

2009-10 UNIVERSITY THEATER SEASON

Show Synopses

1. **How I Learned to Drive** (Sept. 10-13, 2009) (Comic Drama) (*Second Stage "Black Box"*) (Spotlight) (For Adult Audiences)

By Paula Vogel

Winner of the 1998 Pulitzer Prize. Co-winner of the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. Co-winner of the 1998 Lucille Lortel Award for outstanding play, the NY Times describes this as "...a tremendous achievement, genuine and genuinely disturbing...This is, quite simply, the sweetest and most forgiving play ever written about child abuse." A wildly funny, surprising and devastating tale of survival as seen through the lens of a troubling relationship between a young girl and an older man. HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE is the story of a woman who learns the rules of the road and life from behind the wheel.

With subtle humor and teasing erotic encounters, Vogel addresses the dangerous intersections of teenage temptation. She also paints a richly poetic and picturesque landscape...The play is a potent and convincing comment on a taboo subject, and its impact sneaks up on its audience." —Variety. "

"Ms Vogel has written a lovely, harrowing guide to the crippling persistence of one woman's memories." —NY Times. "

2. **Around the World in 80 Days** (Oct. 1-4, 9-11, 2009) (comedy) (Spotlight) (All age Groups)

By Mark Brown,
Adapted from the novel by Jules Verne.

Stampeding elephants! Raging typhoons! Runaway trains! Unabashedly slapstick! Hold onto your seats for the original amazing race! Join fearless adventurer Phileas Fogg and his faithful manservant as they race to beat the clock! Phileas Fogg has agreed to an outrageous wager that puts his fortune and his life at risk. With his resourceful servant Passepartout, Fogg sets out to circle the globe in an unheard-of 80 days. But his every step is dogged by a detective who thinks he's a robber on the run. Danger, romance, and comic surprises abound in this whirlwind of a show as five actors portraying 39 characters traverse seven continents in Mark Brown's new comic adaptation of the Jules Verne classic novel.

-- "Witty in the extreme."

—*Los Angeles Times*

--"Ingeniously adapted...a wildly whacky, unbelievably creative, 90-miles-an-hour, hilarious journey! A ton of fun for all ages."

—*The Toluca Times*

--"High-spirited." "Flat-out hilarious." "Ingenious and imaginative."

—*Ithaca Times*

3. **The Baker's Wife** (Nov. 12-15, 20-22, 2009) (musical) (Ford) (All Age Groups)

Book by Joseph Stein

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz

Based on the film *La Femme de Boulanger* by Marcel Pagnol and Jean Giono

Old world charm permeates every moment of this bittersweet, wise and gently offbeat fable of life, love and bread by Joseph Stein ("Fiddler On The Roof") and Stephen Schwartz ("Godspell," "Pippin," "Children of Eden" and "Wicked." "

The bickering residents of a small Provencal town at last find peace and contentment in the heavenly bread of the newly arrived baker and his attractive young wife, but when she is lured away by the attentions of a handsome young gigolo, the middle-aged baker loses all zest for life and baking, throwing the community into chaos.

--"A charming entertainment... a particularly lovely score"

The Christian Science Monitor

4. **The Shape of Things** (Jan. 28-31, 2010) (drama) (*Second Stage "Black Box"*) (Spotlight)
(For Adult Audiences)

By Neil LaBute

Any shrewd chap who finds his artist girlfriend has a video-camera in the bedroom to film the cut and thrust of their sexual action might well fear he was destined to end up as her artistic fodder. But in *THE SHAPE OF THINGS*, Neil LaBute's absolutely chilling report from the sex war's frontline, where stratagems for sexual humiliations are planned, Adam, the shy chap concerned, takes the video-camera, so to speak, lying down. LaBute, the remarkable American movie director and playwright whose film *IN THE COMPANY OF MEN* showed a sexually unappealing woman exploited by two vengeful pretend lovers, now returns to this theme. This time it's a man who's the victim of female guile... LaBute meticulously plans that the shocking, climatic revelations should cast dark light upon his apparently average people. ~ Nicholas de Jongh, *The Standard*

--"What is art? What are you permitted to do in its name?..."

These questions are thrown up by a piece whose intricate layers of treachery are worthy of David Mamet..."

Paul Taylor, *The Independent*

--"LaBute's great gift is to live in and to chronicle that murky area of not knowing, which mankind spends much of its waking life denying. Where does truth end and fiction begin? Is the fiction more valuable than the truth? Do the results justify the means?"

John Lahr, *The New Yorker*

5 **As You Like It** (Feb. 19-21, 26-28, 2010) (Comedy) (Ford) (All Age Groups)

By William Shakespeare

Shakespeare at his 'gender-bending' best, this play tells the tale of Rosalind, daughter of a banished Duke, who is forced to flee the court and enter the Forest of Arden when her uncle threatens to have her killed. Accompanied by her cousin Celia, Rosalind disguises herself as a man for safety's sake. The disguise comes in handy when Rosalind tests the devotion of her noble admirer Orlando, another exile, and teaches him lessons of the heart. Some of the Bard's most poetic language flows as a merry and melancholy series of misunderstandings, gender confusions, and mistaken identities unfolds amidst court exiles and forest natives. With Rosalind's wit leading the way, the forces of true love and justice eventually triumph.

"*As You Like It* is effortlessly entertaining, from start to finish."

David Hinckley, *New York Daily News*

"*As You Like It* [is]...utterly charming and completely winning."

Charlie McCollum, *San Jose Mercury News*

"...it's one of Shakespeare's most mischievous—"

Jesse Hicks, *PopMatters*

6 **The Cripple of Inishmaan** (March 25-28, April 1-3, 2010) (comic drama) (Spotlight) (Adolescent and above)

By Martin McDonagh

Set on a remote island off the west coast of Ireland in 1934, *THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN* is a strange comic tale in the great tradition of Irish storytelling. As word arrives on Inishmaan that the Hollywood director Robert Flaherty is coming to the neighboring island of Inishmore to film *MAN OF ARAN*, the one person who wants to be in the film more than anybody is young Cripple Billy, if only to break away from the bitter tedium of his daily life.

--McDonagh's...comic talent appears unlimited, and he also has a way...of mixing up his humor with a touch of the poet and a profound sense of tragedy always dangerously lurking on comedy's untidy fringe. In short, young McDonagh is a playwright to reckon with..."

—*NY Post*. "

-- McDonagh's storytelling style...has the clarity and power of fable. Each character enters not only with his own idiosyncrasy but with his own distinct idiom. McDonagh skillfully juggles rhythms and repetitions so as to illuminate the sadness, defensiveness and longing for connection underneath the characters' badinage."

—*The New Yorker*.

7. The Mikado (April 9-11, 16-18, 2010) (Opera) (Ford) (All Age Groups)

Book by W. S. Gilbert

Music by Arthur Sullivan

The most popular Gilbert and Sullivan opera, and arguably the most popular opera ever written, "The Mikado" has delighted audiences for more than a century, and spawned a number of imitations. Nanki-Poo, the son of the Mikado, leaves home and disguises himself as a musician to escape a distasteful marriage - and meets a beautiful girl, Yum-Yum, with whom he falls in love. He desperately wants to marry her, but obstacles are cast in his way by Yum-Yum's guardian, Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner, who is also in love with Yum-Yum and has every intention of marrying her, himself. Also causing problems is Katisha, Nanki-Poo's jilted bride, who arrives in Titipu in the company of Nanki-Poo's father, the Mikado.

'*The Mikado* is absolutely guaranteed to give you an extraordinary night out!... a show that truly appeals to all ages.'

Philo, *RiotACT.com*

8. YSU Dance Ensemble (April 29-30, May 1, 2010) (Dance Concert) (Ford)

Produced by Christine Cobb

The April performance marks the 18th annual concert that the Ensemble has produced under the direction of Christine Cobb. Ms. Cobb is Associate Professor of Theater and Dance at YSU, and also serves as Artistic Director and advisor to the Dance Ensemble. The concert features choreographed works from visiting artists, students, and faculty, and is inclusive, but not limited to, the dance styles and genres of modern dance, jazz, hip hop, swing, and Native American. The *YSU Dance Ensemble* will be presented in Ford Theater