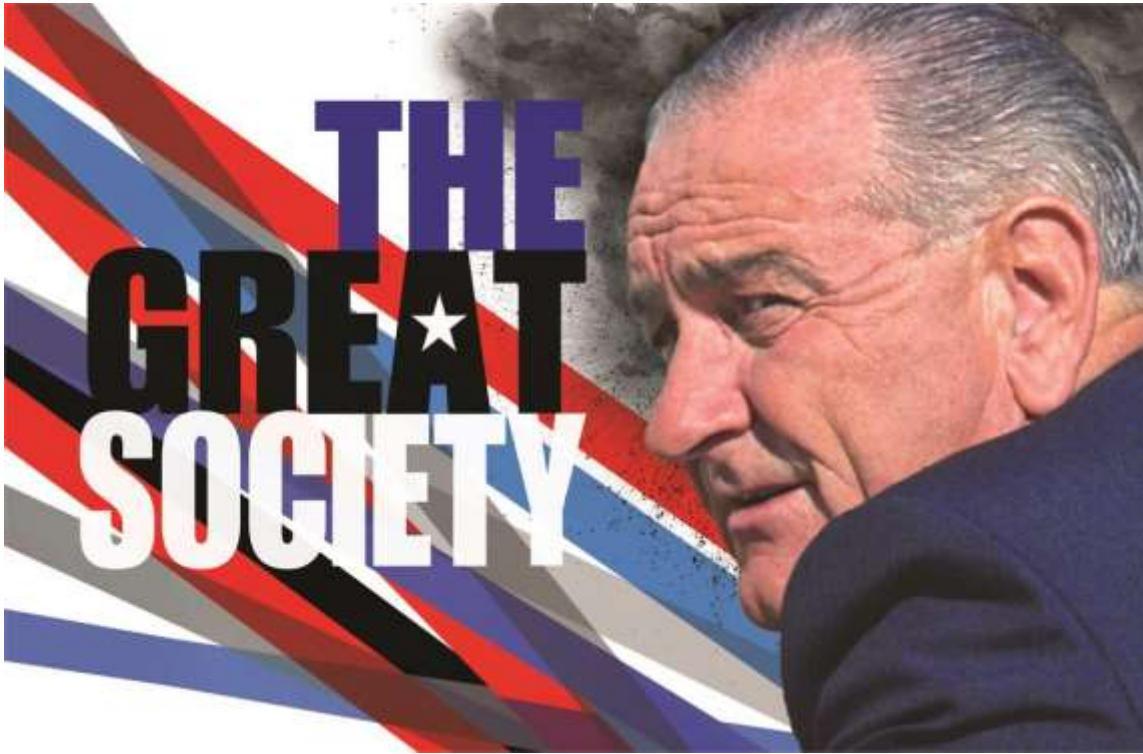


# ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE

PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MICHAEL DONALD EDWARDS • MANAGING DIRECTOR LINDA DIGABRIELE



\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\*

December 14, 2016

**ASOLO REP PRESENTS *THE GREAT SOCIETY*;  
THE THRILLING SEQUEL TO LAST SEASON'S RECORD-  
BREAKING PRODUCTION OF *ALL THE WAY* OPENS JANUARY 13**

**"Pure, breathtaking entertainment."**

— *Seattle Weekly*

**(SARASOTA, December 14, 2016)** — Asolo Rep kicks off its winter repertory season with ***THE GREAT SOCIETY***, Pulitzer Prize-winner Robert Schenkkan's gripping political drama that chronicles the second chapter of Lyndon Baines Johnson's presidency. Asolo Rep is proud to be the only theatre in the country granted the rights to produce ***THE GREAT SOCIETY*** during the 2016-17 season. The sequel to last season's box office record-breaking production of *All the Way* will be directed by Nicole A. Watson. ***THE GREAT SOCIETY*** previews January 11 and 12, opens January 13 and runs in rotating repertory through April 2 in the Mertz Theatre, located in the FSU Center for the Performing Arts.

***THE GREAT SOCIETY*** picks up right where the curtain closed on *All the Way*, delving into President Lyndon Baines Johnson's polarizing administration, including his steadfast War

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on Poverty, the tumultuous Vietnam War, and the uphill battle for Civil Rights. From Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to Senator Robert F. Kennedy, J. Edgar Hoover, Governor George Wallace, and more, **THE GREAT SOCIETY**, unearths the engrossing opponents and chess match of the political arena of the late 1960s.

"When we initially announced **THE GREAT SOCIETY** for the final season of our American Character Project, we knew that it would open just as a new President of the United States took office," said Asolo Rep Producing Artistic Director Michael Donald Edwards. "What we could have never anticipated was the shockingly divided state that our country would be in. Robert Schenkkan's **THE GREAT SOCIETY** could not be a more remarkably poignant, timely and vital story to tell right now, and I'm thrilled to present it to our community."

The production stars acclaimed actor Matt DeCaro as LBJ. Mr. DeCaro replaces the previously announced Jack Willis in the role. Throughout Mr. DeCaro's 40-year acting career, he has performed in theaters all over the country, including Manhattan Theatre Club, Goodman Theatre, Guthrie Theater, the Old Globe, and Steppenwolf Theatre. Actor A.K. Murtadha will once again portray Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., after taking on the role in *All the Way* at Asolo Rep last season. Denise Cormier will also reprise her role as Lady Bird Johnson. Longtime Asolo Rep company actor David Breitbarth will reprise his role as Governor George Wallace, and will also play Sheriff Jim Clark, Richard Nixon, and John McCone. William Dick also returns as controversial FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover.

Director Nicole A. Watson, who served as the associate director for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Seattle Repertory Theatre productions of **THE GREAT SOCIETY**, has also helmed Kevin R. Free's *Night of The Living N-Word*, Johnna Adams' *World Builders (CATF)*, and the opera *Approaching Ali (Washington National Opera)*. She has also directed productions of *Our Lady of Kibeho* (Smith College), *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (North Carolina School of the Arts), and *The Mountaintop* (Kitchen Theater).

"To me, it seems like all the things LBJ was fighting for are the things that we are still fighting for. You listen to his opening State of the Union Address – voting rights, health care, poverty, education – we're still working on those things," said Director Nicole A. Watson. "**THE GREAT SOCIETY** is a play that tries to look at a time period where *everyone* was trying to be heard. It would be hard to see this play and not see connections to today. I guess history does indeed repeat itself."

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## CAST

(In Order of Appearance)

MATT DeCARO\*.....President Lyndon Baines Johnson  
TOM COINER\*.....Vice President Hubert Humphrey/Ensemble  
ERIC HISSOM\*.....Sen. Everett Dirksen/Cartha "Deke" DeLoach/Ensemble  
DAVID BREITBARTH\*.....Gov. George Wallace/Sheriff Jim Clark/Richard Nixon/John McCone/Ensemble  
TAYLAR\*.....Sally Childress/Coretta Scott King/Ensemble  
BRETT MACK†.....Sen. Robert F. Kennedy/Ensemble

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BRANDON MALDONADO.....Adam Walinsky/Gen. Westmoreland/Alabama Trooper/Vietnam Soldier/Ensemble  
A.K. MURTADHA\*.....Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
MICHAEL KINSEY.....Rep. Adam Clayton Powell/Rev. Ralph Abernathy/Ensemble  
WILLIAM DICK\*.....J. Edgar Hoover/Ensemble  
CHRISTOPHER KELLY\*.....Robert McNamara/Rep. Wilbur Mills/Stanley Levison/Ensemble  
SEAN BLAKE\*.....Bob Moses/Rev. Dobynes/Hosea Williams/Marquette Frye/Ensemble  
IAN FERMY.....Stokely Carmichael/John Lewis/Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier/Ensemble  
ANDREW MALONE.....Jimmie Lee Jackson/James Bevel/Ensemble  
JACOB SHERBURNE.....Dr. James Z. Appel/Col. Al Lingo/Ensemble  
DENISE CORMIER\*.....Lady Bird Johnson/Ensemble  
KELLY ELIZABETH SMITH.....Sheriff's Auxiliary/Ensemble  
WYATT McNEIL.....CHP Officer/Alabama Trooper/Ensemble  
MICHAEL D. FISHER.....Gardner Ackley/Alabama Trooper/Vietnam Soldier/Ensemble  
MIKE PEREZ.....Clark Clifford/Alabama Trooper/Vietnam Soldier/Ensemble  
SCOTT KUIPER.....Seymore Trammell/Rioter with Brick/CHP Officer/Ensemble  
JESSIE TAYLOR.....Muriel Humphrey/Rioter with Baby/Vietnam Soldier/Ensemble  
NORM BOUCHER\*.....Mayor Richard J. Daley/Gen. Earle Wheeler/Ensemble  
DANIELLE RENELLA.....Lynda Byrd Johnson/Ethel Kennedy/Maid/Waitress/Ensemble  
ROB GLAUZ.....Norman Morrison/Charles Robb/Vietnam Soldier/Selma Marcher/Ensemble  
JILLIAN COURTNEY.....Pat Nixon/Ensemble

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

†Appears courtesy 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.....Nicole A. Watson  
Based on the original production by Bill Rauch

Scenic Designer..... Steven C. Kemp  
Based on the original design by Christopher Acebo

Costume Designer.....Sarah Smith

Lighting Designer..... Paul Miller  
Based on the original design by David Weiner

Sound Designer/Composer.....Paul Prendergast  
Projection Design..... Shawn Sagady  
Fight Director.....Bruce Lecure  
Hair/Wig & Make-up Designer.....Michelle Hart

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## **SELECTED ARTISTIC BIOS**

(In Alphabetical Order)

**DAVID BREITBARTH\* (Gov. George Wallace/Sheriff Jim Clark/Richard Nixon/John McCone/Ensemble, *THE GREAT SOCIETY*)** Over 75 productions at Asolo Rep include: *Both Your Houses, The Grapes of Wrath, Glengarry Glen Ross, Clybourne Park, God of Carnage, Once in a Lifetime, Twelve Angry Men, The Front Page, The Immigrant*, world premieres of *Men of Tortuga* and *Perfect Mendacity, The Winter's Tale, A Few Good Men, Laughing Stock, A Flea in Her Ear, Rounding Third, Art, Hobson's Choice*, and *Nicholas Nickleby*. Broadway 1st National Tour: *Spring Awakening*. Off-Broadway: *Short Change, Perfect Crime, Fluorescent Hunger*, and *This Hard Life*. Los Angeles: *Life in the Trees*(West Coast premiere) and *David's Mother*. Film and television: *Frasier, Taken!, Law & Order*, and *Fame*. He has appeared regionally around the country and was recently named a member of Florida Repertory Theatre's Ensemble of Theatre Artists. David is a proud 2013 Lunt-Fontanne Fellow selected by the prestigious Ten Chimneys Foundation and he is married to the actress Kate Hampton, of whom he is also proud.

**DENISE CORMIER\* (Lady Bird Johnson/Ensemble, *THE GREAT SOCIETY*)** Asolo Rep: *All the Way, Ah, Wilderness!, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, Good People, Our Betters*. Ms. Cormier appeared in the first national Broadway tour of *The Graduate*. Regionally, she has appeared in *Good People* (Repertory Theatre of St. Louis), *Clybourne Park* (Northern Stage), *Diary of Anne Frank* (Indiana Repertory), *Intimate Apparel* (Actors Theatre of Louisville/Cleveland Play House), *Annapurna* (Magic Theatre) and seasons at Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival and Theatre at Monmouth. Film and TV credits: *The Affair, Law & Order: Criminal Intent, Six Degrees, Mermaids, In Dreams* and *The Big Gay Musical*. Graduate of Shakespeare Theatre Company ACA @ GWU. [www.denisecormier.com](http://www.denisecormier.com)

**MATT DECARO\* (President Lyndon Baines Johnson, *THE GREAT SOCIETY*)** has enjoyed a 40 year acting career. Though a Chicagoan, he has been fortunate to play in theaters across the country including Lincoln Center, Manhattan Theatre Club, Goodman Theatre, Guthrie Theater, Steppenwolf Theatre, the Old Globe, American Conservatory Theater, and internationally in Dublin, Toronto and China. Some favorite roles include the Judge in David Mamet's *Romance*, Dave Moss in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Boss Mangan in *Heartbreak House*, Boolie in *Driving Miss Daisy*, and Fa Hai in Mary Zimmerman's *The White Snake*. His TV and film credits include *The Wise Kids, Eagle Eye, House*, and *The Office*.

**A.K. MURTADHA\* (Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *THE GREAT SOCIETY*)** has enjoyed various classic and contemporary roles in regional and repertory theatres. He joined Asolo Rep last season as MLK in *All the Way* and Dr. Prentice in *Guess Who's*

*Coming to Dinner*. He most recently played Macduff in *Macbeth* at the Ensemble Theatre Company of Santa Barbara. TV/Film credits include *NCIS: LA*, *Raising the Bar*, *The Unit*, *Medium*, *Numb3rs*, and the horror movie *8989 Redstone* (Amazon). Awards include Best Actor - New Orleans Short film festival - *In the Wind*; NAACP Award: Best Ensemble - *All My Sons*. (MFA – UC San Diego) [www.akmurtadha.com](http://www.akmurtadha.com)

**NICOLE A. WATSON (Director, *THE GREAT SOCIETY*)** Credits include the world premieres of Kevin R. Free's *Night of The Living N-Word*, Johnna Adams' *World Builders*(CATF), and the opera *Approaching Ali* (Washington National Opera). She has also directed productions of *Our Lady of Kibeho* (Smith College), *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*(North Carolina School of the Arts), and *The Mountaintop* (Kitchen Theatre). She is a frequent volunteer with the 52<sup>nd</sup> Street Project and has worked at the Lark Play Development Center, New Dramatists, Signature Theatre, the Public Theater, Working Theater, and The Fire This Time Festival. Nicole has taught at NYU, the Tribeca Film Institute, and the St. Louis Language Immersion School. She is an alum of the Drama League, the Lincoln Center Directors Lab and the Women's Project Directors Lab. [nicoleawatson.com](http://nicoleawatson.com)

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## **PUBLIC PROGRAMMING**

### **OUT@AsoloRep: *THE GREAT SOCIETY***

Saturday, January 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 ***THE GREAT SOCIETY*** 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, and Community Foundation of Sarasota County - Our Sarasota Fund and McCauley Brown Fund.**

### **Inside Asolo Rep: *THE GREAT SOCIETY* and *The Originalist***

Wednesday, January 25 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 GREAT SOCIETY*** and *The Originalist*, and engage in stimulating discussion inspired by the plays' themes and issues.

**Inside Asolo Rep is sponsored by Hotel Indigo and the Observer**

### ***THE GREAT SOCIETY* IllumiNation Event**

Saturday, February 11 at 1pm

Pre-show 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 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.**

**The Scoop**

One hour prior to every performance of **THE GREAT SOCIETY**  
Asolo Rep's Mertz Theatre, orchestra level

Arrive one hour before curtain to hear the ideas and inspirations that contributed to the making of **THE GREAT SOCIETY**. (Opening Night, January 13, is excluded.)

**Tuesday Talkbacks**

Every Tuesday throughout the run  
Asolo Rep's Mezzanine

Join us for an intimate post-show discussion with featured actors or guests following every Tuesday performance of **THE GREAT SOCIETY**.

**Meet the Actors**

Sunday, January 22 at 2pm  
Asolo Rep's Mertz Theatre

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

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**TICKETS**

Tickets for **THE GREAT SOCIETY** and the entire 2016-2017 Asolo Repertory Theatre season are on sale now. Tickets for **THE GREAT SOCIETY** start at \$26.

To purchase tickets, call 941.351.8000 or 800.361.8388, visit [www.asolarep.org](http://www.asolarep.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.

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## **SPONSORS**

Asolo Rep is able to present **THE GREAT SOCIETY** because of the generosity of its sponsors. Corporate sponsors for **THE GREAT SOCIETY** are Plumbing Today, Innovative Dining, Williams Parker and SNN. 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 Huisking 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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## **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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