

ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE

PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL DONALD EDWARDS • MANAGING DIRECTOR LINDA DIGABRIELE



For Immediate Release

March 1, 2016

ASOLO REP PROUDLY PRESENTS *DISGRACED*; AYAD AKHTAR'S THRILLING TONY® NOMINATED AND PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING DRAMA OPENS APRIL 1

(SARASOTA, March 1, 2016) — Asolo Rep continues its record-breaking 2015-2016 season and the fourth season of its five-year American Character Project with the thrilling and poignant Tony nominated and Pulitzer Prize-winning drama: *DISGRACED*. Penned by Ayad Akhtar, the critically acclaimed play premiered on Broadway in 2014. Directed by Asolo Rep Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards, *DISGRACED* previews March 30 and 31 at 8pm, opens Friday, April 1 at 8pm and runs through Sunday, April 24 in the Historic Asolo Theater, located in the Ringling Visitors Pavilion.

Hailed by *the New York Times* as "terrific and turbulent, with fresh currents of dramatic electricity," *DISGRACED* tells the story of Amir Kapoor, a brilliant, successful Muslim-American attorney who has turned his back on his faith in order to thrive in post-9/11 Manhattan. On the surface, he has it all — a beautiful wife, a swanky apartment and a lucrative career. But the charmed life he so artfully constructed is in jeopardy when a dinner party turns tumultuous and the guests' ideals of culture, marriage, career and family collide.

Dorien Makhloghi, who has appeared on Broadway in *The Merchant of Venice* and Off-Broadway in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Oedipus Cycle*, and more, stars as Amir Kapoor. Lee Stark plays his wife Emily, the role she originated at the American Theater Company's world premiere of *DISGRACED*. New York City-based actor Bianca Jones, who was recently seen in *King Lear* at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater, plays Amir's co-worker Jory. FSU/Asolo Conservatory third-year student Jordan Ben Sobel portrays Jory's husband, Isaac. Nik Sadhni, who appeared in the Hulu series *The Path* opposite Aaron Paul and Michelle Monaghan, plays Amir's nephew Abe.

In addition to *DISGRACED*, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Ayad Akhtar has also written *The Who & The What* and *The Invisible Hand*. He is also the author of the 2012 novel *American Dervish*, which has been published in 25 languages around the world. Akhtar was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for Best Screenplay for *The War Within*.

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DISGRACED is the most produced play at professional theatres around the country this season, and the play has inspired passionate conversation at every venue where it has been presented. In addition to the theatre's standard public programming, Asolo Rep will host a post-play discussion following every performance of **DISGRACED** as an outlet for questions and further reflection.

“Ayad Akhtar’s brilliant Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece is a pivotal addition to Asolo Rep’s American Character Project,” said Michael Donald Edwards, Producing Artistic Director of Asolo Rep and Director of **DISGRACED**. “This piece examines Muslim-American attorney Amir Kapoor's complex cultural identity struggle and, in doing so, tells the story of so many immigrants throughout the world. I am thrilled to be at the helm of this modern American story.”

Suggested for mature audiences. Contains profanity and physical violence.

CAST

(In order of appearance)

Lee Stark*Emily
Dorien Makhloghi*Amir
Nik Sadhnani.....Abe
Jordan Ben Sobel.....Isaac
Bianca Jones*.....Jory

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

SELECTED CREATIVE TEAM MEMBERS

Director.....Michael Donald Edwards
Scenic Designer.....Reid Thompson
Costume Designer.....Beth Goldenberg
Lighting Designer.....Jen Schriever
Sound Designer.....Ryan Rumery
Projection Designer.....Michael Clark
Fight Director.....Bruce Lecure
Hair/Wig & Make-Up Designer.....Michelle Hart
Voice & Dialect Coach.....Patricia Delorey

SELECTED ARTISTIC BIOS

(In Alphabetical Order)

MICHAEL DONALD EDWARDS TENTH SEASON (Producing Artistic Director; Director, *Disgraced*) is in his tenth season as producing artistic director of Asolo Repertory Theatre.

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He was previously the associate artistic director of Syracuse Stage and served as artistic director of Shakespeare Santa Cruz. A Garland Award and Drama-Logue Award-winning director, Mr. Edwards has directed at Cleveland Play House, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Geva Theatre, Syracuse Stage, The Shakespeare Theatre, San Jose Rep, Opera San Jose, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Old Globe in San Diego, Virginia Stage Company, the Virginia Opera, the State Theatre of South Australia, Opera Australia, Victoria State Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera. In previous seasons for Asolo Rep, Mr. Edwards has directed his English adaptation as well as Pulitzer Prize-winner Nilo Cruz's Spanish translation of Shakespeare's text in *Hamlet, Prince of Cuba*; as well as *Las Meninas*; *La Bête*; *The Last Five Years*; *The Life of Galileo*; *Perfect Mendacity*; *The Winter's Tale*; *Equus*; *A Tale of Two Cities*; *Darwin in Malibu*; *Nobody Don't Like Yogi*; *Amadeus*; *The Smell of the Kill*; *The Grapes of Wrath* and several pieces in the annual Unplugged festival of new plays.

BIANCA JONES* GUEST ARTIST, FIRST SEASON (Jory, *Disgraced*) is thrilled to make her Asolo Rep debut. Bianca is the face of the Time Warner Cable commercials "Check Out" and "Start Over". Regional credits include *King Lear* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater), *The Mountaintop* (City Theatre), *The Seeds Of Abraham* (Signature/Billie Holiday), *A Civil War Christmas* (Long Wharf), Williamstown Theater Festival, St. Louis Black Rep, National Black Theatre Festival, The Classical Theater of Harlem, Roundabout Theatre Company and others. Recent film credits include *How to Tell You Are Dating A Douchebag* (Sundance 2016), *Blue Angel* with Stanley Tucci, *americanmother*, and *JUMP* written by Eric Lockley. In June 2015, Bianca won two awards from the DC Black Theatre Festival for her direction in a Solo and Duo, One Acts. Bianca received training from University of NC School of the Arts, SUNY Purchase and Yale School of Drama.

DORIEN MAKHLOGHI* GUEST ARTIST, FIRST SEASON (Amir, *Disgraced*) has appeared on Broadway in *The Merchant of Venice* (Public Theater) and Off-Broadway in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night* (New York Shakespeare Festival), *The Oedipus Cycle*, *Nathan the Wise* (Pearl Theatre), and *Around the World in 80 Days* (New Theater on 45th). Other theater credits: *Scorched* (Syracuse Stage) and world premieres of *Love/Stories*, *The Great Recession* (Flea Theater) and *Another Life* (Theater Three Collaborative). Film: *I Origins*, *Starving*, *Revulsion*. Web series: www.3Dorks.com.

NIK SADHNANI GUEST ARTIST, FIRST SEASON (Abe, *Disgraced*) is thrilled to be at Asolo Rep this season. Previous credits include Boston Playwrights' Theatre's production of a new work: *She Eats Apples*. Film/TV credits include Hulu's latest series, *The Path*, starring opposite Aaron Paul and Michelle Monaghan.

JORDAN BEN SOBEL THIRD YEAR STUDENT, FIRST SEASON (Isaac, *Disgraced*; Rep. William Colmer/Network Correspondent and others in *All the Way*) is thrilled to be making his Asolo Rep debut. Regional credits include: *The Donkey Show* (American Repertory Theatre), *The Corn Is Green* (Huntington Theatre Company), *She Kills Monsters* (Company One), *Of Mice and Men* (Moonbox Productions), and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Riverside Theatre Works). Jordan would like to thank his sponsors Nancy Stevenson, Nona Macdonald Heaslip, Ron Banyay, the spirit of Esther M. Mertz, and his parents for their continuous love and support.

LEE STARK* GUEST ARTIST, FIRST SEASON (Emily, *Disgraced*) originated the role of Emily in the 2012 world premiere of *Disgraced* at Chicago's American Theater Company. New York credits include *The Iceman Cometh*, starring Nathan Lane and Brian Dennehy, at Brooklyn Academy of Music (originally at The Goodman Theatre), and several productions

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at The Pearl Theatre. Ms. Stark's work in Chicago includes productions at Steppenwolf, Victory Gardens, and The Artistic Home; regionally, at Milwaukee Rep, Indiana Rep, Geva Theater Center, and the Great Lakes/Idaho/Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festivals. Ms. Stark has appeared in film and television, including a recurring role in the current season of *Shameless*.

DISGRACED PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

Inside Asolo Rep: DISGRACED

Wednesday, March 30 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 creating *DISGRACED*, and engage in stimulating discussion inspired by the plays' themes and issues.

Inside Asolo Rep is sponsored by Hotel Indigo and the Observer

DISGRACED IllumiNation Event

Tuesday, April 12 at 6:30pm

Pre-show cocktail reception held on Asolo Rep's Mezzanine

Performance in the Historic Asolo Theater, located in the Ringling Visitors Pavilion

Post-show panel discussion held in the Historic Asolo Theater

Contact Asolo Rep's Box Office for series package information and single performance tickets.

IllumiNation is Asolo Rep's new series of performances and events promoting cross-cultural conversations in the community. IllumiNation evenings begin with a cocktail hour at 6:30pm, continue with that evening's performance at 7:30pm 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.

The Scoop

One hour prior to every performance of *DISGRACED*

Historic Asolo Theater, located in the Ringling Visitors Pavilion

Arrive one hour before curtain to hear the ideas and inspirations that contributed to the making of *DISGRACED*.

DISGRACED Discussions

Following every performance

Historic Asolo Theater, located in the Ringling Visitors Pavilion

In addition to the theatre's standard public programming, Asolo Rep will host a post-play discussion following every performance of *DISGRACED* as an outlet for questions and further reflection.

TICKETS

New this Season: Start times for Wednesday & Thursday performances will be moved one-half hour earlier to 1:30pm and 7:30pm. All preview performances will begin at 8pm.

Tickets for **DISGRACED** and the entire 2015-2016 Asolo Repertory Theatre season are on sale now. Tickets for **DISGRACED** start at \$17. 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 currently open Monday 10am – 4pm, 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.

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SPONSORS

Asolo Rep is able to present **DISGRACED** because of the generosity of its sponsors. Corporate sponsors for **DISGRACED** are Brighthouse Networks, Hampton Inn & Suites, Femme Rouge, Muse at the Ringling, and Home Resource. Asolo Rep 2015-2016 Major Season Sponsors are Florida State University, Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, The Virginia B. Toulmin 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.

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