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**BROADWAY AND SARASOTA FAVORITE MARY TESTA STARS IN GERALDINE ARON'S
UPROARIOUS BREAK-UP COMEDY, MY BRILLIANT DIVORCE**

**Asolo Rep's Staging is the Second Major American Regional Theatrical Production;
Michael Donald Edwards Directs**

SARASOTA, Fla. (June 17, 2013) — Is laughter really the best medicine? The popular adage is put to the test in this hysterically funny, one-woman tour de force about picking up the pieces of a broken heart and beginning life again, *My Brilliant Divorce*. In its only second major American regional production, Asolo Rep's Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards directs celebrated Broadway star Mary Testa, a two-time Tony Award nominee, as Angela, the 40-something housewife blindsided by her philandering husband's desertion in Aron's engaging, mid-life crisis comedy.

My Brilliant Divorce opens on Wednesday, June 26 with an 8 p.m. curtain. Opening night will be preceded by two preview performances on Sunday, June 23 at 2:00 p.m. and Tuesday, June 25 at 7:30 p.m. The show runs through July 14, 2013 in Asolo Rep's Mertz Theatre located in The FSU Center for the Performing Arts.

"Mary Testa is such a wonderfully gifted actress, I could think of no one better to play the part of Angela. Mary is witty, charming, feisty --- hilariously so --- and at the same time, vulnerable and engaging. Audiences in Sarasota will identify with her and they will love her," said Michael Donald Edwards, Asolo Repertory Theatre's Producing Artistic Director. "We've all experienced heartbreak at some point in our lives, so we naturally embrace those rare artists who can inform our own existence and at the same time, make us laugh until our sides ache."

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My Brilliant Divorce is a very popular play throughout the world, although it is not as well known in the United States. It premiered in 2001 at the Druid Theatre in Galway, Ireland (where Ms. Aron was born) and was later transferred to the West End of London, where it was nominated for the 2004 Olivier Award for Best Entertainment. As of the present moment, it has been produced or is awaiting production in 33 countries around the world. Last year, *My Brilliant Divorce* opened in such diverse locations as Athens, Greece and Nairobi, Kenya. It also made its American debut in 2012 at the Bay Street Theater in Sag Harbor, New York.

Edwards first became aware of the play through a colleague who worked on the American premiere. After Edwards read it, he was inspired to approach Aron with the idea of tailoring an Asolo Rep production to showcase the comedic strengths of Mary Testa. Edwards knew Testa through her long and storied career, and had lured her to Sarasota for last season's production of *Love, Loss and What I Wore*. In the cast of amazing actresses that included the Emmy Award-winning Loretta Swit and Tony Award-winning Donna McKecknie, Testa's performance took Sarasota by storm. He advised Aron to run a Google search on Testa, and Aron, too became excited about the possibility.

"I met with Geraldine Aron in London last summer and she was intrigued with the idea of remaking the character of Angela for Testa. We both knew we needed an actress who carries emotional weight and is a brilliant comedienne, and that's what Mary brings to the table. By making some subtle changes in the script, all of the issues surrounding the divorce --- the alienation, destabilization, and sense of displacement in England --- are made more acute, and somehow funnier because of Testa's interpretation," said Edwards. "If Mary hadn't been available and interested, I'm not sure we would have done the show."

"Comedy is a special gift. You ease people's burdens when you make them laugh. They can see themselves in the situations where they felt like a fool, and watching someone else go through it is a release," said Testa. "Every step of the journey is going to resonate with someone, because pretty much everyone has had loss, disappointment, or heartache, as well as joy, happiness, and love."

But why is this play titled *My Brilliant Divorce*? Edwards offers up this simple explanation.

"Divorce is never easy. It can at times be very bitter, but as you will find out in this play, when one window of opportunity closes, another excellent one opens, and the light shines in," said Edwards.

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The Story

Angela Kennedy-Lipsky is the middle-aged American wife of Max, a Brit who has run off with his lover and left Angela high and dry in London. Once a professional window dresser, Angela gave up her career to be a wife and mother and now finds herself adrift in a sea of shifty solicitors, Christmas on her own, and her confidence at an all-time low. Should she fight to keep her husband? Or should she sign the divorce papers and move on? Bizarre dates, a trip to the adult toy store, a telephone call to a suicide hotline, a near reconciliation with the ex, then a singles weekend that brings about a surprise meeting and a glimmer of hope...

Although a one-woman play, Angela brings other characters to the stage in telling her story. Angela mimics her disapproving mother, an Irish woman who telephones from Dublin, an indulgent doctor who treats her many health complaints --- mostly imagined --- and her unsympathetic divorce lawyer, really a misogynist, though this fact escapes Angela throughout most of the play. Angela does have one loyal companion who joins her onstage during the show, her dog Dexter, a shaggy Skye terrier (who in this production, is a stuffed animal mounted on a toy car chassis, operated by remote control).

The Creative Team

Michael Donald Edwards has assembled a team of seasoned Asolo Rep designers to bring his production to life. Dane Laffrey, fresh off his collaboration with Edwards on this season's *Clybourne Park*, designs the set and the costumes for the show. Australian Anthony Pearson, also in his second season with Asolo Rep, is the lighting designer. Last season, Pearson worked with Edwards on *Hamlet: Prince of Cuba*. Aaron Rhyne, now in his fifth season with Asolo Rep, designs the projections for *My Brilliant Divorce*. Rhyne's other Asolo Rep credits include *Bonnie & Clyde*, *Fanny Brice*, *Working*, and *The Last Five Years*. Jane Shaw, in her second season, is the sound designer.

Mary Testa's Career Highlights

Mary Testa has twice been nominated for the Tony Award, once for her performance in *On the Town* and once for *42nd Street*. Her other Broadway credits include *Xanadu*, for which she received a Drama Desk nomination, *Guys and Dolls*, *Chicago*, *Marie Christine*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *The Rink*, *Marilyn*, and *Barnum*.

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In 2012, she was honored with the Drama Desk Award in recognition of three decades of outstanding work on the New York stage, which singled out her bravura performance in Michael Jon LaChiusa's *Queen of the Mist*, for which she also received Lucille Lortel and Drama League nominations. Testa has received Obie Awards for *From Above* and *On the Town*, and was nominated for Drama Desk Awards for *See What I Wanna See*, *First Lady Suite*, and *String of Pearls*. Off-Broadway productions include Charles Busch's *Judith of Bethulia*, *Tricks the Devil Taught Me*, *Measure for Measure*, *Regrets Only*, *The Vagina Monologues*, *The Wax*, *Lucky Stiff*, *The Knife*, *A New Brain*, *Tartuffe*, *Scapin*, *In Trousers*, and *Daughters*. Testa has appeared in several feature films, including *Eat, Pray, Love*; *The Bounty Hunter*; *Tony 'n' Tina's Wedding*; *Franny*; *Tio Papi*; *Four Single Fathers*; *The Out-of-Towners*; *Stay*; and *Stanley and Iris*. On television, Testa had a recurring role on *Whoopi*, and has guest starred on *Smash*, *Two Broke Girls*, *White Collar*, *Nurse Jackie*, *Law and Order*, and *Sex and the City*.

Testa most recently appeared in *Caucasian Chalk Circle* for Classic Stage Company and will soon be seen at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in the US Premiere of Mark-Anthony Turnage's opera, *Anna Nicole*. Testa has sung with many of the leading symphony orchestras in the country, including the New York Philharmonic, Boston Pops, Philly Pops, Minnesota Orchestra, and the St. Louis Symphony. She has recorded several original cast albums including the recently released *Queen of the Mist*.

TICKETS

Ticket prices for all performances range from \$20 to \$72. Tickets can be purchased at the Asolo Repertory Theatre Box Office in person or by calling 800.361.8388 or 941.351.8000. Tickets can also be purchased online at www.asolorep.org. The Asolo Repertory Theatre and Box Office are located in the FSU Performing Arts Center adjacent to the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art at 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34243. Parking is free.

Asolo Repertory Theatre Summer 2013 Box Office Hours:

Monday: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Tues.-Sat.: 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Sunday: 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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SCHEDULED PERFORMANCES

June 23, 2:00 p.m. - First Preview	July 6, 2 p.m.
June 25, 7:30 p.m. - Second Preview	July 6, 8 p.m.
June 26, 8 p.m. - Opening Night	July 7, 2 p.m.
June 27, 8 p.m.	July 9, 7:30 p.m.
June 28, 8 p.m.	July 10, 2 p.m.
June 29, 2 p.m.	July 10, 8 p.m.
June 29, 8 p.m.	July 11, 8 p.m.
June 30, 2 p.m.	July 12, 8 p.m.
July 2, 7:30 p.m.	July 13, 2 p.m.
July 3, 2 p.m.	July 13, 8 p.m.
July 3, 8 p.m.	June 14, 2 p.m. -Closing Day
July 5, 8 p.m.	

SPONSORS

Asolo Repertory Theatre is able to bring *My Brilliant Divorce* to the stage because of the generosity of our corporate sponsors and individual supporters. Corporate sponsors for *My Brilliant Divorce* are Herald Tribune Media Group, Tamaya Wine, Holiday Inn, and Saks Fifth Avenue. Season sponsors are Florida State University, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Comcast, Designing Women Boutique, Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, and The Woman's Exchange, Inc. Paid for in part by Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax revenues. Sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture.

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