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## George Bernard Shaw's 'Candida' at Town Hall Theatre

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Alan Coyne (Lexy), Derek Robertson Fischer (Morell), and Maggie Mason (Candida). Photo Stu Selland

and how we make compromises." The play is totally relevant today, she says, both as an explanation to young people that moving out of the "honeymoon phase" is a more rewarding part of married life, and as a reminder that you can feel an attraction to people outside of your marriage. "Temptation will exist, always," she says. "It's the covenant that you make with your partner, the faith you put in each other, that preserves the harmony of the relationship."

Aaronson-Gelb, who is the co-artistic director at Just Theater in Berkeley, has directed many new plays by local playwrights. She is a native of the Bay Area, and was offered this direction by former THT artistic director Clive Worsley (now replaced by Joel Roster), who has great respect for her work.

The group of actors functions very well together; their liveliness highlights the humor that Shaw put into the play. "At the core of the story is the idea that this very strong, confident man, Pastor Morell (played by Derek Robertson Fischer), has his confidence toppled by an 18-year-old boy," says the director. "Morell for me reads like a giant football player, a popular man in a constant positive feed-back loop who suddenly realizes that it happened through the work of others, and he should not take his privilege for granted."

Luke Meyers plays the young poet, Eugene Marchbanks, who challenges Morell. "He has collapsible ankles," says Aaronson-Gelb of the actor. "He melts and puddles all over the floor in a simply delightful way."

The center of their rivalry, Candida, is played by Maggie Mason. A lovely actress, she also has smarts and poise. "Maggie Mason had an immediate connection with the language and Candida's irreverence," says Aaronson-Gelb. "She says that her husband is the master of the house, but that she is the one who made him so. I think that Shaw, in all honesty, was trying to say that women have power, and they create environments and opportunities."

Shaw, without being a real feminist, supported the right of women to vote and believed they should have a more powerful role in society. In the play, Candida is the central anchor; she does not change, while the two men around her realize things about themselves as they examine their love and relationship with her.

"Candida" will play at Town Hall Theatre from May 24 to June 12 with previews on May 22 and

There is something intimate and special about witnessing the rehearsal of a play close to opening night; the actors have memorized the script, their performance is almost set, the emotion is there, but some of the choreography is still in the making - and one literally sees a story being born.

The provocative and witty characters of "Candida" in George Bernard Shaw's 1894 play about a classic love triangle, which opens May 24 at Town Hall Theatre, are played by young actors, many of them new to THT, bringing a lively charm and delightful humor to the Lafayette stage. The story, set in Victorian England, tells of the turmoil that results from the intrusion of a young romantic poet into the lives of a well-established clergyman and his charming wife, Candida.

"The biggest idea in this play is the relationship between love, marriage, domesticity, and poetic love," says director Molly Aaronson-Gelb. "Shaw is asking the ways those go together

23. For tickets and more information, visit [www.townhalltheatre.com](http://www.townhalltheatre.com).

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