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WRITERS' THEATRE TO PREMIERE
A MINISTER'S WIFE, ADAPTED FROM SHAW'S CANDIDA
BY AUSTIN PENDLETON
WITH MUSIC BY JOSH SCHMIDT, LYRICS BY JAN TRANEN AND
DIRECTED BY MICHAEL HALBERSTAM

Glencoe, IL— **Writers' Theatre** Artistic Director **Michael Halberstam** and Executive Director **Kathryn M. Lipuma** announce the World Premiere of ***A Minister's Wife***, a new musical adapted from George Bernard Shaw's *Candida*, conceived and directed by **Michael Halberstam** with musical direction by **Richard Casey**. ***A Minister's Wife*** was adapted by **Austin Pendleton** with music by **Joshua Schmidt** and lyrics by **Jan Tranen**. The production runs May 19-July 19, 2009, at **Writers' Theatre**, 325 Tudor Court in Glencoe. **The press opening is June 4, 2009, at 7:30 p.m.**

Reverend James Morell and his wife, Candida, are happily married—at least so they think. But when Eugene Marchbanks, a romantic young poet aims to rescue Candida from her domestic routine, everyone's world is turned upside down. Sharp, witty and tender, *A Minister's Wife* explores the fires burning beneath the surface of an ordinary marriage and discovers a secret in the heart.

"I have been working for the past four years to bring this piece to life with a dream team of collaborators," says Artistic Director Michael Halberstam, "and the adventure of creating this new musical has been a uniquely Writers' Theatre experience. The attention we focused on the word and the artist has allowed this piece to come to life with the fullness and richness under which it was originally imagined. It has been a rare and beautiful journey."

The cast includes **Liz Baltes** (Proserpine Garnett), **Kate Fry** (Candida Morell), **Kevin Gudahl** (Reverend James Morell), **John Sanders** (Reverend Alexander Mill) and **Alan Schmuckler** (Eugene Marchbanks).

The designers are **Keith Parham** (lighting), **Rachel Anne Healy** (costume), **Brian Sidney Bembridge** (scenic), **Richard Carsey** (musical director) and **Tim Splain** (assistant musical director).

Michael Halberstam (*Director*) is the artistic director and co-founder of Writers' Theatre. He has directed more than thirty productions for the company including *Not About Heroes* (starring Nicholas Pennell), *Private Lives*, *Look Back in Anger*, *Candida*, *The Father*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Benefactors*, *Seagull*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Othello*, *The Savannah Disputation* and this past fall, *Nixon's Nixon*. Halberstam appeared in numerous Writers' Theatre productions including *Richard II* (title role), *Loot*, *Misalliance* and his annual solo performance of *A Christmas Carol*. Previously, he spent two years at The Stratford Festival in Ontario and performed in *Timon of Athens*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (title role), *Much Ado About Nothing* and *As You Like It*. Halberstam's other Chicago acting credentials include productions with Wisdom Bridge, Court Theatre and Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Elsewhere he directed *Pledge of Allegiance* (American Theatre Company), *The Gamester* (Northlight Theatre), *A Man for all Seasons* (Peninsula Players Theatre), *Hamlet* (Illinois Shakespeare Festival), *Candida* (Jean Cocteau Repertory in New York), *Ten Little Indians* (Drury Lane Oakbrook), a highly acclaimed revival

of *Crime and Punishment*, which Writers' Theatre produced Off-Broadway at 59E59 Theatres in New York City and recently, *Enchanted April* and *State of the Union* (Milwaukee Repertory Theater). His forays into opera have included *The Rape of Lucretia* (Chicago Opera Theater), *Francesca De Ramini* featuring the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Christoph Eschenbach and *Le Freyshutz*, a Berlioz adaptation of the Weber opera conducted by Christoph Eschenbach in its North American Premiere (Ravinia Festival). He spent two and a half years teaching Shakespeare at The Theatre School at DePaul University and has received awards for excellence in theater management and artistic achievement from The Chicago Drama League, The Arts & Business Council, Chicago Lawyers for the Creative Arts and The Chicago Associates of the Stratford Festival. His next Writers' Theatre project will be directing the first production of the 2009/10 Season, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*.

Austin Pendleton (*Adaptor*) returns to Writers' Theatre where he wrote and appeared in *Booth*, directed by David Cromer, in a role originated in New York by Frank Langella. Pendleton also wrote *Orson's Shadow* and *Uncle Bob*. He is an Ensemble member at Steppenwolf Theatre Company and has acted there in *The Sunset Limited*, *Valparasio*, *Uncle Vanya* and *Educating Rita*, among other plays. He has directed several productions at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, such as *Love Song*, *Frankie and Johnny in the Claire De Lune*, *Harvey*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Thee Sisters*, *Loose Ends* and *Say Goodnight, Gracie*. His recent New York directing credits include *Uncle Vanya* (Classic Stage Company), Michael Weller's *Fifty Words* (Manhattan Class Company) and Barbara Eda-Young's *Lillian Yuralis* (La Mama). He has acted on and off-Broadway and in many regional theaters, as well as in about 100 movies and extensively on television, most recently in *Law and Order*. Pendleton is a veteran of musical theatre, having originated the role of Motel the Tailor in *Fiddler on the Roof*. He teaches acting at HB Studio in New York, Act One Studios in Chicago and directing at the New School of Drama in New York.

Josh Schmidt, USAA (Composition/Sound Designer) is a Writers' Theatre Artistic Associate and has designed sound for *Nixon's Nixon*, *The Lion in Winter*, *The Savannah Disputation*, *Othello*, *The Puppetmaster of Lodz*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Chosen*, *The Subject Was Roses*, *The Doctor's Dilemma*, *Benefactors*, *My Own Stranger*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Rough Crossing* and *The Price*. In 2001 Schmidt made his Chicago debut at Writers' Theatre when he composed music for *A Phoenix Too Frequent*. Other Chicago credits include *The Tempest*, *Love-Lies-Bleeding*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Things Being What They Are*, *World Set Free* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company), *Adding Machine* and *Far Away* (Next Theatre), *The Chalk Garden* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* (Northlight Theatre), *Celebrity Row* (American Theatre Company), *Journey's End* (Seanachai Theatre Company) and many others. Regional credits include Alley Theatre, The John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts and Ford's Theatre, Bard College, University of Rochester, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Cleveland Playhouse, South Coast Repertory, American Players Theatre, Madison Repertory, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Milwaukee Ballet, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Milwaukee Shakespeare and Renaissance Theaterworks among others. Off-Broadway credits include *Adding Machine* (Minetta Lane Theatre), *Fifty Words* (MCC Theatre), *Crime and Punishment* (59E59 Theatres) and *Candida* (Jean Cocteau Repertory). Upcoming projects include *The Farnsworth Invention* (Alley Theatre), *Henry V* and *Long Day's Journey into Night* (American Players Theatre) and *Resurrection*, a new monologue in music with libretto by David Simpatico.

Jan Tranen (Lyricist) is making her Writers' Theatre debut and has written the lyrics for *Night in Sarajevo*, a one-act opera by Jay Schwandt which was staged at the Theatre Building Chicago in 1997 under the direction of Warner Crocker. With Schwandt she went on to co-write the book and write lyrics for *Crazy Mary*, a full length musical drama based upon Mary Todd Lincoln's life after her husband's assassination. The first reading of *Crazy Mary* was staged by Michael Halberstam in 1999. It was given a subsequent skeletal staging directed by Lara Teeter at Theatre Building Chicago and a full production in 2000 at the Hartt School, University of Connecticut in Hartford, directed by Henry Fonte. She also co-wrote the book and wrote lyrics for *Steadfast the One Legged Tin Soldier*, a family holiday musical with music by Elizabeth Doyle. She studied lyric writing in New York City with Sheila Davis, musical theatre writing at Theatre Building Chicago and playwriting at Chicago Dramatists. She is a member of The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers and the Dramatists' Guild.

Richard Carsey (Musical Director) makes his Writers' Theatre debut. Upcoming projects include music direction of the new musical, *A Little House on the Prairie*, directed by Francesca Zambello (Guthrie Theater). Carsey is currently the Principal Conductor of the Skylight Opera Theatre, where he also served as their Artistic Director from 1997 to 2003. During his 15-year association with the Skylight, he has conducted over 50 productions. Highlights of his operatic work at the Skylight include Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Carmen*, *Gianni Schicchi* and Argento's *Waterbird Talk*, as well as such contemporary operas as *Little Women* by Mark Adamo, *Rosine* by Hiram Titus, *3* by Richard Wargo, and the world-premiere production of Wargo's *Ballymore* (based on the play *Lovers*, by Brian Friel) which was subsequently broadcast on regional PBS.

Liz Baltés (Proserpine Garnett) makes her Writers' Theatre debut. Additional Chicago credits include *25th Annual Putnam Spelling Bee*, *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown* (Drury Lane Watertower) and *Once Upon A Time in New Jersey* (Marriott Theater in Lincolnshire). Regional credits include *OLIVER!* (National Tour), *Seussical: The Musical*, *The Quilt Maker's Gift* and *Anne of Green Gables* (1st Stage Children's Theatre), *Bluest in The Night*, *Animal Crackers*, *A Grand Night for Singing* and *Anything Goes* (Skylight Opera Theatre), *Closer Than Ever* and *I Love You You're Perfect, Now Change* (Pennsylvania Center Stage). Baltés is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association

Kate Fry (Candida Morell) makes her Writers' Theatre debut. Chicago area credits include *Caroline, or Change*, *Arcadia*, *The Romance Cycle*, *My Fair Lady* and *Twelfth Night* among others (Court Theatre), *Henry IV Parts I & II*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Moliere Comedies*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *Uncle Vanya*, *Pygmalion*, *Kindertransport* and *Falsettos* (Apple Tree Theater) as well as work with Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire, StreetSigns Productions, Candlelight Playhouse and Theater at the Center. Regionally, she has worked at The Mark Taper Forum (Los Angeles), McCarter Theatre Center (Princeton, NJ) and Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. Fry is married to actor Timothy Edward Kane.

Kevin Gudhal (Reverend James Morell) returns to Writers' Theatre where he has performed in *Othello* and *The Doctor's Dilemma*. He has appeared in over twenty-five productions with Chicago Shakespeare Theater including *The Comedy of Errors*, *Passion*, *Julius Caesar*, *A Little Night Music*, the title role in *Macbeth* and the title role in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Other Chicago credits include *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolfe?*, *My Fair Lady*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Wild Duck* (Court Theatre), *Turn of the Century*, *King Lear* and *The House of Martin Guerre* (Goodman Theatre), as well as work with Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire, Northlight Theatre, Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, Victory Gardens Theater, Apple Tree Theatre, National Jewish Theatre, Briar Street and Wisdom Bridge. International stage appearances include *Pacific Overtures* (DonMar Warehouse), *Henry IV parts I & II* (Swan Theatre at Royal Shakespeare Company), five seasons with Stratford Shakespeare Festival in plays such as *Twelfth Night*, *The Miracle Worker* and *Three Sisters*. Film credits include *While You Were Sleeping*, *Home Alone III* and *Baby On Board*. Television appearances include *Early Edition* (CBS), *Crime Story* (NBC) and *The Untouchables*. Gudahl is a recipient of the Joseph Jefferson Award and teaches Shakespeare.

John Sanders (Reverend Alexander Mill) returns to Writers' Theatre, having previously appeared in *The Uneasy Chair*. Chicago credits include *Miss Saigon* and *Ten Little Indians* (Drury Lane Oakbrook), *Turn of the Century* (Goodman Theatre), *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (Noble Fool), *Cymbeline* and *Troilus & Cressida* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *It's a Wonderful Life...A Live Radio Play* (American Theater Company), *Fellow Travelers*, *Burying The Bones*, *Prairie Lights* and *The Memorandum* (Stage Left Theatre), *Arrangement for Two Violas* (Visions & Voices Theatre) and *Henry V* and *Blood Wedding* (The Hypocrites). Sanders appeared Off-Off Broadway as Jaime in *The Last Five Years*. He is an Artistic Associate with Chicago Dramatists and an Ensemble Member Emeritus with Stage Left Theatre. He is the recipient of two Joseph Jefferson Award Nominations and an After Dark Award.

Alan Schmuckler (Eugene Marchbanks) makes his Writers' Theatre debut. Additional Chicago credits include *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* (Drury Lane Water Tower Place), *Short Shakespeare! The*

Taming of the Shrew, *The Two Noble Kinsman* and others (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *Shenandoah*, *The Princess and the Pea* and others (Marriott Theater in Lincolnshire), *Fiorello!* (Timeline Theatre Company), *The Time of Your Life* (Provision Theater Company), as well as work with Lookingglass Theatre Company, Northlight Theatre and Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Regional credits include *A Christmas Carol* (Indiana Repertory Theatre), *Seussical: The Musical* and *A Little Night Music* among others (Wagon Wheel Theatre). Schmuckler also co-wrote with Michael Mahler *How Can You Run With A Shell On Your Back?* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater). He is a Barrel of Monkeys company member, proud member of Actors' Equity Association and a proud graduate of Northwestern University.

Performances are May 19- July 19, 2009. **The press performance is on June 4, 2009, at 7:30 p.m.** Curtain times are Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m.; Thursdays and Fridays 8:00 p.m.; Saturdays at 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.; and Sundays at 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. There will be no performance on Tuesday, June 9, Friday, July 3, Saturday, July 4 and there will be no Sunday 6 p.m. performances on June 28 or July 19. Wednesday matinees begin at 2 p.m. on June 10, 24 and July 15, 2009.

Tickets are \$40-\$65 and are available at the Box Office, 376 Park Avenue, Glencoe; 847-242-6000 or online at www.writerstheatre.org.

Discussions with artistic staff and cast members will follow the performances on June 16, 17, July 1 and 7. **A pre-show lecture**, designed to make the Writers' Theatre experience even more enjoyable, will be given by Michael Halberstam or other members of the artistic staff June 21 at 5 p.m.

In conjunction with *A Minister's Wife*, Writers' Theatre and select North Shore libraries will present the fourth annual *From Page to Stage* program. This comprehensive series of special events, lectures, readings and performances are designed to enhance and enrich audience understanding of *A Minister's Wife*. A schedule of events is available at www.writerstheatre.org/FPTS.

DiPescara is the Writers' Theatre 2008/09 Season Restaurant Partner. Patrons can enjoy dinner before the show at Di Pescara (2124 Northbrook Court, Northbrook), one of the North Shore's top restaurants, named among the city's best new restaurants by *Chicago* magazine. This Lettuce Entertain You restaurant, conveniently located at Northbrook Court (just five minutes from the theater), is offering a three-course pre-theater meal for \$29.95 (excluding tax and gratuity). Contact Di Pescara at 847-498-4321 to make your reservation and mention Writers' Theatre to receive your special offer.

The 2008/09 Season sponsor is Mary Winton Green. Mary Winton Green, and her late husband David, also made a most generous commitment to launch the **Literary Development Initiative** in 2004. Through the *Literary Development Initiative*, Writers' Theatre nurtures new works and adaptations that are so vital to the American theatre landscape, including this production of *A Minister's Wife*.

Several other individuals have joined together to support the development and premiere of *A Minister's Wife*. The Production Sponsors are Avy and Marcie Stein and Mary Pat Studdert. The Production's Benefactors are Joyce Chelberg, David & Carolyn Colburn, Lousie Hart, Dick & Lou Hurckes and Sonia Marschak.

A Minister's Wife is also supported by the Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation.

The Production Corporate Sponsor is Magnetar Capital.

The Writers' Theatre season is underwritten, in part, by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

Writers' Theatre is a professional company focusing on the Word and the Artist. Remaining true to the intention of the playwright and nurturing the artist stand at the center of the mission. Now in its 17th season, the company both revives classic scripts and cultivates new works and adaptations while invigorating them with fresh energy in the intimacy of its venues. Founded in 1992, Writers' Theatre performed exclusively at Books on Vernon, 664 Vernon Avenue for the first 12 years. In the fall of 2003,

the organization opened a new 108 seat performance venue at 325 Tudor Court. Today, Writers' Theatre continues to produce in both spaces, maintaining an intimate theatrical experience for audiences. Since 2000, the subscriber base has grown almost 250%, from 1,500 to more than 5,300 today. With an operating budget of \$3.4million, Writers' Theatre is supported by a staff of 18 full-time employees and a 31-member Board of Trustees.

FACTS: *A Minister's Wife*

Reverend James Morell and his wife, Candida, are happily married—at least so they think. But when Eugene Marchbanks, a romantic young poet aims to rescue Candida from her domestic routine, everyone's world is turned upside down. Sharp, witty and tender, *A Minister's Wife* explores the fires burning beneath the surface of an ordinary marriage and discovers a secret in the heart.

Based on George Bernard Shaw's *Candida*
Adapted by Austin Pendleton
Music by Josh Schmidt
Lyrics by Jan Tranen
Musical direction by Richard Carsey
Conceived and Directed by Michael Halberstam

Dates: **First performance:** May 19, 2009 at 7:30 p.m.
Press opening: June 4, 2009 at 7:30 p.m.
Closing performance: July 19, 2009 at 2:00 p.m.

Schedule: **Tuesdays & Wednesdays: 7:30 p.m.**
There will be no performance on Tuesday, June 9
Thursdays & Fridays: 8:00 p.m.
There will be no performance on Friday, July 3
Saturdays: 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m.
There will be no performance on Saturday, July 4
Sundays: 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.
There will be no 6:00 p.m. performance on June 28 or July 19
Wednesday Matinees: 2:00 p.m., June 10, 24 and July 15 only

Special events: **Pre-show lectures:** June 21 at 5 p.m.
Post-show discussions: June 16, 17, July 1 and 7

Location: **Writers' Theatre, 325 Tudor Court, Glencoe**
Prices: Prices for all performances range from \$40 - \$65.
Box Office: The Box Office is located at **376 Park Avenue, Glencoe;**
847-242-6000; www.writerstheatre.org

Notes of Interest:

- *A Minister's Wife*, commissioned through the Writers' Theatre **Literary Development Initiative**, has been developed at Writers' Theatre from its inception through performance.
- Artistic Associate **Josh Schmidt** is a longtime Writers' Theatre collaborator, made his Chicago debut composing music for *A Phoenix Too Frequent*. He has designed sound and written original music for *Rough Crossing*, *The Puppetmaster of Lodz*, *Othello* and *The Lion in Winter*, among many others. At 31, Josh gained acclaim nationally in 2008 with *Adding Machine*, his musical adaptation of Elmer Rice's American expressionistic masterpiece. The original production premiered at Next Theatre in Evanston and enjoyed a tremendously successful subsequent run off-Broadway winning two Outer Critics Circle Awards (Outstanding New Off-Broadway Musical, Outstanding New Score), four Lucille Lortel Awards (Outstanding Musical,

Outstanding Director, Outstanding Lead Actor, Outstanding Lighting Design) and four Obie Awards as well as nominations from the Drama Desk and Drama League awards.

- **Austin Pendleton** (adaptor), a Steppenwolf Theatre Company ensemble member, returns to Writers' Theatre where he appeared in his play *Booth*, in a role originated in New York by Frank Langella. Pendleton also wrote *Orson's Shadow* and *Uncle Bob*. He has more than 100 television and film credits.
- Writers' Theatre and select North Shore libraries present the fourth annual ***From Page to Stage*** program. This comprehensive series of special events, lectures, readings and performances are designed to enhance and enrich audience understanding of *A Minister's Wife*. A schedule of events is available at www.writerstheatre.org/FPTS.
- **Di Pescara**, one of the North Shore's top restaurants and Writers' Theatre dining partner, conveniently located at Northbrook Court (just five minutes from the theatre), is offering a three-course pre-theatre meal for \$29.95.

(more/ **From Page to Stage** schedule)

From Page to Stage:

Writers' Theatre and select North Shore libraries present the fourth annual *From Page to Stage* program. This comprehensive series of special events, lectures, readings and performances are designed to enhance and enrich audience understanding of *A Minister's Wife*.

Schedule of Events:

***From Page to Stage* Kick-Off Event**

Tuesday, April 21, 7 p.m.

Glencoe Public Library (The event will be held at Writers' Theatre, 325 Tudor Court, Glencoe)
847-835-5056 | www.glencoepubliclibrary.org

From Page to Stage kicks off with director Michael Halberstam, composer Josh Schmidt, lyricist Jan Tranen, and actor Kevin Gudahl discussing how they transformed George Bernard Shaw's script into a world premiere musical. Stay after the discussion to enjoy desserts, coffee and tea, celebrating our annual literary event!

A Musical Medley

Glencoe Public Library

1930 Glenview Road, Glenview

847-729-7500 | www.glenviewpl.org

Many of the best musicals are adapted from the works of great playwrights. Popular pianist, Eugene Kwok, the house pianist for Glen Flora Country Club for nearly ten years, will present a lively repertoire of memorable show tunes and musical favorites.

George Bernard Shaw's *Candida*: A Woman Unbound

Sunday, May 3, 2 p.m.

Winnetka-Northfield Public Library

768 Oak Street, Winnetka

847-446-7220 | www.winnetkalibrary.org

George Bernard Shaw, both a socialist and feminist, frequently wrote about equality in his plays. Professor Raymond Ciacci, Director of the Graham School of General Studies at the University of Chicago, discusses the dynamic role of women in George Bernard Shaw's *Candida*.

A Look at the American Musical

Thursday, May 7, 7 p.m.

Highland Park Public Library

494 Laurel Avenue, Highland Park

847-432-1573 | www.hplibrary.org

In celebration of the world premiere musical *A Minister's Wife*, *Chicago Tribune* Theatre Critic, Chris Jones examines the history of this purely American art form.

Pygmalion vs. My Fair Lady

Tuesday, May 19, 7 p.m.

Glencoe Public Library

320 Park Avenue, Glencoe

847-835-5056 | www.glencoepubliclibrary.org

College of Lake County Film Professor Robert Coscarelli compares video scenes from the dramatic movie, *Pygmalion* and the musical, *My Fair Lady* and discusses the different structure of Shaw's work.

From Page to Screen

Thursday, May 21, 7 p.m.

Northbrook Public Library

1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook

847-272-6224 | www.northbrook.info/lib_index.php

Dorothy Andries, classical music critic for the *Pioneer Press* will discuss in-depth musicals adapted from literature, exploring the works that have preceded *A Minister's Wife*.

This program is sponsored by the Friends of the Northbrook Public Library

A Celebration of George Bernard Shaw

Sunday, May 30, 2 p.m.

Wilmette Public Library

1242 Wilmette Avenue, Wilmette

847-272-6224 | www.wilmette.lib.il.us

ShawChicago Theater Company presents a selection of concert readings of George Bernard Shaw and his contemporaries' plays, concluding the celebration of adapting Shaw's work for the musical medium.

From Page to Stage is generously support by Melvin and Randy Berlin.

Josh Schmidt's participation in the *From Page to Stage* Series is made possible by Meet The Composer's *MetLife Creative Connections* program

All events are FREE of charge and open to the public. For more information about a specific event, contact the host library or go to www.writerstheatre.org/FPTS.