

ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE

PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL DONALD EDWARDS MANAGING DIRECTOR LINDA DIGABRIELE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 21, 2014

**Directed by Michael Donald Edwards, Frank Galati's
World-Renowned Adaptation of *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*
Opens March 12 at Asolo Rep**

(SARASOTA, February 21, 2014) — Asolo Rep continues its 2013-2014 season with Frank Galati's triumphant adaptation of John Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel ***THE GRAPES OF WRATH***, directed by Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards. Frank Galati's adaptation premiered at the Steppenwolf Theatre of Chicago in 1988. The Broadway production won the Tony award for Best Play and Best Direction of a Play in 1990 and was nominated for six additional Tony Awards. Galati also won a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Director in 1990 and the play was nominated for four additional Drama Desk Awards. Previews will be **March 12 – 13**, opening night will be on **March 14 at 8pm** and the play will run through **April 19**.

A true American masterpiece, ***THE GRAPES OF WRATH*** chronicles the hardships of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, particularly its detrimental effects on the nation's farmers. Also transformed into the 1940 Academy Award-winning film starring Henry Fonda, the play tells the inspirational story of one family of farmers, the Joads, and their harrowing cross-country journey from their depleted farm in Oklahoma to the supposedly thriving grape farms of California. The family's resilient matriarch, Ma Joad, and her son, Tom, who has been released from prison for killing a man at the beginning of the play, spearhead the family's adventure. The frail Granma and Grampa Joad, the family's patriarch, Pa Joad, newly pregnant Rose of Sharon, and her husband, Connie Rivers, and the

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and the disheartened preacher, Jim Casy, join Tom and Ma on the road to California. The Joad family's uplifting 2,000-mile quest for their own Eden by way of an old, beat-up jalopy reveals the insurmountable fortitude and tenacity of mankind.

“***THE GRAPES OF WRATH*** is a great work of art. The Joad family's story of survival is uplifting and universal. For me, there are few plays that touch every aspect of what it is to be human, and this is one of them. The set, featuring a recreation of the Colorado River, onstage rain, and the iconic moving jalopy, is a visual masterpiece that vividly complements this extraordinary story of what it means to be an American,” said Producing Artistic Director and Director of ***THE GRAPES OF WRATH*** Michael Donald Edwards.

In addition to the captivating set, designed by Scott Bradley, Asolo Rep's production features 28 cast members, including five local child actors. Onstage musicians enhance Steinbeck's powerful story of strength, perseverance and hope. The play's composer/music director, award-winning American folk musician Tim Grimm, explained that Americana singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie, who grew up in Oklahoma and lived through the Dust Bowl, and Pete Seeger, who was one of the fathers of American folk music, served as his greatest inspirations. Grimm will perform on stage alongside local musicians Sara Moone and Carmela Pedicini.

“In ***THE GRAPES OF WRATH***, music operates in multiple ways. On one hand, it serves as a Greek chorus – commenting on what is happening or about to happen on stage, but it also has the ability to literally become a part of the scene and story. Woody sang the songs of the people with just a voice and guitar. There was nothing sweet about the way he sang his songs. But, as Steinbeck himself said about Woody, “there is something more important for those who will listen. There is the will of a people to endure and fight against oppression. I think we call this the American spirit,” said Tim Grimm.

THE GRAPES OF WRATH continues the second season of Asolo Rep's American Character Project, which explores the nation's distinctive political, social and historical elements, and this season focuses on the American family. Through the provocative characterization of the dynamic Joad family, Steinbeck, who won a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962, artfully depicted one of the nation's most trying economic periods.

CAST

(In Alphabetical Order)

Tyla Abercrombie*	2 nd Narrator/3 rd Narrator/Picketer
Bernard Balbot*	Connie Rivers/Hooper Ranch Guard/Picketer/1 st Man in Storm
Kristen Lynne Blossom	Rose of Sharon
David Breitbarth*	Uncle John
Christian Conn*	Tom Joad
Samantha Crawford	Ruthie Joad
Anne-Marie Cusson*	Elizabeth Sandry/Picketer/Mrs. Wainwright
Tim Grimm*	1 st Narrator/Man with Guitar/Car Salesman 1/Floyd Knowles/Hooper Ranch Guard/2 nd Man with Club/4 th Narrator
Cale Hauptert	Willy/Noah Joad/Officer in Hooverville/Weedpatch Camp Director/Hooper Ranch Bookkeeper/Hooper Ranch Guard/1 st Man with Club
Tori Grace Hines	Picketer/Aggie Wainwright/Woman Who Gets Shot/Ensemble
Caroline Howard	Young Girl/Ensemble
David S. Howard*	Grampa Joad
Evan Huitt	Young Boy/Ensemble
Douglas Jones*	Pa Joad
Mark Konrad	Car Salesman 2/The Man Going Back/Man in Crowd/1 st Man in Casy's Camp/Picketer/Mr. Wainwright
Lucy Lavelly	Proprietor's Daughter/Weedpatch Camp Nurse/Al's Girl/Picketer/Ensemble
Jefferson McDonald	Al Joad
Carolyn Michel*	Granma Joad
Zlatomir Moldovanski	Car Salesman 4/Young Man/Gas Station Attendant/1 st Agricultural Officer/Contractor/Guard at Casy's Camp/Picketer/3 rd Man in Storm
Sara Moone	Musician
Amanda Lynn Mullen	Floyd's Wife/Picketer/Ensemble
Brian Nemiroff+	Muley Graves/Gas Station Owner/2 nd Agricultural Officer/Deputy Sheriff/Hooper Ranch Guard/2 nd Man in Storm
Carmela Pedicini	Musician
Peggy Roeder*	Ma Joad
Stevie Lee Romero	The Man in the Barn's Son/Ensemble
Andrew Sellon*	Jim Casy/Man in Barn
Jakob Silver	Winfield Joad
Don Walker	Car Salesman 3/Proprietor/Mayor of Hooverville/2 nd Man in Casy's Camp/Picketer

*Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

+Appears courtesy of Actors' Equity Association.

-All casting is subject to change

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SELECTED CREATIVE TEAM MEMBERS

Director	Michael Donald Edwards
Composer/Music Director	Tim Grimm*
Scenic Design	Scott Bradley
Costume Design	B. Modern
Lighting Design	Paul Miller
Sound Design	Matthew Parker
Hair, Wig & Make-Up Design	Michelle Hart

SPECIAL PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

Inside Asolo Rep

Wednesday, February 26, 2014 at 11am

Asolo Rep's Cook Theatre

Led by Asolo Rep Dramaturg/Literary Manager Lauryn Sasso, this comprehensive behind-the-scenes panel discussion will feature Asolo Rep's Producing Artistic Director/Director of ***The Grapes of Wrath*** Michael Donald Edwards, and Composer/Music Director/actor Tim Grimm*, a world-renowned folk musician. To find out more about Mr. Grimm's award-winning music visit www.timgrimm.com. Tickets for this event are \$5 for the general public and free for Asolo Rep donors and Guild members and are available at Asolo Rep's Box Office or at www.asolorep.org.

Pre-show Conversations

A half-hour before the performance, speak with Asolo Rep staff to gain insight into the production's development and to explore its themes.

- **Thursday, April 17 at 7:30pm** on the Mezzanine, prior to the 8pm performance

Tuesday Talkbacks

Join an intimate post-show discussion with Asolo staff and cast members, located on the Mezzanine immediately following the 7:30pm performance

- **April 1, 8, and 15**

Meet the Actors

Join the cast for an onstage post-show discussion, held in the Mertz Theatre immediately following the 2pm matinee.

- **Sunday, April 6**

OUT@AsoloRep

OUT evenings feature local LGBT organizations, a pre-show reception, a special speaker, and an evening of live theater. OUT@AsoloRep is sponsored by Morton's Gourmet Market & Catering, Visit Sarasota County and U.S. Trust, Bank of America, Private Wealth Management. Receive 25 percent off tickets in sections A, B or C with the code OUT1314.

- **THE GRAPES OF WRATH** OUT@AsoloRep event will be held on Wednesday, April 9, 2014 at 7pm and feature Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards, and LGBT organizations Equality Florida and Trinity Charities.

SELECTED ARTIST BIOS

(In Alphabetical Order)

CHRISTIAN CONN* (Tom Joad) Theater credits include *Desire Under the Elms* (Broadway); *Tiny Dynamite* (59E59); *Other Desert Cities* (Guthrie Theater); *Venus in Fur* (Studio Theatre); *The Liar, The Beaux' Stratagem, Love's Labor's Lost* (Shakespeare Theatre); *Angels in America, All My Sons* (Playmakers Rep); *The Lieutenant of Inishmore, Bug, King Lear* (Syracuse Stage); *Playboy of the Western World* (Hangar Theatre). Christian's also played five seasons with the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, three seasons with the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, and one season with The Acting Company. BFA, Rutgers University. www.christianconn.com.

MICHAEL DONALD EDWARDS (Producing Artistic Director; Director, **THE GRAPES OF WRATH**) is in his eighth season as producing artistic director of Asolo Repertory Theatre. He was previously the associate artistic director of Syracuse Stage and served as artistic director of Shakespeare Santa Cruz. A Garland Award and Drama-Logue Award-winning director, Mr. Edwards has directed at Cleveland Play House, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Geva Theatre, Syracuse Stage, The Shakespeare Theatre, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Opera San Jose, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Old Globe in San Diego, Virginia Stage Company, the Virginia Opera, the State Theatre of South Australia, Opera Australia, Victoria State Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera. In previous seasons for Asolo Rep, Mr. Edwards has directed his English adaptation as well as Pulitzer Prize-winner Nilo Cruz's Spanish translation of Shakespeare's text in *Hamlet, Prince of Cuba*; as well as *Las Meninas; La Bête*;

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The Last Five Years; The Life of Galileo; Perfect Mendacity; The Winter's Tale; Equus; A Tale of Two Cities; Darwin in Malibu; Nobody Don't Like Yogi; Amadeus; The Smell of the Kill; and several pieces in the annual Unplugged festival of new plays.

TIM GRIMM* (Composer/Music Director, 1st Narrator/Man with Guitar/Car Salesman 1/Floyd Knowles/Hooper Ranch Guard/2nd Man with Club/4th Narrator) As an actor, Mr. Grimm's Regional Theatre credits include work at Indiana Repertory Theatre, Syracuse Stage, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Victory Gardens Theater, The Goodman Theatre, Centre Stage, Phoenix Theatre, Cleveland Play House and The Chester Theatre. His film and TV credits include *Clear and Present Danger*, opposite Harrison Ford and 2 seasons co-starring on NBC's *Reasonable Doubts*. As an award-winning singer-songwriter, Tim tours North America and Europe with his unique brand of roots-folk-Americana music and has been called, "The poet laureate of the rural Midwest." He has released numerous recordings (most recently *The Turning Point*) that consistently reach the top of the Folk and Euro-Americana charts.

PEGGY ROEDER* (Ma Joad) has appeared at Asolo Rep in *You Can't Take It With You, The Game's Afoot, My Fair Lady*. Credits include *The Dresser* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company), *Romeo and Juliet* (Goodman Theatre), *The Clean House* (Milwaukee Rep), *Kabuki Macbeth* (Chicago Shakespeare), *The Cider House Rules* (Mark Taper Forum), *Big Meal* (ATC), *The How and The Why* (Etopia Productions), *Cabaret* (Peninsula Players), *Float* (About Face), *Barefoot in the Park* (Drury Lane Oakbrook), *Busy World Is Hushed*; (Next Theatre). Her work has garnered four Jeff Awards, three Artisan Awards, two After Dark Awards. Film and Television credits include *Groundhog Day, Road to Perdition, In Memoriam, Were the World Mine, Stranger than Fiction, Star Trek: DS9, ER, Law & Order*.

TICKETS

Tickets for ***THE GRAPES OF WRATH*** and the entire 2013-14 Asolo Repertory Theatre season are on sale now. **Tickets for *THE GRAPES OF WRATH* start at \$21.** To purchase tickets, call 941.351.8000 or 800.361.8388, visit www.asolorep.org, or visit the Asolo Repertory Theatre Box Office, located in the lobby of the theatre. Asolo Repertory Theatre is located at 5555 North Tamiami Trail in the Florida State University Center for the Performing Arts. Box office hours are Monday 10am – 4pm, Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 8pm, and Sunday 10am – 2pm. The box office closes at 5pm when there are no evening performances and phone lines close one hour prior to the start of any performance. Season subscription packages are also available online and by visiting or calling the box office.

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SPONSORS

Asolo Rep is able to bring ***THE GRAPES OF WRATH*** to the stage thanks to the generosity of its sponsors. Corporate sponsors are Bright House Networks, Scene Magazine, The Resort at Longboat Key Club, Williams Parker Harrison Dietz & Getzen Attorneys at Law and Gold Coast Eagle Distributing. Asolo Rep's season sponsors are Florida State University, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Designing Women Boutique, Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, and The Woman's Exchange, Inc. Asolo Rep's artistic programs are paid for in part by Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax revenues. Asolo Rep is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture.

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