

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

April 3, 2020

**Asolo Repertory Theatre and the FSU/Asolo
Conservatory for Actor Training Proudly
Announce 2020-21 Seasons**

**Asolo Rep Kicks Off its 62nd Season with *BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL* Directed and
Choreographed by Josh Rhodes,**

**Season Features Two Musicals Rescheduled from 2019-20 Season: Lewis Flinn and Douglas
Carter Beane's New Robin Hood Musical *HOOD***

and

**World Premiere of Lynn Ahrens, Stephen Flaherty and
Frank Galati Musical *KNOXVILLE***

(SARASOTA, FL, April 3, 2020) — Asolo Repertory Theatre and the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training proudly announced their 2020-21 seasons today in a virtual event broadcast via Facebook and YouTube Live.

Asolo Rep's season kicks off in November with a brilliant new production of the four-time Olivier Award- and ten-time Tony Award®-winning music and dance masterpiece ***BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL*** (November 18 - January 2), directed and choreographed by **Josh Rhodes** (Broadway: *Bright Star, It Shoulda Been You, First Date, Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella*). Rhodes returns to Asolo Rep where he previously directed and choreographed the theatre's productions of *The Sound of Music* in 2019, *Evita* in 2017 and *Guys and Dolls* in 2016. This triumphant, dance-filled sensation follows a young boy as he trades in his boxing gloves for dance shoes amidst the turmoil of the 1984 coal miners' strike in England. Set to an explosive score by Sir Elton John, ***BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL*** is a joyous celebration of one boy's journey that will inspire the dreamer in everyone.

The winter repertory season opens with ***KEN LUDWIG'S THE THREE MUSKETEERS*** (January 13 - March 13), adapted from the novel by Alexandre Dumas and

directed by beloved Asolo Rep associate artist **Peter Amster**. Young d'Artagnan and his sister Sabine head for Paris in search of fame, fortune and adventure. When they team up with the famous Musketeers of the Guard, hilarious shilly-shallying abounds as this boisterous bunch fences, drinks and romances their way across the countryside while proving that heroism, courage and honor rule the day.

The rep season continues with a new comedy, straight from a smash-hit run on Broadway, **GRAND HORIZONS** (January 20 - March 25), penned by one of the most exciting voices currently writing for the stage, Bess Wohl, and directed by **Giovanna Sardelli**. Just as Bill and Nancy settle into their new retirement home in Grand Horizons, Nancy announces that she wants out. As their two adult sons struggle to cope with the news, they're forced to question everything they assumed about the people they thought they knew best. Sophisticated, funny and delightfully honest, this new Broadway hit-comedy takes an intimate look at the unpredictable and enduring nature of love.

The culminating event of the rep season is the artistic and philosophical center of everything the theatre hopes to give to its community in these challenging times, Thornton Wilder's timeless masterpiece **OUR TOWN** (February 10 - March 27), directed by Asolo Rep Producing Artistic Director, **Michael Donald Edwards**. Perhaps no other play rings truer today. **OUR TOWN** is, at its heart, about us. All of us. Swept up by time and subject to inescapable change. Long after it won the 1938 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, **OUR TOWN** remains one of the most enduring American plays of all time, reminding audiences to always celebrate love, family, community, and the beauty in the ordinary.

In March, Asolo Rep will also present a new play that takes an inside look at what seems to be a closed-off world: Lindsay Joelle's **TRAYF** (March 24 - April 18). Directed by Asolo Rep Associate Artistic Director **Celine Rosenthal**, **TRAYF** will be presented in the Cook Theatre. Manhattan. Summer. 1991. Clothes are baggy and mixtapes are still mix *tapes*. Ready to conquer any obstacle, best friends and loyal members of the Chasidic community, Zalmy and Shmuel set out in their freshly tricked-out Mitzvah Tank, determined to take on the world. This budding bromance is a funny and heartwarming ode to the turbulence of youth, the universal suspicion that we don't quite fit in and the faith and friends that see us through.

The theatre continues its season with two productions originally scheduled in its 2019-20 season, that were canceled due to the unique circumstances presented by the coronavirus.

HOOD (April 9 – May 1), featuring music and lyrics by Lewis Flinn (*Lysistrata Jones*), a book by five-time Tony-nominated playwright Douglas Carter Beane (*Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella*, *Lysistrata Jones*, *Sister Act*, *Xanadu*) and helmed by **Mark Brokaw** (*Heisenberg*, *Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella*, *After Miss Julie*). Everything old is new again as we follow the exciting escapades of Robin Hood and his Merry Band as he fights to restore justice for the people of Sherwood, win the heart of the beautiful Maid Marian, who definitely does not need saving, and rid the land from the Sheriff of Nottingham once and for all.

In May, Asolo Rep proudly presents the world premiere of **KNOXVILLE** (May 14 – June 5). This moving and innovative musical will feature lyrics by Lynn Ahrens, music by Stephen Flaherty (songwriting team behind *Anastasia*, *Once on this Island*) and will be adapted and directed by **Frank Galati**, reuniting the dynamic Tony Award®-winning creative team behind *Ragtime*, one of the most beloved musicals of all time. **KNOXVILLE** is based on James Agee's Pulitzer Prize-winning autobiographical novel *A Death in the Family* and based, in part, on the play *All The Way Home* by Tad Mosel. When an unexpected turn of events leaves Rufus' family spinning, he and his mother, Mary, embark on a journey through the mysteries of life and death, faith and doubt, in order to come to terms with what they have lost and what they have found. An enduring illumination of the forces that shape us into who we are, **KNOXVILLE** is a quintessentially American coming-of-age story about family, faith and love, and the boy who will grow up to write it. The world premiere of **KNOXVILLE** is made possible by a generous grant from The Roy Cockrum Foundation.

To finish the season, Asolo Rep continues its commitment to present world class family-friendly productions each June. This production (June 15 – 27) will be announced very soon.

"The overarching theme for our 2020-21 season is that of family, humanity, and community," said Asolo Rep Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards. "It seems to us at Asolo Rep, that what we need now in these dark days is a light at the end of the tunnel. A galvanizing call to action to see our community through this incredibly difficult trial. That is what we hope to bring you with this season: human stories that inspire hope for a bright future, and healing in the times to come."

"With the help and continued support of our incredibly loyal patrons, we are pressing onward and upward to tell the stories that we *need* in order to bring us back together and make our community whole again," continued Edwards. "We cannot wait to be back in the theatre with you as soon as possible, proving once again the overwhelming power of theatre to connect us all through tears of sorrow, tears of joy, and love."

Asolo Rep will also present its annual fall educational tour, an FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training production of William Shakespeare's **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** (October - November, 2020), adapted by Celine Rosenthal and directed by **Kelly Galvin**. The tour presents freshly re-imagined 45-minute adaptations of classic literature to schools and community venues throughout the state of Florida.

The FSU/Asolo Conservatory opens its season with the world premiere of Greg Leaming's **SISTER CARRIE** (November 3 - 22). Adapted from the novel by Theodore Dreiser, the story follows 18-year-old Carrie Meeber on her journey from obscurity to fame in turn-of-the-century Chicago. In January, the Conservatory presents Lauren Gunderson's dark comedy, **EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR** (January 6 - 24). Walking a fine line between comedy and tragedy, this new play by one of America's hottest playwrights explores how art can be used to heal. The season continues in February with Christopher Durang's **BABY WITH THE BATHWATER** (February 16 - March 7). This laugh-out-loud dark comedy dives face first into the absurd waters of how, for better or worse, family makes us who we are.

The Conservatory will return to Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in April for William Shakespeare's masterpiece of intrigue, allegiance and conspiracy, **JULIUS CAESAR** (April 6 - 26). Caesar returns to Rome a triumphant war hero and the people pour into the streets to celebrate. But when civic duty clashes with political ambition, it turns out democracy cannot be rebuilt so easily.

"The FSU/Asolo Conservatory is training the future of the American theatre, and we are thrilled to be able to present these young artists in plays that will showcase their skills, their passion and, most importantly, their incredible talent," said Greg Leaming, Director of the FSU/Asolo Conservatory. "The 2020-21 season includes some of the greatest plays written for the stage as well as bright, new, highly original work from the 21st century, all starring the 12 brilliant young artists of our second-year class. It promises to be a season of great plays and great young actors ready to be discovered."

ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE 2020-21 SEASON

BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL

November 21 - January 2
Previews November 18, 19 & 20
Music by Elton John
Book and Lyrics by Lee Hall
Directed and Choreographed by Josh Rhodes

The musical the world fell in love with, *BILLY ELLIOT* was heralded as "The best musical of the decade" by *Time* magazine. This triumphant, dance-filled sensation follows a young boy as he trades in his boxing gloves for dance shoes amidst the turmoil of the 1984 coal miners' strike in England. A dance teacher discovers a diamond in the rough in 11-year-old Billy—a boy whose passion for dance inspires and unites the entire town, against insurmountable barriers. Set to an explosive score by Sir Elton John, *BILLY ELLIOT* is a joyous celebration of one boy's journey that will inspire the dreamer in everyone.

Ken Ludwig's THE THREE MUSKETEERS

January 15 - March 13
Previews January 13 & 14
Adapted from the novel by Alexandre Dumas
Directed by Peter Amster

17th century France has never been so much fun. Alexandre Dumas' timeless tale springs to life in this swashbuckling romp brilliantly adapted by Ken Ludwig (*Murder on the Orient Express*) with a few contemporary twists. Young d'Artagnan and his sister Sabine head for Paris in search of fame, fortune and adventure. He joins the famous Musketeers of the Guard, charged with defending King Louis XIII and Queen Anne while Sabine gleefully finds herself embroiled in his exploits. Hilarious shilly-shallying abounds when this boisterous bunch fences,

drinks and romances their way across the countryside while proving that heroism, courage and honor rule the day.

GRAND HORIZONS

January 22 - March 15
Previews January 20 & 21
By Bess Wohl
Directed by Giovanna Sardelli

You're never too old to learn, but what if you learn that the person you've been married to for 50 years is making you miserable? Bill and Nancy practically breathe in unison; they anticipate each other's sighs, sneezes and ends of sentences. But just as they settle into their new retirement home in Grand Horizons, Nancy wants out. As their two adult sons struggle to cope with the news, they're forced to question everything they assumed about the people they thought they knew best. Sophisticated, funny and delightfully honest, this new Broadway hit-comedy takes an intimate look at the unpredictable and enduring nature of love.

OUR TOWN

February 12 - March 27
Previews February 10 & 11
By Thornton Wilder
Directed by Michael Donald Edwards

Perhaps no other play rings truer today. Thornton Wilder's magnificent *OUR TOWN* is, at its heart, about us. All of us. Swept up by time and subject to inescapable change. As another ordinary day begins, the townsfolk of Grover's Corners go about their business: newspapers are delivered; people go to work; gardens are tended. And a boy and girl fall in love. But as life's events unfold, one question remains: "do any human beings ever realize life as they live it? Every, every minute?" Long after it won the 1938 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, *OUR TOWN* remains one of the most enduring American plays of all time, reminding audiences to always celebrate love, family, community, and the beauty in the ordinary.

TRAYF

In the Cook Theatre
March 26 - April 18
Previews March 24 & 25
By Lindsay Joelle
Directed by Celine Rosenthal

Manhattan. Summer. 1991. Clothes are baggy, flannels adorn waists, and mixtapes are still mix tapes. For Zalmy and Shmuel, the summer of '91 is particularly special. Ready to conquer any obstacle, the two best friends and loyal foot soldiers to the Chasidic community set out in their freshly tricked-out Mitzvah Tank, a temple on wheels, determined to take on the world.

This budding bromance is a funny and heartwarming ode to the turbulence of youth, the universal suspicion that we don't quite fit in and the faith and friends that see us through.

HOOD

April 16 – May 1

Previews begin April 9

Book by Douglas Carter Beane

Music and Lyrics by Lewis Flinn

Directed by Mark Brokaw

Presented by arrangement with Tom Kirdahy and Hunter Arnold

Asolo Rep is thrilled to present this extraordinary new musical comedy, bound for the world's stages. Everyone loves a good-hearted outlaw, but only Robin Hood has captured the public's imagination for nearly nine centuries. Everything old is new again as we follow the exciting escapades of Robin and his Merry Band as he fights to restore justice to the people of Sherwood, win the heart of the smart and sassy Maid Marian and rid the land of the avaricious Sheriff of Nottingham once and for all. This much-loved tale gets a hilarious 21-century twist by five-time Tony-nominated playwright Douglas Carter Beane, with a folk and rock-infused score by Lewis Flinn. Intoxicating, joyful and enchanting, *HOOD* celebrates the hero in everybody's heart.

WORLD PREMIERE MUSICAL *KNOXVILLE*

May 21 – June 5

Previews begin May 14

Book by Frank Galati

Music by Stephen Flaherty

Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens

Based on the Novel *A Death in the Family* by James Agee

Based, in part, on the play *All The Way Home* by Ted Mosel

Directed by Frank Galati

This moving and innovative new musical reunites the dynamic Tony Award-winning creative team behind *Ragtime*, one of the most beloved musicals of all time. Based on James Agee's autobiographical Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *A Death in the Family*, the story begins as James Agee struggles to write his greatest novel—about the event that touched his young life, and the effect it had on his mother, his town and his own future. A powerful illumination of the forces that shape who we are, *KNOXVILLE* is a universal coming-of-age story about family, faith and love—and about the boy who will grow up to write it. With a sweeping musical score and an extraordinary creative team and cast, this world premiere is a must-see event.

SUMMER FAMILY PRODUCTION

June 16 - 27

Preview June 15

To Be Announced

On Tour

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Touring Florida schools October - November 2020

By William Shakespeare

Adapted by Celine Rosenthal

Directed by Kelly Galvin

Asolo Rep will also present its annual fall educational tour, an FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training production of William Shakespeare's *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*. The tour presents freshly re-imagined 45-minute adaptations of classic literature to schools and community venues throughout the state of Florida.

FSU/ASOLO CONSERVATORY 2020-21 SEASON

SISTER CARRIE

By Greg Leaming

November 4 - 22

Preview November 3

18-year-old Carrie Meeber ventures from her small Wisconsin town to Chicago in 1900 in search of a better life. When a traveling salesman learns that she is an aspiring actress, he sets her up in her own apartment and surrounds her with wealth and attention. On her rise from obscurity to fame, she discovers the allure of money and sex – and how little morality plays a role. Adapted for the stage by Greg Leaming, this major theatrical event stars the entire second year company of actors and acting instructor, Jonathan Epstein.

EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR

By Lauren Gunderson

January 6 - 24

Preview January 5

Nan Carter decides to take matters into her own hands and teach her abusive husband Kyle a lesson. Aided by her reliable BFF and cheerleader Simon, along with her new friend Sweetheart the stripper, Nan finally has the confidence to make the break she's been longing for. Through a night of emotional trials and several jars of honey, Nan and Kyle are freed from their past in this smart, quirky comedy that delivers a few heartfelt lessons on friendship, loyalty and finding yourself.

BABY WITH THE BATHWATER

By Christopher Durang

February 17 - March 7

Preview February 16

Helen and John are completely unprepared for parenthood. They're disappointed that their newborn baby doesn't speak English and they are too polite to check its sex. So they decide that the child is a girl and name it Daisy. Add an outrageous Nanny, a clueless school principal and, and when it turns out that Daisy is a boy, stopping the madness is next to impossible. This laugh-out-loud dark comedy dives face first into the absurd waters of how, for better or worse, family makes us who we are.

**Shakespeare in the Gardens:
*JULIUS CAESAR***

By William Shakespeare
April 7 - 26
Preview April 6

We celebrate our fifth season of Shakespeare in the Gardens with Shakespeare's masterpiece of intrigue, allegiance, conspiracy — and the ultimate political thriller. Caesar returns to Rome a triumphant war hero and the people pour into the streets to celebrate. But whispers of opposition grow. When civic duty clashes with political ambition, it turns out democracy cannot be rebuilt so easily. This classic, passionate story reveals what we'll sacrifice for a chance at a better world.

ABOUT ASOLO REP

Looking forward to its 62nd season, Asolo Repertory Theatre is recognized as one of the premier professional theatres in America and one of the largest in the Southeastern United States. One of the few select theatres in the nation that performs in true rotating repertory, Asolo Rep's highly skilled acting company and extensive craftsmanship bring to life this unique performance method that gives audiences the opportunity to see multiple productions in the span of a few days. Asolo Rep presents up to 10 productions each season including contemporary and classic works and provocative musical theatre experiences. A theatre district in and of itself, Asolo Rep is committed to expanding its reach into the community, furthering its collaboration with the best theatre artists working in the industry today and cultivating new artists through its affiliation with the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training. Under the leadership of Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards and Managing Director Linda DiGabriele, Asolo Rep's ambitious theatrical offerings and ground-breaking education and community programming engage audiences and ensure its lasting legacy for future generations. asolorep.org

ABOUT THE FSU/ASOLO CONSERVATORY

The FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training is a celebrated three-year graduate program culminating in a Master of Fine Arts degree. For more than 45 years, tens of thousands of actors from across the continent have auditioned for admission. A maximum of 12 students are admitted each year. In their second year, the students perform in the Cook Theatre, a 161-seat space designed to create an intimate experience for the audience and actors. Third-year students are seen on the Mertz Stage working with the Asolo Repertory Theatre's professional actors in exciting and significant roles. For more information, visit asolorep.org/Conservatory.

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5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota FL 34243 | boxoffice@asolo.org

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