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**THE GREAT AMERICAN MUSICAL IS DOCKED AT ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE**

**ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE PRESENTS *SHOW BOAT***

**Director Rob Ruggiero Steers the First Modern American Musical**

**This Timeless, Heartwarming Musical Launches Asolo Rep's 2013-2014 Season**

**and the Second Year of the American Character Project**

**(SARASOTA, October 16, 2013)** — Asolo Repertory Theatre is proud to open its 2013-2014 season with ***SHOW BOAT***, based on the novel by Edna Ferber, music by Jerome Kern and book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II. This winner of the 1994 Tony Award for best revival features a score of timeless classics, including "Ol' Man River," "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man" and "Make Believe." Previews will be held **November 12 – 14** and the show will run from **November 15 – December 29**. Opening night will be held on **Friday, November 15 at 8pm**.

***SHOW BOAT*** will take audiences aboard Captain Andy Hawks' *Cotton Blossom*, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century riverboat that travels from town to town on the Mississippi River with a troupe of performers. The musical chronicles these performers' lives during a crucially transformative period in U.S. history, spanning 1887 to 1927, from the dawn of the Progressive Era to the eve of the Great Depression. ***SHOW BOAT*** explores many poignant topics, including racial diversity in marriage and economic hardships, that still challenge the world today.

"The love of family and family in the larger sense – the family of man – that's what the show is about. That's what Oscar Hammerstein is about," said Hal Prince, director of the 1994 ***SHOW BOAT*** Broadway revival.

The musical launches the second year of Asolo Rep's five-year American Character Project, which examines all of the historical, cultural and political intricacies that make this country unique. The second year of the Project will concentrate on family, in both its most traditional and unconventional of forms. In ***SHOW BOAT***, the tight-knit troupe of performers on board the *Cotton Blossom* discovers that family is much more than just blood relations. From its 1927 Broadway premiere to its 1994 revival, the musical has never been more pertinent than it is today.

"***SHOW BOAT*** encompasses all that is extraordinary, complex and dynamic about the American family and is the perfect introduction to Asolo Rep's thrilling 2013-2014 season and the second year of the American Character Project. Ever since its Broadway premiere in 1927 completely revolutionized the

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form of the American musical, the show's themes, characters and music have resonated deeply with audiences from all walks of life. It is the first modern American musical, and we are delighted to continue its dazzling, timeless voyage here in Sarasota," said Michael Donald Edwards, Producing Artistic Director of Asolo Repertory Theatre.

Eight musicians will bring **SHOW BOAT's** magnetic score, orchestrated by Dan DeLange, to life. The reimagined version of this masterpiece was mounted in 2011 at Goodspeed Musicals in East Haddam, Connecticut, directed by Rob Ruggiero and choreographed by Noah Racey (**Noah Racey's Pulse**, 2013). Ruggiero and Racey will also lead Asolo Rep's production, along with musical director Wade Russo.

"I am thrilled to be directing my own adaption of **SHOW BOAT** for Asolo Rep. Although I adapted and directed the musical at Goodspeed two years ago, this will be almost a completely new company of actors making this a fresh and new production especially for Sarasota. It's a show that is very near to my heart – an intimate **SHOW BOAT** that focuses in on the story of a show-business family. I am sure Asolo Rep audiences will be entertained and moved by this extraordinary musical," said Rob Ruggiero, director of **SHOW BOAT**.

### **SPECIAL PUBLIC PROGRAMMING FOR SHOW BOAT**

#### **Inside Asolo Rep**

**Wednesday, October 30 at 11am**

This special discussion featuring director Rob Ruggiero and music director Wade Russo will provide patrons with a behind-the-scenes look at the making of **SHOW BOAT**. Panel discussions are \$5 for the general public and free for donors and Asolo Rep Guild members. Purchase an Inside Asolo Rep Pass for \$15 to attend all four 2013-2014 Inside Asolo Rep events.

#### **"Carefully Taught" Cabaret**

**Sunday, November 24, 2013 at 7pm**

This evening will explore Oscar Hammerstein II's songs, and social and political beliefs. Get to know the music and the man during this intimate cabaret performance in the Cook Theatre. Tickets are available at the box office.

#### **Family Day – SHOW BOAT**

**Saturday, November 30, 2013 at 1pm; performance at 2pm**

Bring the entire family on board for this celebration of American family! **SHOW BOAT** Family Day will feature pre-show activities, special family ticket packages for the 2pm matinee, and a post-show discussion with members of the cast. Families can purchase four tickets for \$50.00 – provided that two

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members of the group are under age 18. With the purchase of a family pack, additional tickets for patrons age 18 and younger can be purchased for \$10 each.

**TICKETS**

Tickets for **SHOW BOAT** and the entire 2013-2014 Asolo Repertory Theatre season are on sale now. To purchase tickets, call 941.351.8000 or 800.361.8388, visit [www.asolorep.org](http://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. The box office is currently open Monday – Friday, 10am – 5pm. Box office hours in season, beginning October 29, are Monday 10am – 4pm, Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 7pm, and Sunday 10am – 1pm. The box office closes at 4pm 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.

**CAST (In Order of Appearance)**

Joel Blum\* ..... Captain Andy Hawks  
Elisa Van Duyne\* ..... Ellie May Chipley  
Denis Lambert\* ..... Frank Schultz  
Dorothy Stanley\* ..... Parthy Ann Hawks  
Daniella Dalli\* ..... Julie LaVerne  
David Sattler\* ..... Steve Baker/Ensemble  
Dereck Seay ..... Pete Gavin/Jeb/Ensemble  
E. Faye Butler\* ..... Queenie  
Bruce Sabath\* ..... Windy/Ensemble  
Ben Davis\* ..... Gaylord Ravenal  
Dan Kennett ..... Sheriff Ike Vallon/Ensemble  
Marissa McGowan\* ..... Magnolia Hawks  
Michael James Leslie\* ..... Joe  
Griffeth Whitehurst ..... Willy/Backwoodsman/Ensemble  
Lilly Mae Stewart ..... Young Kim  
Katie Weidmaier ..... Governess/Town Girl 2/Lottie/Ensemble  
Denise Lute\* ..... Mrs. O'Brien/Mother Superior/Old lady/Ensemble  
Jeff M. Smith ..... Jake/Ensemble  
Nicholas Ward\* ..... Charlie/Ensemble

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Brigid Kegel.....Town Girl 3/Nun 2/Dottie/Ensemble  
Brittany Proia\* .....Adult Kim/Town Girl 1/Nun/Ensemble  
Daniel Belnavis.....Ensemble  
Troy Jackson.....Ensemble  
Candace Culcleasure.....Ensemble  
Johnathan Shepherd.....Ensemble

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

### **SELECTED ARTISTIC BIOGRAPHIES (in alphabetical order)**

**JOEL BLUM\* (Captain Andy Hawks)** played Frank in Hal Prince's 1994 Broadway revival of **SHOW BOAT** and in London and received a Tony nomination for his performance. Other Broadway credits: *42<sup>nd</sup> Street*, *The Debbie Reynolds Show*, *Steel Pier* (Tony nomination), *A Christmas Carol*, *The Music Man*, among others. He has also won a Barrymore Award in *The Tin Pan Alley Rag*, a Helen Hayes nomination for *Meet John Doe*, a Drama Desk nomination for *Golf: The Musical*, and a BroadwayWorld Award for *Billy Elliot*. On television Joel has appeared in *Law & Order*, *The Sopranos*, *Ed*, *The Tonight Show*, *Bob Hope Specials*, *Liberace Special*, and *The Sonny & Cher Show*.

**BEN DAVIS\* (Gaylord Ravenal)** recently appeared as Billy in *Anna Nicole, the opera* (BAM, Lincoln Center) and Brom Broeck in *Knickerbocker Holiday*. Broadway credits include Mr. Lindquist, u/s Count Carl-Magnus Malcolm, and Fredrik in *A Little Night Music*, Javert and Enjolras in *Les Misérables*, Trevor Graydon in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, Marcello in Baz Luhrmann's *La Bohème* (2003 Tony Honor). Tour: Galahad in *Spamalot*. Regional: Emile de Becque in *South Pacific* (The Muny), Captain von Trapp in *The Sound of Music* (Paper Mill Playhouse), Antipholus of Ephesus in *Boys From Syracuse* (DC Shakespeare), and Gaylord Ravenal in **SHOW BOAT** (Goodspeed Musicals). Film/TV: Mozart's *The Magic Flute* directed by Kenneth Branagh, *30Rock*, and *Numb3rs*.

**MICHAEL JAMES LESLIE\* (Joe)** is a Cornell Law School graduate who made his theatrical debut in the first Broadway revival of *Hair*. He was the last Lion in the original Broadway production of *The Wiz*, repeating that role on tour. Michael originated the role of The Voice of the Plant in *Little Shop of Horrors* in Los Angeles, London (Olivier Award for Best Musical), and the recent Broadway production and National Tour. He was nominated for Best Supporting Actor by the Denver Post Ovation Awards in 2005 and in 2010 for Best Featured Actor in a Musical or Revue for *Once on This Island*.

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**MARISSA MCGOWAN\* (Magnolia)** recently originated the role of Stella Purdy in the Marvin Hamlisch/Rupert Holmes musical *The Nutty Professor* directed by Jerry Lewis. Broadway credits include *A Little Night Music* revival with Catherine Zeta Jones and Angela Lansbury (Original Cast Recording), *Bonnie & Clyde* (Original Cast Recording) *Les Misérables* (Revival and National Tour) where she performed the roles of Eponine and Cosette. Favorite regional roles include Maria in *The Sound of Music*, Guinevere in *Camelot*, Philia in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and Johanna in *Sweeney Todd*. Television: *Major Crimes* (TNT). She received her BFA from Syracuse University.

**NOAH RACEY (Choreographer)** Last seen at Asolo Rep as lead/creator of *Noah Racey's Pulse*. Noah debuted on Broadway in the 2001 Follies revival of *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (Associate Choreographer), *Never Gonna Dance*, and *Curtains*. Choreographer of Town Hall's *Broadway By the Year* series, *Brooklyn to Hollywood*, *All Singin'*, *All Dancin'*. Musical premieres: *It Shoulda Been You* (George Street Playhouse), *Turn of the Century* (Goodman Theatre). Associate Director for *High School Musical* and *High School Musical 2*. Assistant Director/Choreographer: *Shenandoah* (Ford's Theatre). Choreographer of 2008-09 *White Christmas* national tour, *Cinderella* and *Guys and Dolls* at Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre, **SHOW BOAT** and *Annie Get Your Gun* at Goodspeed Musicals (Connecticut Critics Circle Outstanding Choreography Awards). Boston Conservatory graduate.

**ROB RUGGIERO (Director of SHOW BOAT)** directed *Ella* at Asolo Rep in 2007. On Broadway Rob directed *Looped* (starring Valerie Harper), and *High* (starring Kathleen Turner). Off-Broadway he directed *All Under Heaven* (also starring Ms. Harper), as well as conceiving and directing the original musical revue *Make Me a Song: The Music of William Finn* (Drama Desk/Outer Critics Circle nominations). Rob's work has been seen at major regional theaters around the country, including Actors Theatre of Louisville, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Cleveland Play House, Goodspeed Musicals, The Guthrie Theater, Hartford Stage, The Muny, The Pittsburgh Public Theater, and The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, among others. Rob recently was named Producing Artistic Director of TheaterWorks where he has directed almost 50 shows.

## **SPONSORS**

Asolo Rep is able to present **SHOW BOAT** because of the generosity of its sponsors. Corporate sponsors for **SHOW BOAT** are Sarasota Magazine, Herald-Tribune Media Group, SNN Local News, Hyatt Place, and Michael's on East. 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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