



***HERO: THE MUSICAL* Opens May 2 at Asolo Rep**

"Instantly engaging and wholly accessible. Emotionally smart yet wonderfully playful. Young, funny, real and full of heart." – *Chicago Sun-Times*

"**HERO** very well may conquer the world with its transformative message of seeing what is right in front of you, meeting your particular challenges with the resources at hand, and moving on into the destiny of your tomorrow with your new-found family at your side." – *Broadwayworld.com*

"Sweetly charming... A bonafide hit." – *Centerstage Chicago*

(SARASOTA, April 7, 2014) — Asolo Rep's brand new production of **HERO: THE MUSICAL** features a dynamically fresh pop-rock score, Broadway's brightest young stars and an inspirational story of perseverance. Previews for the winner of the 2012 Jefferson Award for Best New Musical are **April 29, 30 and May 1**, opening night is **Friday, May 2 at 8pm** and the show will run through **June 1**. The musical had its world premiere in 2012 at the Marriott Theatre in Chicago and was created by the theatre's Artistic Director, Aaron Thielen. Asolo Rep's production will be directed and choreographed by David H. Bell, winner of 11 Jefferson Awards and writer/director of Asolo Rep's 2012 production of *Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl*.

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## **HERO: THE MUSICAL**

Page 2 of 7

Hailed by *ChicagoCritic.com* as a "...warm, funny and well sung new musical that, for a world premiere, is ready for life after Marriott Theatre," Asolo Rep is thrilled to continue to cultivate and develop this critically acclaimed new musical. Thielen, who also wrote the book and concept for the show, and Michael Mahler, who wrote the music and lyrics, have revamped Asolo Rep's production, expanding upon and enhancing their original smash hit.

Hero Batowski is a 28-year-old comic book artist who hasn't moved out of his childhood home. He lives vicariously through his art, suppressing his own dreams and reality. Hero's inability to let go of a painful incident from his past is his own kryptonite. When his life takes an unexpected twist, he is forced to evaluate his uncertain future and choose a new path. With a little help from his sidekicks – his wise-cracking cousins, loving dad, and his beautiful high school girlfriend who he thought he had lost forever – he slowly awakens what was there all along: his inner superhero.

"It definitely is not a comic-book musical," Thielen said. "It's really about a guy trying to find himself. That is a universal thing. But even if you're not a comics fan, you know who Superman is. You understand that duality of being yourself and embracing the super power you have – whatever it is you are gifted with."

Brian Sears (*The Book of Mormon* on Broadway) and Laurie Veldheer (*Mamma Mia!* on Broadway) lead this all-star cast. Don Forston, who originated the role of Al Batowski at the Marriott Theatre, will star as Hero's kindhearted father.

"With an utterly fresh new book and score, **HERO: THE MUSICAL** is about the most American cultural phenomenon: comics, and the people who love them," said Michael Donald Edwards, Producing Artistic Director of Asolo Rep. "It is an upbeat, hilarious, surprisingly touching musical that simply can't be missed."

"**HERO** is a contemporary story with immense heart," said Director/Choreographer David H. Bell. "It was created by a team that loves its characters, story and, above all, loves musical theatre. It explores how we can keep ourselves from our dreams by living for the expectations and approval of others. **HERO** teaches us that in love, art, and life sometimes the thing you need most is courage."

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**CAST**

(In order of appearance)

Don Forston*	Al Batowski
Brian Sears*	Hero Batowski
Ian Paul Custer*	Ted/Ensemble
Norm Boucher*	Kyle/Ensemble
Brad Weinstock*	Ensemble
Samantha Eggers*	Ensemble
Chelsea Lovett*	Ensemble
Sean Martin	Ensemble
Owen Teague	Nate
Matthew Mueller*	Kirk
Laurie Veldheer*	Jane Foster
Dara Cameron*	Susan Schmitt
Jameson Cooper*	John Timmons

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

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**SELECTED CREATIVE TEAM MEMBERS**

Director and Choreographer	David H. Bell
Book and Concept	Aaron Thielen
Music and Lyrics	Michael Mahler
Orchestrations / Arrangements	Michael Mahler
Orchestrations / Music Direction	Ryan T. Nelson
Scenic Design	Scott Davis
Costume Design	Ana Kuzmanic
Lighting Design	Jesse Klug
Sound Design	Kevin Kennedy
Projection Design	Aaron Rhyne

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## ***HERO: THE MUSICAL***

Page 4 of 7

### **SPECIAL PUBLIC PROGRAMMING**

#### **Discussion Series: Connecting Great Artists to Great Audiences**

##### **Tuesday Talkbacks**

Share an intimate discussion on the themes of the play.

- May 6, 13\*, 20 and 27, following the 7:30pm performance

\*This talkback will also feature special guest Jay Handelman of the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*

##### **Meet the Actors**

After select Sunday performances, join the cast for a special moderated talkback.

- May 18, following the 2pm matinee

##### **Pre-Show Conversations**

A half hour before select performances, speak with Asolo Rep artists and staff to gain insight into the play's development and explore its themes.

- May 15 at 7:30pm, prior to the 8pm performance

##### ***Kaleidoscope: Heroes***

Monday May 12 at 6pm

Mertz Theatre

FREE. Reservations are recommended.

Asolo Rep partners with area schools and service organizations for its award-winning performing arts program for people with disabilities – one of Asolo Rep's longest-running outreach programs. Don't miss this collaborative, celebratory performance where participants share their work with the community on the Mertz stage. (Appropriate for all ages.)

Kaleidoscope features artists from Bayshore High School, Community Haven for Adults and Children with Disabilities, Easter Seals Southwest Florida and Oak Park School.

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## **HERO: THE MUSICAL**

Page 5 of 7

They and their teaching artists have taken inspiration from this season's production of **HERO: THE MUSICAL** to create original theatre in response to the question, "What is your superpower?"

### **OUT@AsoloRep**

OUT evenings feature local LGBT organizations, a pre-show reception, a special speaker, and an evening of live theater. OUT@AsoloRep is sponsored by U.S. Trust, Visit Sarasota County and Morton's Gourmet Market.

- **HERO: THE MUSICAL** OUT@AsoloRep will be Friday, May 9, 2014

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### **SELECTED ARTIST BIOS**

(In Alphabetical Order)

**DAVID H. BELL** SECOND SEASON (Director/Choreographer) returns to Asolo Rep after directing his musical, *Fanny Brice, America's Funny Girl*. David originally directed **HERO** at Chicago's Marriott Theatre. Other Chicago work has garnered him 44 Joseph Jefferson Award nominations (winning 11 times). His musical *Hot Mikado* has played all over the World (winning numerous awards including London's Laurence Olivier Award). His work with *Matador*, and the Jimmy Buffett/ Herman Wouk musical *Don't Stop the Carnival* resulted in 5 Florida Carbonell Nominations. Upcoming: *On the Town*(Chicago), a world premiere of the Turkish best seller *The Forty Rules of Love* for Healy Theatricals, *Pericles* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre). David is currently the Donald G. Robertson Chair of Music Theatre at Northwestern University, and the Artistic Director of the American Music Theatre Program (AMTP)

**DON FORSTON\*** GUEST ARTIST, FIRST SEASON (AL BATOWSKI) makes his Asolo Rep debut with **HERO**. He originated the role of Al in the world premiere of **HERO** at the Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire. Don's most recent credits are with Chicago Shakespeare Theatre in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and the world premieres of *The Adventures of Pinocchio* as Geppetto and the Emperor in *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Don recently appeared on NBC's hit television series, *Chicago PD*, as Phil Rodiger. His film credits include, *Rookie of the Year* and *Blink*.

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## **HERO: THE MUSICAL**

Page 6 of 7

### **BRIAN SEARS\*** GUEST ARTIST, FIRST SEASON (Hero Batowski)

Broadway: *The Book of Mormon* (Original cast member), *Lend Me a Tenor* (directed by Stanley Tucci), *Finian's Rainbow*, *Grease*, *All Shook Up*. First National Tour: *All Shook Up* (Dean). Regional: *H2\$* (Finch) at Goodspeed, *Oklahoma!* (Will Parker) and *Hello Dolly!*(Barnaby) at Paper Mill Playhouse, *The Bowery Boys* (Dick) at Marriott Lincolnshire (Jeff Nomination). CCM Alum.

### **Laurie Veldheer\*** GUEST ARTIST, FIRST SEASON (Jane Foster)

Broadway: *Mamma Mia!* (Sophie), *Newsies* (Hannah/Smalls, u/s Katherine, OBC). National tours: *Hairspray*. Regional: Millie in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (Maltz Jupiter Theater [Paper Mill Playhouse]), Hannah/Smalls in *Newsies* and Brenda in *Hairspray* (Paper Mill Playhouse), Natalie in *Next to Normal* (Milwaukee Rep), *My One and Only* (Goodspeed Musicals.) BFA in musical theater from Penn State University.

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## **TICKETS**

Tickets for **HERO: THE MUSICAL** and the entire 2013-14 Asolo Repertory Theatre season are on sale now. **Tickets for HERO: THE MUSICAL start at \$21.** 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. Box office hours are Monday 10am – 4pm, Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 8pm, and Sunday 10am – 2pm. The box office closes at 5pm 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.

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## **SPONSORS**

Asolo Rep is able to bring **HERO: THE MUSICAL** to the stage thanks to the generosity of its sponsors. Corporate sponsors are the Herald Tribune Media Group, WUSF Public Media, Residence Inn by Marriott, ABC 7, SRQ Media, and Modern Events. Asolo Rep's season sponsors are Florida State

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***HERO: THE MUSICAL***

**Page 7 of 7**

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**MEDIA CONTACT**

Sasha Fields

Public Relations Manager

941-351-9010 ext. 4800

[sasha\\_fields@asolo.org](mailto:sasha_fields@asolo.org)