

ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE

PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL DONALD EDWARDS • MANAGING DIRECTOR LINDA DIGABRIELE



For Immediate Release
February 11, 2016

ASOLO REP PRESENTS *GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER*; THE NEW STAGE ADAPTATION OF THE MILESTONE 1967 FILM OPENS MARCH 11

"The perfect piece of theater." – *DC Theatre Scene*

(SARASOTA, February 11, 2016) — Nearly 50 years after the groundbreaking film inspired the world, Asolo Rep is thrilled to present Todd Kreidler's electric stage adaptation of the iconic Academy Award®-winning film ***GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER***. The production poignantly continues the fourth season of Asolo Rep's five-year American Character Project, an exploration of who we are as a nation – past, present and future. Based on the original screenplay by William Rose and directed by Academy Award-nominee and two-time Tony Award®-winner Frank Galati, this captivating, witty romantic comedy previews March 9 and 10, opens March 11, and runs in rotating rep in the Mertz Theatre located in the FSU Center for the Performing Arts through April 17.

A handsome, prestigious doctor meets a beautiful young woman. The two begin a whirlwind romance and their swift courtship leads to a happily accepted proposal. The catch? It's 1967 in America – the handsome doctor, John Prentice, is a black man and his intended, Joanna Drayton, a white woman. When Joanna surprises her proudly liberal parents with the engagement, their morals and values are put to the test in this moving story that deftly challenges the notion that love can conquer all.

"The most profound and unique element in the play that distinguishes it from the medium of film is live performance. This may be 'then' but it's happening 'now'," said Director Frank Galati. "What unfolds before the audience must feel completely spontaneous and true. Playing the narrative out live on stage changes the dynamic of the experience; playing it now, 50 years after its first flicker of life on the silver screen, offers us a chance to reflect back on a threshold moment in our country's history and the state of the nation now when

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the movie is forgotten and even the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is not a part of the majority's collective memory."

The film **GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER** boldly premiered in December 1967, just six months after the landmark *Loving v. Virginia* civil rights decision deemed laws barring interracial marriage to be illegal throughout the U.S. Directed by Stanley Kramer, the film starred Katharine Houghton and Academy Award-winners Spencer Tracy, Sidney Poitier and Katharine Hepburn. It garnered two Academy Awards, for Best Original Screenplay and Best Actress for Katharine Hepburn's portrayal of Christina Drayton.

A.K. Murtadha, who currently plays Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Asolo Rep's critically acclaimed production of *All the Way* (running through April 9) will portray Dr. John Prentice. Asolo Rep favorite Peggy Roeder, who plays Lily Miller in Asolo Rep's celebrated production of *Ah, Wilderness!* (running through April 10) will play Christina Drayton and Broadway veteran Mark Jacoby (Cartha "Deke" DeLoach, Rep. Howard "Judge" Smith, Sen. Everett Dirksen, and Governor Carl Sanders in *All the Way*) will play Matt Drayton. FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training third-year MFA student Ally Farzetta, who plays Iris Peabody in Asolo Rep's current production of *Living on Love* (running through February 25) will play Joanna Drayton. Beloved longtime Asolo Rep actor Tyla Abercumbie (Coretta Scott King/Fannie Lou Hamer/Choir Member, *All the Way*) will portray Mary Prentice and Ernest Perry, Jr. (Roy Wilkins/Shoeshiner/Choir Member, *All the Way*) will play John Prentice, Sr.

"To be able to bring an iconic American film to the stage and have Tony winner Frank Galati, one of today's foremost directors, at its helm is a timely and riveting addition to the fourth season of our American Character Project," said Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards. "While the screenplay was penned almost 50 years ago, this story remains fresh. It has tremendous global purchase, warmth, and humor, and I know that it will deeply resonate with our audiences."

CAST

(In order of appearance)

Jacqueline Williams*	Matilda "Tillie" Binks
Denise Cormier*	Hilary St. George
Peggy Roeder*	Christina Drayton
Mark Jacoby*	Matt Drayton
Ally Farzetta	Joanna Drayton
A.K. Murtadha*	Dr. John Prentice
William Dick*	Monsignor Ryan
Ernest Perry, Jr.*	John Prentice, Sr.
Tyla Abercumbie*	Mary Prentice

*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.....Frank Galati
Scenic/Costume Designer.....James Schuette
Lighting Designer.....Paul Miller
Sound Designer.....Matthew Parker
Hair/Wig & Make-Up Designer.....Michelle Hart
Voice & Dialect Coach.....Patricia Delorey

SELECTED ARTISTIC BIOS

(In Alphabetical Order)

TYLA ABERCRUMBIE* GUEST ARTIST, FOURTH SEASON (Mary Prentice, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, Coretta Scott King/Fannie Lou Hamer, Ensemble, *All The Way*) is excited to return to Asolo Rep. She appeared in last season's *The Matchmaker* and *Good People*. Regional credits; Court Theatre, Next Theatre, Northlight, Timeline, The Goodman, Portland Stage Company, Pittsburgh Public, Milwaukee Repertory, ATL, St. Louis Black Repertory, Victory Gardens, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Studio Arena, Onyx Theatre Company, Coronet Theatre. Film & Television credits: *Poker House*, *Crisis*, *Low Winter Sun*, *The Mob Doctor*, *The Chicago Code*, *Detroit 187*, *The Beast*, the 2015 film *Unexpected* and Starz new series *The Girlfriend Experience*.

ALLY FARZETTA THIRD YEAR STUDENT, FIRST SEASON (Joanna Drayton, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*; Iris Peabody, *Living on Love*) is thrilled to join Asolo Rep for this terrific season. FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training credits: Celia in *As You Like It*, Susan in *[title of show]*, and Anya in *The Cherry Orchard*. She offers endless love and thanks to her incredible parents, as well as her inspiring sponsors Margot & Warren Coville and Carole Cosby & Larry Wickless.

FRANK GALATI ASSOCIATE ARTIST, SIXTH SEASON (Director, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*) is a member of the Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago. In September his adaptation of John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* opened the theatre's 40th anniversary season. Over the years, he has received nine Joseph Jefferson Awards for his work in Chicago theatre. Here at Asolo Rep he has directed *Both Your Houses*, *Philadelphia*, *Here I Come*, *1776*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Twelve Angry Men*. He has directed at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Berkley Rep, Mark Taper Forum, Long Wharf Theatre, Chicago Opera Theatre, San Francisco Opera, Dallas Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera, The Metropolitan Opera, The Stratford Festival in Canada, and the Roundabout Theatre in New York. For twenty years he was an Associate Director at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago. He won two Tony Awards in 1990 for his adaptation and direction of the Steppenwolf production of *The Grapes of Wrath* on Broadway and was nominated again in 1998 for directing *Ragtime* on Broadway. In 1989, Mr. Galati was nominated for an Academy Award for his screenplay (with Lawrence Kasdan) of *The Accidental Tourist*. In 2000 he was inducted into The American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Mr. Galati is a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Performance Studies at Northwestern University. He lives in Sarasota.

MARK JACOBY* GUEST ARTIST, FIRST SEASON (Matt Drayton, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*; Cartha "Deke" DeLoach/Rep. Howard "Judge" Smith/Sen. Everett Dirksen/Gov. Carl Sanders, *All the Way*) Broadway credits include *Ragtime*, *Show Boat*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Elf*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Sweet Charity*, and *Phantom of the Opera*. He played Peter Dummermutt in *The Visit* (The Goodman/Signature Theatre) and Frank Willis in The New Group's *Critical Darling*. Other appearances include *The Play's the Thing* (Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey), *Life X 3* (Repertory Theatre of St. Louis), *Five Presidents* (Arizona Theatre Company/Milwaukee Rep), *Bus Stop* (Bristol Riverside Theatre), and *Sleuth* (Maltz-Jupiter Theatre). Television audiences have seen Mark in *Elementary*, *Law & Order* (three episodes), *Law & Order SVU* as well as all of New York's "soaps".

A.K. MURTADHA* GUEST ARTIST, FIRST SEASON (Dr. John Prentice, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*; Martin Luther King, Jr., *All the Way*) is pleased to be making his Asolo Repertory debut. He has enjoyed various classical and contemporary roles in regional and repertory theatres. His most recent plays include *Intimate Apparel* and *Detroit '67*. Some of his TV and Film credits include: *NCIS-LA*, *All My Children*, *Raising the Bar*, *The Unit*, *Medium*, *Numb3rs*, and the upcoming feature - *Redstone*. Awards include Best Actor - New Orleans Short film festival - *In the Wind*; NAACP Award: Best Ensemble - *All My Sons*. He was also the Featured Guest Artist for Auburn University's - *The America Play*. www.akmurtadha.com

ERNEST PERRY, JR.* GUEST ARTIST, FIRST SEASON (John Prentice, Sr., *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*; Roy Wilkins/Shoeshiner/Choir Member, *All the Way*) Select regional credits: *Puddin 'n' Pete* (Goodman Theatre, Jeff Award nomination); *Suspenders!* (Chicago Theatre Company, Jeff Award nomination); *5 Rooms of Furniture* (Organic Theater Company, Black Theater Alliance Award for Best Actor); *Death and the King's Horseman* (Kennedy Center); *Fences* (Arden Theatre Company, Barrymore Award nomination); *Oo-Bla-Dee* (La Jolla Playhouse). International credits: *The Merchant of Venice* at Royal Shakespeare Company (London), Thalia Theatre (Germany) and MC93 Bobigny (Paris). Select television credits include *ER*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, *Early Edition*, *The Untouchables* and *Boss*. Film credits include *Quebec*, *Barbershop 2*, *Roll Bounce*; *Liar, Liar*; *Rage in Harlem*, *The Color of Money*.

PEGGY ROEDER* GUEST ARTIST, SIXTH SEASON (Christina Drayton, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*; Lily Miller, *Ah, Wilderness!*) has appeared at Asolo Rep in *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *The Matchmaker*, *Good People* and *My Fair Lady*. Other favorites include *The Dresser* (Steppenwolf), *Romeo and Juliet* (Goodman), *The Clean House* (Milwaukee Rep), *Kabuki Macbeth* (Chicago Shakespeare), *The Cider House Rules* (Atlantic Theatre Company), *The How and the Why* (Etopia Productions), *The Big Meal* (ATC), *Outside Mullingar* (Peninsula Players), *Float* (About Face), *The Busy World is Hushed* (Next). Her work has garnered four Jeff Awards, three Artisan Awards, and two After Dark Awards. Film and TV credits include *Groundhog Day*, *Road to Perdition*, *Were the World Mine*, *Stranger than Fiction*, *Star Trek: DS9*, *Law & Order*.

GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

Inside Asolo Rep: *ALL THE WAY* & *GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER*

Wednesday, February 24 at 11am

Asolo Rep Mezzanine

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 *ALL THE WAY* and *GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER*, and engage in stimulating discussion inspired by the plays' themes and issues. The featured panelists will be two time Tony Award®-winner and Academy Award®-nominee and director of *GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER* Frank Galati and Shaun Patrick Tubbs, Asolo Rep directing fellow for *ALL THE WAY*, *GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER* and *DISGRACED*.

Inside Asolo Rep is sponsored by Hotel Indigo and the Observer

***GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER* IllumiNation Event**

Tuesday, March 29 at 6:30pm

Pre-show cocktail reception and a post-show discussion held on the Mezzanine

Performance in the Mertz Theatre

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.

OUT@AsoloRep: *GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER*

Thursday, April 14 at 6:30pm; show starts at 7:30pm

Asolo Rep's Mezzanine

Contact Asolo Rep's Box Office for subscription and ticket information

Now in its seventh season, OUT@AsoloRep is Sarasota's premier cultural event connecting local Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities with fantastic theatre. Enjoy a pre-show reception and learn about participating LGBT organizations, gain personal insight into *GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER* from the creative team and cast members, and mingle with the actors and other OUT attendees after the performance.

OUT@AsoloRep is sponsored by U.S. Trust, Visit Sarasota County, Morton's Gourmet Market & Catering, Community Foundation of Sarasota County - Our Sarasota Fund and McCauley Brown Fund, and Watermark Media.

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The Scoop

One hour prior to every performance of **GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER**
Asolo Rep's Mertz Theatre, orchestra level

Arrive one hour before curtain to hear the ideas and inspirations that contributed to the making of **GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER**. Opening night, Friday, March 11, excluded.

Tuesday Talkbacks

April 5, 12
Asolo Rep's Mezzanine

Join us for an intimate post-show discussion with featured actors or guests following every Tuesday performance of **GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER**.

Meet the Actors

Sunday, March 20 at 2pm
Asolo Rep's Mertz Theatre

Immediately following the 2pm matinee, ask questions and learn more from members of the cast at this intimate discussion.

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 **GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER** and the entire 2015-2016 Asolo Repertory Theatre season are on sale now. Tickets for **GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER** start at \$24. 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.

SPONSORS

Asolo Rep is able to present **GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER** because of the generosity of its sponsors. Corporate sponsors for **GUESS WHO'S COMING TO**

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DINNER are SunTrust Private Wealth Management, Sarasota Magazine, SNN, Williams Parker Harrison Dietz & Getzen, and The Resort at Longboat Key Club. Lead support for **GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER** student access provided by Community Foundation of Sarasota County. 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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