



NONPROFIT
ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO.20
GLENCOE, IL

Performance Venues

325 Tudor Court
Glencoe, IL 60022

664 Vernon Avenue
Glencoe, IL 60022

Administrative Offices

378 Park Avenue
Glencoe, IL 60022

Box Office 847-242-6000

Office 847-242-6001

Fax 847-242-6011

www.writerstheatre.org

*The 2004/05 season is underwritten, in part, by grants from
The Chicago Community Trust and the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.*

WT

WRITERS' THEATRE
THE BRIEF CHRONICLE
ISSUE NINE MAY 2005

01 DEAR FRIENDS 03 SCOGIN ON SHAW 06
THE ROMANCE OF ARMS AND THE MAN 08 IN
SHAW'S OWN WORDS 11 ARTISTIC
CONVERSATION 14 THE CAST OF
ARMS AND THE MAN 16 WORDPLAY 20 2005/06
SEASON 24 OVERSEAS ADVENTURE 26 ALUMNI UPDATE 28 EDUCATION



Michael Halberstam
Artistic Director

Jennifer Bielstein
Managing Director

Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe we are already running the final show of our second season in our beautiful new venue on Tudor Court. *Arms and the Man* is an exciting conclusion to another adventurous season. We hope you will enjoy reading this issue of *The Brief Chronicle* before you come to the theatre. We have created lobby displays with additional fascinating facts related to each production. Do be sure to peruse them, along with the expanded background information we include in your programs, either before or after the show.

Please don't forget that *The Subject Was Roses* is simultaneously enjoying its long run into July at our theatre in Books on Vernon. Artistic Associate Shade Murray has breathed a wonderful contemporary vitality into this chestnut and filled its environs with pitch-perfect flavorings of nostalgia.

Next season presents a whole new realm of possibilities for theatrical exploration of the human condition. In keeping with our traditional variety of programming, we are including another great American play, a recent script of great wit and style and a wonderful, rarely-produced classic from a contemporary of Shakespeare. Bringing these gems to life will be another gathering of some of the finest actors in the country. You can read more about the selections on page 22.

Amidst all the excitement surrounding next season there is the ever present fact that producing theatre on such a professional yet intimate scale involves a great deal of skilled artisanship. *Arms and the Man* necessitates the hiring of seven actors, three understudies, a director, a set designer, a lighting designer, a sound designer, a costume designer, a props designer, a stage manager, a production assistant, a wardrobe mistress, a seamstress, a soundboard operator, two scenic painters, eight electricians, five carpenters and a technical director to oversee the building of the set. On hand at every performance, we have three staff members and a total of ten full-time employees supporting the entire organization. (By the way, most organizations our size would have around 20 full-time employees, but we focus resources heavily into our artists and maintain a leaner, very hard-working, highly motivated staff). Ticket prices cover less than half of this expense.

We thank all of you who have donated this season and have made so much depth and exploration possible. To those of you who have yet to donate, and to those of you who are moved to give more, we appeal to you to help bridge the gap between ticket sales and expenses and to send us boldly into another adventurous season.

We are also entrusted with the awesome responsibility of revealing the intricacies and nuances of the human condition. With the world in such turmoil, live theatre provides an opportunity for sharing, reflection and learning. We thank you for your participation and support.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Halberstam
Artistic Director

Jennifer Bielstein
Managing Director



An anti-romantic comedy

SCOGIN ON SHAW

Robert Scogin has enjoyed a long association with Writers' Theatre having appeared in six productions, including Seagull and The Doctor's Dilemma. His expertise in Shaw met its perfect union in 1996 when he was appointed Artistic Director of ShawChicago. Since then, he has produced and directed over 25 readings of plays by Shaw and his contemporaries. He shares with us some of his knowledge of Arms and the Man.

PRODUCTION HISTORY OF ARMS AND THE MAN

"Very few people would know anything about love if they hadn't read about it."

François La Rochefoucauld

In 1893 the actress Florence Farr received a large sum of money from another member of "The Golden Dawn," an occult society to which she belonged. The money, donated by Annie Horniman, heir to the Horniman Tea fortune, was to be used to finance a season starring Farr at the Avenue Theatre in London.

Farr immediately asked each of her playwright friends, William Butler Yeats and George Bernard Shaw (G.B.S.), to write a play for the season. Yeats soon complied with his short play, *The Land of Heart's Desire*, dedicated to Florence, and intended as a curtain raiser for the Shaw work. Even though Shaw's play was to be the evening's main attraction, he dawdled over the writing and no script was ready for the opening of the season. Farr turned in desperation to John Todhunter who gave her his play, *A Comedy of Sighs*, as a replacement for Shaw's unfinished work. Todhunter's play was a disaster, and the day after

ARMS AND THE MAN

BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW DIRECTED BY WILLIAM BROWN

the opening Shaw received a telegram from the Avenue Theatre management pleading for the right to produce one of his works. He hastily put the finishing touches on *Arms and the Man* and delivered it to the theater.

Florence Farr played Louka in the first production.

Shaw's early working title for the play had been *Alps and Balkans*, and his friend Henry Salt suggested he call it *Battlefields and Boudoirs*, but he eventually settled on *Arms and the Man*, from the opening phrase of Dryden's translation of Virgil's (Publius Vergilius Maro) *The Aeneid*: "Of arms and the man I sing." This prompted Salt to compose the Ogden Nash-like doggerel:

*Since G.B.S. from P.V.M.
For title took that ancient gem,
Arms and the Man, how many
quote it!
How few give thought to him
who wrote it!
And now methinks it savours less
Of P.V.M. than G.B.S.*

Arms and the Man began rehearsals on April 11th, 1894, and opened a mere ten days later on April 21. Needless to say, the actors were terrified. Writing of the premiere to his friend, Henry Arthur Jones, Shaw said,

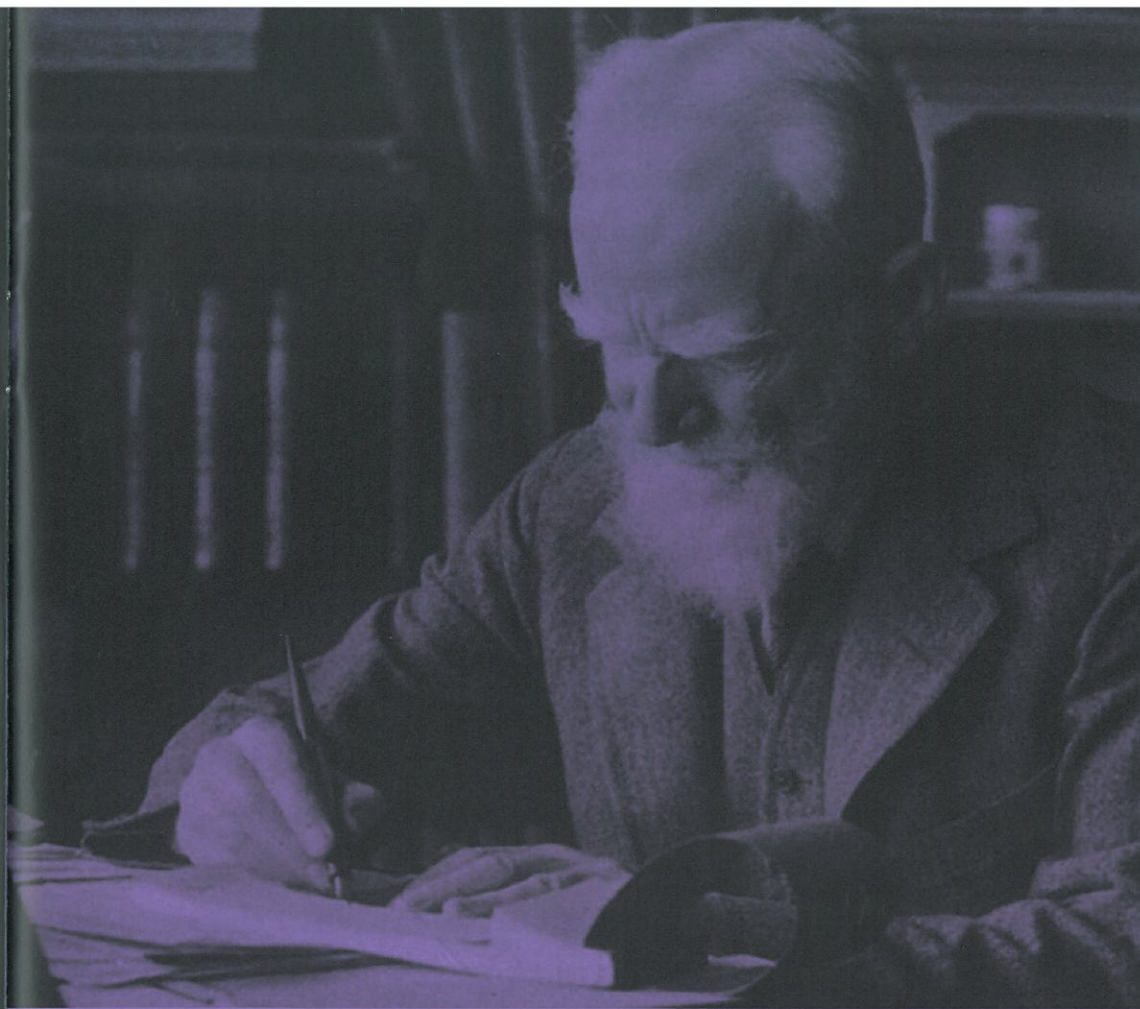
"In *Arms and the Man*, I had the curious experience of witnessing an apparently insane success, with the actors and actresses almost losing their heads with the intoxication of laugh after laugh."

The critics agreed: "It was applauded," wrote G.K. Chesterton, "by that indescribable element in all of us which rejoices to see the genuine thing prevail against the plausible." "We laughed at it wildly, hysterically," said William Archer, "and I exhort the reader to go and do likewise."

When Shaw went on stage for a short curtain speech, he was greeted by deafening applause and bravos from the audience. One young man, however, stood up and delivered a resounding "Boo!" "My dear fellow," Shaw responded, "I quite agree with you, but what are we against so many?"

The play ran for a total of 50 performances, and then toured the provinces. *Arms and the Man* was the first of Shaw's plays to be staged in America. Richard Mansfield produced the play in New York.

The American premiere took place at the Herald Square Theatre on September 17, 1894, with Mansfield in the role of Bluntschli, and his wife Beatrice Cameron as Raina.



"In Arms and the Man, I had the curious experience of witnessing an apparently insane success, with the actors and actresses almost losing their heads with the intoxication of laugh after laugh."

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

THE ROMANCE OF ARMS AND THE MAN

WILLIAM BROWN EXPLAINS THE POLITICS OF ROMANCE AND THE ROMANCE OF POLITICS

BY ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE SHADE MURRAY

Listening to director William Brown describe the opening moments of *Arms and the Man*, one envisions a perfect romantic scenario more closely associated with Puccini than Shaw. "Shaw set this in some idea of Bulgaria. So there's just enough distance, color and romanticism that one can associate with Eastern Europe. On a cold snowy night, a beautiful young girl alone in her bedroom, wrapped in fur, is surprised by an enemy soldier who has shimmied up the drain pipe."

But despite our expectations of such a scene, the romantic ideal is quickly undercut by a pragmatic reality. "The soldier neither attacks, nor do they make love. They talk. And it's funny talk, and it's smart talk, and it's surprising talk. The fact that the soldier is muddy and tired and a fugitive also belies the romantic setup with which we've started. The fact that he may not be exactly what her idea of a soldier is belies the romantic setting in which we find ourselves. To a large extent, *Arms and the Man* is a riff on just that kind of juxtaposition, where a frequently romantic ideal is challenged by the cold facts of the case."

Arms and the Man is a comedy about the efforts we go to in order to live up to the

perfect ideal – be it social, political or personal.

"One only has to look around the world we live in to see the ideals people try to uphold based on how they dress, what cars they drive, how big their houses are. And, in the bigger picture, the people we vote for, the wars we fight, the social and political ideals we hold sacred. Shaw is all about challenging those ideals."

Such a comic juxtaposition can be found in the play's setting, an aristocratic Bulgarian home, obvious in its attempts to appear Western. "This Bulgarian family has their own notions of what Western society is, what's modern, what's top-drawer. They don't quite have the information to pull it off. It is making fun of the things that all of us do to impress."

"In terms of how that takes shape: [costume designer] Rachel Healy brought in a sketch of the mother, who Shaw refers to as someone who will dress in a formal tea gown to have breakfast in the front yard. Now, she brought in an ink drawing that gave us the silhouette and details of something quite acceptable as an afternoon tea gown. But then we started talking about the fabric, or the color, or the accessories, you know perhaps she has an underskirt of a stripe that's just a little too broad for what

this is trying to be. Perhaps there are too many jewels. Perhaps she wears a headpiece that's more appropriate for the evening. So we begin to have fun with aspirations and how we get them and how we don't achieve them. How we get it wrong becomes comic fodder here. And because it's such a well-written play – well-written, multi-dimensional characters – I don't think it's ever abusive, I don't think we're making fun of aspirations. But we'd all do well to look at ourselves and our ideals."

Those ideals include our visions of the perfect romance, the perfect relationship. "I think this is one of his sexiest plays," says Bill. "Setting it in far-off Bulgaria allows for a looser, earthier dynamic, in terms of the relationships. There are more man-woman scenes than in most Shaw plays I can think of, and they are always a 'Who's on top?' situation." This is illustrated in the play's quadrangle of fiery young lovers: Raina, a young aristocrat who learned about love strictly from romance novels and operas; Bluntschli, a mercenary who forsakes all ideals in the interest of self-preservation; Sergius, a soldier who cannot reconcile his celebrated war-hero status with his personal philandering; and Louka, a pragmatic ser-

vant who sees relationships in a socio-economic light. Their high ideals are questioned and even abandoned as they find themselves in hot romantic pursuit of one another.

"The play is equally about our need to romanticize politics, especially in times of warfare."

"Shaw really can't be bothered to tell us the details of this particular war and that's his point. It is more about how people have to translate war in order to deal with it. I think that we can see that in today's politics, where slogans and 'bumper sticker ideals' frequently trump the facts of the case. Shaw recognized these principles and has decided to mine them for comic value."

And in Bill's estimation, this is why Shaw reigns as the most frequently produced playwright at Writers' Theatre. "Shaw's work remains smart, funny, challenging, surprising, and sexy. And I don't know a lot of playwrights who can do that."

DIRECTOR'S SIDEBAR WILLIAM BROWN, DIRECTOR ARMS AND THE MAN



Originally from Beckley, West Virginia, Bill attended West Virginia University as a music major. He received his Master's in acting from the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco.

Bill's first season at Writers' Theatre introduced him to audiences as both a director (*The Glass Menagerie*) and an actor (*Private Lives*). As a Writers' Theatre actor, Bill also appeared in *Candida*, *Dear Master*, *Butley* and *Nixon's Nixon*. Other Writers' Theatre directing credits include *Incident at Vichy*, *Misalliance*, *Rocket to the Moon*, and *Our Town*.

In 2003, Bill was recognized alongside Kimberly Mellen as theatre's "Chicagoans of the Year" by the *Chicago Tribune*. Bill also received the Joseph Jefferson Award for Outstanding Actor in a leading role for his portrayal of Henry Kissinger in *Nixon's Nixon*.

Bill's recent and upcoming projects include directing *Lady Windermere's Fan* at Milwaukee Rep, *Cymbeline* at Montana Shakespeare and *Henry V* at Notre Dame.

In Shaw's Own Words

This interview, "A Talk with Mr. Shaw about His New Play," appeared in the *Pall Mall Budget*, April 19, 1894, with Shaw as both the interviewee and the interviewer:

"About this play of yours – *Arms and the Man*?" I said, as Mr. Bernard Shaw curled himself into an armchair in a certain club smoking room, after a morning of rehearsal at the Avenue.

"The scene is laid in Bulgaria," began Mr. Shaw.

"Why Bulgaria?" I asked.

"There is a place called Bulgaria, isn't there?" said Mr. Shaw anxiously, sitting up in his chair. I thought there was. But I wanted to know why he had selected it as the scene of a play.

"Well, let me give you the history of an idea," said Mr. Shaw. "A month or two ago I thought that Miss Farr would be wanting a play for her enterprise at the Avenue. It struck me that some inter-

est might be got from the clash of romantic ideals with cold, logical democracy. The play was nearly finished before I had settled on its locality. I wanted a war as a background. Now I am absolutely igno-

rant of history and geography; so I went about among my friends and asked if they knew of any wars. They told me of several, from the Trojan to the Franco-German. At last Sidney Webb told me

of the Servo-Bulgarian war, which was the very thing. Put a Republican – say a Swiss – into the tyrant-ridden East, and there you are. So I looked up Bulgaria and Servia in an atlas, made all the names of the characters end in 'off,' and the play was complete."

"But what about local colour?" I asked. "Did you go to Bulgaria and live the life of the people, study their aspirations and -?"

"Never heard of it until this year," replied Mr. Shaw. "But I thought of that. So I asked Stepniak, who is a friend of mine, to come and hear me read the play, and set me right on points of detail. He came, and brought with him the Admiral who had commanded the Bulgarian fleet during the war. I asked them to suggest bits of local colour. I told them that the play opened just after the first Servian victory.



I have plenty of other work to do, and I am the laziest man in London

“‘That won’t do,’ said the Admiral; ‘there was no Servian victory.’

“‘Not even a cavalry skirmish?’ I suggested.

“‘No,’ said the Admiral, ‘the Bulgarians simply walked over.’

“Of course I should have asked Sidney Webb which side won the war. However, it was easy to make the victors Bulgarians instead of Servians.

“‘The heroine’s father – a Bulgarian general –’ I proceeded, but the Admiral stopped me.

to her room, when the Admiral stopped me again. I had to pull down the house, for the architecture was all wrong.

Before the end of the reading it seemed that the play itself was tumbling about my ears. But I altered it, and patched it, and corrected it, until I believe it is a fair presentment of Bulgarian life.”

“Do you wish to be regarded as a real dramatist, or merely- shall I say an excursionist?” I inquired.

“I don’t mind at all,” replied Mr. Shaw. “I don’t make a business of writing plays; I have other work to do. If I strike on an idea, I work it out in railway trains and on buses. But I have always thought I should like to write a good play. A man must learn a trade, and he can only learn to do a thing by doing it over and over again. If I can write twelve plays I may be able to write a good one. This one may be regarded as the fourth of the series. If the public do not like my ideas and my style I shall turn to something else. I have plenty of other work to do, and I am the laziest man in London.”

“Is this to be a play with a purpose?” I asked. “Will it turn the limelight on our ethical system, and furnish texts for advanced clergymen?”

“I don’t think so,” answered Mr. Shaw rather vaguely, as if he were looking around for a purpose. “I do not believe in a didactic drama, though I believe it is an educational power. One may compare it with painting. The labourer who has never seen a picture does not know that the scenery round his village is worth looking at. By looking at pictures one learns to appreciate nature. And by looking at plays – if they are reproductions of life as they ought to be – one learns to look intelligently at life. But the material which the dramatist uses must be familiar to the audience, or they will turn away for fear of learning something.”

“‘That won’t do,’ he said. ‘There were no Bulgarian generals. There was nobody in the army above the rank of major.’

“So I degraded the general, and went on to the heroine, who was a young lady of ancient lineage and high ideals. The Admiral stopped me again. ‘That won’t do,’ he said. ‘There is no ancient lineage in Bulgaria. The oldest family can only trace its history back eight years. And as for ideals –!’ So I docked the heroine’s pedigree and moderated her ideals. Then I started on the first scene – the heroine’s bedchamber on the first floor. A fugitive climbed up a waterpipe

ARTISTIC CONVERSATION

Artistic Director Michael Halberstam discussed *Arms and the Man* and *Shaw with Kymberly Mellen and Elizabeth Ledo*, both who appear in the production.

Michael Halberstam: What is your experience with Shaw and do you have any memorable anecdotes or discoveries that you would like to share?

Kymberly Mellen: *Pygmalion* was the first play I was exposed to in high school. I understudied Eliza Doolittle. A few years ago I understudied Eliza again in *My Fair Lady* at Court Theatre. For a long time I’ve wanted to play a juicy part in a Shaw play, wrap my tongue around his words and claim his wit as my own.

Elizabeth Ledo: I don’t even recall doing scenes from his work in school, though I do remember others tackling the material. I’m overjoyed to be embarking on what I feel is one of his finest pieces, and doing it with such a splendid group of artists. *Arms and the Man* will be my very first Shaw experience.

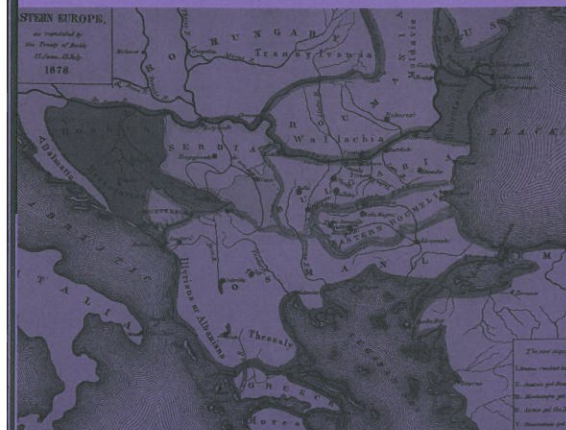
MH: What most excites you about this play and production?

EL: Having the opportunity to work with the gang at Writers Theatre. I have been

seeing plays at Writers’ since I came to Chicago and I’ve always walked away from the productions with some treasure that I didn’t have going in. I am honored to be a part of a thriving and generous theatre and very eager to play with such a terrific cast and one of the greats, Bill Brown.

KM: I’m also excited to be working with such an amazing ensemble; I admire and am in awe of everyone. I think the production will challenge me to find the serious moral message underneath all the wit and romance and fluff.

EL: I love the honest dishonesty in it, the fearless nature of some and the cautious air of others. The characters each hold a mighty thread to the entire story and the action is unwavering. I love plays where you really get to know everyone that you meet. No one comes and goes in this play without being exposed to and shared with the audience in a full way.



I LOVE THE HONEST DISHONESTY IN IT, THE FEARLESS NATURE OF SOME AND THE CAUTIOUS AIR OF OTHERS

KM: I think Louka will be a thrill to play. She's intelligent, practical, sexy and very self-assured. She is desperately focused on rising above her station and presents a practical approach to love and marriage. I see her as the counterpoint to Raina's romantic illusions of war and love which can only lead to disaster on the battlefield and an unhappy marriage on the home-front.

MH: Elizabeth, what do you feel will be most challenging for you?

EL: The challenge for me in doing this particular piece is perhaps the style and the fact that it is a first for me. I always have a great deal of fun leaping into a new groove but I also am aware of the angst that comes with doing something for the first time. Shaw has certain particularities that I will need to comprehend and embrace and any time one does a play set in a certain time or period, one must be sure to truly adopt that essence as well. But, those are challenges that I think make acting one of the greatest ways to spend your hours.

MH: Do you find it difficult to find contemporary relevance in his writing? Why show we do this play now?

EL: I feel there is indeed contemporary relevance in Shaw's writing and that doing this particular piece now is timely and important. When I reread the play this past summer I was warmed by the romantic ideal that threads its way through the story. I can easily relate to these characters using their imagination to conjure up a reality that they need to hold on to in order to tolerate and accept what is indeed truth. War, being a truth in the play and a truth in our present time, is the relevant foundation for doing this play now. It is that unfortunate truth that one tries to tame and soften

with romantic ideals and solutions. It is important to witness, at times, how people try to believe in the hero overcoming the foe. Of course, what is so lovely about Shaw's play is that we get a chance to see things work out well and witness the essence of love and romance doing exactly what it does best, cause havoc.

KM: I agree. I think this play is chosen at a very apt time in our country's history. I think most of us in the United States have a grossly romantic idea of war, unless some loved one is directly involved in it. It's amazing that people not very far removed from a wartime situation can ignore it so completely – just as the play's characters do.

MH: What impressions would you like the audience to take home with them?

KM: It really depends on Bill's vision of the play. I finished reading the play with a resolve to be more honest in my intimate and familial relationships and to become more knowledgeable about the world and politics surrounding me.

EL: I hope they will leave the theatre having been charmed. I think everyone in this play is trying to obtain the ideal and, in doing so, are exposing very honest urges and

needs. It is charming to me that the characters are all good at heart and therefore find themselves being dishonest with very honest intent. It sounds like a backward statement, I am sure, but I really think this play allows an audience to sit back, witness some very genuine colorful characters just trying to snag their ideal and then being surprised by the change in their ideals. In doing so, they also expose some off the wall traits that they themselves don't even like. All this happens in such a delightful way.

WE GET A CHANCE TO SEE THINGS WORK OUT WELL AND WITNESS THE ESSENCE OF LOVE AND ROMANCE DOING EXACTLY WHAT IT DOES BEST, CAUSE HAVOC

Arms and the Man

By George Bernard Shaw
Directed by Associate Artist William Brown

May 17 – July 24, 2005

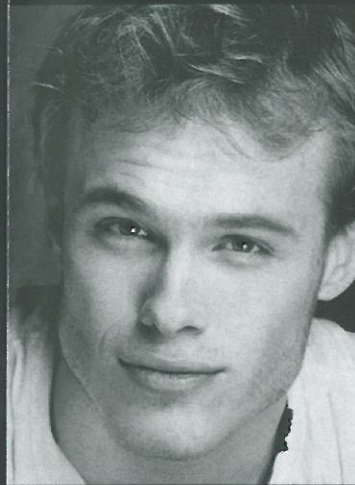
Performed at 325 Tudor Court

Anxiously awaiting her fiancé's victorious return from military battle, the daughter of a prominent family is surprised to find a soldier from the opposing side seeking asylum in her bedroom! Her unexpected guest prefers the taste of chocolates to the taste of battle, and soon the girl comes to understand a very different notion of both love and war. Featuring a delicious cast of characters, *Arms and the Man* offers an extraordinary love story filled with wit and wisdom, shifts and turns, moments of passion, and a romantic ending.

THE CAST OF ARMS AND THE MAN



Sarah Gabel



Brad Eric Johnson



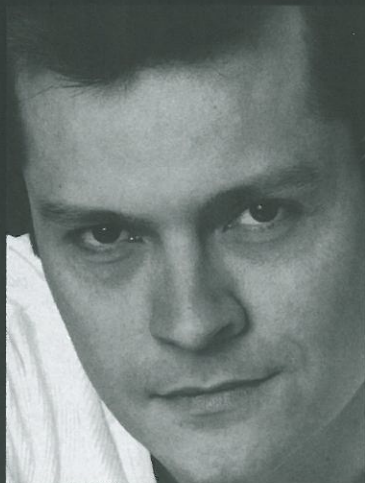
Timothy Edward Kane



Elizabeth Ledo



Kimberly Mellen



Paul Sass



Jonathan Weir

Scenic Design
Brian Sidney Bembridge

Costume Design
Rachel Anne Healy

Lighting Design
Rita Pietraszek

Sound Design
Andy Hanson

Properties Master
Sara Walsh

Production Stage Manager
David Castellanos

Word Play

Saturday, February 26, 2005

On Saturday, February 26, nearly 300 supporters gathered at the Hotel Orrington in Evanston for WordPlay, a black-tie gala in celebration of the word and to honor the artists of Writers' Theatre. The event, which raised more than \$200,000 for the theatre, featured an intimate evening of special performances showcasing the talented artists often seen on the Writers' stage. The live auction, led by auctioneers and Writers' Theatre artists Steve Hinger and Jonathan Weir, raised more than \$80,000 and featured a selection of unique items that offered unparalleled access to the art and artists of Writers' Theatre.

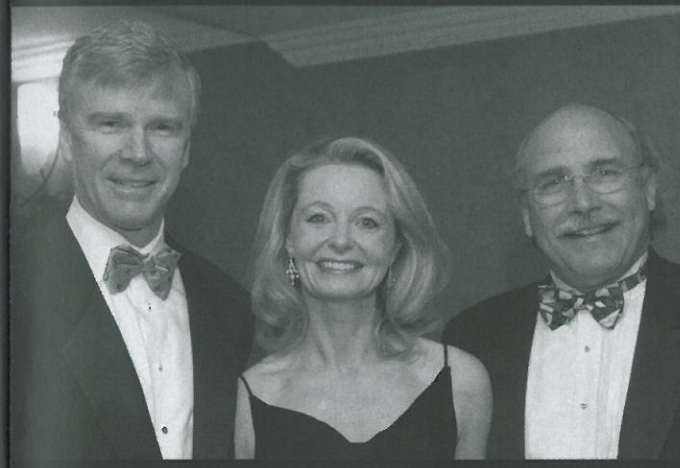
The evening's highlight was a collection of romantic balcony scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Cyrano De Bergerac* and *Private Lives*, all directed by Artistic Director Michael Halberstam, and featuring Jason Bradley, William Brown, Susan Hart, and Elizabeth Ledo. Between each balcony scene, the musical team of Joel Hatch and Carol Kuykendall performed romantic melodies.

The Writers' Theatre Board of Trustees thanks and congratulates Gala Chair Emily Knight and the Gala Host Committee: Janice and Philip Beck, Kitty Bliss and Jerry James, Betsy and Keith Colburn, Carolyn and David Colburn, Emily and Christopher Knight, Denise and Eric Macey, Alexandra and John Nichols, Pam Phillips and Roger Weston, Irene Pritzker, Stephanie and William Sick, Marcie and Avy Stein and Marilyn and Carl Thoma.

A special thank you to our sponsors for the evening: Premier Sponsor - LaSalle Bank
Benefactor - British Airways. Photos by Michael Brosilow.



Above - Trustee Carol Dawley, Gala Chair Emily Knight, and Trustee Barb Melcher



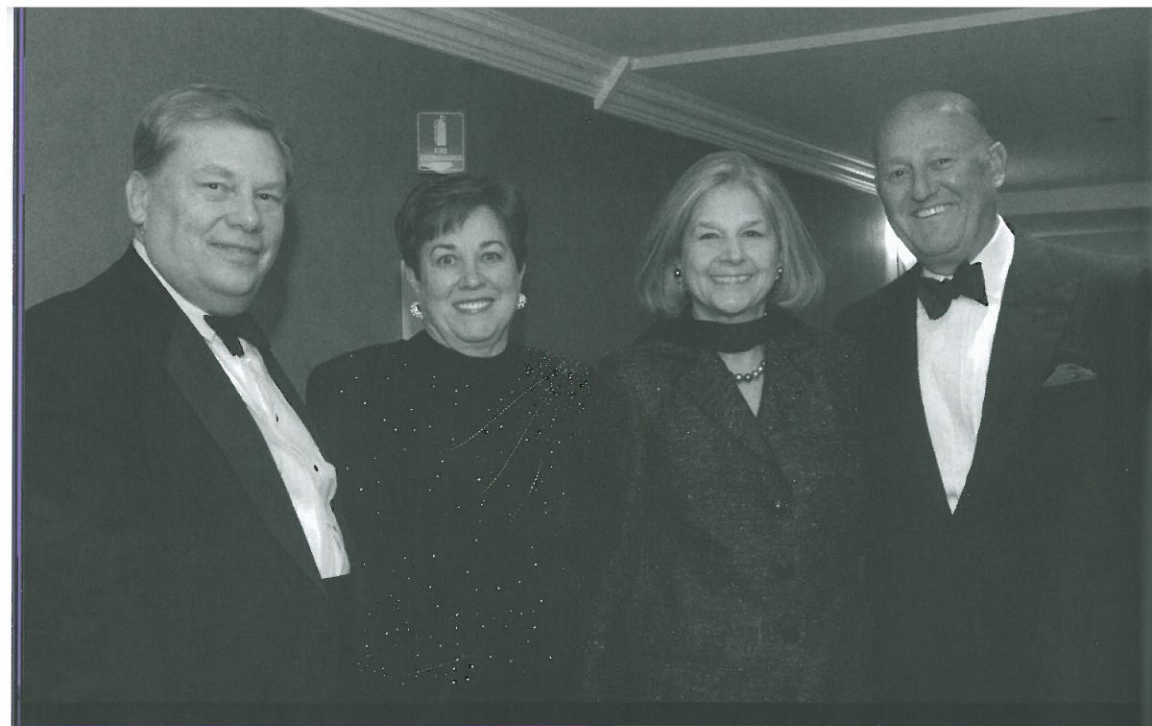
Left - Keith Colburn and Jaimee & James McNulty

Bottom Left - Mark Dawley, Trustee Bruce Tranen & Jan Tranen



Below - Doris & Howard Conant





Above – Bill & Dian Taylor and Trustee Gillian Goodman & Ellis Goodman

Right – Jennifer and Alec Litowitz

Below – Terry Livingston & Debra Cafaro, Trustee Barb Melcher and Anne Tucker

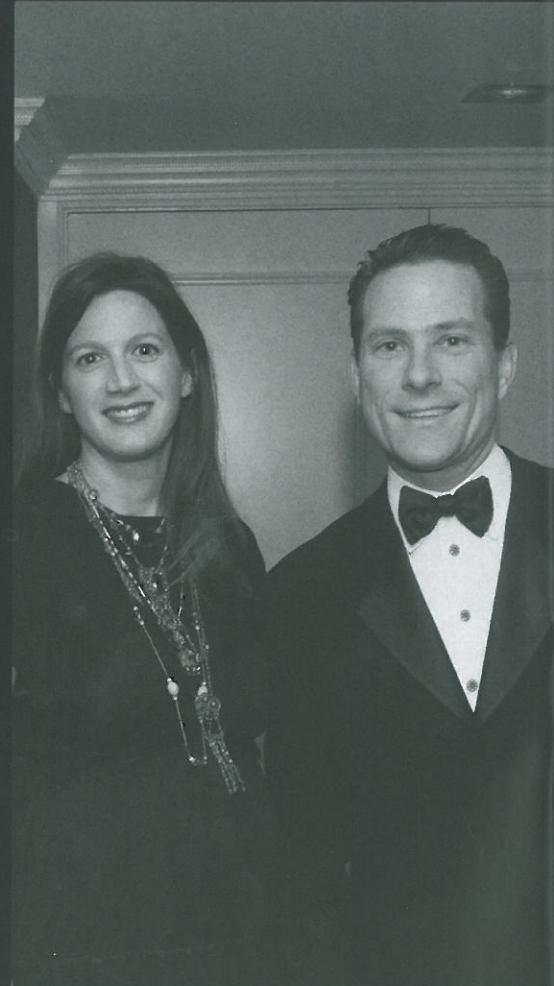
Below Left – Sash Patera & Jeff Weiss and Trustee Sara Cohan and Dan Cohan



Top Left – Craig Millard, Kimberly Handler, Dianne Millard and Janice Beck

Middle Left – Louise Weiss, Steve Barnhart & Meg Barnhart

Below – Managing Director Jennifer Bielstein, Elissa Polston & Trustee David Polston



Above – Trustee Christine Pope, Denise Macey, Ann & Bob Bates

Right – Irene Pritzker and Janet & Roger Owen

Bottom Right – Trustee Carol Dawley, Artistic Director Michael Halberstam, and Tamara Dempsey



WRITERS' THEATRE 2005/06 SEASON

subscriptions
now available

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, staff and artists of Writers' Theatre, we thank you for your continued support and participation through your 2004/05 subscription. As your loyalty allows us to thrive artistically and bring first-rate productions to our theatre, we are pleased to include you among the first to know our very exciting 2005/06 season, full of wonderful plays and new programs. If you have sent in your renewal, thank you. If you have not, there is still time. Please contact the Box Office at 847-242-6000 before June 1st in order to save your seats.



NEW PROGRAMS FOR THE 2005/06 SEASON

Pre-Show Lecture Series

Join Artistic Director Michael Halberstam and other Writers' Theatre artists for an informative look into the intricacies of the production and learn details that will enhance your enjoyment of the show. The pre-show lectures will be held prior to select Sunday 6:00 p.m. shows. To join this series, please contact the Box Office at 847-242-6000 and ask for the Pre-show Lecture Series.

Dinner Theatre Series

Make a night of your Writers' Theatre visit. For only \$250, you will receive one ticket to each of the four productions and dinner at Meg's Café/An Apple a Day before each show, consisting of an appetizer, entrée, dessert and a glass of wine. Available on select Wednesday performances. If you have already sent in your renewal, simply call the Box Office at 847-242-6000 and request to change your series to the Dinner Theatre Series.

Metra Fare Discount Program

Purchase your train passes at a discount when you order your season subscription tickets. Simply indicate the Metra station at which you board and we will send you 8 one-way vouchers (to and from the four shows of the season) with your theatre tickets for the price indicated on the form.

Email Reminders

We realize that, when buying tickets months in advance, it is sometimes difficult to remember the details when it is time to attend the performance. For this reason, we are now offering email reminders to all season subscribers. If you would like to have a reminder sent to you, please include an email address on your subscription renewal form. If you have already sent in your form, please contact the Box Office at 847-242-6000 and let them know you would like to set up an email reminder.

Patron Feedback Program

Writers' Theatre would like to recruit a select group of interested subscribers to join our "Patron Feedback Program." This group will submit feedback for each show that may be published on our website and in our printed materials. Interested parties should contact Kory Kelly, Director of Marketing, at 847-242-6003 for more details.

2005/06 Season Sponsor



2005/06 SEASON PRODUCTIONS

1 THE UNEASY CHAIR

BY EVAN SMITH

DIRECTED BY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL HALBERSTAM
SEPTEMBER 27 – NOVEMBER 27, 2005

When stubborn, thrifty and independent Amelia Pickles rents a room to the stubborn, thrifty and independent Captain Wickett, their relationship unexpectedly escalates from tenant-landlord to plaintiff-defendant to husband-wife. Featuring **Linda Kimbrough**, **Ross Lehman** and **Greg Vinkler**, this sparkling comedy about the contrary nature of marriage wittily pays homage to Oscar Wilde and Charles Dickens.

Performed at 325 Tudor Court



2 BUS STOP

BY WILLIAM INGE

DIRECTED BY RICK SNYDER
JANUARY 24 – MARCH 26, 2006

Dreams, desperation, love and lawlessness all intersect at a small roadside diner where a busload of travelers is forced to wait out the storm. Featuring gripping dialogue and dynamic ensemble acting, *Bus Stop* realistically captures the hopes and ambitions of the Midwest heartland. Steppenwolf ensemble member **Rick Snyder** directs Writers' Theatre favorites **William Brown** and **Kymberly Mellen** in this modern American classic.

Performed at 325 Tudor Court

3 THE CHOSEN

ADAPTED BY AARON POSNER AND CHAIM POTOK FROM THE NOVEL BY CHAIM POTOK
DIRECTED BY ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE SHADE MURRAY
MARCH 14 – JULY 9, 2006

Adapted from Chaim Potok's classic novel, *The Chosen* follows the unlikely yet enduring friendship between two Jewish teenagers: one Orthodox and the other Hassidic. Despite their radically different outlooks on the world, the boys learn to rely on each other as they bridge the divides within their faith, their neighborhood, and their families. Artistic Associate **Shade Murray** (*The Subject Was Roses*) directs this heartfelt story about understanding, respect and reconciliation.

Performed at 664 Vernon Avenue



4 THE DUCHESS OF MALFI

BY JOHN WEBSTER

ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL HALBERSTAM
MAY 16 – JULY 16, 2006

WORLD PREMIERE ADAPTATION

This rarely performed Jacobean drama has all the trappings of a summer blockbuster thriller. The Duchess of Malfi's brothers are outraged when they learn of their sister's forbidden marriage to Antonio, her servant. Politically threatened by this union, the brothers create a web of lies, betrayal, espionage, insanity and murder to guarantee the downfall of the Duchess. Penned by one of England's great early dramatists, the play is rich with poetry and filled with surprising turns and circumstances.

Performed at 325 Tudor Court

OPTIONAL FIFTH PRODUCTION!

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

BY CHARLES DICKENS

ADAPTED AND PERFORMED BY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL HALBERSTAM
SUNDAY DECEMBER 18, 2:30 P.M. TUESDAY THROUGH THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20-22, 8 P.M.

10TH ANNIVERSARY

An intimate one-man telling of this remarkable story returns for a limited engagement.

Performed at 325 Tudor Court



OVERSEAS ADVENTURE

BY RICHARD CHRISTIANSEN
FORMER CHIEF CRITIC, CHICAGO TRIBUNE
AUTHOR, A THEATER OF OUR OWN: A HISTORY AND A MEMOIR
OF 1,001 NIGHTS IN CHICAGO



You'll forgive us — all 27 of us — if we look just a bit smug these days. We were the happy few who went on the Writers' Theatre trip to England in late December-early January, and in our eight days there, we saw the latest and the best that London stages had to offer. And that's not idle boasting. When the Olivier Awards were handed out earlier this year, most of the shows we attended were nominees and winners in that prestigious annual competition for London theaters.

For example: The Royal National Theatre's brilliant production of *The History Boys* by Alan Bennett took the prizes for best play, best director (Nicholas Hytner) and best actor (Richard Griffiths). Bennett's very funny, very moving story of a group of eight high school boys and their free-spirited teacher (Griffiths) ranked No. 1 on our list too.

Close behind in our estimation was another Olivier award nominee, *Festen* (The Celebration), the English playwright David Eldridge's sensational dramatization of the 1998 Danish film about a birthday party and a family reunion from hell. This last-minute addition to our playgoing agenda took us all by surprise with its stark, severe style and its perfectly choreographed staging by director Rufus Norris.

Our two big new musicals were *Mary Poppins*, the lavish stage version of the 1964 Disney movie, with its spectacular special effects and buoyant dance numbers, and *The Woman in White*, composer Andrew Lloyd Webber's romantic take on the 1860 novel by Wilkie Collins, with its mind-boggling (and eye-crossing) video projection scenery.

All of these shows will be on their way to America in the next season or two; and *Woman* is due in Chicago this November in its North American, pre-Broadway premiere at the LaSalle Bank (formerly Shubert) Theatre. So — if you want to know more in advance about how *Mary Poppins* flies into the audience, or what tunes stand out in Webber's score, just ask us. We saw and heard them first.

We also saw a few shows that were not quite worth writing home about. (Don't ask me, for example, about the National's frenetic revival of Nikolai Erdman's 1925 Russian social satire *The Mandate*. And a lot of us found playwright Peter Whelan's *The Earthly Paradise*, about the romantic triangle between the artists William Morris and Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Morris's wife Janey, pretty much a snore.) But even the lighter, special entertainments, such as the jolly Christmas pantomime of *Aladdin*, with Sir Ian McKellen in drag, had their peculiar charms.

Meanwhile, with Michael Halberstam leading the post-show seminars and with the ever-present skills of Irene Kogan handling all living and transportation matters, we had a comfortable, convenient home base at the Waldorf Hilton hotel and a series of meetings with such articulate guests as Michael Billington, theater critic of *The Guardian*, and Nicolas Kent, artistic director of the small, enterprising Tricycle Theatre.

We found time to do a little shopping amid London's post-Christmas crowds. We took in the splendid Raphael exhibit at the National Gallery. We had a rousing Champagne toast on New Year's Eve at our hotel and watched the nearby fireworks at midnight. We even managed to squeeze in a day trip to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and, for good measure that same day, a buffet lunch on a snug river barge.

We had a great time, and, you bet, I'm all ready to go on the next trip.

UPCOMING PERFORMING ARTS TOURS WITH
MICHAEL HALBERSTAM AND RICHARD CHRISTIANSEN

SHAW

SHAW FESTIVAL, AUGUST 3 – 7, 2005

Our annual trip to the Shaw Festival includes best available tickets to six top notch productions, all transportation, four nights at the luxurious Queens Landing Inn, delicious breakfasts, a gourmet dinner at the hotel, a sumptuous meal at the Peller Estates Winery, and seminars with Artistic Director Michael Halberstam and Richard Christiansen (Former Chief Critic, *Chicago Tribune*). There will also be exclusive and vibrant discussion and seminars with Richard Christiansen & Michael Halberstam and a meeting with Shaw Festival Artistic Director Jackie Maxwell (subject to her availability).

London

LONDON TOUR, DECEMBER 29, 2005 – JANUARY 7, 2006

Our popular and highly acclaimed New Year's visit to London includes best available tickets to six productions, eight nights at the luxurious historic London Hilton-Waldorf, round trip air on British Airways (optional), visits with a London Theatre VIP (past guests have included Sir Ian McKellen), all coach transfers, a gourmet welcome dinner at one of London's finest restaurants, a wonderful New Year's Eve dinner with live music and champagne at the hotel, an exclusive private gallery tour, and a meeting with *The Guardian* chief drama critic Michael Billington. We are considering an optional day trip to Paris.

Space is limited. Like our theatre, we chose to keep our tours intimate. Don't delay — call today! For more information on either tour, contact Dennis Hull at 847-242-6004.

(All travel arrangements by Irene Kogan of Travel 100 Group/Stage & Page, Kenilworth.)

ALUMNI UPDATE

Every once in a while we like to let you know where some of our regular Writers' Theatre artistic family are performing and directing.

NEW YORK

Orson's *Shadow* recently opened in New York to great reviews, and features many Writers' Theatre artists! John Judd (*The Price, Crime and Punishment*), Jeff Still (*The Price, Rough Crossing*), and Lee Roy Rogers (*The Price*) are reprising their roles as Orson Welles and Laurence Olivier in *Orson's Shadow* by Austin Pendleton (*Booth*) directed by David Cromer (*Oscar Remembered, The Beats, Booth, The Price*). Joining them in the highly acclaimed production is Susan Bennett (*Crime and Punishment*).

KAREN ALDRIDGE

Karen Aldridge just completed her run of Regina Taylor's wonderful new play *The Dreams of Sarah Breedlove* at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

WILLIAM BROWN & KATE BUCKLEY

William Brown just directed a new production of Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* for Milwaukee Repertory and completed his third year as Scrooge in The Goodman Theatre's *Christmas Carol*, directed by Kate Buckley who just directed *Little Women* for Missouri Repertory.

SHANNON COCHRAN & MICHAEL CANAVAN

Shannon Cochran (*Private Lives, The Father*) completed a very successful run of *Bug* by Tracy Letts in New York and was joined in performance by her husband Michael Canavan (*The Father*).

COBY GOSS & NATASHA LOWE

Coby Goss (*Seagull*) and his wife Natasha Lowe (*Benefactors*) are pleased to announce their greatest production to date, the birth of Nathaniel Wakefield Goss.

GARY GRIFFIN

Gary Griffin (*Loot*) is in preparation for his Broadway debut of *The Color Purple*, a musical adapted from the book by Alice Walker, and has staged both *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* and *The Apple Tree* for the City Center Encores Series.

SUSAN HART

Susan Hart (*Glass Menagerie, Loot, Our Town, Benefactors, Seagull*) is currently appearing in Chicago Shakespeare's production of *Romeo and Juliet* at Navy Pier.

CHRISTOPHER MCCLINDEN

Christopher McClinden (*Seagull*) just appeared in *Vincent in Brixton* at Apple Tree Theatre.

KYMBERLY MELLEN

KyMBERly Mellen just completed a successful run of *Intimate Apparel* at Steppenwolf.

SCOTT PARKINSON

Scott Parkinson (*Crime and Punishment, The Doctor's Dilemma*) just finished a run with Brian Bedford in *School for Scandal* at the Mark Taper Forum in LA and is currently based in New York, where he recently completely performing in *Rose Rage*. He will be appearing as Hal in *Henry IV* for the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival.

HOWARD WITT

Howard Witt (*The Price*) is currently appearing on London's West End in Bob Falls' revival of *Death of a Salesman*.

KAREN JANES-WODISTCH, KEVIN GUDAHL & ROBERT SCOGIN

Karen Janes-Wodistch (*Love and Lunacy, Candida, Rocket to the Moon, The Doctor's Dilemma, Seagull*) recently appeared in *Measure for Measure* at Chicago Shakespeare along with Kevin Gudahl (*The Doctor's Dilemma*) and Robert Scogin (*Niedecker, The Doctor's Dilemma, Seagull*).

EDUCATION UPDATE

Building off of last year's successful residency at Northbrook's Meadowbrook Elementary School, Writers' Theatre teamed with School District 28 to launch a district-wide after school drama program for students grades 1- 5. The classes in creative drama were offered to the students at Greenbriar, Westmoor and Meadowbrook Elementary Schools. Working as an ensemble, the students learned the value of teamwork, tolerance and accepting the ideas of others.

Writers' Theatre especially thanks Lauren Bondi and Michael Chanon for introducing Writers' Theatre to School District 28, and we look forward to future collaborations.

"It is always gratifying to see students come together and create something larger than any one person could create alone," says teaching artist Janet Brooks. "Students begin to trust the concept of listening and sharing ideas – learning that the outcome will be better if every-one takes part in the creative process."

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Tom Hodges
President

Gillian Goodman
Vice-President

Christopher Knight
Vice-President

Bruce Tranen
Vice-President

Norman Cutler
Treasurer

Lorel McMillan
Secretary

Arthur Anderson, Jr.

Susan Belgrad

Jennifer Bielstein

Lorry Borowitz

Carl Boyer

Sara Cohan

Howard Conant, Jr.

Judy Cottle

Carol Dawley
Immediate Past President

Michael Halberstam

Betty Askow Lilienfield
Founding President

Barbara Melcher

Jean Nerenberg

David Polston

Christine Pope

Bobbie Schultz

Ilana Seligman

Gerry Silverstein

Pam Zdunek

THE BRIEF CHRONICLE TEAM

Michael Halberstam
Artistic Director

Jennifer Bielstein
Managing Director

Shade Murray
Artistic Associate

Kory Kelly
Director of Marketing

Dennis Hull
Development Associate

Jeff Brown
Business Manager

Jennifer Amling
Ticket Services Manager

Brant Russell
Administrative Assistant