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ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE

FLORIDA'S PREMIER PROFESSIONAL THEATRE • SARASOTA

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Asolo Repertory Theatre presents *Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl*

(SARASOTA, Fla.)- Before there was a Lucy or Ethel, Gracie Allen or Imogene Coca, Fanny Brice was the female comic superstar. ***Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl*** will be open May 23, 2012 and run until June 17, 2012. Previews begin May 20. ***Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl*** is a reworking of Maltz Jupiter Theatre's 2009 hit production *Fanny Brice: The Real Funny Girl*. Writer and Director David H. Bell modified the script and is bringing Asolo Rep the most inspiring version yet. *TCPalm* raved, "Marya Grandy may not be the real Fanny Brice...but she just might be a new version of Ethel Merman. That's with a little Patti LuPone and the emotional singing delivery of a Judy Garland tossed in for good measure". WJTW FM said "what really brought the audience to its feet for a standing ovation however was the finale...it doesn't get any better than that."

Born Fania Borach on the Lower East Side of New York City in 1891, Brice began her career on stage with a burlesque troupe at the age of 17. Two years later she was headlining for the Ziegfeld Follies, and by 1921 she released her signature song, "My Man." Brice became one of the biggest comedic stars to grace the stage, yet her personal life wasn't as successful, with heartache and betrayal followed her at every step and her three marriages all ending in divorce. During her tumultuous marriage to husband #3 Billy Rose, Brice launched her own weekly radio show and introduced the world to her newest character, Baby Snooks. For almost 15 years Brice entertained listeners with her impersonation of the mischievous toddler until she passed away in 1951 at the age of 59.

Recreating the spirit of ballyhoo, flim-flam and artistic genius of the early Broadway era, this new musical showcases Fanny Brice at her best and worst: creating laughs for her adoring public and singing the songs that made her an American icon while also working tirelessly to keep her personal relationships from disintegrating. Known for her witty banter, Brice was quoted once saying, "Listen, kid! I've done everything in the theatre except marry a property man. I've been a soubrette in burlesque and I've accompanied stereopticon slides. I've acted for Belasco and I've laid 'em out in the rows at the Palace. I've doubled as an alligator, I've worked for the Shuberts, and I've been joined to Billy Rose in the holy bonds. I've painted the house boards and I've sold tickets and I've been fired by George M. Cohan. I've played in London before the king and in Oil City before miners with lanterns in their caps."¹

Playwright and director Bell said, "Fanny Brice is a type of American icon that fascinates me - A 'super nova' on stage - with the ability to be both a hysterical low-comedienne and a moving torch singer, and often do both in the same

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¹ Goldman, Herbert G., *Fanny Brice: The Original Funny Girl*. New York: Oxford UP, 1992. Print.

show. She was an elegant, articulate and witty woman off stage who turned herself into an awkward, gangly Yiddish stereotype on stage for laughs-- she would do anything that she needed to do to get those laughs - and yet personally her life was in shambles. She made every wrong choice imaginable in the name of love. That distance between her comic public persona - and her struggle with unhappiness, loneliness and tragedy is the stuff of drama. I have grown to love her, and I hope others learn to love her too.”

Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl

Written and directed by David H. Bell

May 23- June 17 in the Harold E. and Esther M. Mertz Theatre

Previews are Sunday, May 20 at 7:30 p.m. and Tuesday, May 22 at 7:30 p.m.

Creative Team:

David H. Bell	Director
Katie Spelman	Choreographer
Dan Green	Music Director
Brian Sidney Bembridge	Set Design
Virgil C. Johnson	Costume Design
Jesse Klug	Lighting Design
Matthew Parker	Sound Design
Aaron Rhyne	Projection Design
Ian Weinberger	Conductor/Piano
Kelly A. Borgia*	Production Stage Manager
Deb Styer*	Assistant Stage Manager
Ann E. Stenehjem	Stage Management Intern
Lauryn E. Sasso	Resident Dramaturg

Cast (in order of appearance):

Marya Grandy*	Fanny Brice
Stef Tovar*	Billy Rose, Irving Berlin, and others
Lance Baker*	Harold Underhill, Nick Arnstein, and others
Norm Boucher*	Florenz Ziegfeld and others

Musicians (in alphabetical order):

Teri Booth	Reed Doubler
John Miller	Bass Player
Thomas Suta	Drummer

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

***Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl* select bios:**

DAVID H. BELL FIRST SEASON (Playwright, Director, *Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl*) This is David's first time at Asolo Rep, but not his first time in Florida, having been nominated for five Carbonell Awards for *The Good War* at Maltz Jupiter Theatre, as well as the Matador and Jimmy Buffet/Herman Wouk musical *Don't Stop the Carnival*, both at the Coconut Grove Playhouse. David has been nominated for 43 of Chicago's Joseph Jefferson Awards (winning 11) for his work at the Marriott Theatre, Drury Lane Oakbrook, and the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre.

He has won LA's Drama-logic Award, DC's Helen Hayes Award, and five After Dark Awards (Chicago). His musical *Hot Mikado* has been performed all over the world and was nominated for London's Laurence Olivier Award. He has served as Artistic Director of Ford's Theatre in Washington, DC, and Associate Artistic Director for Atlanta's The Alliance Theatre. He currently heads the Music Theatre Program at Northwestern University and is the Artistic Director of the American Music Theatre Project.

LANCE BAKER* FIRST SEASON (Harold Underhill, Nick Arnstein, and others, *Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl*) is making his Asolo Rep debut. He has been a Chicago actor for two decades and has received Joseph Jefferson nominations for his work in *Mauritius, Travesties, Lobby Hero, Speed-the-Plow, Dealer's Choice, This is Our Youth*, the world premiere of Rebecca Gilman's *Dollhouse*, and *Thom Pain (based on nothing)* for which he split the Best Solo Performance award with hip-hop artist Matt Sax. He is an ensemble member of A Red Orchid Theatre, where he recently performed in the Chicago premiere of Mike Daisey's *The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs*. www.lancebakeractor.com

NORM BOUCHER* FIRST SEASON (Florenz Ziegfeld and others, *Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl*) is thrilled to join the cast of *Fanny Brice*. He has played Nathan Detroit, Max Bialystock, and Oscar Madison. He understudied Daniel in the world premiere of *Chinglish* at the Goodman, and played Columbo in *Columbo Takes The Rap* (written by Columbo's co-creator William Link). He has been in *The Comedy of Errors, Wait Until Dark, West Side Story, Urinetown*, and *Dirty Blonde*. He was in the CBS series *Early Edition*, and numerous TV and radio ads, including two Super Bowl commercials. Norm would like to thank his wife and best friend Nancy Jane Nelson.

MARYA GRANDY* FIRST SEASON (*Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl*) originated the role at Maltz Jupiter Theatre. Broadway/New York credits: *Les Misérables* (2006 Revival), *Damn Yankees*, *Bells Are Ringing* (City Center Encores!), *The Great American Trailer Park Musical* (Drama Desk Nomination), and *The Water Coolers* (co-author). Regional credits: *Follies, Take Flight, Gypsy, Beehive, Smokey Joe's Café, The Honky Tonk Angels, Working*, and *The Water Coolers* (Joseph Jefferson Nomination). Television/film credits: *Rescue Me, Conviction, Law & Order, Law & Order: SVU, Denis Leary's Merry F***ing Christmas*, and *Love Streams*. Recordings include *The Great American Trailer Park Musical, Bodies and Souls*, and *Superwoman*, by her own band, Five Floor Monica.

STEF TOVAR* FIRST SEASON (Billy Rose, Irving Berlin, and others, *Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl*) Recent Chicago credits include Jeffrey Skilling in *Enron* (TimeLine Theatre) and David O. Selznick in *Moonlight and Magnolias* (Fox Valley Rep). After six years in Los Angeles, Stef returned to Chicago, won a Joseph Jefferson Award in 1997, and founded Route 66 Theatre Company where credits include Rob in *High Fidelity*, Jack in *On an Average Day* (LA and Chicago), and Noah in the world premiere of *A Twist of Water*, opening in New York this fall. He can be seen on the TV show *Boss* with Kelsey Grammer and in the film *Contagion* with Matt Damon. Love to KWP.

Show sponsors for *Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl* include Grapevine Communications, INC., *Living on the Suncoast*, SNN Local News 6 and Café L' Europe. Tickets for *Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl* are available through the Asolo Repertory Theatre box office by calling 941-351-8000 or toll-free, 800-361-8388. Tickets are also available online at www.asolorep.org.

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Now in its 53rd season, Asolo Repertory Theatre is widely recognized as one of the premier professional theatres in the Southeastern United States. One of the few true repertory companies in the nation, Asolo Rep presents a diverse repertoire of newly commissioned plays, bold reinterpretations of contemporary and classical works, and provocative new musical theatre experiences each season. With its ambitious theatrical offerings and groundbreaking education, outreach and audience development programming, Asolo Rep is more vibrant and its work more relevant than ever before. A theatre district in and of itself, Asolo Rep exists to present a diverse mix of theatrical work of the highest artistic standards and enthusiastically engage its audiences, continually ensuring its lasting legacy for future generations.