SHAKESPEARE THEATRE COMPANY’S 2007-2008 SEASON CONTINUES WITH

**MAJOR BARBARA**

**BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW**

**DIRECTED BY ETHAN MCSWEENY**


Media partner Roll Call Group provides promotional support throughout the run.

Andrew Undershaft has been estranged from his family on account of his business for the past 20 years. Daughters Barbara and Sarah are now engaged, and their mother, Lady Britomart, invites Andrew to the family’s home in hopes of securing their dowries. Barbara, who serves as a Major in the Salvation Army, is especially horrified by her father’s amoral attitude toward his dangerous work, but she promises to visit his arms factory so long as he visits her shelter. Watching Barbara in action, Undershaft determines that she would be a great asset to his business, but her fiancé Adolphus Cusins asserts that Barbara would never turn her back on morality for money. When Barbara learns that the Salvation Army has accepted donations from a wealthy patron who owns a whisky distillery, she quits, disheartened that the organization would accept tainted money. Later, the Undershaft family visits Andrew’s weapons plant and is surprised by both the cleanliness of the town and the happiness of the workers. Lady Britomart suggests that she and Barbara should run the town and that Cusins should inherit the business. Barbara watches in shock as her fiancé accepts this offer, but Cusins reassures her that he will bring virtue and ethics to the business. With the realization that no good thing can remain wholly untainted, Barbara resolves to marry Cusins and bring her high standards to the family business.

“Shaw’s *Major Barbara* poses the question of whether or not money is the root of all evil or if, in fact, poverty is the greatest crime against humanity,” Ethan McSweeny said. “The world’s premier arms and ammunition maker is juxtaposed with the moralistic Barbara; pitting God on one side and guns on the other. Barbara’s idealism collides with Undershaft’s realism, each wagering their soul on their ability to convert the other. But at its core is also the story of a family that has grown apart and is finding ways to get back together again.”
THE DIRECTOR

Ethan McSweeny returns to the Shakespeare Theatre Company to direct for the first time since his 2004 production of The Persians. His work on new plays, revivals and classics has been seen on many of the country's prominent stages. In New York, his direction includes the Tony-nominated, Outer Critics Circle and Drama Desk Award-winning Broadway revival of Gore Vidal’s The Best Man featuring Charles Durning, Chris Noth and Spalding Gray, the world premiere of Kate Fodor’s 100 Saints You Should Know (Entertainment Weekly and Time Out 10 Best of 2007), Jason Grote's 1001 (Time Out 10 Best of 2007), the Off-Broadway premiere of John Logan’s Never the Sinner (Outer Critics Circle award), and critically acclaimed productions of Aeschylus’ The Persians at National Actor's Theatre and Willy Holtzman's Sabina for Primary Stages.

In addition to staging classics by Aeschylus, Shakespeare, Chekhov, Shaw, Miller and Pinter, McSweeny has directed new works by a range of contemporary authors including Courtney Baron, Lee Blessing, Kate Fodor, Richard Greenberg, Noah Haidle, Julia Jordan, Tony Kushner, John Logan, Quincy Long, Peter Morris and Lloyd Suh. McSweeny has directed at the Alley Theatre, Berkeley Repertory, Folger Theatre, Guthrie, Hartford Stage, Kennedy Center, Manhattan Theatre Club, McCarter Theatre, Old Globe, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, South Coast Repertory, Westport Playhouse and the Wilma Theatre, among others.

McSweeny was recipient of the 2006 San Diego Theatre Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Director, Play, Ensemble and Set for A Body of Water. Other awards include the 2005 OCIE Award for Best Production (Mr. Marmalade), the Minneapolis Star-Tribune Award for Best Production and Best Director (Six Degrees of Separation), the New Jersey Star-Ledger Best of 2002 Award for CTRL+ALT+DELETE, and the 2001 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Best Production Award for Wit. In Washington, McSweeny’s work has been recognized with multiple Helen Hayes Award nominations for Mad about the Bard, Never the Sinner and The Triumph of Love.

With his partner Vivienne Benesch, McSweeny has spent the last three summers as Artistic Director of the Chautauqua Theater Company and conservatory in western New York. Additionally, McSweeny has served as Associate Artistic Director of the George Street Playhouse, as Artistic Advisor to the National Actors Theatre, and Associate Director of the Shakespeare Theatre Company (1993-1997). He currently serves as a member of the Executive Board of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers. He received the first ever undergraduate degree in theater and dramatic arts from Columbia University.

THE CAST

Vivienne Benesch returns to the Shakespeare Theatre Company to play Barbara Undershaft. Benesch last appeared in the Company’s 1995 mainstage production of Henry V at the Lansburgh Theatre and subsequent production at the Free For All at Carter Barron. Her many credits include Off-Broadway performances with Primary Stages, Lincoln Center, New York Theatre Workshop, Theatre For A New Audience and New York Shakespeare Festival. Additionally, Benesch performed in London’s West End production of The Lady from Dubuque with Maggie Smith. Regional credits include roles at the
Guthrie Theater, Hartford Stage, McCarter Theatre Center, Long Wharf Theatre and Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. As Co-Artistic Director of the Chautauqua Theater Company, Benesch recently directed Much Ado about Nothing, Measure for Measure and Skin of Our Teeth. A graduate of New York University’s MFA program, Benesch also serves as Chair of the Theatre Panel for the National Foundation of Advancement in the Arts.

Helen Carey returns to the Shakespeare Theatre Company for the first time since her role as Atossa in the 2006 production of The Persians, directed by Ethan McSweeny. Carey will play the role of Lady Britomart Undershaft in Major Barbara. Carey's Shakespeare Theatre Company credits include roles in Henry VI, Antony and Cleopatra, Volpone, Macbeth (1995), Julius Caesar (1994), As You Like It and The Merry Wives of Windsor and The Comedy of Errors (1993). She has performed in numerous productions at the Guthrie Theater and also has appeared at Roundabout Theatre Company, the Stratford Festival in Ontario, Berkshire Theater Festival, Arena Stage, Hartford Stage and McCarter Theatre. She earned a Tony nomination and Theatre World Award for her role in London Assurance.

Ted van Griethuysen returns to play Andrew Undershaft. Van Griethuysen last appeared with the Company as Gravedigger and Ghost in Hamlet. Other recent Company credits include performances in Love’s Labor’s Lost (mainstage and RSC productions), The Persians, Lorenzaccio, Macbeth, Henry IV, Part 1 and Part 2 and The Silent Woman. Van Griethuysen’s Broadway credits include roles in Romulus, Inadmissible Evidence and Galileo. He also has appeared Off-Broadway at the New York Shakespeare Festival, Eastside Playhouse, Opposites Company, Roundabout Theatre Company and La MaMa, and in regional productions at the Folger Theatre, Studio Theatre, Hartford Stage and Long Wharf Theatre, among others.

Floyd King returns to play Peter Shirley. King last appeared in the Company’s repertory productions of Tamburlaine and Edward II at Sidney Harman Hall. Other recent Company credits include performances in Love’s Labor’s Lost (mainstage, Free For All and RSC productions), The Comedy of Errors, The Tempest, Lorenzaccio, Pericles, Henry IV, Part 1 and Part 2, The Rivals, Richard III (2003) and The Silent Woman. King also has appeared in regional productions at the Folger Theatre, Woolly Mammoth, Studio Theatre, Alley Theatre and Pittsburgh Public Theater, among others.


Tom Story returns to the Company to play Stephen Undershaft. Story’s Shakespeare Theatre Company credits include roles in The Rivals, Twelfth Night and Measure for Measure. A graduate of Duke
University and the Juilliard School, Story received two Berkshire Eagle Awards for his performances in *Secret Lives of the Sexists* and *The Heidi Chronicles* at the Berkshire Theatre Festival, and Helen Hayes Award nominations for *A Number* and *The Invention of Love* at the Studio Theatre. He has appeared regionally at McCarter Theatre, Yale Repertory, Northern Stage and Kansas City Repertory, as well as Off-Broadway at the York Theatre Company, Town Hall Repertory Company, Mint Theatre Company and Project 400.

The *Major Barbara* cast also includes Leah Curney, Tiffany Fillmore, Catherine Flye, Jennifer Mendenhall, Kevin Kell O'Donnell and James Ricks.

THE DESIGNERS

McSweeny’s artistic team for the production includes designers well known to the Shakespeare Theatre Company. Set Designer James Noone returns to the Company for the first time since McSweeny’s production of *The Persians*. Noone won a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Set Design for his sets for *Cyrano* at the Lansburgh Theatre. His Broadway credits include *Match*, *Urban Cowboy*, *A Class Act*, *Judgment at Nuremberg*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Night Must Fall*, *The Rainmaker*, *Getting and Spending*, *The Gin Game*, *The Sunshine Boys* and *Inherit the Wind*. He also has designed for numerous opera companies, regional theatres and Off-Broadway productions. For *Major Barbara*, Noone has created three separate worlds: An Edwardian room of bookcases, stately furniture and windows, all with gold and black detailing; a brick façade that serves as the Salvation Army center where Barbara spends her time; and a small town of identical house-like workshops surrounding a central war monument.

Costume Designer Robert Perdziola has outfitted the men of *Major Barbara* in three-piece suits with top hats, and the women in Salvation Army blue bonnets and belted coats, dresses in rich velvet, and evening gowns ornamented with lace. Perdziola’s Shakespeare Theatre Company credits include designs for *The Beaux’ Stratagem*, *Lady Windermere’s Fan* (Helen Hayes Award), *Cyrano*, *The Rivals*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Don Carlos* (Helen Hayes Award), *The Country Wife* (Helen Hayes Award), *King John* and *A Woman of No Importance*. The *Major Barbara* design team also includes Lighting Designer Robert Wierzel (*The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Little Foxes*), Composer David Madox, and Voice and Text Coach Ellen O’Brien.

MEDIA PARTNER

The Shakespeare Theatre Company is pleased to welcome Roll Call Group as the media partner for *Major Barbara*. Roll Call Group acted as media partner for last season’s production of *An Enemy of the People*. Media partners are instrumental in exposing the Shakespeare Theatre Company and its productions to new markets and audiences.

Widely regarded as the leading publication for Congressional news and information, Roll Call ranked highest in regular readership with Congressional opinion leaders in a recent survey. Thorough, authoritative and entertaining, Roll Call delivers up-to-the-minute news of the legislative and political maneuverings that happen every day on Capitol Hill. In addition to breaking news, readers get keen
insight from such respected Washington analysts as Morton Kondracke, Stuart Rothenberg and Norman Ornstein, plus political coverage of Congressional and presidential elections across the country.

With a menu of online products featuring a new legislative wire service, CongressNow, and a legislative tracking service, GalleryWatch, Roll Call Group continues its commitment to providing its readers with current, comprehensive information that keeps up with the pace of Capitol Hill.

SPECIAL PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

There will be audio-described performances of *Major Barbara* on Thursday, March 13, at 8 p.m. and Saturday, March 15, at 2 p.m. Sign-interpreted performances are Tuesday, March 11, at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, March 22, at 2 p.m.

A series of special events and performances will be held in conjunction with the production of *Major Barbara* as part of Access to Classics, sponsored in part by American Express.

• All are welcome to Harman Hall on Sunday, February 24, at 1 p.m., for a Windows discussion and introduction to *Major Barbara* with local scholars and members of the artistic staff. Call 202.547.1122 and press 4 or visit ShakespeareTheatre.org to reserve a space.

• Following the evening performance of *Major Barbara* on Wednesday, February 27, all are welcome for a post-show discussion with members of the cast. Those attending the evening's performance are guaranteed seats. Limited additional seating is available on a first-come basis. Call 202.547.1122 for the approximate start time. No reservations required.

• On Saturday, March 15, following the 2 p.m. matinee of *Major Barbara*, the Shakespeare Theatre Company sponsors Classics in Context at Harman Hall. This discussion features scholars and artists discussing their connection to the play. Call 202.547.1122 and press 4 or visit ShakespeareTheatre.org to reserve a space.
FACT SHEET: Major Barbara
by George Bernard Shaw
directed by Ethan McSweeny

The Shakespeare Theatre Company’s 2007-2008 season continues with Major Barbara. Full of Shaw’s signature shrewd, urbane wit, Major Barbara depicts timeless tensions between wealth and charity, government and religion, business and family. Often called Shaw’s greatest play, Major Barbara offers a provocative discourse, while entertaining us with vivid characters, intriguing plot twists and a hefty dose of pure fun. The production runs from February 19 to March 23, 2008, at Sidney Harman Hall, a part of the Harman Center for the Arts. McSweeny directs a cast that includes Vivienne Benesch, Helen Carey, Ted van Griethuysen, Floyd King, Andrew Long and Tom Story.

DATES: February 19 to March 23, 2008

LOCATION: Sidney Harman Hall, 610 F St. NW

TIMES: Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. (except February 26 and March 18); Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.; Sundays at 7:30 p.m.; matinees on Saturdays and Sundays at 2 p.m. (except February 24); matinee at noon on Wednesday, March 19.

TICKETS: $23.50-$79.75 with discounts available for senior citizens and students.

ACCESSIBILITY: Sidney Harman Hall is accessible to persons with disabilities, offering wheelchair-accessible seating and restrooms, audio enhancement, and Braille and large print programs.
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PARKING: Paid parking is available at the Interpark garage located directly beneath the Sidney Harman Hall and AARP Headquarters block; enter from E or F streets between Sixth and Seventh streets.

METRO: Gallery Pl-Chinatown station (Red, Yellow and Green Lines): Patrons attending performances at Sidney Harman Hall should exit using the Arena/7th Street exit. Harman Hall is visible one block to your left. Judiciary Square station (Red Line): Take the F Street Exit toward the National Building Museum, turn left and walk one and one-half blocks along F Street to Sixth Street.

ShakespeareTheatre.org