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

4th student written, acted & directed annual one-act new play festival
opens april 22 @ 11pm
curated by erica negal todd lobby

major barbara

ARM
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The university of rochester international theatre program presents

major barbara

by george bernard shaw

directed by brooke o’hara
set design by justin townsend
costume design by michael mckown
lighting design by peter lindsay
sound design & original music by Brendan Connely
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/costumes
Annette 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 Crisologo
Ezea 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 his 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 repertoire, 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 "Shawanity".

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 understanding, to reach God's level and to aid God in remedying 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 confidence (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 that the need to communicate the ideas in his plays required the use of a universal language. His plays were intended to be performed in English language. He often wrote a play and then translated it into another language to see how it worked. 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 fragmentated 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 even seem to us idealistic and unrealistic. Many, however, were prescient and significantly progressive. In Shaw's view, a life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable, but more useful than a life spent doing nothing.
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 voluptuous ones; to lead it, nerve it, withstand its constant tendency to lapse into carelessness and vulgar familiarity.

What we want is not music for the people, but bread for the people, rest for the people, immunity from robbery 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 people will make tolerable music for themselves.

I regard war as wasteful, demoralizing, unnecessary, and ludicrously and sordidly inglorious 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.

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

All great truths begin as blasphemies.

If you cannot get rid of the family skeleton, you may as well make it dance.

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

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

It is not experience of life, but expectation of life that determines our conduct.
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 pasts. As a result, the converts instead joined Booth in his cause and his following grew and came to be known as "The Christian Mission."

The official naming of the group came about in 1878, when Booth read an annual report saying of the mission: "The Christian Mission under the superintendence of Rev. William Booth is a volunteer army." Booth proceeded to cross out "volunteer" and write "mission." 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.

The development of Kabuki drama is rooted in the Edo period of Japanese history (1603-1868). Women dominated the stage in the early days of Kabuki theatre, but in 1629 decrees were issued banning women from performing. Among the reasons for this were that female Kabuki actors often doubled as prostitutes, standing in a show and then putting themselves up for sale immediately afterwards. Due to the prostituting of actors and also because of the drama's subject matter, Kabuki was decreed a "moral disturbance" of morality. The ban on women performers still holds true today, only men can be Kabuki artists. Men portraying women are called onnagata and the acting style associated with female roles would come into its own as a very specific and challenging skill for a Kabuki actor to master.

The rise of Kabuki is historically significant because the art grew out of a new middle class: a class of merchants facing socio-political oppression. The hierarchy of Tokugawa (Edo) society was split into three distinct groups: (in descending order) the court nobility (kuge), the warrior class (daimyo or samurai), and the townspeople, farmers and craftsmen, who lived in the kabuki theatre became directly out the class of lowest social class. It was this class which saw an economic rise during this period, and began to command influence over the kuge and samurai classes. Kabuki drama thus began to flourish, replacing the dominant no drama of the time. Merchants built Kabuki Theatres as a showcase for their economic successes, to live out their licentious fantasies and display their dianing fashions, and to vent their veiled criticism of forbidden topics.

As Kabuki artists became more famous and skilled, the art started to change and enter more serious subject matter. The writing started to become more sophisticated, in order to match the new skills of the actors. Kabuki began to adapt texts from various puppet plays (many written by the great writer Chikamatsu — often called the Shakespeare of Japan). Even today, many of the texts that remain in the Kabuki canon originated in the puppet theatre.

Elements of the form Kabuki drama, first and foremost, emphasizes the skill of the actor. The literarcy value of the play takes a backseat to this aesthetic ideology and, in fact, actors often change the dialogue and plot of the play, understanding that they themselves are the epicentre of the performance. Indeed, most Kabuki audiences come to the theater to watch their favorite actors, not to see their favorite plays. Kabuki actors train from childhood, and are often part of a long family line of Kabuki performers.

Kabuki originated from dance and therefore finds its roots in stylized movement and specific, highly heightened gesture. The most prominent of those gestures is the mii (a self-contained, tense or frozen stance or attitude). Often, when a powerful and moving dialogue occurs, the actor will completely stop after a verse of movement, and freeze with a specific stance, onbashira crossing his eyes and letting the corners of his mouth droop. The mii is considered a "defensive" pose and many scholars have linked the protective nature of the expression to Japanese political ideology during the Edo period.

Music is also a very important part of Kabuki Theatre. The most prominent instrument is the shamisen, a three-stringed instrument. The shamisen, along

continued over...
with the flute and a number of percussion instruments, perform throughout the play, supporting the actors. Often musicians will follow, and underwrite 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 zuke-mono, or historical Kabuki plays (one of the three main types of Kabuki plays along with domestic dramas and dance -- seiza-mono and erabamono 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 particularly intense interpretation of the character's role or his or her dramatic function.

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Bedrock O'Hara (Director) is co-founder of the NYC-based "The Theatre of a Two-headed Cat". She is a Drama League Directing Fellow, a recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Grant, a coregent nominee for the Alan Schneider Award, and a member of HERE's Artists Residency Program. In 2003, Brooke was invited to tape her interpretation of the award-winning play, Woyzeck, at a prestigious venue. Her film work includes "The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great", "The Mother, Tiger Brinzesraven" (all at La Mama ETC), and "How High The Moon" (Pierrott Theatre). Brooke has an MFA from Tulane University, and has trained in Japan with the Butoh company, Aga Ga, and with Kyozen master, Nenosuke Maki. She has studied and worked in Indonesia, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Ghana. Notable directors with whom she has worked are Jo Chiaki, Richard Muenster and Jan Neberly (Brookline). She is an adjunct at NYU's Experimental Theatre Wing, and will direct Lisa D'Ambrosio's "Waltz With Me" at the Pierrott Theatre in Providence, RI, this spring.

Justin Townsend (Sets) has worked with "Two-Headed Cat" on Major Barbra and The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great (La Mama/ECA/ENG 170's Experimental Theatre Wing). Other lighting designs include "Blood on the Ivory White (Intimate Theatre); 'dir. Bat She' (Odeh; "Furrows Stage; dir. Karen Crummond), King Lear (associate: Diams, Stendere; "dir. Travis Pompeii, Mouly-Buy (by Nicky Parla, La Mama), Sphynx: (Georgia Shakespeare Festival; dir. Nancy Kenneth), The Glass Menagerie (Intimate Theatre, NY; dir. Alen McNeely), Nureyev, Nureyev (Stages Theatre, TX; dir. Mark Ramautt), and "dir. Malena (by Subtraction, CA; dir. Nancy Kenneth). Scene designs include work at CalArts (including "Love in the Night and "In The), both dir. Jen Harvey), at El Portal Theatre, and with directors Nancy Kenneth and Wes Savie. He has designed and guest lectured at many universities and is a founding member of TEN at SBC/ow.com (a company dedicated to creating and verifying ideas of performance and design). Justin has an MFA in Design from CalArts and resides in Brooklyn.

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 theatre. His work has been seen at the Jean Cocteau Rep, Chicago's Eclipse Theatre Company, the Texas Shakespeare Festival, the Ponderosa Theatre (NSC), and in several independent features and short films. As a milliner, his work has been seen in the recent Broadway productions of Wicked, The Boy From Oz, and Cygnet. Other projects include designs for Laura Peterson Choreography (NYC), and the production and costume design for the 2004 "Cruise Gala Refreshing Ensenada's Award" winning short Film, Being Real.

Peter Keander (Lighting) is a sculptor and designer currently working out of Brooklyn, NY. Lighting designs include: Arms and the Men (Intimate Theatre); "dir. Lenan and Lenon (Columbus University), The Misanthropo (Portland Stage), All The Time (louw's Riverside Theatre), and several productions for CalArts. As scenic designer, he has worked with Richard Eyre (Back Behavior, CalArts), "Ela ("Ela) from the Museum to Eu- nat)", University of Iowa) and Muriel Callard ("I've Like It, The Little Theatre Project), among others. Pappert work includes credits as puppeteer, author, director, and designer on several original productions, as well as "Hander (California Shakespeare Festival); dir. Karen Crummond), The Stopping Date Effect (with animator, Melissa Chimovick), and the Stepford Butterfly Project (Arts at St. Ann's Puppeted). He is a founding member of TEN, a collective performance company that explores space and time as the basis for performance. In 2004, TEN were in residence in Portland, ME, creating OB Sustain ("dir. Bum Stamps), adapted from Bum's book of poetry ("dir. The , and Moebius and 's Kiss. Peter is a design associate with the PHD Group.

Brendan Connelly (Sound/Original Music) is co-founder of "The Theatre of a Two-Headed Cat" and has composed music for all its plays. Other credits include: "dir. David Levinstein, The Amourous Thieves (Present Company), (by La Mama/ECA/ENG 170's Experimental Theatre Wing), and (by the University of Experimental Music Series; STAGE 01 Festival (NYC), Ode A Festival of Experimental Music and Art (Chashama, NY), and a number of West End Missions concerts. He has been a visiting artist at Dartmouth and Lafayette Colleges, a composer, and a composition, "Quartet 2", was released on Plenum Records in 2004.

Bilal Khan (Video) has developed applications and technologies for wireless, Internet, and computations manipulated video in work with "The Theater of a Two-Headed Cat" since 2002. He contributed video elements to The Mother (2003), The Difference Engine (2003), The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great (2004) and the NYU workshop of Major Barbra (2004). He is a graduate student in the Department of Computer Science at UCY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice.