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65th anniversary season!

Summer festival
May 20–June 28

OPERA SARATOGA

Mary Birnbaum
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MY FAIR LADY

For musical theater
diehards, Anglophiles,
and the racing set

First Performance:
March 15, 1956
Mark Hellinger Theatre
on Broadway

Music:
Frederick Loewe

Book and Lyrics:
Alan Jay Lerner

**June 20,
24 & 26 / 7pm
June 28 / 2pm**

**Universal
Preservation Hall**

**Running Time:
2 hrs 30 min
including a 15 min
intermission**

**New Production
sung in English**

CAST

ELIZA DOOLITTLE
Christine Taylor Price**

HENRY HIGGINS
Bill Army

COLONEL PICKERING
Nazrin Azlan Alymann*

MRS. HIGGINS
Amy Burton**

MRS. PEARCE
Sadie Spivey*

MRS. EYNSFORD-HILL
Maiya Williams*

FREDDY EYNSFORD-HILL
Nathan Romportl*

ALFRED P. DOOLITTLE
Keith Jameson

ZOLTAN KARPATY
Daniel Esteban Lugo*

JAMES
Jack O'Leary*

*Current Member of Opera
Saratoga's Festival Artist Program
**Alum of Opera Saratoga's Festival
Artist Program

CREATIVE TEAM

MUSIC DIRECTOR
Adam Nielsen

DIRECTOR
Mary Birnbaum

CHOREOGRAPHER
Julia Eichten

ALFRED Z. SOLOMON
COSTUME DESIGNER
Oana Botez

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Anshuman Bhatia

PROPS DESIGNER
Charli Rose Burkhardt

**HAIR AND MAKEUP
DESIGNER**
Tracy McCaskill

SOUND DESIGNER
Nathan Cox

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Elio Bucky*

**ASSISTANT COSTUME
DESIGNER**
Caleb Krieg

FESTIVAL ARTIST PIANIST
Michał Skowronek*

RÉPÉTITEUR/COACH
Jesse Wong

**SPEECH & DIALECT
COACH**
Amy Jo Jackson

STAGE MANAGER
Leslie Sears

**ASSISTANT STAGE
MANAGER**
Sophia Flynn

Production sponsored by
Ellen Jabbur

Lerner and Loewe's *My Fair Lady*
is presented through special
arrangement with Music Theatre
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performance materials are also
supplied by MTI. mtishows.com.
Any video and/or audio recording of
this production is strictly prohibited

MY FAIR LADY SYNOPSIS

ACT I

On a rainy night in Edwardian London near the Royal Opera House, a young Cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, is selling violets. A young man, Freddy, bumps into her and spoils her flowers. Eliza is cheered up when an elderly gentleman, Col. Pickering, buys a flower, but again has an outburst when she notices another gentleman writing down how she talks. He introduces himself to the older gentleman as Henry Higgins, a phoneticist, and bets that he can make Eliza a lady by improving her speech ("Why Can't the English"). As they depart he unwillingly throws some loose change into Eliza's bucket, and she imagines what it would be like to live a life like the proper folk ("Wouldn't It Be 'Lovely'").

The next morning Alfred Doolittle, Eliza's father, seeks out Eliza for some money for a drink ("With A Little Bit of Luck"). Meanwhile Higgins and Pickering are discussing linguistics when they get an unexpected visit from Eliza. She is seeking speech lessons to be able to get a job as an assistant at a florist's shop. The two men reinstate their previously discussed wager, and Higgins begins the preliminary attempt to refining Eliza ("I'm An Ordinary Man"). Alfred Doolittle hears of Eliza's lessons, and decides to try and see if he can score a little money out of the arrangement ("With a Little Bit of Luck - Reprise").

Higgins, impressed by Alfred's linguistics and lack of moral code, agrees to pay Alfred to go on a spree so Eliza can continue lessons and also recommends him to an American millionaire seeking a lecturer on moral values. Eliza's tumultuous lessons continue, and she frustratingly imagines ways to get rid of Higgins ("Just You Wait"). The tired servants are on the verge of giving up when suddenly Eliza has a phonetic breakthrough and perfectly recites "The Rain in Spain." An overjoyed Eliza is too thrilled to sleep ("I Could Have Danced All Night").

Eliza is brought to the racecourse to test her new skills ("Ascot Gavotte"). After an initial good first impression, Eliza shocks the attendees with vulgar slang and Cockney attitude - but not without entrancing the young man, Freddy Eynsford-Hill, she bumped into outside the opera. Freddy is denied by

Eliza when he calls on her, but swears to wait for her as long as necessary ("On The Street Where You Live").

The final test is at the Embassy Ball where Eliza dazzles as a lady and impresses everyone, including the Queen of Transylvania ("Embassy Waltz"). A former student of Higgins, Zoltan Karpathy, is employed to discover the truth about Eliza through her speech. Though cautioned by his mother and Pickering not to let Karpathy dance with Eliza, Higgins relents.

ACT 2

The test at the Embassy Ball is considered a success as Karpathy has concluded that Eliza must be of Royal Hungarian blood. Pickering and Higgins are ecstatic at the success and declare the experiment over ("You Did It"). Eliza feels used and alone, her feelings unnoticed by Higgins. She lashes out at him and decides to leave. Higgins insults her and abruptly leaves ("Just You Wait - Reprise"). Outside she finds Freddy, still waiting for her ("On The Street Where You Live - Reprise"). He begins to explain his feelings of love towards her, but she cuts him off, tired of words ("Show Me"). The two return to Covent Garden where Eliza is unrecognizable with her new demeanor ("The Flower Market / Wouldn't It Be 'Lovely' - Reprise"). Her father also happens to be there, well dressed and with news that he has been bequeathed four thousand pounds a year and now must marry Eliza's "step-mother" to be a respectable gentleman ("Get Me To The Church On Time").

Higgins reflects on life with and without Eliza ("A Hymn to Him"). Higgins seeks his mother's advice and is surprised to find Eliza having tea with her. Left alone, the two can clear the air. While Higgins always treated Eliza like a flower girl, Pickering treated her like a lady. Higgins denies any difference in treatment, and Eliza announces she will marry Freddy because he loves her. She says she was foolish to think she needed Higgins and will never see him again ("Without You").

Henry Higgins realizes his attachment to Eliza ("I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face"). He re-plays the recordings of their first lesson and only hears his harsh and disparaging words. He is interrupted by a Cockney accent, Eliza, who has returned for a possible reconciliation.

The Music That Shows

"Don't talk of stars, burning above," Eliza insists. "If you're in love, *show* me." Eliza may be a student of (pronouncing) words, but she is a woman of action – attuned to the truths revealed by what people actually *do*. Correspondingly, Frederick Loewe's score doesn't just accompany the drama, it *shows* us what's really going on.

The score directs the sweepers in "Wouldn't It Be Lovely?" to move in a relaxed "soft shoe" style, which is looser and less percussive than tap. They sing about comfort, but they also embody it: the men whistle lazy triplets, while the accompaniment evokes a gently pastoral sound world – breezy, woodwind-like lines set against harp- and plucked-string-like figures. This is not simply a fantasy of rest; it is a world that already knows how to experience ease.

Later, in "Get Me to the Church on Time," Doolittle's friends rally around him in close barbershop-style harmonies and homophonic texture that signifies camaraderie. That unity becomes the foundation for exuberance. The score indicates a "street can-can": the meter high-kicks into an athletic 6/8, and a glissando vaults the key from G major up to the distant and unrelated B-flat. Rhythms cartwheel and shoes tap like percussion instruments. The music shows us a world that is not only vibrant, but irrepressible.

Higgins favors rapid patter and speech-like delivery. We perceive that he analyzes rhythm rather than surrender to it. But in "I'm an Ordinary Man," the music shows what lies behind his carefully controlled self-image. When his patter fractures into brief, two-measure outbursts – thick tutti chords, sudden shifts to the minor, off-beat accents, and chromatic turns each marked *pesante* (heavy) – we hear a musical foot-stamp, the childishness beneath his rhetoric. Eliza is also granted a single *pesante* outburst, right at the opening of "Just You Wait," but the effect is different. It launches her into one of the most imaginative songs in the show, as her anger becomes the engine for escalating wit and invention. The music has shown us that Higgins's temper constricts, while Eliza's catalyzes.

Ascot unfolds as a gavotte – and not simply because the words happen to rhyme. A gavotte is a duple-meter dance that begins with a half-bar pickup, creating a sense of lift and buoyancy. Historically associated with the court of Louis XIV, it represents a highly stylized version of a rustic dance: courtly “slumming” carefully choreographed into an art of restraint. Its gestures – offering a hand, a flower, a bow – are codified and controlled. What we are shown is that Ascot is less a living social world than a performance of one: elegant, but soulless.

Eliza’s breakthrough in “The Rain in Spain” begins not as a declaration of victory but a moment of alignment, as she locks into rhythm with Higgins and Pickering. But when she bursts into “I Could Have Danced All Night,” the music moves beyond that shared framework. Rather than adopting a recognizably “high-class” English idiom, it turns outward: toward habanera, fandango, or jota. We are shown that

Eliza is unconstrained by the codes she has learned to master. Higgins is cerebral and curiously immobile. Eliza’s joy does not sound like assimilation; it sounds like imagination.

In a musical so preoccupied with language, it is striking how often the music tells the story: the vitality of the Cockney world, the artifice of Ascot, the imaginative reach of Eliza’s joy, the limits of Higgins’s control. Eliza asks to be shown rather than told. The musical score obliges.

Sarah Day-O’Connell
Professor, Department of Music
Skidmore College

MY FAIRLADY SONGS

ACT 1

Overture
 Why Can’t The English?
 Wouldn’t It Be Lovely?
 With A Little Bit of Luck
 I’m An Ordinary Man
 Just You Wait
 The Rain In Spain
 I Could Have Danced All Night
 Ascot Gavotte
 On The Street Where You Live
 Embassy Waltz

ACT 2

Entr’acte
 You Did It
 Show Me
 The Flower Market /
 Wouldn’t It Be “Lovely”
 Get Me To The Church On Time
 Without You
 I’ve Grown Accustomed To Her Face



Two Musicians, Louis Di Valentin (1907–1982), c. 1959. Oil on canvas Albany Institute of History & Art, gift of the American Academy of Arts and Letters Childe Hassam Fund, 1959.37