



NEWS RELEASE

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In Arabia We'd All Be Kings Crowns Debut of Graduate Ensemble

MFA Acting Program Class of 2014 Takes On Edgy Play by Stephen Adly Guirgis

February 1 – 11, 2012

Calendar Editors: See Fact Sheet for Performance Schedule

CLEVELAND, OH (January 18, 2012) – The Case Western Reserve University/Cleveland Play House MFA Acting Program will present *In Arabia We'd All Be Kings* in the new Helen Rosenfeld Lewis Bialosky Lab Theatre at PlayhouseSquare from February 1 – 11, 2012. Directed by Chair and Director of the MFA program, Ron Wilson, *In Arabia We'd All Be Kings* is a gritty exploration of a seedy NYC bar's clientele penned by Tony®-nominated playwright Stephen Adly Guirgis (*The Motherf**ker with a Hat*). *In Arabia We'd All Be Kings* marks the debut performance of the MFA first year acting graduate ensemble (class of 2014) and offers a unique chance to follow these actors in their graduate training. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$7.50 for students with a valid ID and are on sale now at Cleveland Play House by calling 216.241.6000 or online at www.clevelandplayhouse.com.

ABOUT THE PLAY and PLAYWRIGHT

In Arabia We'd All Be Kings, written by Stephen Adly Guirgis, is a dramatic play that takes place in 1990s New York City. It chronicles the demise of a group of individuals living in New York's Hell's Kitchen around the time of Mayor Rudy Giuliani's efforts to clean up the city. Out of work and strapped for money, the lives of these individuals revolve around a local bar and their misguided hopes and dreams. **Content Advisory:** This play contains mature language and adult situations. Not intended for anyone under 16 years of age.

Guirgis is an American playwright, screenwriter, director, and actor. He is a member and co-artistic director of New York City's LAByrinth Theater Company, where his plays have been originally produced and directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman. Guirgis was nominated for a Tony® Award in 2011 for his most recent play, *The Motherf**ker with the Hat*, which received a total of six nominations.

ABOUT THE MFA ACTING PROGRAM

Since 1996, Cleveland Play House (CPH) has partnered with Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) to offer a Master of Fine Arts degree in Acting. In 2003, it became a conservatory program completely housed at Cleveland Play House.

Every two years, the MFA Acting Program accepts a class of eight actors into its three-year program. All three years are spent in residency at The Play House, providing students with unique access to its vast facilities and the professional expertise of its staff.

The program is designed to instill the physical, mental, and practical techniques needed by today's successful theatre artists. Its intimate class size enables the curriculum and performance experiences to be tailored to suit the specific training needs of each class and individual student. Together, instructors in acting, voice, speech, and movement work to train and assess the progress of each student, integrating the various disciplines in ways that will create maximum flexibility, freedom of expression, and dynamic range, with the ultimate goal of instilling the skills, discipline, and an aesthetic of craft necessary to develop a distinctive and effective actor capable of encompassing the full range of professional demands.

IN ARABIA WE'D ALL BE KINGS cast:

The actors in this production are members of the Case Western Reserve University/Cleveland Play House Master of Fine Arts (MFA) Acting Program, Class of 2014, also known as the Graduate Ensemble.

Therese Anderberg (Demaris) received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Performance from Western Michigan University in 2011. Since graduating, she performed in *So Far From God* at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater for one industry performance, and in an original show at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Bernard Bygott (Lenny/Man #1/Bartender) was born and raised in Center City, Philadelphia, and received his Bachelor of Arts in Theater & Dance from Amherst College. He has not only worked in film and television, but spent a great deal of his performance work in Shakespeare and classical drama at American Shakespeare Center. His musical theatre performance work has included Lincoln Center, Avery Fisher Hall, International Opera Theater, Italy, and Glimmerglass Opera.

Drew Derek (Charlie/Man #2/Holy Roller) received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 2008. Along with a number of acting credits in Buffalo (including the Irish Classical Theatre Company) and New York City, he also performed at the International Theatre Institute in Romania. He has also written and directed for the theater at Manhattan Repertory Theatre (Off-Off Broadway).

Michael Feldsher (Jake/Sal/Greer) was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, and earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He also studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London, England. His performance credits include: Ford's Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre Company, and the Folger Shakespeare Library.

TJ Gainley (Sammy/Vic) was born in Dallas, Texas, and was raised in Fort Collins, Colorado. He received his Bachelor's degree in Theater from Case Western Reserve University in 2008. His other theatrical studies have taken him to the British Academy of Dramatic Art for a semester study abroad, improvisation with Second City and Improv Olympics in Chicago, and the National Theatre Institute. After graduation he spent two years in the Teach for America Program. He's also appeared previously at Cleveland Play House in CWRU /CPH MFA Acting Program productions of *An Orchard* and *As You Like It*.

Christa Hinckley (Chickie) was born in Denver, Colorado, and was raised in Dallas, Texas, and received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatre from Dartmouth College. She spent a transfer term at the Eugene O'Neill National Theatre Center in Connecticut. Her acting credits range from Off-Broadway, Off-Off-Broadway and regionally, as well as TV and film.

Sarah Ann Kinsey (Daisy/Miss Reyes) received her Bachelor's of Music degree in Voice and Theatre from the University of Colorado-Boulder in 2003. She also worked in the Acting Apprentice Company for a year at the Actors' Theatre of Louisville, and she also performed extensively in Chicago on-stage and on-camera.

Stephen Spencer (Skank) received his Bachelor's of Fine Arts degree in Acting from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, North Carolina, in 2011. His performance work includes among others: Triad Stage and North Carolina Shakespeare Festival. He spent this past summer acting in Alabama.

For a complete list of cast bios, go online at <http://www.clevelandplayhouse.com/cwru-cph-mfa/in-arabia-wed-all-be-kings>

IN ARABIA WE'D ALL BE KINGS Creative Team:

Stephen Adly Guirgis (*Playwright*) has been a LAByrinth Company Member since 1994. His plays have been produced on five continents and throughout the United States. They include *Our Lady of 121st Street* (10 best plays of 2003; Lucille Lortel, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle Best Play Nominations), *Jesus Hopped the A Train* (Edinburgh Festival Fringe First Award, Detroit Free Press Best Play of the Year, as well as a Laurence Olivier Nomination for Best New Play), *In Arabia We'd All Be Kings* (10 Best of '99, Time Out New York), and *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, produced by LAByrinth in collaboration with The Public Theater in 2005. All four plays were originally produced by LAByrinth and directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman. They are published by Dramatists Play Service as well as by Faber and Faber in the anthology *Three Plays By...* Stephen was awarded a 2004 TCG fellowship, attended the 2004 Sundance Screenwriter's Lab, and was named one of 2004's 25 New Faces of Independent Film by Filmmaker Magazine. He is the recipient of new play commissions from Manhattan Theatre Club and South Coast Repertory, and is a member of New Dramatists, MCC's Playwright's Coalition, New River Dramatists, Primary Stages, and The Actor's Studio Playwright/Directors Unit. He developed and directed Liza Col-n-Zayas's *Sistah Supreme* for Danny Hoch's Hip Hop Theater Festival, and Marco Greco's award winning *Behind the Counter with Mussolini* in New York and Los Angeles. As an actor, he appeared in Brett C. Leonard's *Guinea Pig Solo*, produced by LAByrinth at the Public Theatre in 2004, and has leading roles in Todd Solondz's *Palindromes*, Brett C. Leonard's *Jailbait* opposite Michael Pitt, and in Kenneth Lonergan's upcoming *Margaret*.

Ron Wilson (*Director*) has among his many directing credits the world premiere of *Comp* at the Boston Playwrights' Stage. He directed *The Underpants* and *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* at Case Western Reserve University's Eldred Theater and *Cloud 9* and *Arcadia* for the CWRU/Cleveland Play House MFA Acting Program where he serves as program director and chair of CWRU's Department of Theater. As an actor his most recent performance at CPH was as Dr. Glass in *Room Service* and prior to that as Klingelehoff in *The Underpants*. He also made an appearance in 2009 on the Brooks Theatre stage as Lavash in the CWRU/CPH MFA Acting Program production of *All's Well that Ends Well*. He is resident production movement director and fight choreographer at CPH.

The **design team** for *In Arabia We'd All Be Kings* includes Tiffany Scribner (Scenic Design), Michael Boll (Lighting Design), Kristine Davies (Costume Design), and Matthew Eckstein (Sound Design). Also on the team: Stage Manager Lisa G. Palinkas. For a complete list of design team bios, go online at <http://www.clevelandplayhouse.com/cwru-cph-mfa/in-arabia-wed-all-be-kings>

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$7.50 for students with a valid ID and are on sale now at Cleveland Play House by calling 216.241.6000 or online at www.clevelandplayhouse.com.

FACT SHEET

What: In Arabia We'd All Be Kings, by Stephen Adly Guirgis

Where: Helen Rosenfeld Lewis Bialosky Lab Theatre, PlayhouseSquare, 1407 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, OH

When: **Opening Night: Wednesday, February 1, 2012 at 7:30 pm**
Performances: February 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10 & 11, 2012 at 7:30 pm
Matinees: February 4 & 11, 2012 at 2:30 pm

Who: Cast

Therese Anderberg Demaris
Bernard Bygott Lenny/Man #1/Bartender
Drew Derek Charlie/Man #2/Holy Roller
Michael Feldsher Jake/Sal/Greer
TJ Gainley Sammy/Vic
Christa Hinckley Chickie
Sarah Ann Kinsey Daisy/Miss Reyes
Stephen Spencer Skank

Creative Team

Playwright Stephen Adly Guirgis
Director Ron Wilson
Scenic Designer Tiffany Scribner
Costume Designer Kristine Davis
Lighting Designer Michael Boll
Sound Designer Matthew Eckstein
Dialect Coach Jerrold Scott
Dramaturg Cyrus Taylor, Jr.

Prices: Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$7.50 for students with a valid ID.

For Single Tickets: Call 216.241.6400, or visit www.clevelandplayhouse.com.

Founded in 1915, Cleveland Play House is America's first professional regional theatre. More than 11 million people have attended over 1,100 productions at Cleveland Play House – including more than 100 American and/or World Premieres. Today, under the leadership of Artistic Director Michael Bloom and Managing Director Kevin Moore, Cleveland Play House is an artist-driven theatre that serves the community by holding true to its mission: *To inspire, stimulate and entertain diverse audiences in Northeast Ohio by producing plays and theatre education programs of the highest professional standards.*

Cleveland Play House is funded through the generosity of Cuyahoga County residents through Cuyahoga Arts and Culture, and The Ohio Arts Council helps to fund Cleveland Play House with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans.

Case Western Reserve University is among the nation's leading research institutions. Founded in 1826 and shaped by the unique merger of the Case Institute of Technology and Western Reserve University, Case Western Reserve is distinguished by its strengths in education, research, service, and experiential learning. Located in Cleveland, Case Western Reserve offers nationally recognized programs in the Arts and Sciences, Dental Medicine, Engineering, Law, Management, Medicine, Nursing, and Social Work.

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