

ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE

PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL DONALD EDWARDS • MANAGING DIRECTOR LINDA DIGABRIELE



ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE AND THE FSU/ASOLO CONSERVATORY FOR ACTOR TRAINING PROUDLY ANNOUNCE THEIR 2016-17 SEASONS

(SARASOTA, March 14, 2016) — On Monday, March 14, 2016, Asolo Rep and the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training proudly announced their 2016-17 seasons to more than 350 patrons in the Mertz Theatre, located in the FSU Center for the Performing Arts.

The 2016-17 season marks the final season of Asolo Rep's critically acclaimed American Character Project, an extensive five-year exploration and examination of who we are as a country, past, present and future. The 2016-17 season will follow the same format as the 2015-16 season, with two mainstage musicals in the fall and spring, and four productions playing in rotating rep on the Mertz stage from January through April. This season, Asolo Rep will not present a production in the Historic Asolo Theater and will instead present one production in the Jane B. Cook Theatre, located in the FSU Center for the Performing Arts.

Hailed as "the show that defines Broadway dazzle" by the *New York Times*, **GUYS AND DOLLS**, one of the greatest musical comedies of all time, kicks off Asolo Rep's season in November 2016. In this dazzling Tony Award®-winning musical, the bright lights of Broadway illuminate famed author Damon Runyon's iconic American characters and their high-stakes quest for love and luck, from the lovelorn showgirl Adelaide, and roguish gamblers Nathan Detroit and Sky Masterson, to straight-laced missionary Sarah Brown. Featuring one of the best scores ever written, **GUYS AND DOLLS** is based on the stories and characters of Damon Runyon, features music and lyrics by Tony, Academy Award and Pulitzer Prize-winner Frank Loesser, and a book by Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows. The musical premiered on Broadway in 1950 and was revived in 1955, 1965, 1976, 1992, and 2009 and is currently wowing audiences on London's West End. **GUYS AND DOLLS** will be directed and choreographed by celebrated Broadway (*Bright Star, It Shoulda Been You*, Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Cinderella*), film and television artist Josh Rhodes, who previously choreographed *Working*, *Barnum*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Yentl* at Asolo Rep. **GUYS AND DOLLS** previews November 15, 16 and 17, opens November 18 and runs through Sunday, January 1.

On the heels of the Asolo Rep's critically acclaimed production of **ALL THE WAY**, the

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theatre will continue to chronicle President Lyndon Baines Johnson's divisive presidency with **THE GREAT SOCIETY**. Pulitzer Prize-winner Robert Schenkkan's arresting sequel continues right where **ALL THE WAY** left off, and recounts President Johnson's uphill fight to end poverty and the tumultuous effects of the widely unpopular Vietnam War overseas, across the nation and just outside the White House gates. Directed by Nicole A. Watson, a 2013 Drama League Fall Fellow and based on the original production directed by Bill Rauch, **THE GREAT SOCIETY** previews January 11 and 12, opens January 13 and runs in rotating rep through April 2.

The rep season continues with the **THE ORIGINALIST**. Justice Antonin Scalia's unexpected death at age 79 has thrown a wrench into the political arena, but has brought intense interest in this daring new stage play that had its world premiere at Arena Stage last spring. In John Strand's play, when a bright, liberal law school graduate embarks on a nerve-wracking clerkship with Justice Scalia, she discovers him to be both an infuriating sparring partner and unexpected mentor. Arena Stage Artistic Director Molly Smith directed the world premiere and will also helm Asolo Rep's production. Four-time Helen Hayes Award-winner Edward Gero originated the role at Arena Stage and will star as Justice Scalia in Asolo Rep's production, which previews January 18 and 19, opens January 20 and runs in rotating rep through March 5.

The fourth production in Asolo Rep's 2016-17 season is Academy Award®-winner Garson Kanin's clever girl-meets-world comedy **BORN YESTERDAY**. Directed by Asolo Rep favorite Peter Amster, **BORN YESTERDAY** tells the story of ex-chorus girl Billie Dawn whose lack of social graces embarrasses even her scumbag boyfriend, junkyard magnate Harry Brock. When Harry hires a young reporter to educate Billie, the reporter ends up learning quite a bit from her in this classic comedy that reminds us all not to judge a book by its cover. **BORN YESTERDAY** previews February 8 and 9, opens February 10 and runs in rotating rep through April 15.

In March, Tony Award-winner Frank Galati will direct **THE LITTLE FOXES**, penned by Lillian Hellman, one of the pillars of 20th-century American drama. Guile and greed are front and center in this classic American play set at the dawn of the 20th century in the South, where the wily Regina Hubbard Giddens and her two brothers will stop at nothing to obtain the fortune they so desperately desire. **THE LITTLE FOXES** previews March 15 and 16, opens March 17 and runs in rotating rep through April 15.

The Cook Theatre will be transformed into a wrestling arena in April when Asolo Rep stages **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY**. Mainstream professional wrestling is widely known for choreographing its matches. But when wrestlers are typecast as "good" and "bad" based on the color of their skin, life in and out of the ring is about to get refreshingly real. Hailed as "a culturally explosive knockout" by *D.C. Metro Theatre Arts*, this Pulitzer Prize finalist uses the larger-than-life world of wrestling to tell a surprisingly touching story of race, class and power. **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY** previews April 5 and 6, opens April 7 and runs through April 30.

In May, Asolo Rep will proudly present the world premiere of **BEATSVILLE**, a brand new musical comedy with a book by Tony nominee Glenn Slater ((Film: *Tangled*, TV: *Galavant*, and Broadway: *School of Rock*, *Sister Act*, *The Little Mermaid*) and music and lyrics by Wendy Leigh Wilf. Based on the 1959 Roger Corman cult film, *A Bucket of Blood*, this innovative new musical comedy is set in Greenwich Village in 1959 and tells the story of Walter Paisley and his unimaginable journey from talent-less, down-on-his-luck busboy to

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revered, but accidental, artist. **BEATSVILLE**, which is being co-produced with Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre, begins previews April 27, opens May 5 and runs through May 28.

There will also be an exciting summer production to close Asolo Rep's 2016-17 season, to be announced very soon.

In October and November 2016, Asolo Rep will present the seventh annual New Stages Tour, an FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training production of an all new, re-imagined adaptation of William Shakespeare's haunting tale of revenge, **HAMLET**. Directed by former Asolo Rep Directing Fellow Justin Lucero, the New Stages Tour, which features a cast of third-year Conservatory students, brings condensed, 45-minute adaptations of classic literature to schools and community venues throughout the state.

"The fifth and final season of Asolo Rep's American Character Project is brimming with iconic playwrights, headline-making political figures, quintessential American classics, and provocative new work," said Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards. "We kick off the season with the splashy and timeless **GUYS AND DOLLS**, widely considered the most perfect musical comedy of all time, continue to share President Lyndon Baines Johnson's story in **THE GREAT SOCIETY**, and bring the late Justice Antonin Scalia's controversial thinking to the forefront in **THE ORIGINALIST**. The season continues with the hilarious classic comedy **BORN YESTERDAY** and Lillian Hellman's gripping drama **THE LITTLE FOXES**. **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY**, the larger-than-life play set in the world of professional wrestling, and the world premiere of **BEATSVILLE**, a brilliant new musical comedy about the journey of a young accidental artist, along with a summer production to be announced shortly round out the season. I'm thrilled to present this remarkable final chapter of our five-year American Character Project to our audiences."

The FSU/Asolo Conservatory's 2016-17 season kicks off with Lanford Wilson's stirring drama **BOOK OF DAYS**, the tale of a small town bookkeeper who, inspired by her role as Joan of Arc in a local play, seeks for the truth behind her boss' mysterious death in a hunting accident. It is followed by the explosive **A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE**, Arthur Miller's searing tragedy of a Brooklyn dockworker's shift from endearing to violently protective father-figure. Next, contemporary playwright Adam Bock's **THE DRUNKEN CITY** takes the stage with a whirlwind comedy that sets three inebriated brides-to-be loose in New York City, resulting in a night of theater compared by the *New York Daily News* to "the best episodes of *Sex and the City*." This striking season culminates with "Shakespeare in the Gardens: **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**," Shakespeare's spirited and whimsical classic performed on the stunning grounds of Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in an exciting new collaboration between Selby Gardens and the Conservatory.

"The 16-17 season is particularly fitting alongside Asolo Rep's American Character project, with works by some of America's most influential playwrights, ranging from the contemporary yet classical work of Arthur Miller to the uniquely American vision of the brilliant Lanford Wilson," said FSU/Asolo Conservatory Director Greg Leaming. "In addition, producing a work from one of American theatre's most exciting new voices, Adam Bock, allows us to further this project by introducing a playwright whose works will continue to explore the American Character on stages across this country for many years to come! The Conservatory is also incredibly excited to enter into a collaboration with Selby Gardens to present Shakespeare's **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** — a beloved classic perfectly suited for the utterly glorious Selby grounds."

Season subscriptions for the 2016-17 season are on sale now and available by visiting the **Asolo Rep Box Office**, located in the lobby of the theatre, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota, by calling 941.351.8000 or 800.361.8388 or online at www.asolorep.org. Single tickets will go on sale in September 2016.

2016-17 Asolo Repertory Theatre Season

GUYS AND DOLLS

November 18-January 1
Previews November 15, 16, 17
A Musical Fable of Broadway
Based on a Story and Characters of Damon Runyon
Music and Lyrics by Frank Loesser
Book by Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows
Musical Direction by Sinai Tabek
Choreographed and Directed by Josh Rhodes

When it comes to wit, style, and sheer exuberant joy, **GUYS AND DOLLS** is the odds-on favorite as the best musical comedy of all time. Set under the bright lights of Broadway and bustling with gamblers, gangsters, and sassy showgirls, **GUYS AND DOLLS** features one of the greatest scores ever written by the legendary Frank Loesser, masterfully witty book and lyrics by Joe Swerling and comedy legend Abe Burrows, and those glorious Damon Runyon characters who have become classics in the world of musical theatre. The plot involves the unlikeliest of romantic pairings: a high-rolling gambler and a save-your-soul missionary, a showgirl dreaming of the straight-and-narrow and a craps game manager who is anything but. Place your bet on love conquering all in this hilarious classic that defined Broadway's Golden Age.

THE GREAT SOCIETY

January 13-April 2
Previews January 11 & 12
By Robert Schenkkan
Directed by Nicole A. Watson

On the heels of Asolo Rep's wildly successful *All the Way*, *The Great Society* continues Robert Schenkkan's profound exploration of President Lyndon Johnson's turbulent years in the White House. Besieged by political opponents, Johnson summons all his political wiles to advance his vision of a Great Society. Despite deep division over the Vietnam War and ongoing civil rights battles, Johnson championed the most ambitious effort ever to test what American government is capable of achieving. By looking back, *The Great Society* examines who we are, asks how we got here, and dreams of what we could yet become.

THE ORIGINALIST

January 20-March 7
Previews January 18 & 19
By John Strand

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Directed by Molly Smith

Justice Antonin Scalia's unexpected death at age 79 has thrown a wrench into the political arena, but has brought intense interest in this daring new stage play that had its world premiere at Arena Stage last spring. When a bright, liberal law school graduate embarks on a nerve-wracking clerkship with Justice Scalia, she discovers him to be both an infuriating sparring partner and unexpected mentor. Written by Charles MacArthur Award-winning playwright John Strand and starring four-time Helen Hayes Award winner Edward Gero (who bears an uncanny resemblance to Scalia), this powerful work depicts passionate people risking heart and soul to defend their interpretation of the truth.

BORN YESTERDAY

February 10-April 15

Previews February 8 & 9

By Garson Kanin

Directed by Peter Amster

A Broadway triumph and 1950 Academy Award-nominated film, this deliciously witty comedy is also a biting commentary on politics and the power of female persuasion. With his ex-showgirl girlfriend Billie Dawn in tow, junkyard magnate Harry Brock moves to Washington D.C. where he hopes to break into some "special interest" business with an ethically-challenged senator. When Billie's lack of social graces embarrasses even him, Harry hires a young reporter to give her the polish she needs to get ahead in D.C. society. But Harry gets more than he bargained for when, in a deliriously funny turn of events, he discovers a little bit of learning can be a dangerous thing.

THE LITTLE FOXES

March 17-April 15

Previews March 15 & 16

By Lillian Hellman

Directed by Frank Galati

Relevant, ruthless, and gripping, Lillian Hellman's chronicle of the dark side of the American Dream is a masterpiece of 20th century drama. Set in 1900 in the deep South, Regina Hubbard Giddens and her two brothers are nouveau-riche cotton growers who have a chance to become mega-rich by investing in a new mill. But the siblings still need \$75,000 to seal the deal, which they attempt to swindle from Regina's ailing husband. And so the sinister games begin with each of these "little foxes" nibbling at the other's tender grapes (the title comes from the Song of Solomon) as each will let nothing stand in the way of financial gain.

THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY

April 7-30

Previews April 4, 5 & 6

By Kristoffer Diaz

In the Cook Theatre

Winner of the Obie for Best New American Play, this Pulitzer Prize finalist is as hilarious as it is relevant. Macedonio "Mace" Guerra is a really good professional wrestler, but he's not the champion – that's the impossibly charismatic Chad Deity. When Mace discovers an Indian-American Brooklyn kid whose charisma rivals that of the champ, he decides to recruit

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him as the perfect foil. But when their rivalry is used to exploit racial stereotypes to raise ratings, all three men find themselves fighting for more than the title belt. This no-holds-barred comedy transforms the Cook Theatre into a wrestling arena where you'll have a ringside seat for this invigorating tale that masks a sly allegory about race, class and power.

World Premiere

BEATSVILLE

May 6-28

Previews begin April 28

Book by Glenn Slater

Music and Lyrics by Wendy Leigh Wilf

Directed by Bill Berry

A co-production with Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre

Dig this. One of the most highly anticipated new musicals from one of the hottest writing teams on the planet, **BEATSVILLE** has its world premiere at Asolo Rep next spring. It's Greenwich Village, 1959 – the world of underground coffee shops, goateed artists, turtle-necked poets, and bongo-playing jazzbos. Tragically square busboy Walter Paisley wants nothing more than to be one of the beatniks, but he has no artistic talent whatsoever. When he accidentally kills a cat and hides it in a lump of clay, "Dead Cat" is declared a masterpiece, and Walter a genius. More "sculptures" bring more acclaim – but will the world discover Walter's secret? Hip, rollicking, and bona fide hilarious, hang onto your berets – we're headed to Beatsville!

SUMMER MUSICAL

To Be Announced

June 2-25

Preview June 1

New Stages Tour

HAMLET

By William Shakespeare

Adapted and Directed by Justin Lucero

October and November 2016

Presented by Asolo Rep and the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training, the New Stages Tour features a cast of third-year Conservatory students and brings exciting 45-minute adaptations of classic literature to schools and community venues throughout the state of Florida. In this year marking the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, a freshly re-imagined look at his towering masterpiece invites the next generation to wrestle with **HAMLET's** timeless questions of responsibility and revenge.

2016-17 FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training Season

BOOK OF DAYS

By Lanford Wilson

November 1 through November 20

Acclaimed by Frank Rich as "a writer who illuminates the deepest dramas of American life

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American playwrights of our time. **BOOK OF DAYS** won the Best Play Award from the American Theater Critics Association in 1999. The play is set in a small town dominated by a cheese plant, a fundamentalist church, and a community theater. When the owner of the cheese plant dies mysteriously in a hunting accident, Ruth, his bookkeeper, suspects murder. Cast as Joan of Arc in a local production of George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, Ruth takes on the attributes of her fictional character and launches into a one-woman campaign to see justice done. "Book of Days is lively storytelling by one of our best playwrights." — Lawrence DeVine, *Detroit Free Press*.

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

By Arthur Miller

December 27 through January 15

A searing tragedy of classical proportions by one of our country's most important contemporary playwrights. The man who gave us *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible* and *All My Sons*, turns his eye on the dockworkers of New York, in particular Eddie Carbone, a longshoreman who helps smuggle in two of his wife's cousins into the country. When one of the two cousins begins to pursue Eddie's teenage niece, a monstrous change creeps up on the kind and loving uncle, and the play explodes in a tragic display of violence and unconscious passions.

THE DRUNKEN CITY

By Adam Bock

February 21 through March 12

One of the great new playwrights in this country telling the story of three twenty-something brides-to-be who set out on a celebratory evening, only to have one of them question her future after a chance meeting with a recently jilted handsome stranger. A wildly theatrical play that captures the ever-shifting nature of love and identity in a very surprising way! "Like the best episodes of 'Sex and the City', a little heartache always goes well with hilarity." — *Daily News*

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

By William Shakespeare

Presented in collaboration with Marie Selby Botanical Gardens

April 11 through April 29 at the Selby Gardens

(Tuesday through Saturday evenings only)

The entire company of second year graduate students at the FSU/Asolo Conservatory in Shakespeare's hilarious comedy about four young lovers, five rude mechanicals, and an army of fairies and spirits who all cross paths one magical night in a forest outside of Athens. The most beloved of Shakespeare's plays, capturing the essence of young, and not-so-young love, performed by the future of the American theatre. This very special event will be a collaboration between Marie Selby Botanical Gardens and the FSU/Asolo Conservatory and will be performed outdoors at Selby Gardens throughout the month of April.

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