

N E W S

MY FAIR LADY,
**THE MOST DELICIOUS MUSICAL EVER WRITTEN,
PROMISES DELIGHTFUL MID-WINTER DISTRACTION**

Praise for *My Fair Lady*

“One of the best musicals of the century ... close to the genius of creation.”

-- Brooks Atkinson in the *New York Times*

My Fair Lady, Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick's Loewe's beloved 1956 musical based on G.B. Shaw's *Pygmalion*, has taken on new life in a recently discovered two-piano orchestration commissioned by the authors in 1959 from arranger **Trude Rittman**. PORTLAND CENTER STAGE is pleased to present this sleek and intriguing version – which includes *all* the original dialogue and songs (“I Could Have Danced All Night,” “Wouldn't Be Loverly?,” “On the Street Where You Live,” among the more than two dozen sterling showstoppers) – in a co-production with **Dallas Theater Center**. Directed by DTC Artistic Director **Richard Hamburger**, the creative team includes Musical Director **Jeff Lankov**, Choreographer **Joel Ferrell** and Costume Designer **Wade Laboissonniere**. The production opens in Portland, with performances from February 15 – March 12*, then moves to Dallas from April 6 – May 1.

My Fair Lady previews at the Newmark Theatre, 1111 SW Broadway at Main, Tuesday, February 15 - Thursday, February 17; opens Friday, February 18 and closes Saturday, March 12*. Evening performances take place at 7 PM Tuesday, Wednesday, Sunday and 8 PM Thursday, Friday, Saturday while Thursday, Saturday and Sunday matinee dates are also available. The production also includes many festivities such as **Fade to Black**, **Doo-a-Little Tea** and **Girls Night Out**. (see page four for complete details). Tickets: \$15, 30+under, \$20 - \$55, general; box office: 503-274-6588; information: www.pcs.org. *My Fair Lady* is sponsored by **Hoffman Construction, Ticor Title Insurance Company, Gerding Edlen Development Company** and **GBD Architects**.

In *My Fair Lady*, Henry Higgins (**Martin Kildare**), a linguist who appears to be all head and no heart, determines to civilize Eliza Doolittle (**Sherry Boone**), an uneducated, unmannered cockney guttersnipe. While Eliza is indeed an apt pupil, she turns out to have a rare inner beauty that charms all who meet her, including her curmudgeonly, know-it-all teacher. *My Fair Lady* is full of colorful, unforgettable characters, including scallywag Alfie Doolittle (**James Brennan**), bumbling Col. Pickering (**David Coffee**), dotty Mrs. Higgins (**Janis Pessano**), long-suffering Mrs. Pearce (**Mary Jo McConnell**), imperious Mrs. Eynsford-Hill (**Susannah Mars**) and sweetly smitten Freddy (**Jeff Edgerton**).

In Richard Hamburger's clever conception, the set is a mirror image of PORTLAND CENTER STAGE's elegant Newmark Theatre, with the boxes serving especially well for the Ascot scene. The action centers in Prof. Higgins' study, with carefully chosen furnishings moving seamlessly on and off stage to suggest settings from the bustling outdoor marketplace to the opera house of Covent Garden and the tenement and

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pub of Tottenham Court Road to the splendor of the Embassy Ballroom. The timeframe has been shifted 20 years, from 1912 to the 1930s – to give Wade Laboissonniere the freedom to create livelier, more seductive costumes – and, in a stroke of nontraditional, extraordinary casting, Eliza is played by a young African American soprano who’s been called “one of the most brilliant performers on Broadway” (BroadwayWorld.com). The two pianists (Jeff Lankov and **Christopher Schindler**) are clearly visible to the audience not only moving the music along but also engaging in humorous bits of stage business.

There’s a lot of Shaw in Henry Higgins. Shaw was a confirmed bachelor who didn’t marry until very late in life and only then with the promise that the union not be consummated. He was also an astounding polymath with many intellectual obsessions, including the English language. He even went so far as to publish a new alphabet for English. But he knew himself well and the character of Henry Higgins is laced with saving self-mockery. One of his most famous lines, as Eliza complains of his treatment of her near the end of Act II is: “The question is not whether I treat you rudely, but whether you ever heard me treat anyone else better.” True to Shaw’s *Pygmalion*, the stage version of *My Fair Lady* ends ambiguously: we never know whether Eliza responds to Higgins yearning command, “Eliza? Where the devil are my slippers?” Shaw never intended for these arch antagonists yield to the sentimentality of traditional romance. In honor of his intent, his language and his wit, Lerner and Loewe created a play with music that continues to *live* with grace and clarity. The two-piano version exposes the bones of the of the play within the musical and they are very fine bones, indeed.

SHERRY BOONE has played Sharon in *Master Class* (Berkeley Rep), Mimi in *La Bohème* (New York’s Merkin Hall), the title role in *Marie Christine* (alternating with Audra McDonald, Lincoln Center) and Marian Anderson in John La Chiusa’s *First Lady Suite*. She has performed as a soloist with the New York Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra, among others. She is co-author of an opera, *Ellen Craft*, about a female slave who passed as white and as a man, which played New York’s Fringe Festival last fall. She is well matched with **MARTIN KILDARE** whose stage career moves fluidly between musicals and Shakespeare. He’s been called a “knockout performer...urgent and electrifying” (*Las Vegas Review-Journal*) for his Iago at Utah Shakespearan Festival. His magnetic performance as Essex in Maxwell Anderson’s *Elizabeth the Queen* allowed the Folger Theatre production to “achieve great theater” according to Potomacstages.com. And he was part of the Pearl Theatre Company’s revival of Shaw’s *Candida* (Rev. Morell) that led Curtainup.com to exclaim: “Every once in a while, there’s a confluence of forces that transports a production from the range of ‘good’ or even ‘very good’ into the realm of ‘excellent.’”

ALAN JAY LERNER (Book and Lyrics) and **FREDERICK LOEWE** (Music) began their partnership in 1943 with songs for the stage production of *What’s Up?* They hit their stride four years later with the Broadway smash *Brigadoon*. Other stage and movie successes followed, such as *Paint Your Wagon* (1951), *Gigi* (1958, with an Academy Award-winning score) and *Camelot* (1960), but no success was bigger for the duo than *My Fair Lady*, which opened on Broadway on March 15, 1956, with a record-breaking 2,500 performances, became the longest running production in Broadway history when it closed on June 13, 1961. A national tour of a second company, begun in 1957, played for several years, breaking box office records in city after city; and the original cast recording sold more than 3,000,000 albums. In addition to being a huge commercial success, the play won nine Tony Awards, including Best Musical, Best Author (Lerner) and Best Composer (Loewe). The 1964 film won eight Oscars, including Best Picture.

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Director **RICHARD HAMBURGER** is in his thirteenth season as Artistic Director of Dallas Theater Center where he has directed a wide range of classic and contemporary works, including new plays such as *Dreamlandia* for the Big D Festival of the Unexpected. Previously, he was Artistic Director at Maine's Portland Stage Company and Associate Director at Great Lakes Theater Festival. He is an active director in regional theaters as well as an award-winning playwright. He serves on the Executive Board of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers.

Sherry Boone	Eliza	Richard Hamburger	Director
James Brennan	Alfie Doolittle	Jeff Lankov	Musical Director
David Coffee	Col. Pickering	Joel Ferrell	Choreographer
Jeff Edgerton	Freddy	John Coyne	Set Designer
Michael Farina	Ensemble	Wade Laboissoniere	Costume Designer
Martin Kildare	Henry Higgins	Marcus Doshi	Lighting Designer
Susannah Mars	Mrs. Eynsford-Hill	Garth Hemphill	Sound Designer
Mary Jo McConnell	Mrs. Pearce	Christine Menzies	Dialect Coach
Dell McLain	Ensemble	Amber Wedin	Stage Manager
Janis Pessano	Mrs. Higgins	Mark Tynan	Assistant Stage Mgr

All actors and the stage managers are Equity members.

The city's largest professional theater, **PORTLAND CENTER STAGE** is a resident company of the Portland Center for the Performing Arts and an affiliate of the League of Regional Theatres, Actors' Equity Association and Theatre Communications Group. PCS embarked on a period of dynamic change when its fourth artistic director, **Chris Coleman**, joined the theater in May 2000. With a new artistic vision that is vast, eclectic and committed to audience enrichment, PORTLAND CENTER STAGE dares to create theater that is as ravishing, innovative and thought-provoking as our wildest dreams. Its 2004 – 2005 season concludes with:

- *O Lovely Glowworm, or Scenes of Great Beauty*, Glen Berger, **World Premiere**
March 22 – April 24, 2005, Winningstad Theatre

Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe's *My Fair Lady*: Performances and Special Events
Portland Center Stage • Newmark Theatre • 1111 SW Broadway • Tickets: \$15 – 55
Box Office: 503-274-6588 • www.pcs.org

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<u>Evenings</u>	7 PM		8 PM
Tuesdays	Feb 15 (P), 22, Mar 1, 8		Thursdays Feb 17 (P), 24, Mar 3, 10
Wednesdays	Feb 16 (P), 23, Mar 2, 9		Fridays Feb 18 (O), 25, Mar 4, 11
Sundays	Feb 20, 27		Saturdays Feb 19, 26, Mar 5, 12 (C)*
<u>Matinées</u>	2 PM		Noon
Sundays	Feb 20, 27, Mar 6		Thursdays Feb 24, Mar 3, 10
Saturday	Mar 5, Mar 12		(P) = Preview • (O) = Opens • (C) = Closes

Run time is **2-1/2 hours, with one intermission.**

* **N.B.** * **Please Note:** There is no 7 PM performance on Sunday, March 6, there are two Saturday matinées, and the production closes with the 8 PM performance on Saturday, March 12.

Fade to Black: The theater party with a twist

Tuesday, February 15 7 PM The Rotunda
 First preview and a party with dj'd music and free swing dance lessons from the **Viscount Ballroom**. Food by **InOvations in Catering**. Cash bar. \$15 • 503-274-6588.

Opening Night Celebration

Friday, February 18 8 PM The Rotunda
 Immediately following the performance, join Richard Hamburger and the entire *My Fair Lady* company for cocktails, comestibles and dancing to **Dirty Martini**. With food by InOvations in Catering.

Doo-a-Little Tea

Sundays, February 20, 27, March 6 Noon Heathman Tea Court
 Saturdays, March 5, 12 1001 SW Broadway
 Be very English by taking tea before a weekend matinée. \$60, adults/\$29.50, ages 6 - 12, **reservations, required** • 503-274-6589.

Girls Night Out

Tuesdays, February 22, March 1, 8 5 PM South Park
 Wednesdays, February 23, March 2, 9 1525 SW Park
 Girlfriends gather for early dinner at South Park followed by a 7 PM performance. \$50, **reservations required** • 503-274-6589.

Q&A

Thursdays, February 24, March 3 Noon Third floor Gallery
 Tuesday, March 1 7 PM
 Discuss the play in an open dialogue with members of the company, immediately following the performance.

Access Performances

<u>Audio Described</u>		<u>Sign Interpreted</u>	
Friday, February 25	8 PM	Thursday, March 3	8 PM

The Newmark is fully accessible for all people with disabilities. Large print programs and assistive listening devices are available from the coatroom, free of charge.

Forum

Sunday, February 27 2 PM Third floor Gallery
 Join special guests in a discussion of *My Fair Lady*. Immediately following the matinée.

2005 – 2006 Season Announcement

Monday, February 28 7 PM Newmark Theatre
 Join Artistic Director Chris Coleman, the Board and staff of Portland Center Stage as we announce the plans for PCS' 18th season of contemporary, classic and world premiere theater.