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**GUNPLAY, SEX, LIES, DECEIT, DOUBLE-CROSSES, LAUGHTER!**

**THE GAME'S AFOOT OPENS AT ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE**

**(SARASOTA, March 12, 2013)** —Asolo Repertory Theatre is thrilled to present *The Game's Afoot*, a madcap murder-mystery brimming with hijinks and hilarity penned by the master of American farce, Ken Ludwig. Directed by Greg Leaming, this production is only the second time the play will be produced by a leading regional professional theatre. *The Game's Afoot* opens in the Mertz Theatre on Friday, March 29 with an 8 p.m. curtain and runs through May 12, 2013. Opening night will be preceded by two preview performances March 27 and 28 at 8 p.m. Tickets are available now at the Asolo Rep Box Office by calling 941.351.8000 or online at [www.asolorep.org](http://www.asolorep.org).

Ludwig's witty, rapier-sharp whodunit is centered around William Gillette, the accomplished playwright and actor that wrote *Sherlock Holmes-- A Drama in Four Acts* in collaboration with the famous sleuth's creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Gillette performed the title role more than 13,000 times in New York and London over the span of three decades. *The New York Times* called Gillette "the most successful of all American actors" in its obituary, with estimates pegging Gillette's fortune in the range of three to four million dollars, an amazing sum for an artist living in these times.

### **The Plot Thickens**

*The Game's Afoot* begins with William Gillette recovering from a bullet wound to his arm suffered during a performance of *Sherlock Holmes*. Rather than spend his Christmas holidays at home with only his mother by his side to nurse him, he invites his co-stars and a loathsome gossip columnist to his Art Deco estate (or castle, really) to sip eggnog and help solve the mystery of who tried to do him in.

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## ***The Game's Afoot***

### **Page two of six**

Instead, the castle becomes the setting for murder, and Gillette must summon Sherlock Holmes' powers of deduction to uncover the secrets his guests are hiding and catch the real killer. Gillette's guests include the flamboyant Felix and Madge Geisel, a pair of married thespians; Aggie Wheeler and Simon Bright, a striking ingénue and her new husband; and Daria Chase, the poison pen writer they all despise. Gillette's doting mother Martha and her dog Portia stir the action, and a frumpy female police officer, Inspector Goring, appears to help sort things out.

*The Game's Afoot* is a classic cloak'n'dagger tale gorgeously staged as farce in splendid Asolo Rep style. Gillette and his fashionable friends are adorned in glamorous, over-the-top period garb, the kind that only people of the theatre would dare wear off stage. Gillette's opulent, yet peculiar castle is the other star of this theatrical game of Clue, with its rotating walls, secret passageways, hidden gadgets, and arsenal of medieval weaponry. The lavish set is decorated in an eclectic mix of Art Deco and medieval styles -- an interior design mash-up well matched to the personality of the manse's mercurial master.

"My two favorite genres of writing are farce and murder mysteries. When we found out that Ken Ludwig had written a play that combined both forms, we were extremely excited. We knew the play would be a gem: a perfect piece of playwriting, a brilliantly funny farce and a very exciting murder mystery! And we weren't mistaken --- *The Game's Afoot* is all that and so much more," said Greg Leaming.

Inextricably identified with portraying Holmes, Orson Welles once said during a broadcast of *The Mercury Theater on the Air*, "It is too little to say that William Gillette resembled Sherlock Holmes; Sherlock Holmes looks exactly like William Gillette... sounds like him, too." With royalties earned from *Sherlock Holmes* and other plays he wrote during his lifetime, the notoriously eccentric Gillette built a replica of a medieval castle on the banks of the Connecticut River in East Haddam, Conn. There he frequently hosted the casts of his theatrical endeavors and entertained them by showing off his latest high-tech toys. An extraordinary structure that took 20 stonemasons more than seven years to build, the castle still stands today as one of Connecticut's most popular tourist attractions.

"We are so pleased to have *The Game's Afoot* as part of our inaugural American Character Project season," said Michael Donald Edward, Producing Artistic Director for Asolo Rep. "Not only is the play exceptionally well-written by a highly successful American playwright, but the irony of a beloved character so closely identified with British culture like Sherlock Holmes being portrayed onstage by William Gillette, a man born in Hartford, Connecticut, is so very American."

## ***The Game's Afoot***

### **Page three of six**

Ludwig was inspired to write *The Game's Afoot* while on an extended vacation with his family in London. When he asked his children about their favorite part of their journey, which included visits to many of the historic landmarks throughout the city, they replied it was the performance of Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap* at St. Martin's Theatre. Astonished by this revelation and encouraged by their enthusiasm, Ludwig decided to write his own comedic caper.

"I have staked my life as a writer on the proposition that the arts make a difference in how we see the world and how we conduct our lives --- how we view charity to our neighbors and justice in our communities. One of my goals as an American playwright is to translate those aspirations to the American experience," said Ken Ludwig. "I chose to write a play about William Gillette in part because he is iconically American. And by taking the initiative to write to Conan Doyle and obtain the rights to adapt the Holmes stories to the stage, Gillette made an indelible mark on the American theatre landscape. In a way, Gillette provides us with a unique, prismatic view of American theatre at the beginning of the twentieth century, and as such, I thought he could form an exciting nucleus for a tale of American mystery and adventure."

### **Cast and Creative Team**

Man of mystery William Gillette is portrayed by **Bryan Torfeh**, a guest artist now in his sixth season with Asolo Rep. Audiences may remember Torfeh for his turns as Karpathy in last season's *My Fair Lady*, Sidney in *Deathtrap*, Bernard in *Boeing Boeing* and Salieri in *Amadeus*. Gillette's best friend Felix Geisel (and Holmes' onstage nemesis, Professor Moriarity) is played by **Eric Hissom**, a guest artist and MFA graduate of the FSU/Asolo Conservatory now in his third season with the company. Interestingly, Hissom played the same role in the world premiere of *The Game's Afoot* at Cleveland Play House in 2011. Hissom can also be seen as Boris Kohlenkhov in this season's runaway hit *You Can't Take It With You* and was recently featured in the role of Ricky Roma in Asolo Rep's powerhouse production of *Glengarry Glen Ross*. **Elizabeth King-Hall**, the lovely Heidi Holland in *The Heidi Chronicles*, is Madge Geisel, Felix's beautiful wife. King-Hall is based in New York City and is in her first season as a guest artist with Asolo Rep. **Gail Rastorfer**, a guest artist from Chicago in her first season, plays the role of Daria Chase, the gossip columnist. Rastorfer is also performing this season as Susan Johnston in *The Heidi Chronicles* and Mrs. Kirby in *You Can't Take It With You*. **Peggy Roeder**, Penny Sycamore in *You Can't Take It With You*, plays another beloved matriarch in *The Game's Afoot*, William's mother Martha Gillette, in her third season with Asolo Rep. Company veteran **Carolyn Michel** (now in her 22 season) takes on the role of the inquisitive Inspector Goring.

## ***The Game's Afoot***

### **Page four of six**

Rounding out the cast are **Brittany Proia** as lovely Aggie Wheeler and **Joseph McGranaghan** as Simon Bright; both are third-year MFA students with The FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training who can also be seen in *You Can't Take It With You*.

**Greg Leaming** is in his eighth season directing for Asolo Rep; he is also the Director of The FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training and Associate Artistic Director of Asolo Repertory Theatre. Past works for Asolo Rep include *God of Carnage*, *Anything to Declare?*, *Boeing Boeing*, *Hearts*, *The Imaginary Invalid*, *The Play's The Thing*, and the world premiere of Jason Wells' *Men of Tortuga*. Leaming is the curator of Asolo Rep's *Unplugged* new play series. Leaming has devoted much time to developing new plays with organizations including New Dramatists, New York Theatre Workshop, New York Stage and Film, Cape Cod Theatre Project, and Theatre of the First Amendment.

Leaming is supported in this production by a strong team of designers with an impressive list of national credits. New York-based **Eduardo Sicangco** created the dazzling costumes for *The Game's Afoot*, and previously did the same for *The Imaginary Invalid* and *Boeing Boeing* at Asolo Rep. In addition, he has designed sets and costumes for *Don Giovanni* and *Ariadne Auf Naxos* at Tanglewood, and *Cinderella* and *Ramona Quimby* for Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis. **Judy Gailen** designed the fabulously detailed set for *The Game's Afoot*. Prior Asolo Rep credits include sets and costumes for *God of Carnage* and *Hearts*, and sets for *Boeing Boeing* and *The Imaginary Invalid*. Other major credits include *Memory House* (Merrimack Rep), *Two Jews Walked into a War* (Geva Theatre), and *Don Giovanni* (Music Academy of the West). **Mary Louise Geiger**, a graduate of the Yale School of Drama and a faculty member at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, designed the lighting for *The Game's Afoot*. The sound for the show is supplied by designer **Fabian Obispo**, a veteran of Off-Broadway and regional theatre productions, including *Hamlet*, *Prince of Cuba*; *La Bete*, *The Life of Galileo*, *The Imaginary Invalid*, and *Pride and Prejudice* for Asolo Rep. **Patricia Delorey** and **Michelle Hart**, both resident artists, are responsible for dialect coaching and hair/wig and make-up design, respectively.

## **The Author**

**Ken Ludwig** is an internationally acclaimed playwright whose work has been performed in at least 30 countries in over 20 languages. He has had six shows on Broadway and six in the West End. He has won two Laurence Olivier Awards, three Tony Award nominations, two Helen Hayes Awards, the Edgar Award, the SETC Distinguished Career Award, and the Edwin Forrest Award for Services to the Theatre. His plays have been commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Bristol Old Vic.

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## ***The Game's Afoot***

### **Page five of six**

His best known plays include *Lend Me A Tenor*, *Crazy For You*, *Moon Over Buffalo*, *Leading Ladies*, *Twentieth Century*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *The Game's Afoot*, *The Fox on the Fairway*, *Midsummer/Jersey*, *The Three Musketeers*, *Treasure Island* and *The Beaux' Stratagem*. His plays have starred Alec Baldwin, Carol Burnett, Lynn Redgrave, Mickey Rooney, Hal Holbrook, Dixie Carter, Tony Shalhoub, Joan Collins, and Kristin Bell. His book, *How To Teach Your Children Shakespeare*, will be published in June 2013 by Crown Publishing. He studied music at Harvard with Leonard Bernstein and theatre history at Cambridge University in England. For more information, please visit [www.kenludwig.com](http://www.kenludwig.com)

### **CAST**

#### **in order of appearance**

BRYAN TORFEH*	William Gillette
ERIC HISSOM*	Felix Geisel
BRITTANY PROIA+	Aggie Wheeler
ELIZABETH KING-HALL*	Madge Geisel
JOSEPH McGRANAGHAN	Simon Bright
PEGGY ROEDER*	Martha Gillette
GAIL RASTORFER*	Daria Chase
CAROLYN MICHEL*	Inspector Goring

\*members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors in the United States

+appears courtesy of Actors' Equity Association

### **TICKETS**

Ticket prices for all performances range between \$20 to \$72. Tickets can be purchased at the Asolo Repertory Theatre Box Office in person or by calling 800.361.8388 or 941.351.8000. Tickets can also be purchased online at [www.asolorep.org](http://www.asolorep.org). The Asolo Repertory Theatre and Box Office are located in the FSU Performing Arts Center adjacent to the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art at 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34243. Parking is free.

#### **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**

March 27, 8 p.m. - Preview #1	April 24, 2 p.m.
March 28, 8 p.m. - Preview #2	April 25, 8 p.m.
March 29, 8 p.m. - Opening Night	April 27, 8 p.m.
April 2, 7:30 p.m. – Tuesday Talkback	May 1, 8 p.m.
April 3, 8 p.m.	May 2, 2 p.m.
April 5, 8 p.m.	May 7, 7:30 p.m. – Tuesday Talkback
April 6, 2 p.m.	May 8, 2 p.m.
April 11, 2 p.m.	May 8, 8 p.m.
April 13, 8 p.m.	May 9, 8 p.m.
April 14, 2 p.m. – Meet the Actors	May 10, 8 p.m.
April 17, 2 p.m.	May 11, 2 p.m.
April 18, 8 p.m.	May 11 8 p.m.
April 23, 7:30 p.m. – Tuesday Talkback	May 12, 2 p.m. - Closing

**PUBLIC PROGRAMMING FOR *THE GAME'S AFOOT***

**Inside Asolo Rep**

Wednesday, April 24, 2013/11 a.m. to 12 Noon in the Cook Theatre

Get a glimpse of what goes on behind the curtain. Tickets are \$5 (free for Guild Members and Donors).

**Meet the Actors**

April 14, 2013

Interact with the cast during a moderated talkback immediately following the 2 p.m. matinee.

**Tuesday Talkbacks**

April 2, April 23, and May 7, 2013

Join us for a moderated talkback on the mezzanine immediately following the 7:30 p.m. performance.

**SPONSORS**

Asolo Repertory Theatre is able to bring *The Game's Afoot* to the stage because of the generosity of our corporate sponsors and individual supporters. Corporate sponsors for *The Game's Afoot* are Sun Hydraulics, Longboat Key Club & Resort, Clear Channel, and *Living on the Suncoast*. 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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