

# My Fair Lady Has Us Singing!



Leslie Alexander as Mrs. Higgins, Shereen Ahmed as Eliza Doolittle and Kevin Pariseau as Colonel Pickering in The Lincoln Center Theater Production of Lerner & Loewe's MY FAIR LADY. Photo by Joan Marcus.

Thursday was opening night of the North American Tour of Lincoln Center Theater's critically acclaimed production of *My Fair Lady*, a musical based on George Bernard Shaw's 1913 play *Pygmalion*. This being a Broadway production at PPAC, directed by Bartlett Sher, you surely don't want to miss it! Disregard Hepburn's classic movie and prepare yourself for a truly new and memorable theatrical experience.

The main character, Eliza Doolittle, is a low-born flower seller who accidentally crosses paths with the brattish aristocrat, Professor Henry Higgins. Shereen Ahmed expertly delivers her rendition with perfect pitch, comedic timing and eventual elegance. It's a pleasure watching Ahmed as she whirls through the amazing revolving sets by Michael Yeagan. Being annoying is her job, and she executes that all too well, yet Eliza never looked so alive!

The part of Higgins is cast to Laird Mackintosh, and it was Colin Anderson who portrayed him this night. Anderson had us laughing as he hurled the crass insults at Eliza (because it's all true!) with the precision of a pro ball player. You feel sorry for the poor girl, yet Anderson's delivery won't allow for the withholding of laughter. It would seem the story revolves around Higgins, as this is a love story at the core. A confirmed bachelor, Higgins sings of never letting a woman into his life, however, Eliza worms her way into his heart and he does eventually grow accustomed to her face.

Kevin Pariseau, a native Rhode Islander hailing from East Providence and a Brown alumnus, portrays Colonel Pickering, the phonetic expert compadre of Higgins. His rich voice is mesmerizing as he adds a soothing touch to Higgins' constant badgering of Eliza. This gentleman adds balance between the bickering couple with style and grace.

Times are changing, and keeping up with them can be challenging for some. "I think it is a show that people need to see now," said Ahmed. "There's joy, there's humor and some very deep conversations underneath it all." Ahmed is likely referring to the modern changes within the production, such as gender and race-blind casting, and the party scene the night before Eliza's father's wedding in which gender norms are challenged by attendees. These are adaptations the more conservative theater attendees may not have been expecting, but nobody was bolting for the doors. The entire production was fun from beginning to end.

Period costumes were absolutely stunning. True to the era, the ladies wore gala-ready, oversized hats adorned with feathers and other ornamentation. One scene in particular had all twirling cast members adorned in shades of gray. It's hard to know where to look next as you take it all in. Of course, Ahmed is absolutely breathtaking as she enters the king's ball in shiny beading, rhinestone-studded jewelry and tiara. Hats off to Catherine Zuba for her vision here.

Music was spot on. The orchestra didn't miss a beat under John Bell's direction, as well as Ted Sperling's supervision. Kudos to cast members who effortlessly dance throughout with Christopher Gattelli's choreography. Arrive 30 minutes early and you'll be treated to a Mighty Wurlitzer pre-show concert by house organist Peter Edwin Krasinski (except the Saturday matinee).

Performances run through Sunday. For more info, visit [ppacri.org](http://ppacri.org)