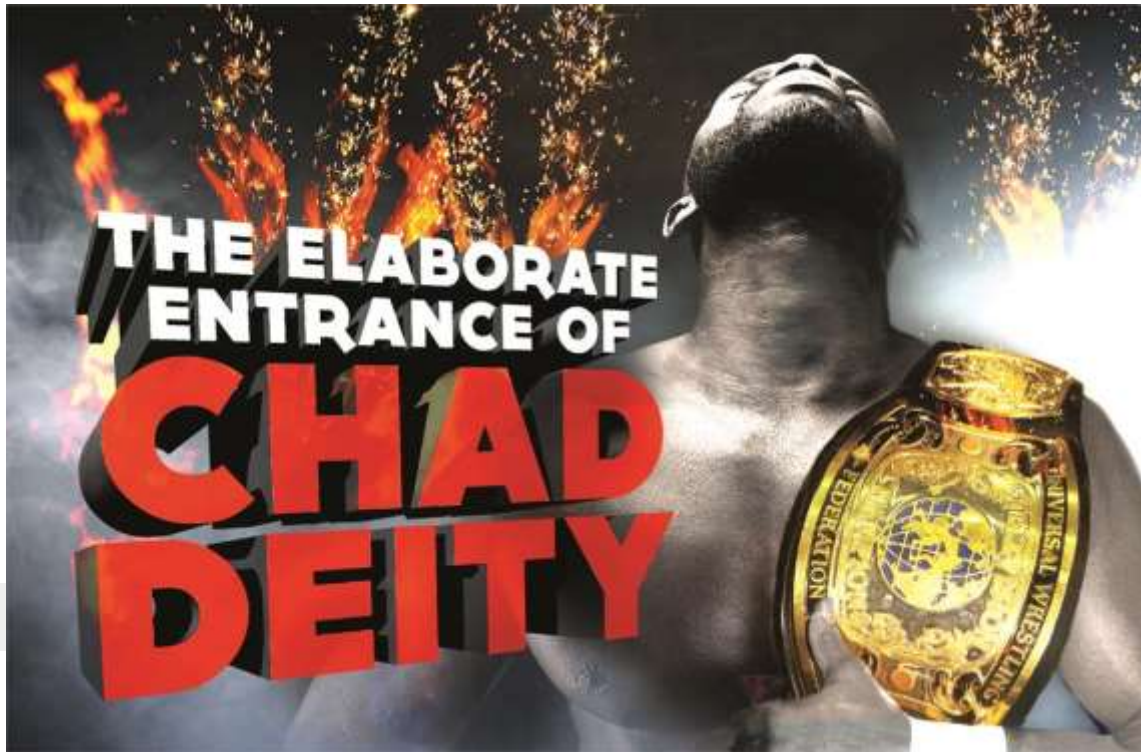


ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE

PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL DONALD EDWARDS • MANAGING DIRECTOR LINDA DIGABRIELE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 2017

ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE PROUDLY PRESENTS
THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY;
THE KNOCK-OUT HIT OPENS APRIL 7

"Has the delicious crackle and pop of a galloping, honest-to-God, all-American satire." — *The New York Times*

(SARASOTA, March 9, 2017) — Asolo Rep continues its record-breaking 2017-18 season with Kristoffer Diaz's ***THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY***, a 2010 Pulitzer Prize Finalist and the 2011 Obie Award-winner for Best New American Play. Directed by Jen Wineman, who previously helmed the educational touring productions of *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Asolo Rep and the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training, ***THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY*** previews April 4, 5 and 6, opens April 7 and runs through April 30. The play will be performed in the Cook Theatre, which will be transformed into a full-scale wrestling arena complete with two ringside seating sections to bring audiences even closer to the action.

This is definitely not an ordinary night at the theatre. With a unique combo of powerful physicality and wickedly smart comedy, this vibrantly entertaining play is about – wait for it – professional wrestling. "Mace" Guerra has spent his wrestling career as the perpetual fall guy – losing on purpose to boost the careers of his fellow wrestlers. When he inadvertently

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discovers Vigneshwar "VP" Paduar, a young Indian American with the charisma to challenge the indomitable Chad Deity, he never imagines the rivalry will be used to exploit racial stereotypes to raise ratings. Hailed as "a culturally explosive knockout" by *D.C. Metro Theater Arts*, this no-holds-barred comedy slams together thrilling spectacle with political allegory for an invigorating theatrical experience.

"Kristoffer Diaz's brilliant, funny, and engaging play is, without a doubt, one of the most exciting productions we've ever presented – an utterly unique theatrical experience filled with laughter and joy, and anchored by tremendous contemporary purchase," said Asolo Rep Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards. "At first glance, the world of professional wrestling may seem like an out-of-the-box choice for the setting of a play. But in this arena of heightened reality, we are actually able to really narrow in on the unexpected truths of our country's deeply rooted racial tensions."

Playwright Kristoffer Diaz has penned five full-length plays, and his work has been performed at The Public Theater, American Conservatory Theater, Center Theatre Group, The Goodman, Second Stage, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and more. In addition to being a Pulitzer Prize Finalist for **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY**, his work has also been celebrated with the *New York Times* Outstanding Playwright Award, Lucille Lortel, Equity Jeff, and Obie Awards, among others.

Off-Broadway, director Jen Wineman has helmed *F#%king Up Everything*. In New York she has also directed *Fable* at the New York Musical Festival, *The King's Whore* at Walkerspace, and *Estrella Cruz [The Junkyard Queen]* at Ars Nova. Her work has also been seen at regional theaters across the country, including *Sweeney Todd* at Playmakers Rep, *Lysistrata* at Connecticut Repertory Theatre, *The 39 Steps* and *Shipwrecked* at Triad Stage, and more.

"From start to finish, **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY** is a complete spectacle – overflowing with energy, exhilarating music, striking projections and larger-than-life characters. This is not your typical production where the audience sits in the dark and claps politely at the end," said director Jen Wineman. "The action of this production will happen all over the theater, sometimes in the audience itself. We hope people will feel free to get a little rowdy, holding up signs and chanting the names of moves they want to see. But don't worry, patrons will not have to actually wrestle. We'll leave that to the pros."

Pierre Jean Gonzalez leads the cast as Mace. His New York theater credits include Usnavi in *In the Heights*, Cassio in *Othello* and Javier in *The House of Ramon Iglesia*. In London he appeared as Oberon/Theseus in the Globe's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Garrett Turner takes on the role of Chad Deity. He has appeared as Benny in *In the Heights* at Aurora Theatre/Theatrical Outfit, Jimmy Early in *Dreamgirls* at Atlanta Lyric Theatre and as Mr. Franklin/Mr. Venus in *Passing Strange* at Playhouse in the Park.

THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY contains strong language including racial epithets, as well as mature themes and simulated violence. Not recommended for small children.

CAST

(In Order of Appearance)

SCOTT AIELLO*.....EKO/Ring Announcer
PIERRE JEAN GONZALEZ.....Macedonio "Mace" Guerra
GARRETT TURNER*.....Chad Deity
RAJI AHSAN*.....Vigneshwar "VP" Paduar
JAMIN OLIVENCIA.....The Bad Guy/Billy Heartland/Old Glory
DANIELLE RENELLA.....Ensemble
BRANDON FILLETTE.....Cameraman

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

SELECTED CREATIVE TEAM MEMBERS

Director.....Jen Wineman
Scenic Designer.....Tim Mackabee
Costume Designer.....Eduardo Sicangco
Lighting Designer.....Alan Edwards
Sound Designer.....Luqman Brown
Fight Director.....Michael Rossmly

SELECTED ARTISTIC BIOS

(In Alphabetical Order)

RAJI AHSAN* (Vigneshwar Paduar, **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY**) is a New York-based actor who couldn't be happier to be making his professional theatre debut at Asolo Rep. He received his BFA from NYU/Tisch in 2013 where he studied under Alec Baldwin (*30 Rock*, *SNL*, *et al.*), Bryce Pinkham (*A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*), and many others. Raji hosts a talk show, "Making Brews and Paying Dues," found on YouTube. All the love to Mom & Gram; gratitude to Chris & Danny; for my Marmots. Proud Equity Member. ig/twitter: @rajihsan

PIERRE JEAN GONZALEZ (Macedonio "Mace" Guerra, **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY**) TV/Film: *Gotham*, *Mysteries of Laura*, *Elementary*, *The Detour*. New York: *Usnavi*, *In the Heights*; *Cassio*, *Othello*; *Javier*, *The House of Ramon Iglesia*.

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London: Oberon/Theseus, The Globe's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. BFA in Acting from Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. Many thanks to my family, friends for their continuous support.

JAMIN OLIVENCIA (The Bad Guy/Billy Heartland/Old Glory, **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY**) will be making his third appearance in **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY** at Asolo Rep, having previously performed at Actors Theatre of Louisville and Dallas Theater Center. Jamin is a poet, personal development coach, professional wrestler, and spiritual public speaker. Jamin has been seen on Ohio Valley Wrestling, *WWE Raw*, and *WWE SmackDown* with 14 years of wrestling experience internationally in North America, Europe, and Australia. Keep up with Jamin's motivational poetry at www.JaminOlivencia.com and Youtube: "Jamin Olivencia Channel"

GARRETT TURNER* (Chad Deity, **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY**) is excited to be making his Asolo Rep debut. A proud native of Florence, Alabama, his recent credits include Benny in *In the Heights* (Aurora Theatre/Theatrical Outfit), Jimmy Early in *Dreamgirls* (Atlanta Lyric Theatre), Mr. Franklin/Mr. Venus in *Passing Strange* (Playhouse on Park), Will in *The Dove* (York Theatre Company), and *Acappella the Musical* (NYMF). Garrett received his B.A. in Music and Creative Writing from Emory University and M.A. in Music Theatre from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London on a Marshall Scholarship. Psalm 115:1 — www.garrett-turner.com — Insta: @digandbedug

JEN WINEMAN (Director, **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY**) is a director/choreographer based in NYC. Off Broadway: *F#%king Up Everything*. New York: *Fable* (NYMF), *The King's Whore* (Walkerspace), *Estrella Cruz [The Junkyard Queen]* (Ars Nova). Touring Productions: *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Asolo Rep New Stages). Regional: *Sweeney Todd* (Playmakers Rep); *Lysistrata* (Connecticut Repertory Theatre); *The 39 Steps*, *Shipwrecked* (Triad Stage); *The Hunchback of Seville* (Washington Ensemble Theatre); *Bubble Boy* (American Theater Group); *Aloha Say the Pretty Girls* (Theatre Vertigo). Jen is a co-founder and the former co-artistic director of Studio 42, a New York City-based company that from 2001-2015, produced "unproducible" plays by emerging playwrights. Up next is a production of *Baskerville* at the Dorset Theatre Festival in Vermont. Education/Training: B.A. Vassar College, M.F.A. Yale School of Drama.

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

The Scoop

One hour prior to every performance of **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY** Asolo Rep's Mezzanine

Arrive one hour before curtain to hear the ideas and inspirations that contributed to the making of **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY**. (Opening Night, April 7, is excluded.)

Inside Asolo Rep: THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY

Wednesday, March 22 at 11am

Cook Theatre

Panel discussions are \$5; and free for all donors and Asolo Rep Guild Members.

Get rare insights into the artistic process, hear directly from the people responsible for

producing **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY**, and engage in stimulating discussion inspired by the plays' themes and issues.

Inside Asolo Rep is sponsored by Hotel Indigo and the Observer

Tuesday Talkbacks

Tuesdays throughout the run: April 4, 11, 25
Cook Theatre

Join us for an intimate post-show discussion with featured actors or guests following every Tuesday performance of **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY**.

THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY IllumiNation Event

Tuesday, April 18 at 6:30pm; show starts at 7:30pm
Pre-show reception and a post-show discussion held on the Mezzanine
Performance in the Cook Theatre
Contact Asolo Rep's Box Office for ticket information

IllumiNation is Asolo Rep's series of performances and events promoting cross-cultural conversations in the community. IllumiNation events begin with a reception one hour before the performance, continue with the featured performance and conclude with a moderated panel discussion where audience members can further explore the topical and social issues that they have just seen played out on stage.

IllumiNation is sponsored by Morton's Gourmet Market & Catering and Capstan Financial Services

Meet the Actors

Sunday, April 23 at 2pm
Cook Theatre

Immediately following the 2pm matinee, ask questions and learn more from members of the cast in a facilitated discussion.

TICKETS

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THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY will be performed in the Cook Theatre, located in the FSU Center for the Performing Arts. Tickets for **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY** and the entire 2016-2017 Asolo Repertory Theatre season are on sale now. Tickets for **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY** start at \$27.

To purchase tickets, call 941.351.8000 or 800.361.8388, visit 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 open Monday 10am – 5pm, Tuesday – Thursday 10am - 7:30pm, Friday – 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.

SPONSORS

Asolo Rep is able to present **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY** because of the generosity of its sponsors. Corporate sponsors for **THE ELABORATE ENTRANCE OF CHAD DEITY** are Sun Hydraulics Corporation, Muse at The Ringling, Stella Artois, SRQ Media, and Hampton Inn & Suites. Asolo Rep 2016-17 Major Season Sponsors are Florida State University, Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, the Huiscking Foundation, the Shubert Foundation, Designing Women Boutique, Woman's Exchange, Inc., and Sunset Cadillac of Bradenton. 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.

ABOUT ASOLO REP

Now in its 58th 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 15 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 outreach programming engage audiences and ensure its lasting legacy for future generations.

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