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**For Immediate Release**

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## American Stage presents **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING**

The 2017-18 Season continues with the original ROM-COM, Shakespeare-style, set in the Florida Key and full of music and dance! #asMUCHADO

### GET IN-THE-KNOW ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

1. Producing Artistic Director, Stephanie Gularte makes her American Stage performing debut.
2. Shakespeare returns to American Stage in nearly a decade with theatre's Original ROM-COM.
3. This production is set in the Florida Keys at the end of the World War II Era.

**St. Petersburg, FL** – American Stage continues its 2017-18 Season 'WE THE PEOPLE' with the original romantic comedy, **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING** by William Shakespeare and directed by Benjamin T. Ismail. American Stage brings Shakespeare back to their mainstage. **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING** (last produced at Shakespeare in the Park in 2004) will have a modern spin while exuding nostalgia from Key West during the forties. Producing Artistic Director, Stephanie Gularte selected this production for the season to share its whimsy, humor and heart with audience members.

*"It has been 11 years since American Stage in the Park produced a Shakespeare play (Over 9 years since **HAMLET** on Mainstage). I am very excited to reintroduce the Bard to our audiences through the intimate setting of our mainstage, where Shakespeare's language, characters and story-telling can be fully appreciated." - Stephanie Gularte, Producing Artistic Director*

*"I have always been especially attracted to Shakespeare. There is true magic in finding contemporary resonance and humor in material hundreds of years old. I look forward to be infusing **MUCH ADO** with a fresh stylized interpretation of the local pizzazz and nostalgic flair of 1940's Key West. It's shaping up to be a gorgeous show with loads of fun and heart-string tugs." - Benjamin T. Ismail, Director*

Full of music and dance, and set against the backdrop of the Florida Keys at the end of the World War II era, this exuberant and festive play reminds us that no one is immune when it comes to matters of the heart. The original Romantic Comedy couple, Beatrice (**Producing Artistic Director Stephanie Gularte\* making her American Stage performing debut**) and Benedick (Brock Vickers\*), face off in a hilarious battle of wits in this American Stage take on Shakespeare's famous romantic comedy about the war between the sexes. **COME TOGETHER** as **WE THE PEOPLE...ARE RIDICULOUS IN LOVE.**

*"We're setting our **MUCH ADO** in the late WWII era in the Florida Keys. This is a time when gender roles were shifting, with men returning home from war finding women to be much more independent than when they'd left. And the locale of the Keys provides the tropical, military port that is consistent with Shakespeare's backdrop for **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING**" - Stephanie Gularte, Producing Artistic Director*

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MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING will have 15 cast members and 10 of which will be making their American Stage debut featuring Stephanie Gularte\*, Brock Vickers, Andrew Vertucci, Michael Raver\*, Margee Sapowsky, Don Walker, Tato Castillo, Kody Hopkins, Tarilabo Koripamo, and Courtney McLaren.

Straight from THE ROYALE, Lisa Kay Powers\* (Director for THE ROYALE) returns with actor Richard Watson\* (THE ROYALE). The following familiar performers will also be returning to the stage, Juliana Davis\* (INFORMED CONSENT), Jim Sorensen\* (IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE), and Matt Acquard (HAIRSPRAY).

***“One of the most satisfying plays in the canon, MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, was selected because of its whimsy, humor and heart and because it is an excellent introduction to some of Shakespeare's most memorable characters.” - Stephanie Gularte, Producing Artistic Director***

The following includes information on the cast, production, performance dates, and ticketing information, as well as a listing of special events associated with the production.

## **ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT**

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE** was an English poet, playwright, and actor. He was born on 26 April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. His father was a successful local businessman and his mother was the daughter of a landowner. Shakespeare is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and nicknamed the Bard of Avon. He wrote about 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses, of which the authorship of some is uncertain. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.

## **CAST**

**Lisa Kay Powers\*** (Antonia)

**Stephanie Gularte\*** (Beatrice)

**Brock Vickers** (Benedick)

**Andrew Vertucci** (Borachio)

**Matt Acquard** (Claudio)

**Richard Watson\*** (Dogberry)

**Michael Raver\*** (Don John)

**Jim Sorensen\*** (Don Pedro)

**Margee Sapowsky** (Hero)

**Don Walker** (Leonato)

**Juliana Davis\*** (Margaret/Verges)

**Tato Castillo, Kody Hopkins, Tarilabo Koripamo, and Courtney McLaren** (Apprentice Ensemble)

## **CREATIVE**

**Benjamin T. Ismail** (Director)

**Juliana Davis** (Choreographer)

**Jerid Fox** (Scenic Designer/ Properties Master)

**Ryan Finzelber** (Lighting Designer)

**Frank Chavez** (Costume Designer)

**Rachel Harrison\*** (Production Stage Manager)

**Benjamin T. Ismail & Rachel Harrison** (Sound Designers)

**Elysse Helms** (Scenic Artist)

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\* = Member of Actors' Equity Association; # = Member of the United Scenic Artists Union

For Cast Bios please visit [americanstage.org/MUCHADO](http://americanstage.org/MUCHADO)

LINK to press releases: [AmericanStage.org/media](http://AmericanStage.org/media)

LINK to promotional photos: [Flickr American Stage](https://www.flickr.com/photos/americanstage/)

*\*Photo credit: Joey Clay Photography. Please note that publicity photos are not typically available until 2 weeks prior to opening. Please contact [marketing@americanstage.org](mailto:marketing@americanstage.org) for immediate needs.*

## FEATURED EVENTS

**Spotlight Series: BEHIND-THE-SCENES:** Sun, October 29 | 1PM

**Opening Night + Signature Art Unveiled:** Fri, November 10, 8pm, \$59 tickets (includes opening night reception at 7pm, and a dessert reception with the cast following the performance.)

**Spotlight Series: CHATBACK:** Thurs, November 16, Sun, November 19, & Sun, November 26 (Post-Performance)

**WE THE PEOPLE - Artist Meet & Greet Reception & Young Professionals Night:**

Fri, November 17 | Happy Hour 6-8PM | Performance at 8PM

**LADIES Night:** Fri, November 24 | Happy Hour at 7PM | Performance at 8PM

**Spotlight Series: COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS:** Tues, November 28 | 7PM

**PRIDE PLUS Night:** Fri, December 1 | Happy Hour at 7PM | Performance at 8PM

## FEATURED VISUAL ARTIST

**Laura Spencer, featured artist for MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING will unveil her Signature Original Artwork on Opening Night which will kick-off a gallery show that will be up through the close of the production.** This 2017-18 Season, 'WE THE PEOPLE', celebrates a partnership with local talents of seven visual artists and one photographer to create elements of the 2017-18 season selections. For MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, American Stage is collaborating with Laura Spencer. Laura created artistic elements which were used in MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING show art, which will be seen throughout the season.

Laura will be invited to attend rehearsals, interact with the development of the set, lighting and costume designers which will further inform his artistic perspective. Inspired by the collaborative creative process of theatre-making, Laura will create a Signature Original Artwork that will be donated as a fundraiser for the American Stage 40FORWARD fund campaign.

Going one step further in this process, American Stage will donate the use of their gallery space to further highlight the impact of artists of all disciplines within the community. Laura Spencer with George Retkes will present a **Gallery Show & Artist Reception, sponsored by Creative Loafing**, at American Stage on Friday, November 17. This exhibit will run concurrently with MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING and have a Florida theme. This season American Stage asks the community to be a part of the WE THE PEOPLE movement and celebrate the arts in the Tampa Bay area!

**"WE THE PEOPLE evokes the power and prowess of the individual, and how a group of individuals can come together, creating powerful and meaningful change." – Laura Spencer, Featured Visual Artist for MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING**

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## BEFORE & AFTER THE SHOW

Throughout the run of MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, ticket holders are invited to arrive early for an exclusive **PROLOGUE** presented by select American Stage apprentice Kody Hopkins 30 minutes prior to each performance.

American Stage is also excited to launch **TGIF!** where guests can kick off their weekend in style and join us for fancy, fun, fierce, and fabulous nights out at the theatre the first four Fridays of every mainstage production.

Also, enjoy drink specials every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night during Happy Hour and post-show. Stick around after the show for lively café conversations. You never know what special guest may arrive.

## TALKS & EVENTS – FULL DETAILS

American Stage has also programmed several audience experience opportunities surrounding the production of MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING. Visit [americanstage.org/MUCHADO](http://americanstage.org/MUCHADO) and click the **TALKS & EVENTS** tab for a full listing of events.

Sunday, October 29 | 1PM

### Spotlight Series: BEHIND-THE-SCENES

*Benjamin T. Ismail (Director), Jerid Fox (Set Designer), and Frank Chavez (Costume Designer)*

The perfect primer! Take a peek behind the curtain before the opening of each production with this informative and entertaining presentation about the play, the playwright, and the American Stage artists who bring it all to life. Professor Emerita Dedee Aleccia will provide relevant details about the history and central themes of the play, while members of the artistic team will give an insider's perspective on their process.

*Pricing: \$10 for General Public. Free for American Stage Subscribers and Act 1 Club Members*

Friday, November 10 | Reception at 7PM | Performance at 8pm

### Opening Night + Signature Art Unveiling by Laura Spencer

Celebrate with the stars! Enjoy a pre-show reception sponsored by **David Bilyeu's Bayou Catering** with hors d'oeuvres and an open bar, rub elbows with the cast & creative team, witness the unveiling of an original piece of art inspired by MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, and be among the first to see one of our first-class productions. There will also be a post-show dessert reception with the cast.

Thursday, November 16, Sunday, November 19, & Sunday, November 26 (Post-Performance)

### Spotlight Series: CHATBACK

Stick around immediately following select performances to talk with the cast and other audience members while the experience of the play is fresh! Ask questions about the play, the characters, and the process, plus respond to the story and ideas aroused by the production. Free for ticket holders to the performance.

Friday, November 17 | Happy Hour 6-8PM | Performance at 8PM

### WE THE PEOPLE - Artist Meet and Greet Reception & Young Professionals Night

On the second Friday, stop by our lobby to celebrate the visual artwork of **Laura Spencer with George Retkes**. American Stage will host a gallery show for four weeks and will also display an original work inspired by the art on stage. **Community Engagement Sponsor: Creative Loafing**

**PLUS - Young Professionals Night:** Young professional under 40 can enjoy drink specials and conversation with the artists. YOUNG AMERICANS between the ages of 21-29 can access \$15 tickets with promo code UNDER30. Code can only be used for one ticket per order when purchased online. Otherwise you can call the Box Office at 727-823-7529 or email [youngamerican@americanstage.org](mailto:youngamerican@americanstage.org).

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Friday, November 24 | Happy Hour at 7PM | Performance at 8PM

**LADIES Night:**

Grab friends, bring a date and turn your ordinary Friday evening into a scintillating, one-of-a-kind night out highlighting some really awesome local women.

Tuesday, October November 28 | 7PM

**Spotlight Series: COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS**

Great theatre inspires contemplation and challenges our assumptions while inviting us to come together for conversation and a deeper connection. From social and political hot-button issues to ethical dilemmas, American Stage's COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS dig deeper into the intriguing and sometimes provocative topics explored by our mainstage productions. Join a panel of local experts as they guide us through a lively discussion, and answer questions about the relevancy of the subject matter explored in the play.

*Pricing: \$10 for General Public. Free for American Stage Subscribers and Act 1 Club Members*

Friday, December 1 | Happy Hour at 7PM | Performance at 8PM

**PRIDE PLUS Night**

**Happy Hour at 7PM | Performance at 8PM**

Enjoy a night OUT at the theatre, with Happy Hour drink specials, and meet some local LGBT+ trendsetters and change-makers.

## AT A GLANCE

**WHAT:** American Stage presents MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING by William Shakespeare

**WHERE:** Raymond James Theatre  
163 3rd Street North  
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

**WHEN:** November 8 – December 10, 2017

Preview Wednesday, November 8, 7pm, "Pay What You Can"

Preview Thursday, November 9, 8pm, \$29 tickets

Opening Night: Friday, November 10, 8pm, \$59 tickets (includes opening night reception at 7pm, and a dessert reception with the cast following the performance.)

Continues: Wednesdays-Sundays through December 10, 2017

Arrive 30 minutes early to get the inside scoop on the play.

### TIMES & PRICES

Wednesdays 7pm, \$39 tickets

Thursdays 8pm, \$39 tickets

Fridays & Saturdays 8pm, \$49 tickets

Saturdays & Sundays 3pm, \$39 tickets

### SERVICE & FACILITIES

**Physical Accessibility:** The theatre features accessible parking, entrances, restrooms, and seating.

*Displaying a valid disabled parking permit will allow you to park at City metered spaces for FREE, for as long as your event requires, including those posted with time limit signs (green signs). **This does not apply to loading zones or otherwise restricted parking signage (red signs).***

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**Large Print Program:** Theatregoers may peruse large print programs for each Mainstage production.

**Listening System:** Theatregoers may enjoy the free infrared listening system from any seat.



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## **AMERICAN STAGE | AS/40**

American Stage celebrates **40 Years Strong** this season. Since 1977, American Stage, has contributed to the vitality of Tampa Bay as a regional professional theatre. American Stage's mission is to reinforce the power of live theatre with high quality productions that excite and challenge a diverse audience. Our year-round programming seeks to realize this through our Mainstage season, Spotlight Series, 21st Century Voices: New Play Festival, American Stage in the Park and Improv. American Stage Education's offerings include award-winning Teaching Artist Outreach focused on bringing theatrical arts experiences to underserved populations, helping them to excel onstage & beyond.

We believe that through the telling of dynamic stories, live theatre has the power to unite us in our shared experiences and to deepen our connection to one another through the illumination of diverse perspectives. American Stage artists and stakeholders are responsible for helping a small theatre touring company blossom into a thriving world-class professional theatre providing nearly 70,000 Tampa Bay residents and tourists with accessible, relevant art and arts education annually.

**Powerful Stories. Boldly Told. 40 Years Strong.**

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**



@americanstage

## **BOX OFFICE INFORMATION:**

**Phone:** (727) 823-PLAY (7529)

**Email:** [BoxOffice@americanstage.org](mailto:BoxOffice@americanstage.org)

**Location:** 163 3<sup>rd</sup> St. North, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

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