

The Provincetown Theatre Company

# NOT ABOUT HEROES

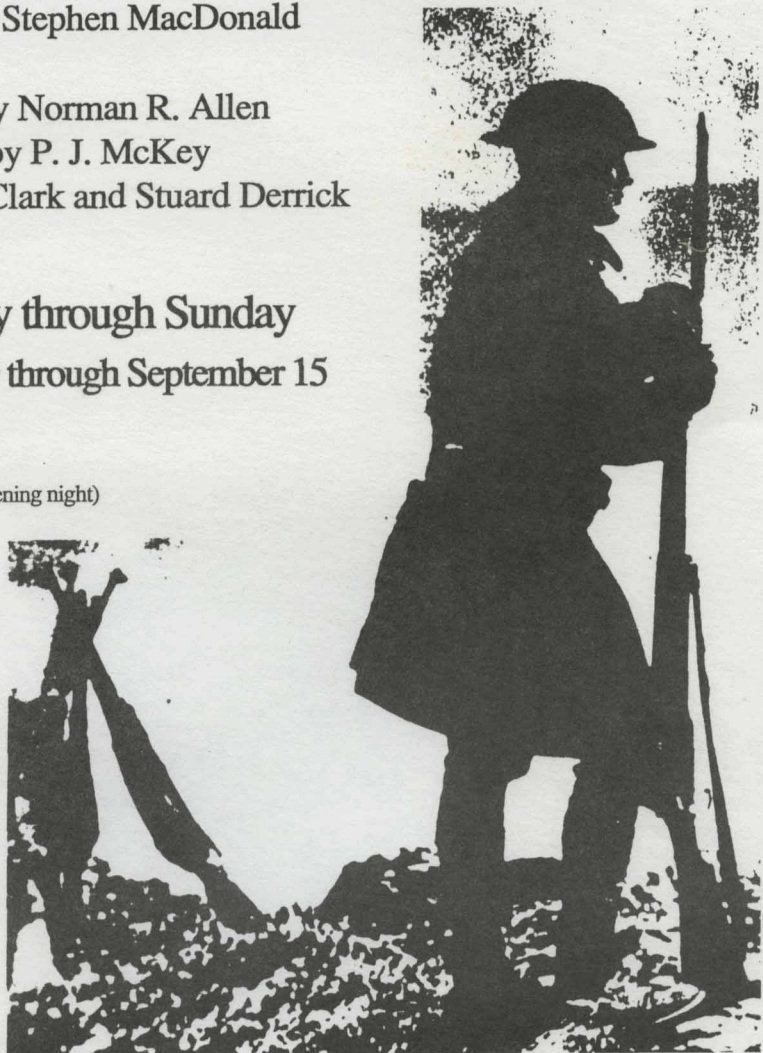
*the friendship of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen*

A Play by Stephen MacDonald

directed by Norman R. Allen  
designed by P. J. McKey  
with Bill Clark and Stuard Derrick

Thursday through Sunday  
August 29 through September 15  
at 8PM

\$10 (\$12 opening night)



Provincetown Inn

One Commercial Street

For Reservations Call 508/487/3466

P.J. McKEY (Designer): This is P.J.'s first design project with P.T.C. She has designed productions for both college and professional theatre including Beckett's *Endgame* and Arrabal's *Guernica*. Earlier this season P.J. directed *Damnée Manon*, *Sacrée Sandra*. She holds an MFA in directing from UMass Amherst and has worked with Boston's AKA Theatre, The Music Theatre Group at the Lenox Arts Center, and the Berkshire Theatre Festival. P.J.'s next project will be directing *Tales of the Lost Formicans* for Wellfleet Harbor Actor's Theatre.

NORMAN R. ALLEN (Director): Norman made his directing debut last season with *The Lisbon Traviata*. Cape audiences have seen productions or staged-readings of his plays *Larry*, *Queen of Scots*, *Jenny Saint Joan*, *Juggling Frank*, and *Here to Stay*. *Here to Stay* was presented at Playwrights' Platform in Boston this spring. A freelance writer, Norman's work has appeared in *The Boston Globe*, *Horizon Magazine*, *Musical America*, *The Mindprint Review*, *Oak Square Quarterly*, and ... *Dog Fancy*. He is a proud member of the Provincetown Theatre Company's Playwrights' Workshop.

The Provincetown Theatre Company

presents

## Not About Heroes

*the friendship of Siegfried Sassoon  
and Wilfred Owen*

by Stephen MacDonald

Directed by Norman R. Allen  
Designed by P.J. McKey

Siegfried Sassoon.....Stuard Derrick  
Wilfred Owen.....Bill Clark

*there will be one ten-minute intermission*

The American Premiere of *Not About Heroes* was presented by the Williamstown Theatre Festival, Nikos Psacharopoulos, Artistic Director.

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.



# CENTER STAGE

## Director of anti-war drama spurred by old man's memories

By Kathi Scrizzi Driscoll  
STAFF WRITER

PROVINCETOWN — When Norman R. Allen was growing up, his grandfather told wonderful stories about how exciting it was to serve in World War I, and about the heroic exploits of the soldiers he knew.

But when his grandfather got older, and perhaps, Allen acknowledged, a little senile, he told "the truth," Allen said.

"He would say things about being at the front, in the trenches, and seeing a friend being blown to bits right next to him," recalled Allen of those later talks. "It (war) was not a beautiful, heroic thing. . . . He told us how it felt to kill people."

Those two faces of his grandfather, and the two faces of war, are part of what attracted Allen to Stephen MacDonald's play "Not About Heroes," which Allen is directing for the Provincetown Theatre Company.

The drama tells the real-life story of the friendship between two British anti-war poets during World War I, Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Both fought in France for the French troops, Allen said, and met at a hospital for shell-shock victims. The action of the play is Sassoon's reminiscence after Owen's death at the front just a week before the armistice was

### Tickets

Provincetown Theatre Company will present "Not About Heroes" at 8 p.m. Aug. 29 through Sept. 1 and Sept. 5-8 and 12-15 at the Provincetown Inn, 1 Commercial St. Tickets are \$12 for opening night, \$10 for other performances. More information may be obtained by calling 487-3466.

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Although Sassoon is not particularly well-known today, Allen said, Owen's works, particularly "Anthem for a Doomed Youth," are still featured in many high school and college literature classes.

Perhaps because of his grandfather's involvement, Allen said he has always had a keen interest in World War I. A high school English teacher introduced Allen to Owen's work, and, at 15, Allen read all of Owen's poetry and letters.

Owen at first attracted the young Allen because of his defiance. Owen "defied the majority. All of England was being very patriotic. . . . He was telling the truth when no one wanted to hear it."

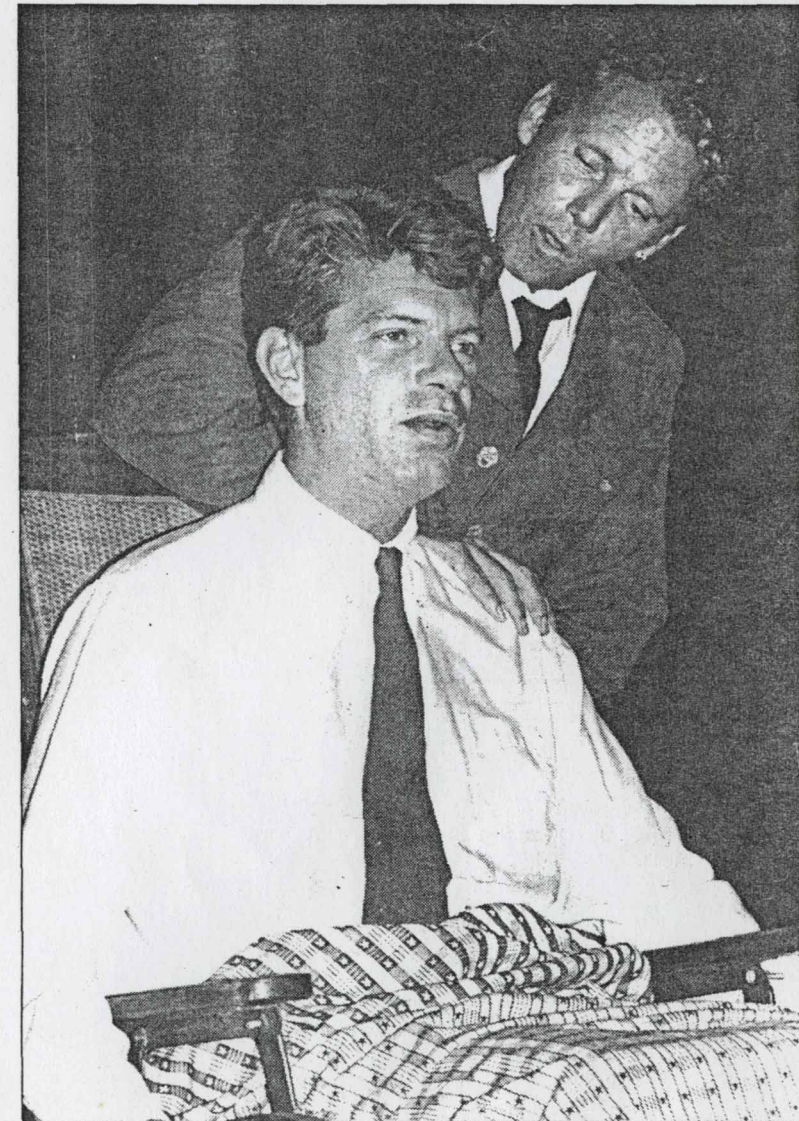
"Not About Heroes" was first produced in 1985 in Williamstown, and then off-Broadway, with Edward

Dianne Wiest directing. Allen heard about the play, read it, then saw a production in Boston. He had thought about staging it on the Cape for a few years, and was reminded of it during the Persian Gulf War. Everything came together when Allen returned from teaching summer school in England and found the Provincetown company had had to cancel a planned summer production of "The Abduction."

The substitution reunited director Allen and actors Bill Clark and Stuard Derrick, the key players of "The Lisbon Traviata," a Provincetown Theatre Company production of last season. "The actors were exactly what I wanted. They're perfect together in the parts," Allen said. And familiarity has helped speed the rehearsal process along. "We knew each other and how everyone worked."

And, even though some of the patriotic fervor of the Persian Gulf War has died down, Allen sees the production of this anti-war play as timely.

"During the Gulf War and still, people are so eager to be patriotic," he said. "There's nothing wrong with that, but sometimes it blinds you to what actually happened. It's exciting and thrilling to have this cause, and the yellow ribbons, but it doesn't change the fact that people — Americans or Iraqis — were killed."



Stuard Derrick, left, and Bill Clark rehearse "Not About Heroes," to be presented by the Provincetown Theater Company.



## PREVIEW

# Not About Heroes: Truth About War

By Elizabeth Aldred

*Not About Heroes*, by Stephen MacDonald, is a play about two poets and pacifists, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, and their friendship during World War I. Director Norman Allen, who is preparing a production of the play for Provincetown Theatre Company to open Thursday, says the theme is timely in the aftermath of the Gulf War.

"Sassoon and Owen talked a lot about how those at home are full of patriotic fervor, turning war into something romantic and heroic," Allen says. In contrast, both poets portrayed war in graphic terms, calling it barbaric and full of savage brutality. And in recent months, Allen says; we have witnessed the same public self-delusion. "Those yellow ribbons turned into yellow blindfolds," he says.

Both Sassoon and Owen fought in the war; Owen was killed in action a week before the armistice, while Sassoon, who was decorated for bravery, survived and continued writing until his death in 1967.

Sassoon, who was older and already well known when the war started, served as mentor to Owen. Ultimately, however, both men ended up learning a lot from each other, Allen says.

The play is made up of selections from the two men's letters and works, and also focuses on the nature of the creative process. Allen says he has been "obsessed with Wilfred Owen since I was in high school," and has hoped for a chance to produce *Not About Heroes* ever since he first saw it about five years ago.

In the current production, Bill Clark will play the part of Owen and Stuard Derrick will portray Sassoon. That makes it a reunion of sorts for director and actors, who also worked together in last fall's production of *The Lisbon Traviata*. Allen describes himself as primarily a playwright, and has worked for three years with Provincetown Theatre Company. He has just returned from London, where he spent most of the summer teaching performing arts.

Last week's hurricane barely put a dent in the busy rehearsal schedule, Allen says. When power was lost in Provincetown, they simply moved rehearsals to Allen's home in North Truro.

Performances will be Thursdays through Sundays through September 15, at the Provincetown Inn, One Commercial Street; curtain time is 8 pm. For reservations, call 487-3466. ♦

