

High-res photo: <https://asolorep.smugmug.com/Asolo-Rep-Staging-Our-Future/>

For Immediate Release
October 25, 2017

Asolo Repertory Theatre Proudly Announces “Staging Our Future” Five Year Strategic Plan, including Essential Capital Acquisitions and Projects

(SARASOTA, October 25, 2017) — Asolo Repertory Theatre proudly announced its “Staging Our Future” five-year strategic plan, including capital projects and acquisitions that will further Asolo Rep’s capacity to produce world-class theatre. Asolo Rep’s Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards and Board President Dr. Larry Haspel, unveiled the Staging Our Future Strategic Plan at its annual Welcome Back Party on October 24 at the Finish Tower at Nathan Benderson Park.

"This is a very exciting time in Asolo Rep's history," said Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards. "At the heart of Asolo Rep's Staging Our Future Strategic Plan is building our capacity to produce world-class theatre for an ever-broadening audience. Expanding our production facilities and modernizing our stage systems are key building blocks for our success, along with investments in new programmatic and administrative spaces. This next chapter will be a thrilling time of growth, artistic exploration, and community engagement."

Larry Haspel, Asolo Rep Board President and co-chair with his wife Debbie of a fundraising campaign to realize the capital projects outlined in Asolo Rep’s Staging Our Future strategic plan, announced “Asolo Rep launches Year One of Staging Our Future, with new property acquisitions and investments in production upgrades, made possible with lead gifts from generous donors who believe passionately in our vision for the future. Over the course of the season, we’ll be planning how best to renovate, purpose and leverage these new assets.”

Staging Our Future Capital Expansions include:

Fulfilling the vision for the Robert and Beverly Koski Production Center Campus.

With a major gift from **Beverly Koski**, Asolo Rep has acquired properties at 7590 Commerce Court, next door to its 1009 Tallevast Road production and rehearsal facility, to create a state-of-the-art production center.

“These expanded facilities will further Asolo Rep’s capacity to work with the country’s top theatrical artists to create the large-scale musical and dramatic works that Asolo Rep has become known for nationally,” said Asolo Rep Managing Director Linda DiGabriele.

Asolo Rep has also received a generous pledge toward renovations from the **Muriel O’Neil Fund for the Performing Arts of Community Foundation of Sarasota County**. The new facilities will include additional rehearsal spaces necessary for directors and choreographers to simultaneously prepare a show’s dramatic, musical and dance components. They will also include exercise and physical therapy rooms for performers to stay in top form for challenging, multi-genre productions, as well as meeting spaces for creative teams. In this expanded space, Asolo Rep will continue its tradition of tours for the community to come behind-the-scenes to view the creative process firsthand.

Invest in upgrades in Asolo Rep's home venue theatres, and public programming and administrative spaces. The Muriel O'Neil Fund for the Performing Arts of Community Foundation of Sarasota County Sound System, now installed in the Harold and Esther Mertz Theatre, will enhance each audience member's auditory experience for seasons to come, beginning with the opening of *EVITA* in November 2017. Many other exciting venue enhancements are envisioned, to better serve Asolo Rep's growing audience and the community.

Unlock the potential of the Herman and Sharon Frankel Asolo Rep Annex. This new property at the southeast foot of Asolo Rep's home campus at the FSU Center for the Performing Arts at 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, made possible by a major gift from **Herman and Sharon Frankel**, will feature a multi-purpose, open plan meeting space, creating a hub for creative collaborations and activities. Prominent new signage, made possible by **Carole Crosby**, will improve Asolo Rep's visibility to Sarasota's ever-increasing population of residents and seasonal visitors. The Asolo Rep Annex also includes: office space for Artistic, Education, and Community Outreach staff; archival storage, and offsite planning space for its Special Events team.

The Community Foundation of Sarasota County will provide Asolo Rep with a total grant of \$705,000 from its Muriel O'Neil Fund: \$180,000 for the new sound system in the Mertz Theatre, \$400,000 for renovations of the new Koski Production Center property, and \$125,000 to establish an endowed fund in support of an FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training Student Fellowship.

"We're delighted to provide support for Asolo Rep through the newly established Muriel O'Neil Fund, at such a pivotal moment in the theatre's growth," said Community Foundation of Sarasota County President and CEO Roxie Jerde. "Muriel was a loyal and passionate supporter of Asolo Rep during her lifetime, and her legacy will live on through the Sound System installed in the Mertz Theatre, a new space to be named in her honor at the Koski Production Center Campus, and endowed student fellowship support."

"It's awe-inspiring to reflect on Asolo Rep's tremendous growth under the leadership of Michael Donald Edwards, Linda DiGabriele, and our phenomenal board of directors," said Asolo Rep Board President and Campaign Co-Chair Larry Haspel. "Since 2009, we've re-invigorated our commitment not only to artistic excellence and community engagement, but also to undertaking essential capital projects and growing our endowment. Staging Our Future is the newest phase of our capital and endowment campaign, and the result of the community's belief in our vision."

"We are incredibly grateful to our Asolo Rep champions for making these initial investments in these Staging Our Future capital projects," said Asolo Rep Development Director Tricia Mire. "During our 17/18 season, we'll unveil more of our vision for leveraging these capital assets, and an exciting array of naming opportunities. Through additional campaign gifts for renovations, acquisitions, and endowment, our donors can help secure Asolo Rep's legacy for generations to come."

Asolo Rep was represented in purchasing its new properties by Jag Grewal, Partner at Ian Black Real Estate, and Jim Chandler, Partner at Bender, Bender, & Chandler.

The 5-year Staging Our Future strategic plan will also guide Asolo Rep in: broadening participation in Asolo Rep productions and programs by community residents from a diversity of backgrounds; creating a new play development program; and expanding public programming.

About Asolo Repertory Theatre

Now in its 59th season, Asolo Repertory Theatre is recognized as one of the premier professional theatres in America and one of the largest in the Southeastern United States. One of the few select theatres in the nation that performs in true rotating repertory, Asolo Rep's highly skilled acting company and extensive craftsmanship bring to life this unique performance method that gives audiences the opportunity to see multiple productions in the span of a few days. Asolo Rep presents up to 10 productions each season including contemporary and classic works and provocative musical theatre experiences. A theatre district in and of itself, Asolo Rep is committed to expanding its reach into the community, furthering its collaboration with the best theatre artists working in the industry today and cultivating new artists through its affiliation with the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training. Under the leadership of Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards and Managing Director Linda DiGabriele, Asolo Rep's ambitious theatrical offerings and ground-breaking education and community programming engage audiences and ensure its lasting legacy for future generations.

###

Media Contact:

Sasha Goodrich
Public Relations Manager
941-351-9010 ext. 4800
sasha_goodrich@asolo.org