

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE PRESENTS

Guys and Dolls

A Musical Fable of Broadway

Based on a Story and Characters of Damon Runyon

Music and Lyrics by Frank Loesser

Book by Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows

Directed by Bill English, Music Direction by Dave Dobrusky, Choreography by Nicole Helfer

November 16, 2023 – January 13, 2024 (opening night: November 22, 2023)

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (17 October 2023) — Offering a snappy spin for the holiday season, **San Francisco Playhouse** will stage a new look at the Broadway hit *Guys and Dolls*. Inspired by Damon Runyon’s stories about post-prohibition New York, Frank Loesser, Abe Burrows, and Jo Swerling’s beloved musical tale of gamblers, gangsters, and betting on love follows two unlikely pairs: a high-roller wooing an uptight missionary to win a bet, and a burlesque dancer whose slippery long-time fiancé can’t seem to commit. Helmed by San Francisco Playhouse Artistic Director **Bill English** with music direction by **Dave Dobrusky** and choreography by **Nicole Helfer**, the Playhouse’s new production reexamines the classic musical, bringing alive Damon Runyon’s gritty world of New York’s Lower East Side and Harlem during the 1930s. An uplifting story of redemption perfect for the holiday season, *Guys and Dolls* will perform **November 16, 2023 – January 13, 2024** (opening night: November 22, 2023) at San Francisco Playhouse, 450 Post Street. For tickets (\$15-\$125) and more information, the public may visit sfplayhouse.org or call the box office at **415-677-9596**.

Filled to the brim with beloved Broadway standards including “Luck Be a Lady,” “Sit Down, You’re Rocking the Boat,” and “I’ve Never Been in Love Before,” *Guys and Dolls* premiered on Broadway in 1950, winning the Tony Award for Best Musical. It has since received five Broadway revivals and has been performed around the world. *The Washington Post* lauded “Frank Loesser’s priceless score” and called the show a “magnitude of delight.” In 2015, *The New York Times* said, “There are many students of the form who proclaim ‘Guys and Dolls’ the best musical comedy ever, and they may well be right.”

San Francisco Playhouse has assembled a thrilling cast of talented actors. **Melissa WolfKlain** (she/her) returns to the Playhouse as Adelaide, a burlesque dancer trying to drag her long-time fiancé to the altar. Seen as Val in last summer’s *A Chorus Line*, WolfKlain also performed in the Playhouse’s productions of *Cabaret* and *Starting Here, Starting Now*. She won a Theatre Bay Area (TBA) Award for *Dames at Sea* at 42nd Street Moon as well as San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle (SFBATCC) Awards for her appearances in Broadway by the Bay’s *Singin’ in the Rain* and *Crazy for You*. Seen in the national tours of *White Christmas* and *42nd Street*, WolfKlain has also performed at regional theatres including TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Hillbarn Theatre, and Arizona Repertory Theatre, and her film and TV credits include FOX TV’s “America’s Most Wanted” and Lifetime’s “The Truth about Jane.”

Joel Roster (he/him) makes his Playhouse debut as Nathan Detroit, a tough guy who facilitates illegal gambling and is committed to not committing to Adelaide. Roster is a multiple award-winning actor, director, and playwright. For the last 20 years, Roster has performed all over the Bay Area with

companies including Broadway SF, Shotgun Players, Ray of Light Theatre, Center Repertory Company, Contra Costa Musical Theatre, Berkeley Playhouse, and many others. Roster is also the founder and Artistic Director of The Other Other Theatre Company (or TOOTCo).

Seen as Celia in last season's *As You Like It*, **Abigail Esfira Campbell** (she/her) returns to the Playhouse as Sarah Brown, a straitlaced and idealistic missionary with an adventurous side. Campbell's credits include playing Ariel in Disney's *The Little Mermaid* at Sierra Repertory Theatre, Molly in *Peter and the Starcatcher* at Adrienne Arsht Center, and Andy in the original cast of *Coming Soon: A New Rock Musical* at Z Space.

David Toshiro Crane (he/him) makes his Playhouse debut as Sky Masterson, a charming and self-assured gambler. Crane has performed with TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Sacramento Theatre Company, Capital Stage, Youth Musical Theater Company, Hillbarn Theatre, and Mountain Play Association.

Performing in the Playhouse's *Songs for a New World*, *Mary Poppins*, *A Christmas Story*, and *She Loves Me*, **Kay Loren** (they/them) returns as Nicely-Nicely Johnson, a cheerful and eccentric gambler. Loren has also worked with American Conservatory Theater, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Center Repertory Company, Hillbarn Theatre, Berkeley Playhouse, 42nd Street Moon, and Ray of Light Theatre.

Recently seen in the Playhouse's summer hit productions of *A Chorus Line* as Richie and *Follies* as Young Buddy, **Chachi Delgado** (he/him) returns as Benny Southstreet, a slick gambler who is Nathan's righthand man. Delgado has also appeared onstage at the Mountain Play, San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Company, African-American Shakespeare Company, and Oakland Theater Project (Ubuntu Theater Project).

Miles Meckling (he/him) makes his Playhouse debut as Harry the Horse, a crook and a gambler. Meckling's regional credits include performances with 42nd Street Moon, Sierra Repertory Theatre, Center Repertory Company, Woodminster Summer Musicals, and Sacramento Theatre Company.

Jessica Coker (she/her) makes her Playhouse debut as Big Jule, an intimidating hustler. Coker has performed with American Conservatory Theater, Ray of Light Theatre, Berkeley Playhouse, 42nd Street Moon, New Conservatory Theatre Center, SFBATCO, and Broadway By the Bay. She is also the General Manager of Ray of Light Theatre.

Appearing as Sheila in *A Chorus Line* last summer, **Alison Ewing** (she/her) returns as General Cartwright, the authoritative regional director of the Save-A-Soul Mission. Ewing has been seen on Broadway in *Mamma Mia!* and Roundabout Theatre Company's *Cabaret*. She has performed in the national tours of *Anastasia*, *An American In Paris*, *Cabaret*, *Flashdance*, and *Mamma Mia!*. In the Bay Area, she's appeared onstage with TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, San Jose Stage Company, Marin Theatre Company, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Center Repertory Company, Playhouse West, and Theatre On San Pedro Square. Her TV and film credits include "Ally McBeal" and "Six Feet Under."

Seen in *Follies*, **Jill Slyter** (she/they) returns as Arvide Abernathy, the warm, wise leader of the Salvation Army in Times Square. Slyter appeared on Broadway in *Show Boat*, opposite Jerry Lewis as Lola in the national tour of *Damn Yankees*, as Peggy Sawyer in the national tour of *42nd Street*, and as Cassie in several national, European, and international tours and Regional productions of *A Chorus Line*.

She has also performed with Arena Stage, Sierra Repertory Theatre, and Children's Musical Theater San Jose.

Performing in last season's *Chinglish* as well as *La Cage aux Folles* and *A Christmas Story*, **Alex Hsu** returns as Lieutenant Brannigan, a police officer dead set on busting Nathan and his gambling ring. Hsu performed in the national tours of *Irving Berlin's White Christmas* and *The King and I*. Nominated for TBA and SFBATCC Awards, Hsu performed regionally with American Conservatory Theater, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, San Jose Stage Company, Marin Theatre Company, 42nd Street Moon, Palo Alto Players, Hillbarn Theatre, and Broadway By the Bay. Hsu can be seen in Tubi TV's "Production Detail."

Malia Abayon, **Jurä Davis**, and **Brigitte Losey** round out the ensemble, all making their Playhouse debuts. **Malia Abayon** (she/her) has performed with Center Repertory Company and 6th Street Playhouse. **Jurä Davis** (he/him) has also acted with North Carolina Theatre, Walnut Street Theatre, and Piedmont Players Theatre. **Brigitte Losey** (she/her) has been seen onstage at Hillbarn Theatre, Palo Alto Players, Ray of Light Theatre, San Jose Stage Company, Los Altos Stage Company, and Pacifica Spindrift Players.

PRODUCTION TEAM:

Guys and Dolls features assistant direction by **Marie-Claire Erdynast**, music direction by **Dave Dobrusky**, choreography by **Nicole Helfer**, scenic design by **Heather Kenyon**, costume design by **Kathleen Qiu**, lighting design by **York Kennedy**, props design by **Angela Knutson**, and sound design by **James Ard**. **Maya Herbsman** serves as intimacy director, **Kimberly Mohne Hill** is the dialect coach, and **Daren A.C. Carollo** is the stage manager.

CREATIVE TEAM:

Damon Runyon (Story and Characters) was an American short-story writer, journalist, and humorist. He was the archetype of the tough, hardnosed street reporter who fraternized socially with gangsters and hoodlums. He began in the newspaper business as a child and went on to cover news, sports, politics, and crime. He also published verses and short stories in national publications such as *Harper's Weekly* and *McClure's*. By the 1920s, Runyon had developed his own distinct style as a prolific author, and in the late 1930s, began writing and producing movies in Hollywood. Runyon's works served as the basis for 29 feature films, including *Lady for a Day* directed by Frank Capra (1933), *Little Miss Marker* starring Shirley Temple (1934), *The Lemon Drop Kid* starring Bob Hope (1951), and *Pocket Full of Miracles* with Bette Davis (1961). In all, Runyon's literary legacy includes over 700 stories, novellas, plays, articles, essays, and poems. Today he is perhaps best known to millions for *Guys and Dolls*, which has become one of the most produced musicals of all time. Its material comes from two of his stories, "The Idyll of Miss Sarah Brown" and "Blood Pressure" but borrows characters and story elements from several other Runyon stories, most notably "Pick The Winner".

Frank Loesser (Music and Lyrics) has been called one of the most versatile of all Broadway composers. Each of his five Broadway musicals (*Where's Charley?*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Most Happy Fella*, *Greenwillow*, and *How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*), is a unique contribution to musical theater. Before Broadway, Loesser supplied lyrics to the music of such greats as Jule Styne, Burton Lane, and Hoagy Carmichael, penning such hit film songs as "I Don't Want to Walk Without You," "Two Sleepy People," "Heart and Soul," and, as composer/lyricist, "Spring Will Be a Little Late this Year," "On a Slow Boat to China," and his 1949 Academy Award winner "Baby, It's Cold Outside." Loesser won Tony Awards for *Guys and Dolls* and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*

as well as the Pulitzer Prize in Drama for *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

Jo Swerling (Book) was an Academy Award-nominated screenwriter and playwright. His work includes the comedy *Street Cinderella* for the Marx Brothers—he also wrote their first movie, the unreleased silent comedy *Humor Risk*. He scored success by writing the book and lyrics for the musical revue *The New Yorkers* and the play *The Kibitzer*, before moving to Hollywood to write the screenplay for the Frank Capra picture *Ladies of Leisure*, the first of several collaborations with the director. His screenplays also include *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Platinum Blonde*, *Behind the Mask*, *Pride of the Yankees*, *Lifeboat*, and *Leave Her to Heaven*. He provided some uncredited writing for the *Gone With the Wind* screenplay.

Abe Burrows (Book) was a radio humorist, songwriter, singer and pianist, television personality, panelist, playwright, and stage director. His collaborations with Frank Loesser earned him four Tony Awards (Best Musical for *Guys and Dolls* and Best Musical, Book, and Direction for *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*) and the Pulitzer Prize in Drama (for *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*). He also wrote, directed, or doctored *Can-Can*; *Make a Wish*; *Silk Stockings*; *Breakfast at Tiffany's*; *Say, Darling*; *Two on the Aisle*; *Three Wishes for Jamie*; *Happy Hunting*; *Good News*; and *Cactus Flower*.

Bill English (Director, he/ him) is the co-founder and Artistic Director of **San Francisco Playhouse**. Alongside co-founder Susi Damilano, he has guided its growth from a bare-bones storefront to the second-largest nonprofit theatre company in San Francisco. English designed the Playhouse's first theatre space at 536 Sutter Street and reconfigured its current space from a 700-seat hall into the current gracious and intimate 199-seat venue. Over the last twenty years, he has served as director, actor, scenic designer, and sound designer, winning SFBATCC nominations or awards in each of those categories. Bill is also an accomplished musician and builder. Milestone accomplishments include introducing Pulitzer Prize winner Stephen Adly Guirgis to the Bay Area by directing three of his plays; commissioning over thirty playwrights including Theresa Rebeck, Aaron Loeb, Lauren Gunderson, Lauren Yee, and Christopher Chen; and developing World Premieres from workshops to Sandbox Series to Mainstage Season to Off-Broadway (including the Off-Broadway transfers of *Ideation* and *Bauer*), and presenting the very first production of *Grounded* by George Brant which later played at the Public Theater. He coined the phrase “the empathy gym,” which drives everything at the Playhouse.

SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE:

Founded by **Bill English** and **Susi Damilano** in 2003, **San Francisco Playhouse** has been described by *The New York Times* as “a company that stages some of the most consistently high-quality work around” and deemed “ever adventurous” by *The Mercury News*. Located in the heart of the Union Square Theater District, **San Francisco Playhouse** is the city's premier Off-Broadway company, an intimate alternative to the larger more traditional Union Square theater fare. The Playhouse provides audiences the opportunity to experience professional theater with top-notch actors and world-class design in a setting where they are close to the action. The company has received multiple awards for overall productions, acting, and design, including the SF Weekly Best Theatre Award and the Bay Guardian's Best Off-Broadway Theatre Award, as well as three consecutive Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards for Best Entire Production in the Bay Area. *KQED/NPR* recently described the company as “one of the few theaters in the Bay Area that has a mission that actually shows up on stage. Artistic director Bill English's commitment to empathy as a guiding philosophical and aesthetic force is admirable and by living that mission, fascinating things happen onstage.” The Playhouse is committed to providing a

creative home and inspiring environment where actors, directors, writers, designers, and theater lovers converge to create and experience dramatic works that celebrate the human spirit.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: Offering a snappy spin for the holiday season, **San Francisco Playhouse** will stage a new look at the Broadway hit ***Guys and Dolls***. Inspired by Damon Runyon’s stories about post-prohibition New York, Frank Loesser, Abe Burrows, and Jo Swerling’s beloved musical tale of gamblers, gangsters, and betting on love follows two unlikely pairs: a high-roller wooing an uptight missionary to win a bet, and a burlesque dancer whose slippery long-time fiancé can’t seem to commit. Helmed by San Francisco Playhouse Artistic Director **Bill English** with music direction by **Dave Dobrusky** and choreography by **Nicole Helfer**, the Playhouse’s new production reexamines the classic musical, bringing alive Damon Runyon’s gritty world of New York’s Lower East Side and Harlem during the 1930s. Filled with beloved Broadway standards including “Luck Be a Lady,” “Sit Down, You’re Rocking the Boat,” and “I’ve Never Been in Love Before,” ***Guys and Dolls*** premiered on Broadway in 1950, winning the Tony Award for Best Musical. It has since received five Broadway revivals and has been performed around the world. *The Washington Post* lauded “Frank Loesser’s priceless score” and called the show a “magnitude of delight.” In 2015, *The New York Times* said, “There are many students of the form who proclaim ‘*Guys and Dolls*’ the best musical comedy ever, and they may well be right.”

WHEN: Previews: Thursday, November 16 – Tuesday, November 21, 2023
Opening: Wednesday, November 22, 2023
Closes: Saturday, January 13, 2024

SHOWS: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 7pm
Wednesdays: 2pm & 7pm
Fridays: 8pm
Saturdays: 3pm & 8pm
Sundays: 2pm

WHERE: San Francisco Playhouse (450 Post Street, San Francisco)

TICKETS: Single tickets (\$15-\$125) and subscriptions are currently available for San Francisco Playhouse’s 2023-24 Season. For more information, the public may visit <https://www.sfplayhouse.org/sfph/2023-2024-season/guys-and-dolls/> or call the box office at 415-677-9596.

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PRESS: Contact Lauren Goldfarb, Carla Befera & Co.
lauren@cb-pr.com

PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available: <http://cbpr.co/press/guysanddolls>