

2006—2007 SEASON

WU?@therep

HEARTBREAK HOUSE

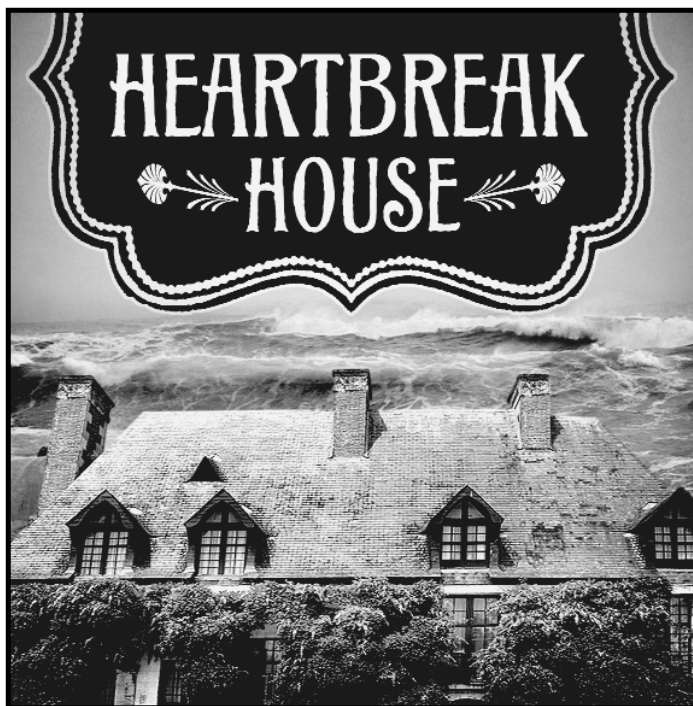
by **George Bernard Shaw**

Directed by **John Going**

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At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast.

But we also know that some things

are worth slowing down for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together

WU? @ THE REP—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (**A/S/L**), a plot summary (**F2F**), biographical information on the playwright (**B4U**), historical context (**B4U**), and other bits and pieces (**HTH**). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means **IRL**, anyway.

CU@therep!

The Teacher's Lounge



In an effort to make our educational materials more accessible to students and easier for educators to incorporate into the classroom, we have adopted a new, more student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, www.repstl.org for additional information regarding the production elements, such as scenery, costumes, and lighting. Any materials, either from this guide, or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom. As always, we appreciate your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

NEATO!

Show Me Standards: CA 2, 5, 6, 7; FA 5; SS 2, 6
and Illinois Learning Standards: 1, 2, 4, 5, 18, 25, 27.

MIHYAP: TOP TEN WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED AT THE REP

10. TBA Ushers will seat your school or class as a group, so even if you are dying to mingle with the group from the all girls school that just walked in the door, stick with your friends until you have been shown your section in the theatre.

9. SITD The house lights will dim immediately before the performance begins and then go dark. Fight off that oh-so-immature urge to whisper, giggle like a grade schooler, or yell at this time and during any other blackouts in the show.

8. SED Before the performance begins, turn off all cell phones, pagers, beepers and watch alarms. If you need to text, talk, or dial back during intermission, please make sure to click off before the show resumes.

7. TMI Not to sound like your mom, but "if you need to go now, you needed to go then." Leaving the theatre during the performance is disruptive, so take care of any personal needs before the show starts.

6. RTM When you arrive at the theatre, read the production program. It's like a deluxe version of liner notes and a free souvenir, all in one.

5. P-ZA? NW! Though your ability to eat ten slices at one sitting may impress your friends, no one wants to listen to you chew, slurp, or smack, so please leave all food, drink, and gum outside the theatre.

4. TLK-2-U-L-8-R We know that you will be dying to discuss what you see onstage with your friends, but please wait until intermission. Any talking—even whispering—is very distracting for both the actors onstage and the audience seated around you.

3. LOL Without you, we really wouldn't have a show. It's your job to laugh when a scene is funny or maybe even shed a tear or two in a tender moment. However, since you are not the audience at *The Jerry Springer Show* please refrain from inappropriate responses such as talking, whistling, making catcalls or singing along with the performers.

2. SOP While it's great that you want a celeb picture of your day at The Rep, the theatre is off-limits to the paparazzi. Flash photography interrupts the performance and along with videorecording is prohibited by Actors Equity rules. You can sneak a peek at production photos on our website, www.repstl.org.

1. LLTA Let the actors know that you respect their work by remaining for the curtain call at the end of the performance. Show your appreciation through applause.

A/S/L

Young, proper singer **ELLIE DUNN** gets much more than she bargained for when she goes to the country for a weekend with a friend.

NURSE GUINNESS is more a member of the family than a servant, and like everyone else, may have a little mischief up her sleeve.

Eccentric inventor and sea captain, **CAPTAIN SHOTOVER** has a unique house, family and philosophy of life.

Long absent from her bohemian family, **LADY UTTERWORD** has been thrown back into the life she tried to escape in her visit home.

Shocking in her beauty and behavior, **HESIONE HUSHABYE** is the hostess of this strange weekend party.

Hesione's husband, **HECTOR HUSHABYE**, likes to invent wild stories about his life which may come back to haunt him.

Kind but naïve, Ellie's father, **MAZZINI DUNN**, wishes only the best for his daughter and supports her choice of a husband.

ALFRED "BOSS" MANGAN seems cold and business-like, but may just have a heart underneath his cruel exterior.

Lady Utterword's foolish brother-in-law, **RANDALL UTTERWORD**, tries to behave properly but harbors a powerful passion for his brother's wife.

H/H

BOHEMIAN: A person with artistic or literary interests who disregards conventional standards of behavior.

PURITAN: A member of a group of English Protestants who in the 16th and 17th centuries advocated strict religious discipline along with simplification of the ceremonies and creeds of the Church of England.

CAPITALISM: An economic system in which the means of production and distribution are privately or corporately owned and development is proportionate to the accumulation and reinvestment of profits gained in a free market.

SOCIALISM: Any of various theories or systems of social organization in which the means of producing and distributing goods is owned collectively or by a centralized government that often plans and controls the economy.

FABIAN SOCIETY: A group dedicated to the establishment of socialism in England.

BOATSWAIN: A warrant officer or petty officer in charge of a ship's rigging, anchors, cables and deck crew.

ALBERT MEDAL: A first class award for extreme or heroic daring in saving life at sea.

SIREN: One of a group of sea nymphs who by their sweet singing lured mariners to destruction on the rocks surrounding their island; a woman considered to be seductive and beautiful.

TRISTAN AND ISOLDE: A medieval romance legend. After swallowing a love potion the two fall in love though she is promised to someone else. He dies of despair after a battle wound and she, finding him dead, dies of grief.

PROVIDENCE: The care, guardianship and control exercised by a deity; divine direction.



HEARTBREAK HOUSE is subtitled “A Fantasia in the Russian Manner on English Themes,” and is often compared to *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekhov. Like Chekhov’s play, it is a haunting, bittersweet look at an affluent, ineffectual society on the brink of profound social change. In pre-World War I England, Miss Ellie Dunn, a poor but proper young lady, arrives for a weekend visit at the home of the eccentric inventor and retired sea-captain, Shotover. Upon her arrival, she discovers that the rules and manners of society do not apply here. Shotover’s house, a fantastical country estate replicated like a ship, permeates an ambience of unrealized ambitions and unrequited love. Ellie has been invited by Shotover’s daughter, Hesione Hushabye, to Hesione’s weekend house party along with a bizarre collection of characters. What Ellie doesn’t realize is that she has been summoned so that Hesione can help the young lady “re-think” her impending marriage to stuffy Boss Mangan, a middle-aged industrialist. Hesione will go to any length to stop the loveless match—she even tries to woo Mangan for herself, and succeeds. Yet financial security proves more important to Ellie than love and loyalty. She remains resolved to marry Mangan, despite the fact that she is in love with someone else: a handsome and mysterious stranger.

ELLIE SOON DISCOVERS that the stranger is none other than Hesione’s husband Hector, a dashing and romantic liar who invents fantastic stories. Ellie’s disillusionment with Hector only makes her more resolved to marry Mangan. Other visitors arrive for the weekend. They include Ellie’s ineffectual, idealistic father, Mazzini Dunn who believes Ellie would be better off with a wealthy man even if she doesn’t love him. Hesione’s sister, Lady Ariadne Utterword, also shows up for the party, although no one seems to recognize her. Her love of “proper” society caused her to leave this strange house and marry a respectable colonial governor. Although she is disgusted at

the lack of manners in the Shotover household, she soon finds a connection with the courtly mannered Hector. Finally, Lady Utterword’s brother-in-law, Randall Utterword, arrives quite uninvited. He carries a torch for Lady Utterword and instantly becomes jealous of the handsome Hector.

THE EVER-CHANGING romantic combinations and shifting relationships of these characters provide the impetus for a series of debates—both social and psychological—on mysticism, capitalism, morality and the nature of love. Ellie is systematically stripped of her romantic illusions, but also comes to realize the inadequacy of emotional cynicism. In the end, she renounces Mangan and instead decides to marry the eccentric 80-year-old Captain Shotover, hoping that together they can define a new world of creative values.

THE PLAY CONCLUDES with an explosion of bombs on the horizon which Hesione and Ellie find thrilling “like Beethoven.” But Shotover sees them as “the hand of God,” and warns: “The judgement has come. Courage will not save you; but it will show that your souls are still alive.”



Special thanks to The Huntington Theatre Company for allowing us to incorporate portions of their Combined Literary & Curriculum Guide for Heartbreak House. This play synopsis is used with permission from the Huntington.



MARRIAGE

Love and marriage are presented in several different ways in this play. For Lady Utterword, who may or may not actually love her husband, marriage was a way to punish and to escape from her Bohemian father. Hesione and Hector Hushabye have a marriage which began as a great romance, but now has apparently fizzled out into a sort of prison for them both. Ellie saw a loving marriage between her parents, yet has opted to marry a man she does not love simply to ensure a comfortable life. Which marriage, if any, in the play do you believe Shaw is setting forth as the correct or ideal situation?

WAR

Shaw was very unhappy with the way English society dealt with the waging of and aftermath of World War I. His disgust with combat and the immediate vilification of anything German was equaled only by his appreciation of the odd beauty of war as viewed from a distance. In this play, the characters live in a society on the brink of war, yet they seem completely preoccupied with trivial romances, unaware of the reality of the destruction they compare to Beethoven.

ROMANCE & REALITY

In the topsy-turvy world of *Heartbreak House*, marriage does not imply either love or fidelity and war is a beautiful entertainment rather than a frightening destruction. There are some characters, however, who seem to see the world as it truly is, rather than what the others would have them believe. Also, several characters undergo a change over the course of the play, either embracing romantic notions or watching as their illusions are shattered by reality.

SOCIETY & CLASS

In many societies throughout history, distinctions based on class and social rank have greatly affected the outcome of individual lives. Depending on a person's rank at birth, their employment, education and even romantic opportunities might already be decided for them. In *Heartbreak House*, we hear Shaw's view that even within the upper class, there are two groups—those Lady Utterword calls the equestrian and the neurotic classes. Shaw himself made this distinction, noticing that one group had all of the big ideas about changing the world, but merely sat by doing nothing as the less educated and less enlightened group did the actual work of running the country.

The characters names are very descriptive and further reinforce the themes Shaw is trying to address. Take for example "Dunn" (done), "Utter" (ancient form meaning death), "Shot" (as in tired) "over" and "bye," all of which suggest endings. Also, three characters have names from Greek mythology. Hector was the great Trojan prince who performed many brave feats. Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, constructed the labyrinth to house the Minotaur. Hesione, a Trojan princess, was saved by Hercules after being sacrificed to the god of the sea.

► Further analyze each character. Why might Shaw have used these names?

COULD A BROKEN HEART BE REAL?

WHILE YEARS of folklore, sad songs and romantic movies have led us to believe that we could possibly die of a broken heart, our parents—and common sense—have probably told us that it just wasn't true. Until now. Scientists at prestigious Johns Hopkins recently published a study in *The New England Journal of Medicine* explaining stress cardiomyopathy, which has also come to be known as "broken heart" syndrome. Studying 19 patients complaining of like symptoms, researchers found that sudden, overwhelming emotional stress triggered by events such as the loss of a loved one could cause an episode similar to a heart attack. This condition is the result of large amounts of adrenaline and other chemicals being released into the blood stream. In large amounts, these chemicals can be temporarily toxic to the heart, stunning the muscle and producing symptoms including chest pain, fluid in the lungs, shortness of breath and heart failure.

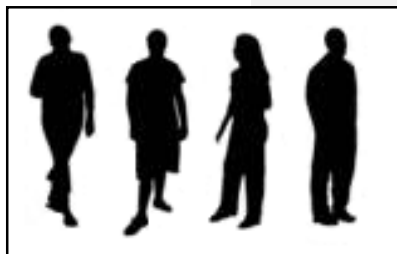
THOUGH BROKEN heart syndrome does have many similarities to traditional heart attacks, it also has several important differences. The study's lead author and cardiologist, Dr. Ilan Wittstein says that

"After observing several cases of 'broken heart' syndrome at Hopkins hospitals...we realized that these patients had clinical

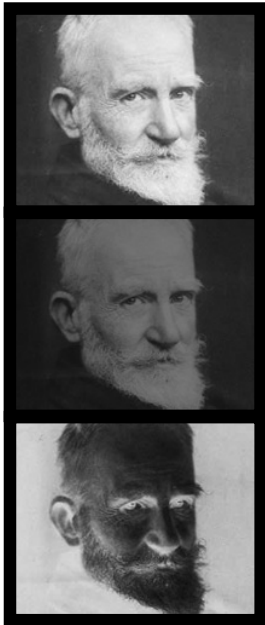
features quite different from typical cases of heart attack, and that something very different was happening. These cases were, initially, difficult to explain because most of the patients were previously healthy and had few risk factors for heart disease."

Though broken heart syndrome appears to be potentially deadly, it seems that patients exhibiting symptoms of the episode did not show significant artery blockage or irreversible heart muscle damage. Perhaps the most surprising was the patients' recovery time. While a heart attack would normally result in several weeks, even months of rehabilitation, patients with broken heart syndrome show dramatic improvement within days and full recovery within two weeks. In addition, there is no evidence of permanent heart damage, and often the patients would go on without any further episodes.

RESEARCH INTO stress cardiomyopathy is still new, but since the original 2005 study was published several more cases have been reported. The idea of a real broken heart has certainly changed the way doctors go about diagnosing heart conditions and has effected the way physicians approach patients undergoing periods of intense emotional stress.



- How do you define a broken heart? Have you ever had one?
- Does it have to put you in the hospital to be considered really broken?
- What would you do to get over this ailment? How would you help someone who is facing a broken heart?



OFTEN CALLED the greatest playwright since Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin, Ireland on July 26, 1856. The son of Lucille Elizabeth Gurly, a gifted singer, and George Carr Shaw, an unsuccessful merchant, Shaw had a difficult childhood due to his father's constant drinking. Shaw began his education in Dublin, but received little formal schooling and claimed that he was basically self taught. Coming from a poor family, he lacked the funding for a university education and consequently began working as a clerk at the age of 15. After years of struggling to make the failing marriage work, in 1873 Shaw's mother took his two sisters and departed for London. In the new atmosphere, his mother enjoyed the artistic community and found work as a voice instructor. Seeing his mother's success and tired of being alone with his father, at the age of 20 Shaw followed his mother to London, beginning a turning point in the young man's life.

IN LONDON society Shaw immediately leapt into the world of art. He was able to continue his own education by attending debates and lectures at the British Museum, and doors of opportunity slowly began to open. Shaw soon found himself a journalist-critic, reviewing concerts, art exhibits, books and theatre with a biting wit new to London readers. Bored with the state of the arts, Shaw strove to improve the taste of audiences by suggesting music and arts outside the norm. His belief was that art was solely for didactic purposes, and that every artistic endeavor must strive to better the world at large. In his search for ways to improve society, Shaw heard a lecture by Henry George, an American economist and critic of capitalism. Shaw was compelled to begin reading the work of Karl Marx and eventually to become a socialist. Soon after, Shaw became a member of the Fabian Society. His new socialist enthusiasm was

mirrored by fellow members and before long he would become a strong advocate for social reform.

BY THE 1880S, Shaw was writing extensively, producing book reviews, art, music and dramatic criticism, as well as Fabian tracts. His criticism of the state of theatre prompted him to try his hand at a new variety of play, more aggressively addressing contemporary social issues. His 1892 play *Widowers' Houses* did just that, opening to great public concern. The reaction delighted Shaw, who saw that he was able to make his views known through this new venue. Continuing his work, and hoping to reach an even larger audience, Shaw began writing more plays all of which included an unconventionally long preface. The prefaces dealt with a great range of topics and helped Shaw to reach a new play-reading public.

AS THE CENTURY turned, Shaw began realizing great success with his work. In the first decades of the 1900s he produced some of his most famous writing including *Man and Superman*, *Major Barbara*, *Androcles and the Lion*, *Pygmalion*, *Heartbreak House* and *Saint Joan*. These works employed characters and a style so distinctly his own that they began to be known as Shavian. His plays attacked and ridiculed what he saw as the public's blind following of traditional views. Characters defied expectation as villains turned out to be good, heroes were not at all heroic and women were strong and controlling of much weaker men. He espoused in his heroes his own view of the "life force" or spiritual individuality as well as "creative evolution" in which a man willfully evolves into a being dominated by the mind. His new attitudes and style at turns outraged and thrilled the public, but society never failed to recognize his brilliance and he was rewarded with the Nobel Prize in 1925.

face face



SWDNT?

"...old fashioned people think you can have a soul without money. They think the less money you have, the more soul you have. Young people nowadays know better. A soul is a very expensive thing to keep..."

- What do you think Ellie means by this statement? Why is a soul expensive to keep? Do you agree that some people think that money lessens your soul? Why might this be so?

"There are only two classes in good society in England: the equestrian classes and the neurotic classes. It isn't mere convention: everybody can see that the people who hunt are the right people and the people who don't are the wrong ones."

- Lady Utterword has neatly divided society into two classes. How does she define these groups? What other characteristics accompany this distinction for each class? To which group do you think she would say she belongs?

"I did not let the fear of death govern my life and my reward was, I had a life. You are going to let the fear of poverty govern your life; and your reward will be that you will eat, but you will not live."

- What criteria is Captain Shotover using here to measure a life? How do you truly live, in his opinion?

"How are we to have any self-respect if we don't keep it up that we're better than we really are?"

- Mangan seems to think that in order to feel good about one's place in the world, we must lie and make ourselves out to be more than we are. How do you feel about this statement? Do you know anyone who presents him or herself as something other than his or her true self? What does this say about people's feelings about themselves?

"I have a horrible fear that my heart is broken, but that heartbreak is not like what I thought it must be."

- After having her heart broken by Hector, Ellie comments that the feeling is different than she anticipated. What might have formed Ellie's romantic notions of heartbreak? What do you think real heartbreak feels like? Is it different than that presented in movies and songs?

"...let me warn you once and for all that I am a rigidly conventional woman. You may think because I'm a Shotover that I'm a Bohemian, because we are so horribly Bohemian. But I'm not. I hate and loathe Bohemianism. No child brought up in a strict Puritan household ever suffered from Puritanism as I suffered from our Bohemianism."

- Lady Utterword has clearly rebelled against her upbringing in the Shotover household. Why do you think she is so against the Bohemian lifestyle? Do you think it is because she rejects the odd nature of the Bohemian movement or do you think it has more to do with her relationship with her father?

"Every drunken skipper trusts to Providence. But one of the ways of Providence with drunken skippers is to run them on the rocks."

- In this statement, Captain Shotover rejects Mazzini Dunn's idealistic view that life is governed by Providence. What do you think Shotover would say controls life? Is it man himself or something more? What are the other characters' views on the subject?