



***Half a Sixpence*
Director's Vision
Gordon Greenberg**

What is your vision for *Half a Sixpence*?

Half a Sixpence is the quintessential British musical. It premiered in London's West End in 1963 and was based on the 1905 H. G. Wells novel "Kipps." Inspired by Wells' own financial success, the story follows the rising and falling fortunes of Arthur Kipps, a shop clerk in the seaside town of Folkstone in the south of England. Interestingly, the musical is at once a product of Wells' time, when class was static and non-negotiable, and the early 1960's, when social barriers were beginning to break apart in England.

It's no secret that the British have long been concerned with class and social order. But the joy in *Half a Sixpence* is in sending up the notions of what creates status or social class. Certainly, Kipps learns an important lesson in that regard after a series of adventures and missteps. This brand of humor and social satire are deeply rooted in British culture, from George Bernard Shaw to Sasha Baron Cohen.

Here, the story is told with the ebullient sounds of the British music hall. Indeed, many of the songs in *Half a Sixpence* are staples of popular culture in the U.K. Ask any Briton to sing "Flash Bang Wallop," and chances are good that they can! Before the days of the mega musicals, Britain was exporting shows like *Half a Sixpence* -- charming, full of pluck, and human scale. Our goal is to pay tribute to that great tradition of classic British musicals.

Why do you think Goodspeed audiences will enjoy the show?

Goodspeed audiences are among the smartest and most savvy musical theatre audiences in the country. Having been acquainted with a tremendous number of classic musicals (many that are rarely produced elsewhere), they have a unique understanding and appreciation for the form and the ways it has evolved. They will be the first American audience to see *Half a Sixpence* in almost fifty years.

The delights of *Half a Sixpence* are many. Its light touch, fantastic score, and whimsical sensibility make it the perfect addition to the Goodspeed cannon. I am thrilled to be able to explore this long overlooked gem of a show with such a fantastic team of collaborators. Patti Columbo is one of the most exciting choreographers working today. Her work honors time period and context, while conveying an athletic immediacy that makes it all seem fresh. We are also lucky to have the first rate design team that worked on *Pirates*, including scenic

designer Rob Bissinger, costume designer David Woolard, and lighting designer Jeff Croiter, all of whom share a beautiful aesthetic and, equally important to any process, a terrific sense of humor. The show's seaside setting informed our visual approach. We wanted it to feel as festive and appealing as a summer at the beach. The goal, then, was to make the show look like a confection you might find there. We wanted it to look delicious. Furthermore, it is a rare pleasure to be able to watch the show in an intimate Victorian theatre that feels as though it was built for *Half a Sixpence*. You might even forget you're in Connecticut and, for a moment, find yourself transported to the British seaside of your imagination.

Tell us about the cast - how you chose them and what the audience can expect to see.

When you cast a show, you're creating a little world. The trick is to intuit in just a couple of minutes who you think belongs in that world and who does not. Since *Half a Sixpence* is all about class distinction in England, we had to find actors who were good with the dialects and who felt organically right for their roles in terms of status and sensibility. On top of that, we were looking for a group of very strong dancers, who had the craft, training, and athletic visceral energy that Patti was seeking. Most importantly, though, you want to make sure that you're bringing together a group of collaborative and kind spirited people who will form a good and a happy company. The audience can expect to see a show that reflects this recipe for an authentically British evening of joy, musicality and excitement.