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BERKELEY REP PRESENTS THE WEST COAST PREMIERE OF AYAD AKHTAR’S DISGRACED

The Pulitzer Prize-winning drama explores the complexities of faith and identity in America

September 24, 2015 – Berkeley Repertory Theatre is proud to present the West Coast premiere of Disgraced by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Ayad Akhtar. Critically lauded as “breathtaking, raw and blistering” (Associated Press), and “terrific, turbulent, with fresh currents of dramatic electricity” (New York Times), Disgraced is the story of Amir Kapoor, who is living the American Dream — an upper East Side apartment, Italian suits, and the promise of becoming partner at the law firm. But when he and his wife Emily, an artist influenced by Islamic imagery, host a dinner party for their friends and colleagues, lies and deception threaten to shatter Amir’s carefully constructed life of cultural assimilation. Akhtar won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for this engrossing and combustible drama that probes the complexity of identity, the place of faith in today’s world, and the hidden prejudices still alive in liberal society.

Director Kimberly Senior comes to Berkeley Rep to stage the provocative play that she shepherded from Chicago to its triumphant run on Broadway. Disgraced begins previews Friday, November 6 and runs through Sunday, December 20, 2015. Press night for Disgraced will be held on Friday, November 13, 2015. Individual tickets start at $29 and can be purchased by phone at 510-647-2949 or online at berkeleyrep.org.

Disgraced, produced in association with Goodman Theatre and Seattle Repertory Theatre, stars Bernard White as Amir Kapoor, a successful Muslim American lawyer; Nisi Sturgis (Emily, Amir’s wife and a visual artist); Zakiya Young (Jory, Amir’s co-worker); J. Anthony Crane (Isaac, Jory’s husband); and Behzad Dabu (Amir’s nephew Abe). Headshots and bio information can be found in the Berkeley Rep press room.

“Disgraced has earned a series of accolades for good reason,” says Tony Taccone, Berkeley Rep’s Michael Leibert Artistic Director. “It’s an explosive play about identity, religion, and self-hatred, focused on the story of a Pakistani American man who has chosen to suppress his Muslim heritage in order to expedite his professional success. When he is forced to admit his family heritage, his life spins into chaos. The play tears the mask off of civil platitudes and dares to give voice to arguments about ethnic bias, racial conflict, and religious prejudice. It’s impossible to watch without being swept up into a passionate swirl of contradictory ideas and a thrilling dramatic conflict.”

“I’m thrilled that Disgraced will have its West Coast premiere at Berkeley Rep,” remarks Akhtar. “The play seems to function as a kind of litmus test; it tells you where you are in society, and has the capacity to connect people to themselves and others in a heartfelt way. I’ve gotten an equal amount of feedback from both sides of the Muslim community; some ask, ‘Why are you doing this?’ and others say, ‘Thank God you are doing this!’ Much work was done at every stage of development of Disgraced, but it finally feels like it has found its most mature form.”

Senior adds, “When audiences interact with Disgraced, they think they’ll align with the person who looks like them or who has the same background as they do — and they find very quickly that’s not the case. As an Arab-Jewish woman, I never feel more Jewish than when I’m the only Jew in the room; and the least Jewish I felt was when I was in Israel. I think the play makes the characters stand by their identities and defend their point of view in a way they might not otherwise because each of them is a minority.”

MORE
American Theater Magazine recently named *Disgraced* as the most produced play in the country. The play will be produced at 18 major American regional theatres this season and will have 32 productions in the next 24 months. Akhtar is currently working on the screen adaptation of the play for HBO.

Audiences are invited to meet Akhtar at Berkeley Rep’s Page to Stage, a discussion free that is open to the public designed to give audiences additional insight into the plays and playwrights. Resident Dramaturg Madeleine Oldham will interview Akhtar on Thursday, November 19 at 7:00 PM at the Goldman Theater at the Brower Center, 2150 Allston Way, in Berkeley. Past Page to Stage discussions have featured theatre luminaries such as David Edgar, Sarah Jones, Tony Kushner, Delroy Lindo, Donald Margulies, Terrence McNally, Charles Mee, Rita Moreno, Salman Rushdie, and the Chicano performance trio Culture Clash. For more information visit http://www.berkeleyrep.org/season/1516/9311.asp#tabbed-nav=events

Ayad Akhtar’s (Playwright) plays include *Disgraced* (Broadway, LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater, 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and 2013 Obie Award for Extraordinary Achievement), *The Who & The What* (LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater and La Jolla Playhouse), and *The Invisible Hand* (New York Theatre Workshop/the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis). Also a novelist, Akhtar is the author of *American Dervish*, published in 2012 by Little, Brown and Company and in 20 languages worldwide. He co-wrote and starred in *The War Within* (Magnolia Pictures), which was released internationally and nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for Best Screenplay. As an actor, Akhtar also starred as Neel Kashkari in HBO’s adaptation of Andrew Ross Sorkin’s book *Too Big to Fail*. He studied at Brown University and Columbia University’s School of the Arts.

Kimberly Senior (Director) directed the Broadway premiere of *Disgraced*, which she previously directed off Broadway at Lincoln Center Theater. Her other off-Broadway credits include *The Who & The What* (Lincoln Center Theater). Her regional credits include *Little Gem* (City Theatre), *Murder on the Nile* and *A Few Good Men* (Peninsula Players), *The Who & The What* (La Jolla Playhouse), and *Mauritius* (TheatreSquared). Her Chicago credits include *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Hedda Gabler*, and *The Letters* (Writers Theatre, where she is a resident director); 4000 Miles and *The Whipping Man* (Northlight Theatre); *Want* and *The North Plan* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *My Name Is Asher Lev*, *All My Sons*, and *Dolly West's Kitchen* (TimeLine Theatre Company, where she is an associate artist); *Disgraced* (American Theater Company); *The Great God Pan, After the Revolution, Madagascar, The Overwhelming*, and *The Busy World Is Hushed* (Next Theatre Company); *Waiting for Lefty* (American Blues Theater); *Uncle Vanya, Conquests of the South Pole, Fuddy Meers, The Cherry Orchard*, and *Old Times* (Strawdog Theatre Company); *Bug* (Redtwist Theatre); and *Cassanova, Apocalyptic Butterflies, The Life and Times of Tulsa Lovechild: a Road Trip, Trojan Women*, and *Three Sisters* (Collaboration, of which she is a founder). Senior was a 2013 finalist for the SDCF Joe A. Callaway Award and the Zelda Fichandler Award.

The creative team includes John Lee Beatty (scenic designer), Jennifer Von Mayrhauser (costume designer), Christine A. Binder (lighting designer), and Jill DuBoff (sound designer). The stage manager for *Disgraced* is Julie Haber.

For the 2015-16 season, Berkeley Rep recognizes the generosity of returning season sponsors BART, Wells Fargo, and KPIX-TV (Channel 5), and welcomes Peet’s Coffee as its fourth official season sponsor. *Disgraced* is made possible thanks to the generous support of season sponsors the Strauch Kulhanjian Family, Jack and Betty Schafer, and Michael and Sue Steinberg, lead sponsors Frances Hellman and Warren Breslau, Stewart and Rachelle Owen, and executive sponsors Bill Falik and Diana Cohen.
ABOUT BERKELEY REP

Berkeley Repertory Theatre has grown from a storefront stage to an international leader in innovative theatre. Known for its core values of imagination and excellence, as well as its educated and adventurous audience, the nonprofit has provided a welcoming home for emerging and established artists since 1968. In four decades, four million people have enjoyed nearly 400 shows at Berkeley Rep. These shows have gone on to win five Tony Awards, seven Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Awards, one Grammy Award, and many other honors. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. Its bustling facilities – which include the 400-seat Thrust Stage, the 600-seat Roda Theatre, the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, the Osher Studio, and a spacious new campus in West Berkeley – are helping revitalize a renowned city. Learn more at berkeleyrep.org.

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FACT SHEET

DISGRACED

WHO: Written by Ayad Akhtar
Directed by Kimberly Senior
Produced in association with Goodman Theatre and Seattle Repertory Theatre
Featuring: J. Anthony Crane (Isaac), Behzad Dabu (Abe), Nisi Sturgis (Emily), Bernard White (Amir), and Zakiya Young (Jory)

Creative team: John Lee Beatty (scenic designer), Christine A. Binder (lighting designer), Jennifer Von Mayrhauser (costume designer), and Jill DuBoff (sound designer).

WHAT: Amir Kapoor is living the American Dream. But when he and his wife Emily, an artist influenced by Islamic imagery, host a dinner party for their friends and colleagues, lies and deception threaten to shatter Amir’s carefully constructed life of cultural assimilation. “A smart and provocative work of unusual daring,” lauds Newsday of this 2013 Pulitzer Prize winner.

WHERE: Berkeley Repertory Theatre
Roda Theatre, 2025 Addison Street @ Shattuck, Berkeley, CA 94704

WHEN: 51 PERFORMANCES: Friday, November 6 – Sunday, Dec 20, 2015
  • Tuesdays and Fridays @ 8:00 PM
  • Wednesdays @ 7:00 PM
  • Thursdays @ 8:00 PM and 2:00 & 8:00 PM on 11/19 and 12/17
  • Saturdays @ 2:00 PM and 8:00 PM; 8 PM only on 11/7 and 11/21
  • Sundays @ 2:00 PM and 7:00 PM; 7 PM only on 11/8
  • No performance on Thursday 11/26

Special Events:
Low-cost previews: Friday 11/6, Saturday 11/7, Tuesday 11/10, and Thursday 11/12 @8:00 PM; Sunday 11/8 & Wednesday 11/11 @ 7:00 PM

Opening Night: Friday 11/13 @ 8:00 PM; includes a pre-show dinner for donors sponsored by Autumn Press, C.G. di Arie Vineyard & Winery, and Hugh Groman Catering @ the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life and a post-show party for audiences.

Teen Night: Friday 11/6 @ 6:15 PM
FREE docent events: Docent talks before Tuesday and Thursday evening performances and discussions after all matinees.

Post-play discussions: Tuesday 12/1, Friday 12/11, and Tuesday 12/15 following the performance; Wednesday 11/18 in partnership with scholars from the Graduate Theological Union.

Page to Stage: A discussion with playwright Ayad Akhtar free and open to the public; Thursday 11/19 @ 7:00pm at the Goldman Theater at the David Brower Center, located at 2150 Allston Way (near Oxford Street).

HOW MUCH: Premium: $48–89 · Section A: $41–73 · Section B: $29–60 (subject to change) TIX & INFO: (510) 647-2949 – berkeleyrep.org Discounts: Half-price tickets available for anyone under 30 years of age; $10 discount for students and seniors one hour before curtain; Groups of 10 or more, email groups@berkeleyrep.org

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