian, a pacifist and, for much of his life, an atheist. He celebrated the “Superman” -- a forceful realist -- in speeches for the Fabian Society and his writings. His reasons for being a vegetarian were political: he felt that eating meat wasted natural resources, debased those working in the meat industry, and coarsened human sensibilities. As an atheist, Shaw criticized the Church of Ireland through numerous essays. He once, in the presence of a group of onlookers, even dared God to strike him dead for blasphemy to disprove the existence of God. That being said, Shaw was a deeply spiritual man and, in the 1890s, redefined himself as a mystic and developed his own system of beliefs, sometimes dubbed “Shavianity”.

Shaw viewed God as a “work in progress” -- a flawed being who had made certain mistakes in the creation of humanity. He believed that people were meant to strive towards equality, to reach God’s level and to aid God in remaking His errors. Shaw viewed people as instruments of divine social change and thought that if people understood the idea of ascending to God’s level they would reach a higher level of existence (as in the aforementioned “superman”).

Shaw also developed a distrust of natural selection, and felt scientific explanations for the creation of the universe and the origin of species robbed people of a sense of purpose and made life less worth living. He additionally disagreed with natural selection because he thought it favored those who had to struggle least to survive. This contradicted his personal belief that those who struggle to improve are superior individuals.

One of George Bernard Shaw’s major goals during his lifetime was to work towards the reform of the English language, where pronunciation and spelling are often completely unrelated. To this end, he developed an idiosyncratic style of punctuation and language usage. He also detested local variations in language because he felt it trivialized the goal of language to unify all people who speak it. He criticized this lack of unity in language most notably in Pygmalion. So devoted was Shaw to this cause that, at the time of his death, he left his entire estate to a project to revamp the English language. After this project failed, his wealth was divided amongst organizations including the British Museum and the National Gallery of Ireland.

Shaw’s huge body of work is filled with political and social satire. Most notably, Shaw fills his plays with fragmented parent-child relationships in the form of foundlings and overbearing parents. This could represent his own conflict with his alcoholic father and the lack of connection with, and support he felt from, his family (Shaw was almost entirely self-educated). Politically, Shaw’s work ties directly to his personal views of religion and his work with the Fabian Society. Many of those ideas now seem to us idealistic and unrealistic. Many, however, were prescient and significantly progressive. In Shaw’s view, life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable, but more useful than a life spent doing nothing.

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one, the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap, the being a force of Nature instead of a feeble selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world has not deviated itself to making you happy.

from Man and Superman

Suppose the world were only one of God’s jokes, would you work any faster to make it a good joke instead of a bad one?
Socialism is not charity or loving-kindness, nor sympathy with the poor, nor popular philanthropy...but the economist's hatred of waste and disorder, the aesthete's hatred of ugliness and dirt, the lawyer's hatred of injustice, the doctor's hatred of disease, the saint's hatred of the seven deadly sins.

**The playwright**

should strive incessantly with the public; to insist on earnest relations with it, and not merely volup-tuous ones; to lead it, to serve it, with its constant tendency to relapse into carelessness and vulgar familiarity.

**Spiritual values** do not and cannot exist for hungry, roofless and naked people.

**What we want is not music for the people,** but bread for the people, rest for the people, immunity from slavery and scorn for the people, hope for them, enjoyment, equal respect and consideration, life and inspiration, instead of drudgery and despair. When we get that I imagine the people will make tolerable music for themselves.

I regard **war** as wasteful, demoralizing, unnecessary, and ludicrously and wholly ignoble in its reality. I don't mean war in a bad cause, or war against liberty, or war with any other qualification whatever. I mean war. I recognize no right of the good man to kill the bad man or to govern the bad man.

**Life isn't about finding yourself,** it's about creating yourself.

**I believe in life everlasting,** but not for the individual.

All great truths begin as blasphemies.

**The family skeleton,** you may as well make it

**A government** that robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul.

**Democracy** is a device that insures we shall be governed no better than we deserve.

It is not experience of life, but expectation of life that determines our conduct.

**cast**

(lin order of appearance)

lady britomart........................sara cohen
stephen undershaft....................chris justus
major barbara undershaft..............kelly smith
sarah undershaft.......................claire leblanc
adolphus cusins.......................david cernikovsky
charles lomax.........................nathan osorio
runny mitchens.......................gaby jones
andrew undershaft...................jonathan wetherbee
snobby price.........................mitch nelson
peter shirley.........................ted limpert
jenny hill..............................shannon sapolich
bill walker............................ralph germain
bilton.................................ralph germain
mrs. baines...........................amber rehash

viola.................................pearl shavzin
William Booth founded the Salvation Army in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In 1852, Booth set out on his career as a minister. His goal was to preach to those out on the streets of London (the homeless, the starving, etc.) the lessons and teachings of Jesus Christ. Needless to say, the Catholic Church in London was unhappy with Booth’s unwillingness to comply with conventional forms of preaching to a congregation. Instead, Booth took his message directly to the people outside of the physical church. Because of these fundamental disagreements, Booth split with the church and embarked on travels throughout Europe to spread his message.

Soon Booth had gathered a huge following of saved Christians who showed a unique and intense motivation to save the souls of corrupted men and women everywhere through the preaching of salvation and hope. With this following, Booth converted many to Christianity, showing gamblers, drunkards, and the like, the way to Christ. Once converted, the individual was matched up with a church to continue the faith. Often churches refused to take the converts in, because of their ugly pasts. As a result, the converted instead joined Booth in his cause and his following grew and came to be known as “The Christian Mission.”

The official name of the group came about in 1878, when Booth read an annual report saying of the mission: “The Christian Mission under the superintendent of the Rev. William Booth is a volunteer army.” Booth proceeded to cross out “volunteer” and write “salvation.” Soon after, the name Salvation Army became the official title of Booth’s mission.

They were an “Army of Salvationists.” From 1881 to 1885, the “army” stormed through the British Isles, saving the souls of over 250,000 people. It was not an easy road, as Booth’s followers frequently became involved in altercations with doubters, mockers and non-believers who physically and verbally attacked them as they passed through.

Eventually the Army spread to the United States. Lieutenant Eliza Shirley held the first ever meeting of the Salvation Army in the United States in 1879 in Philadelphia. Soon after, Booth sent reinforcements over from Europe to help with the efforts, led by Commissioner George Scott Railton. Within six years the Army was recognized by the White House and endorsed by President Grover Cleveland. The Salvation Army still operates today in nations all over the globe.
with the flute and a number of percussion instruments, perform throughout the play, supporting the actors. Often musicians will follow, or underline the movement of the actors on the stage and punctuate specific gestures in a stylized way unique to Kabuki.

Finally, the supporting aesthetic elements (costume, makeup, set, etc.) are elaborate. The costumes often weigh fifty to sixty pounds and are exuberant and striking in color. In jidai-mono, or historical Kabuki plays (one of the three main types of Kabuki plays along with domestic dramas and dance -- sewa-mono and shosagoto respectively), actors wear a makeup style called kumadori, which features a white base with specific lines and colors drawn over the top referring to a character’s nature, such as good or evil. A makeup style of this kind provides a mask for the actor, lending itself to a particular intense representation of the character and her or his dramatic function.

This production has been made possible through the contributions of ENG 170 & 270 (Technical & Advanced Technical Theatre) and ENG 291 (Plays in Production)


Michael Mckown - Costumes) is a 2002 graduate of NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, where he earned his MFA in design for film and theater. His work has been seen at the Jean Cocteau Rep, Chicago’s Eclipse Theatre Company, the Texas Shakespeare Festival, the Firemen’s Theatre (NYC), and in several independent feature and short films. As a milliner, his work has been seen in the recent Broadway productions of Wicked, The Boy From Oz, and Gypsy. Other projects include designs for Laura Peterson Choreography (NYC), and the costume and production design for the 2004 “Coca-Cola Refreshing Filmmaker’s Award” winning short film, “Beating Real.”

Peter Kander (Lighting) is a sculptor and designer currently working out of Brooklyn, NY. Lighting designs include: Arms and the Man (Intimate Theatre); About David and Lemon (Cornell University); The Merry Wives of Windsor (Portland Stage), All in the Telling (Iowa’s Riverside Theatre), and several productions for CalArts. As scenic designer, he has worked with Richard Fissman (Bar Theatres; CalArts), Erik Elm (as a river from Don Minues to Ro-cous; University of Iowa), and Mccallie Catlett (As You Like It, The Little Lasonic Project), among others. Puppetry work includes credits as puppeteer, author, director, and designer on several original productions, as well as Handel’s California Shakespeare Festival; dir. Karin Coombs), The Sleeping Beauty (with animator, Melissa Chizmorov) and the Stupid Butterfly Project (Arts at St. Ann’s Puppettale). He is a founding member of TENT, a collective performance company that explores space and time as the basis for performance. In 2004, TENT won a residence in Portland, ME, creating Oh Sweet Captain, or the Ahab Stump, adapted from Bosco Jicki Crockert’s poems/opera Or The Whale… and Mephir’s Moby Dick. Peter is a design associate with the PBD Group.

Brendan Connelly (Sound/Original Music) is co-founder of “The Theatre of a Two-headed Cal” and has composed music for all its plays. Other credits include: Donne Marriages (dir. David Levick: He’s a Married Man) The Amorous Trio (Present Company Theatre/Instituied), MaudalMasons (NY Fringe Festival); and A Mousetrap of Birds at the UK (all with director, Ian Bethy), and Match, (dir. Susanna Gellert/Lincoln Center). Brendan is a member of Wet Ink Music, a new music preventing organization/composer’s collective. He has been commissioned by Columbia University’s Experimental Music Series; STAGE 01 Festival (NYC); Oasis: A Festival of Experimental Music and Art (Chashama, NY), and a number of Wet Ink Musics concerts. He has been a visiting artist at Dartmouth and Lafayette Colleges.

His latest composition, Quasim 1, was released on Planet Records in 2004.

Bilal Khan (Video) has developed applications and technologies for wireless, live, and computationally manipulated video in work with “The Theatre of a Two-headed Cal” since 2002. He contributed video elements to The Moth (2003), The Difference Engine (2003), The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great (2004) and the NYC workshop of Major Barbara (2004). He is graduate faculty in the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science at CUNY’s John Jay College of Criminal Justice.