

ON STAGE NOV 30 – JAN 1
at Walton Arts Center's Nadine Baum Studios

**CHARLES
DICKENS'**

Great Expectations

adapted by ROBERT FORD
directed by AMY HERZBERG

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New Adaptation of *Great Expectations* Currently showing at TheatreSquared

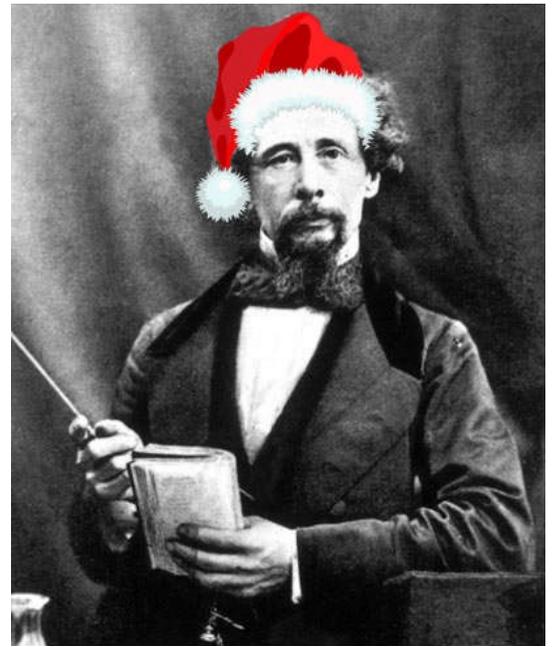
In the summer of 2016, Robert Ford began working on a new adaptation of Charles Dickens' novel "Great Expectations, taking on the task of bringing a 544 page book onto the stage. In the novel, there are dozens of characters and we follow Pip for over 30 years. How can this story translate to the stage?

A playwright must ask themselves very interesting questions: Which scenes should be included? What dialogue is essential? What, if anything, can be cut?

In the novel, Pip serves as a narrator who gives the reader a lot of insight into his thoughts, but the playwright did not want to write a play with a narrator. As you're watching the show, try to figure out how the playwright addressed this challenge. Spoiler: There's a new character!

WHAT THE DICKENS?

Although his works largely surround topics of his time, Charles Dickens is still considered one of the world's greatest novelists. We study his works today and continue to adapt them to other forms of media. Why do we bother if the Victorian Era is long past? Charles Dickens was one of many writers who introduced satire to literature. This bold move inspired both writers and citizens to confront society's problems and either accept them or plan for reform. The incorporation of satire into literature allowed citizens to understand that they can think and feel differently from their government and society. Because his writing is largely based on the issues of society at the time, we can draw parallels to our society today. We can see the problems, allow ourselves to form our own opinions, and choose to accept or reform. Dickens is also extremely notable for his strong focus on the concept of identity. Because Dickens experienced personal growth in his early years, his protagonists almost always experience a dramatic personal change before the end of their stories. For instance, 'Great Expectations' Pip becomes more self-aware and learns what it means to be a gentleman, 'A Christmas Carol's Ebenezer Scrooge learns that the value of love is greater than any monetary achievement, and 'Oliver Twist' leaves a life of crime to become an honest young man. Dickens creates role models for his readers and brings us along on their journeys as they discover the meanings of life and the importance of being a good person. Charles Dickens allows the reader to relate to his characters on a personal and emotional level. He makes readers laugh, cry, and confront society, as well as learn more about identity, life, and the pursuit of joy.



THE ART OF ADAPTATION PRE-PLAY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How do you think the playwright could create a version of the story that only uses SIX actors?

How will the lighting designer create a sense of time passing?

How will the scenic designer create the impression of dozens of locations?

How will the costume designer communicate to the audience which character an actor is playing?

How do you expect the sound design to contribute to the performance?



WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

What will the stage look like?

What characters do you expect to see?

What will be the most dramatic moment?

Will there be any funny moments in the play?

Will the ending be hopeful or solemn?

A NOVEL SYNOPSIS

As a young child, the orphan **Phillip Pirrip (Pip)** lives with his abusive sister, **Mrs. Joe Gargery** and brother-in-law, **Joe Gargery**, the village blacksmith. On Christmas Eve, Pip is walking through the marshes when he meets an escaped convict, **Magwitch**, who threatens him into bringing back food and a file to break the leg-irons. On Christmas Day, the convict is captured and returned to the prison ships known as The Hulks. He never reveals Pip's assistance when he is caught and asked how he escaped his irons.

Much later, young Pip is sent by his opportunistic **Uncle Pumblechook** to entertain **Miss Havisham**, a wealthy old lady who lives in a mansion known as Satis House. The mansion is dark and eerie, and Miss Havisham is dressed in an ancient yellowed wedding gown, which she has worn since being left at the altar as a young girl. Jilted by her fiancé, she has stopped all clocks at 8:40, the moment of the rejection. She raised her beautiful adopted daughter Estella to wreak revenge on the male sex. Estella has learned her lessons well and teases Pip piteously. Pip instantly falls in love with her, but Estella is cold and distant. Over time, she softens somewhat toward Pip, but her affection is erratic. She tells him she can never love anyone.

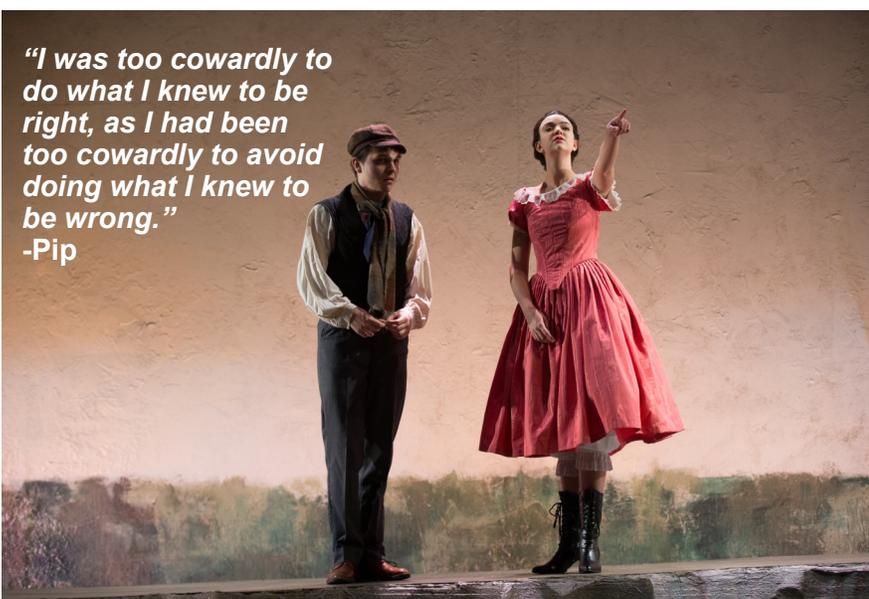
Pip is dismissed from Miss Havisham's service and becomes an apprentice to Joe. But Estella has instilled in him a shame in his commonness. He longs to be a gentleman, not a blacksmith. His discontent grows. One day he learns that an anonymous benefactor has left him an enormous sum of money. He is to move to London, where he will be trained to act as a gentleman. A lawyer, **Jaggers**, will oversee his inheritance. Pip is certain his benefactor is Miss Havisham, and believes he is being trained as Estella's future husband. Pip's happiness is unfathomable as he moves to London, away from the only family and friends he has ever known. He is educated by **Mr. Mathew Pocket** and strikes a great friendship with his son, **Herbert**.

His wealth and position changes him, and soon Pip leads a dissipated life full of idleness. He is ashamed of Joe and **Biddy**, and wants little to do with them. He thinks association with them will lower him in Estella's eyes. Estella continues to be a powerful factor in his life. She has been trained by Miss Havisham to break men's hearts, and is constantly put in Pip's life to toy with him. Even though she warns him she cannot love him, Pip persists in loving her.

On his twenty-fourth birthday, Pip learns that his benefactor is not Miss Havisham, but the convict from long ago. He realizes he is not meant for Estella, and also that Miss Havisham deliberately let him assume incorrectly. As well, he realizes with shame that he has mistreated his good friend Joe, who was always faithful to him. Though Pip is ashamed of the convict, Magwitch, he is grateful and loyal, so he commits himself to protecting Magwitch from the police, who are looking for him. His friend, Herbert Pocket, helps him.

Pip's moral education begins. He decides he can no longer accept the convict's money. He becomes compassionate towards Magwitch, realizing the depth of the convict's love for him. He tries to help Magwitch escape, but in the chaos, Magwitch is injured and caught. Magwitch dies, but not before Pip discovers that

adopted Estella is Magwitch's daughter and tells Magwitch how lovely she is. Estella marries Pip's enemy, **Bentley Drummle**. Miss Havisham dies, but not before repenting of the bitterness that has ruined her life. She leaves a good deal of money to Herbert Pocket, at Pip's request, in the hope that it will earn her forgiveness. Pip goes to Joe and Biddy, who have married one another since the death of Pip's sister. He atones for his sins against them then sets off on his own, determined to make things right in his life. The novel ends when he meets Estella after many years. She has left Drummle, who has since died. She is remarried. She and Pip part as friends and Pip realizes she will always be a part of his life, as surely as all the other memories of his once great expectations.



*"I was too cowardly to do what I knew to be right, as I had been too cowardly to avoid doing what I knew to be wrong."
-Pip*

VOCABULARY

EPIC

Definition: Extending beyond the usual or ordinary especially in size or scope
Context: The journey of Phillip Pirrip from the shadows of society up to the dizzying heights is an epic one.

RECLUSE

Definition: A person who leads a secluded or solitary life.
Context: Pip is introduced to a different sort of prison when he's invited to play at the house of Miss Havisham, a rich recluse who has locked herself away from the world.

BENEFACTOR

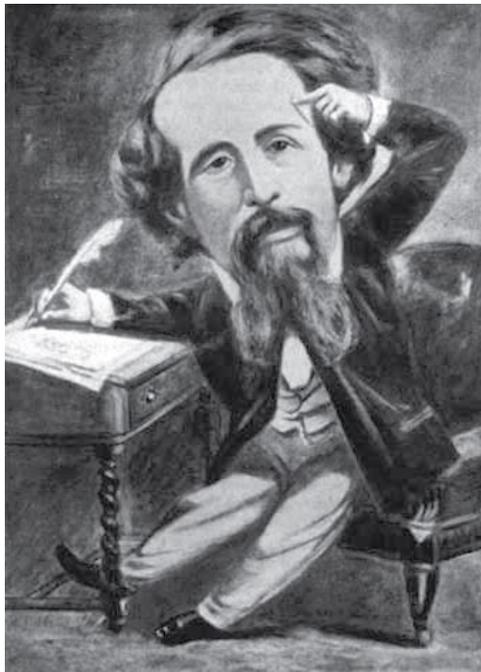
Definition: One who makes a gift or bequest
Context: The lawyer announces that Pip is to receive a small fortune from a benefactor who wishes to remain anonymous.

SMITTEN

Definition: Affected deeply with great feeling.
Context: Estella wins the game, and with it, Pip's undying love. He is completely smitten.

EXONERATE

Definition: To forgive someone of specific criminal charges.
Context: Pip stole the pork pie, but still felt guilty even after being unexpectedly



FROM WHOM WE HAVE
GREAT EXPECTATIONS



Scenic Design of TheatreSquared's production of Great Expectations by David Arsenault

WHO'S WHO?

In our production, six actors (two woman/four men) play multiple characters - and multiple ages of several characters. The actors play the following:

ACTOR 1 : KIERAN CRONIN

Pip (37ish)
Sergeant
Young Herbert
Herbert Pocket
Customs Officer

ACTOR 2 : MASON AZBILL

Pip Too (14ish)
Young Pip
Pip/9, Pip/11, Pip/14, Pip/17,
Pip/19, Pip/21, Pip/23

ACTOR 3 : STEPHANIE BIGNAULT

Biddy (17, 21, 41)
Mrs. Hubble
Estella (ages 11, 14, 19, 21, 23, 37)
Streetseller
Clara (20s)

ACTOR 4 : STEPHEN MARZOLF

Magwitch (40/60)
Pumblechook (40-60ish)
Jaggers (35-50ish)
Waiter (the Blue Boar)

ACTOR 5 : BRYCE KEMPH

Compeyson (ages 30s, 50s)
Joe (mid20s to mid50s)
Wemmick (40 or so)
Drumle (early 20s)
Guard (in hospital prison)

ACTOR 6 : MICHELLE SCHUPE

Mrs. Joe (30s)
Haversham (50s)
Old Woman
Serving Woman
Mrs. Pocket

MONEY AND SOCIAL CLASS



In *Great Expectations*, Dickens includes characters from a variety of social classes so that we can see the different attitudes people had towards money in the Victorian Age. There are criminals, like Magwitch; peasants, like Joe and Mrs. Joe; members of the middle class, like Herbert Pocket; and finally, members of the upper class, like Miss Havisham and Estella. Although they come from many different backgrounds, these characters have gotten where they are by working hard. Dickens was interested in the connection between social class and commerce, and chose to exclude aristocrats and nobles from his novel because their wealth was inherited rather than earned. There is a definite emphasis on money in this story; Pip thinks it will be the answer to all of his problems and is always focused on the status and class of those around him. The biggest lesson that Pip learns as he grows older is that money does not determine his personal worth; rather, kindness, responsibility, and integrity are the true measures of a great man.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Dickens' portrayal of money and class convey the author's message regarding the relationship between wealth and happiness?
2. How does money affect and reflect the morality of each character?
3. Is it possible to successfully improve one's economic status in modern day America? Why or why not? What are examples of successful or failed attempts to join the upper class?
4. Pip is ashamed of his working class background, even though he was treated with respect and dignity as Joe's apprentice. What comparisons are there between the perception of "upper class" and "lower class" career paths in Victorian England and modern America?
5. Magwitch bequeaths his fortune to Pip. What might be his motivation for sharing his wealth? Can you identify any individuals in today's society who use money benevolently like Magwitch.
6. Dickens wrote his way from poverty to the upper class. How might his characters reflect Dickens' own experience with money?
7. Nowadays we do not expect children to spend their childhoods as apprentices or factory workers, but are there any ways in which kids today expected to grow up quickly? Does wealth or social class have any impact on that?



POST-PLAY DISCUSSION

Now that you've attended a production of *Great Expectations*, you probably have a lot of new ideas about the novel and about live theatre.

Each adaptation of a piece of literature is different because so many choices are made by the adapter. Each production will vary based on the production design, the director's concept and the casting.



- ◆ What were some of your favorite moments from the production? Do any images or lines or dramatic moments stand out in your memory
- ◆ What did you think about the adaptor's use of six actors to portray all of the characters in the novel? Did it make any parts of the story difficult to understand?
- ◆ Did the "doubling" make the performance seem like it would be fun for the actors? Did the costumes help you to understand the character changes?
- ◆ What did you think about the scenic design? There were over 37 scene changes. Were the changes enough for you to understand the locations, or did you wish to see more complete environments?
- ◆ What did you think of the sound design? This production featured an original musical score. Did the music help to set the tone of the play? What other kinds of music could you imagine for a play like this?
- ◆ If you were going to stage a production of *Great Expectations*, who would you cast? Try to come up with a "dream cast" using whoever you want - friends, celebrities, fictional characters. Who would you cast in each role, and why?
- ◆ How did watching this play change your understanding of the story of *Great Expectations*? Did you learn anything new that was not as clear or noticeable to you in the book?
- ◆ Look through your local newspapers or online for theatre reviews. Read a few, then write your own review of TheatreSquared's production of *Great Expectations*, based on the form and content of those reviews. Think about what parts of the show you enjoyed, what parts you didn't understand, how the performers embodied the characters, and whether any production elements hindered or enhanced the telling of the story. Feel free to send the review over to us when you're done!