



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: Feb. 13, 2015

ARIZONA THEATRE COMPANY'S 2015-16 SEASON SPOTLIGHTS 4 ARIZONA PREMIERES, 2 PULITZER PRIZE WINNERS AND A GREAT AMERICAN CLASSIC

Arizona Theatre Company's 2015-16 season brings the return of master entertainer Hershey Felder, a mind-bending new comedy from the producer of HBO's *Real Time With Bill Maher*, the provocative 2013 Pulitzer Prize-winning Broadway play, an August Wilson masterpiece, John Steinbeck's classic American tale *Of Mice and Men* and a new musical from Stephen Schwartz of *Wicked* and *Godspell* fame.

The 49th mainstage season opens with the eagerly anticipated return of Hershey Felder to ATC in his newest role in ***Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin***, and is followed by the Arizona premiere of Ayad Akhtar's scintillating hit Broadway play, ***Disgraced***. Stephen Schwartz's new musical, ***Snapshots***, brings some of Schwartz's favorite songs into a new context wrapped in a story filled with humanity and family. Winter brings two great American classics with August Wilson's masterpiece ***Fences*** brought to life by some favorite returning ATC artists, and John Steinbeck's classic tale of friendship in hard circumstances, ***Of Mice and Men***. The season comes to a sparkling close with the witty Arizona premiere of Scott Carter's new play, ***The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord***.

"We are looking forward to what promises to be one of our most artistically substantial seasons ever," said Artistic Director David Ira Goldstein in announcing the slate of plays. "These are not only entertaining works full of theatricality, but they resonate with large themes, big emotions, provocative thoughts and timely issues. The season will bring a return of some of our favorite artistic collaborators, with some new artists who I can't wait to share with our community in their ATC debuts."

The 2015-16 season includes:

• ***Hershey Felder As Irving Berlin***, lyrics and music by Irving Berlin, Book by Hershey Felder, directed by Trevor Hay. **Arizona Premiere.** In Tucson, Sept. 16 to Oct. 4 and in Phoenix from Oct. 8-25.

From the depths of Czarist Russia, to New York's Lower East Side, and ultimately all of America and the world, Irving Berlin's story epitomizes the American dream. Hershey Felder, a bravura performer, compelling storyteller, and superb concert pianist, who thrilled us with *George Gershwin Alone*, returns to ATC in another tour-de-force. This time, Felder brings to vibrant life the remarkable story of "America's Composer." Featuring Irving Berlin's most popular and enduring songs – from "*Alexander's Ragtime Band*" to "*God Bless America*" to "*White Christmas*" - Hershey Felder's performance makes this evening an unforgettable journey. "Remarkable! Richly entertaining and ultimately touching." – *Los Angeles Times*

• ***Disgraced*** by Ayad Akhtar, directed by David Ira Goldstein. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. **Arizona Premiere.** In Tucson, Oct. 17 to Nov. 7 and in Phoenix, Nov. 12-29.

There are some topics you just shouldn't discuss at a dinner party. *Disgraced* is the critically acclaimed, Pulitzer Prize-winning current Broadway hit about the stories we tell our friends, the secrets we tell our lovers, and the lies we tell ourselves. Written by one of the most astonishing new voices in American theater, this provocative tale dares to face the truth hiding just below the deception. In *Disgraced*, what begins as polite table conversation explodes, leaving everyone's relationships and beliefs about race and identity in shards. We are thrilled to bring you the regional premiere of this blistering Broadway hit. "Terrific, turbulent, *Disgraced* comes roaring to life!" – *New York Times*

• ***Snapshots: A Musical Scrapbook*** Music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, book by David Stern. **Arizona Premiere.** In Tucson, Nov. 29 to Dec. 19 and in Phoenix from Dec. 30 to Jan. 17, 2016.

This new romantic musical comedy blends some of the best-loved songs from composer Stephen Schwartz's Broadway shows (*Wicked*, *Godspell*) with some of his lesser-known gems. Meet Sue and Dan, a couple, who, after 20 years of marriage have drifted apart. Together they discover a box of photographs which leads them to relive the memories of their past selves along with their relationships with family and friends. *Snapshots* re-imagines favorites from Stephen Schwartz's vast catalogue in new and exciting ways in a story in which every couple will see themselves. A moving, gorgeous new musical from one of Broadway's legends. "Truly superb!" – *Chicago Tribune*

• **Fences** by August Wilson, directed by Lou Bellamy. Winner of the Tony Award for Best Play and Pulitzer Prize for Drama. *Production Sponsor: The Stonewall Foundation*. In Tucson, Jan.16 to Feb. 2 and in Phoenix, Feb. 11-28.

One of the most beloved plays of our time, *Fences* tells the gripping story of sanitation worker Troy Maxson, a star baseball player whose career was blunted by the racism prevalent in pre-Jackie Robinson America. Feeling his world rapidly changing, Troy builds a fence to protect what is familiar and hold off what threatens. Muscular and lyrical, this August Wilson blockbuster shows what can happen when a strong man is robbed of his dreams. *Fences* tells the searing story of a man who stepped up to the plate too many times only to go down swinging. *Fences* is a stunning play that is as American as baseball itself. "A blockbuster and a major American play." – *New York Daily News*

• **Of Mice and Men** by John Steinbeck, directed by Mark Clements. Winner of the NY Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play. In Tucson, March 5-26 and Phoenix, March 31 to April 17.

Emotional and stirring, John Steinbeck's classic *Of Mice and Men* follows two friends – Lennie and George – as they drift from job to job across the fields and farms of Central California during the hardship of 1920s America. In a time when dreams seemed a thing of the past, these two unlikely friends dare to believe in a better life. This timeless tale of friendship, loneliness, loyalty, sacrifice, and the human connections that are our bedrock for survival in desperate times are as vibrantly resonant and relevant now as ever before. "A pulls-no-punches American classic." – *Wall Street Journal*

• **The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord** by Scott Carter, directed by Matt August. **Arizona Premiere**. In Tucson, April 9-30 and in Phoenix, May 5-22.

A Founding Father, a Victorian novelist and a Russian revolutionary walk into a ... stop me if you've heard this one. Join us for a laugh-out-loud, whip-smart new comedy as *Discord* takes the third U.S. President, the author of *War and Peace*, and the author of *A Christmas Carol*, locks them in room with 'no exit', and has them hash out their views of scripture and the true meaning of existence. A fierce battle of wits from Scott Carter, Executive Producer of HBO's *Real Time with Bill Maher*, this perceptive new comedy examines what happens when great men of history are forced to repeat it. "Funny and thought-provoking ... Hilariously theatrical!" – *Los Angeles Times*

Season tickets for performances at the Temple of Music and Art in Tucson and the Herberger Theater Center in Phoenix are now on sale through

www.arizonatheatre.org/subscribe. Current subscribers renewing by Feb. 20 will be able to keep their current seat locations and receive vouchers for two admissions to any performance during the 2015-16 season by calling (520) 622-2823 in Tucson or (602) 256-6995 in Phoenix.

For more information, visit www.arizonatheatre.org.

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About Arizona Theatre Company:

Arizona Theatre Company (ATC) is the preeminent fully professional theatre in the state of Arizona committed to inspiring, engaging, and entertaining - one moment, one production, and one audience at a time. Boasting the largest seasonal subscriber base in the performing arts in Arizona, ATC is the only resident company in the U.S. that is fully based in two cities providing its wide array of programming and community outreach across the region. Now in its 48th season, more than 130,000 people a year attend our performances at the historic Temple of Music and Art in Tucson, and the elegant Herberger Theater Center in downtown Phoenix. Each season of home-grown productions reflects the rich variety of world drama—from classics to contemporary plays, from musicals to new works—along with a wide array of community outreach programs, educational opportunities, access initiatives and new play programs. Designated The State Theatre of Arizona, ATC is led by Artistic Director David Ira Goldstein, Interim Managing Director Matt Lehrman, Managing Director Emeritus Jessica L. Andrews, and a dedicated Board of Trustees.