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STEAMY NEW COMEDY *VENUS IN FUR* HEATS UP THE STAGE AT ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE

(SARASOTA, March 21, 2013) — It's more than just the Florida sun that's sizzling at Asolo Rep this spring. The must-see hit of the recent Broadway season, *Venus in Fur*, written by theatrical mastermind David Ives opens in the Historic Asolo Theater Friday, April 5 and runs through April 28, 2013. Two preview performances are scheduled for April 3 and 4. Tea Alagić, an exciting new talent originally from the Czech Republic, directs this wickedly entertaining comedy that explores the complex relationship between an aspiring stage actress and her playwright/director.

Venus in Fur is a hot ticket in every sense. This alluring tale of love, lust, and literature illuminates the ultimate battle of the sexes. Vanda is the far-from-typical young actress who arrives to audition for the lead in playwright Thomas' adaptation of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's 1870 erotic novel, "Venus in Furs." As her audition proceeds, Vanda's continually shifting personas, accents, moods, expressions and apparent (and not-so-apparent) intentions engage Thomas in an emotionally charged game of cat and mouse. Is art imitating life? Or is it the other way around? As the lines between reality and fantasy become blurred the audience is swept up in Thomas' seduction. The Broadway production made an instant star of its leading actress, Nina Arianda, who won the Tony Award for Best Actress in 2012. The play also received nominations for the Drama League Award for Distinguished Production of a Play, and the Tony Award for Best Play.

"Vanda and Thomas are engaged in a game of power - the power between men and women as well as the dynamic between actor/director. The play within a play then gives us a very sexy glimpse at the inner workings of the audition room along with how men and women hold power over one another," said Tea Alagić.

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Critics hailed *Venus in Fur* as “Best of the Year” in *The New York Times*, the Associated Press, *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsday*, *The New Yorker*, *New York Magazine*, and *Time Out New York*. It was called “Seriously smart and very funny” – *The New York Times*, “Wildly intelligent” – *The New Yorker*, and “Deliciously witty and darkly sexy... a brilliant balancing act of erotic tension and comic release” – *Time Out NY*.

Venus in Fur opened Off-Broadway at the Classic Stage Company on January 13, 2010. The play was originally set to close on February 21, 2010 and was extended to March 7, 2010. The cast featured Nina Arianda and Wes Bentley with direction by Walter Bobbie. The play, produced by the Manhattan Theatre Club, opened on Broadway at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre with previews beginning October 13, 2011 and its official opening on November 8, 2011. Nina Arianda reprised her role as Vanda and Hugh Dancy replaced Wes Bentley, with Walter Bobbie directing. The production ended its limited engagement at the Friedman on December 18 and resumed performances at the Lyceum Theatre on February 7, 2012 in a limited engagement through June 17, 2012.

“I’m very excited about staging *Venus in Fur* at Asolo Rep. It’s smart, fresh, youthful, provocative, and sure to thrill audiences in Sarasota,” said Michael Donald Edwards, Producing Artistic Director for Asolo Repertory Theatre. “The relationship between the play’s two characters crackles with tension, as ideas about sexual, psychological, emotional, and political dynamics are explored in a powerful and compelling way.”

Venus in Fur contains mature language and strong sexual themes. It is recommended for audiences ages 17 and over.

About the Cast

New York-based **Sarah Nealis** makes her Asolo Rep debut as **Vanda** in *Venus in Fur*. Other regional work appearances include *The Three Musketeers* and *Heartbreak House* at The Denver Center, the world premiere of *Emma* at Cleveland Play House and *The 39 Steps* at Cleveland Play House, Indiana Repertory Theatre, and Syracuse Stage (all directed by Peter Amster); the world premiere of Theresa Rebeck’s *What We’re Up Against* at magic Theater, Huntington Theater, Actors Theatre of Louisville, California Shakespeare Theatre, San Jose Rep, Aurora Theatre Company, Lake Tahoe Shakespeare, Napa Valley Rep, Center Repertory Theatre, and Word for Word.

Scott Kerns returns to Sarasota for a second season as **Thomas** in *Venus in Fur*. Audiences may remember Scott’s standout performance as Liron in *The Innocents*.

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Scott's Off-Broadway credits include *Macbeth*, Epic Theatre Ensemble; *The Shaughraun*, Irish Rep; *Loaded*, Theater Row; and *Heart of the City*, Urban Stages. Scott has also performed at regional theatres around the country, including Folger Theatre, The Studio Theatre, The Kennedy Center, Everyman Theatre, and Two River Theater.

About the Director

Tea Alagić is an internationally acclaimed multilingual theater director and artist. An established New York director with acclaimed Off-Broadway, regional and international productions, she holds a BFA in acting from Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic, and an MFA in directing from the Yale School of Drama where she received the Julian Milton Kaufman Prize in Directing. Recent productions include *Jackie* by Elfriede Jelinek at Women's Project, City Center Stage II; *A Light Design* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins at the Baryshnikov Art Center, and *Petty Harbour* by Martyna Majok at the Yale Carlotta Festival.

Tea has also directed the world premiere of *The Brothers Size* by Tarell McCraney at The Public Theater, NYC, and later productions at The Studio Theatre in Washington, DC, and The Abbey Theatre in Dublin. Her original devised work includes *The Filament Cycle*, which performed at La Mama ETC, NYC, the 4+4 Festival in Prague, BAC London, Philadelphia, Colorado, Denver, and Potsdam; and *Zero Hour*, about the Balkan War. Other directing work from this period includes *Men Have Called Me Mad*, *One Day in Moscow*, *Cerebral Events* and *Sam Perspective*. Formerly she was the Associate Artistic Director of the Ensemble Company for the Performing Arts in New Haven, where she directed *Woyzek* by George Buchner, *Self-Accusation* by Peter Handke, *Preparadise Sorry Now* by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *Baal* by Bertolt Brecht and *Zero Hour*.

About the Author

David Ives is known for his one-act comedies *All in the Timing* and *Time Flies*. *All in the Timing* won the Outer Critics Circle Playwriting Award and in the 1995-96 season was the most performed play in the country after Shakespeare productions. His full-length plays include *The School For Lies* (adapted from Molière's *The Misanthrope*); *The Heir Apparent* (an adaptation of Jean François Regnard's comedy that was an audience and critical hit at the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, D.C. this past fall); *New Jerusalem: The Interrogation of Baruch de Spinoza*, which won the prestigious Hull-Warriner Award; *Is He Dead?* (adapted from Mark Twain); *White Christmas*; *Polish Joke*; and *Ancient History*.

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David Ives is the author of three young-adult novels: *Monsieur Eek*, *Scrib*, and *Voss*, and he has adapted 32 American musicals for New York City's beloved Encores! series. A graduate of the Yale School of Drama and a former Guggenheim Fellow in playwriting, David lives in New York City.

TICKETS

Ticket prices for *Venus in Fur* in the Historic Asolo Theater range from \$15 to \$25 for previews and \$25 to \$40 for regular performances. Tickets can be purchased at the Box Office in person or by calling 800.361.8388 or 941.351.8000 or online at www.asolorep.org. The Asolo Repertory Theatre and Box Office are located in The FSU Performing Arts Center adjacent to the Ringling Museum of Art.

Asolo Repertory Theatre Spring 2013 Box Office Hours:

Monday: 10a.m.-4p.m.
Tues.-Sat.: 10a.m.-8p.m.
Sunday: 10a.m.-2p.m.

SCHEDULED PERFORMANCES

April 3, 8 p.m. - Preview #1	April 17, 2 p.m.
April 4, 8 p.m. - Preview #2	April 17, 8 p.m.
April 5, 8 p.m. - Opening Night	April 18, 2 p.m.
April 6, 8 p.m.	April 19, 8 p.m.
April 7, 2 p.m.	April 20, 8 p.m.
April 9, 7:30 p.m.	April 21, 2 p.m.
April 10, 2 p.m.	April 23, 7:30 p.m.
April 10, 8 p.m.	April 24, 2 p.m.
April 11, 8 p.m.	April 24, 8 p.m.
April 12, 8 p.m.	April 25, 8 p.m.
April 13, 8 p.m.	April 26, 8 p.m.
April 14, 2 p.m. - Meet the Actors	April 27, 8 p.m.
April 16, 7:30p.m.	April 28, 2 p.m. - Closing Day

SPONSORS

Asolo Repertory Theatre is able to bring *Venus in Fur* to the stage because of the generosity of our corporate sponsors and individual supporters. Corporate sponsors for *Venus in Fur* are Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Treviso, Mezzacorona Wine, 92.1 THE COAST and SRQ Media. 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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