The American Century Theater
presents

THE SHOW-OFF
BY GEORGE KELLY

ON STAGE
The American Century Theater presents

THE SHOW-OFF
A TRANSCRIPT OF LIFE IN THREE ACTS
BY GEORGE KELLY

January 11–February 2, 2013
Gunston Theatre Two
2700 South Lang Street, Arlington

Welcome to THE SHOW-OFF, the national premiere of this extraordinary American classic by George Kelly. THE SHOW-OFF is a comic tale about the Fisher family and their loves and foibles, their nature and nurture, and their joys and disappointments in life. This play provides us with an amusing and wise view of the American Century. The American Century Theater is dedicated to the rediscovery, enlightenment, and perspective of America’s plays of the twentieth century. THE SHOW-OFF is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

The Fisher family house in a working-class neighborhood in North Philadelphia, 1924

Act I
Scene 1 A Wednesday evening in May
Scene 2 Later that evening

Act II
Monday, late afternoon, six months later

Act III
Monday afternoon, one week later

There will be two ten-minute intermissions.

Please—Turn off cell phones and other distracting devices. The use of recording equipment and taking of photographs during the performance are strictly prohibited.

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.
**Artistic Director’s Notes**

*The Show-Off* (1924) by George Kelly

As you prepare to see George Kelly’s 1924 comedy *The Show-Off*, thinking—and quite properly so—that this is an obscure and seldom produced play right in The American Century Theater’s wheelhouse, a play that our sister companies have avoided producing like the proverbial plague and that the public, which quickly consigns last year’s Broadway Tony winner for best play to the musty mental compartment labeled “Amnesia” (Quick, now: What was it? Answer below), could hardly be reminded of, since the vast majority of both the playgoing and the non-playgoing populace had never heard of the play in the first place, consider this amazing fact, worthy of the late, great Robert Ripley: *No American comedy in the history of Broadway has been honored with more revivals on the Great White Way and Hollywood adaptations.*

None. George Kelly’s masterpiece was first presented to a Broadway audience in 1924 and ran for 571 performances. It returned in 1932, for another 119 performances. *The Show-Off* was back again in 1937, 1950, twice in 1968 (both starring Helen Hayes as Mrs. Fisher), and 1992, for a grand total of six Broadway productions. No other American comedy equals it. *The Front Page*, regarded as a staple of the U.S. repertoire, is nearest, with four revivals. *Harvey*? Only two productions. *You Can’t Take It with You*, that chestnut of chestnuts and the champ among the many hits by our most acclaimed stage comedy writing team, Kaufmann and Hart, only ties *The Front Page*, with four revivals. **Wait! What about Arsenic and Old Lace?** Nope, only one revival, for a paltry total of two productions. *The Show-Off* beats them all.

But as entertainers often said in George Kelly’s day, “You ain’t seen nothing yet!” For as dominating as *The Show-Off* is in the category of Broadway revivals, its pre-eminence in movies is equally impressive. *The Show-Off* has been made into a theatrical Hollywood film no less than four times, a record for both comedies and American dramas. It was first filmed shortly after the original production closed, with Ruth Gordon (a Broadway playwright herself and later a familiar character actress in such films as *Harold and Maude* and *Rosemary’s Baby*) playing

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**Cast in order of appearance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Actor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clara</td>
<td>Jenna Berk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Fisher</td>
<td>Lee Mikeska Gardner*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Erin E. McGuff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frank Hyland</td>
<td>Nello DeBlasio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Fisher</td>
<td>Craig Miller</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Evan Crump</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aubrey Piper</td>
<td>David Gram</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Gill</td>
<td>Bill Gordon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Rogers</td>
<td>Joe Cronin</td>
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* Lee Mikeska Gardner appears through the courtesy of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

**Production staff**

- Director: Stephen Jarrett
- Stage Manager: Lindsey E. Moore
- Set Design: Leigh-Ann Friedel**
- Master Carpenter: Jonathan Hudspeth
- Costume Design: Erin Nugent
- Lighting Design: Jedidiah Roe
- Sound Design: Ed Moser
- Properties Design/Set Dressing: Joshua Aaron Rosenblum
- Assistant Stage Manager: Johanna Schoenborn
- Master Electrician: Jonathan Weinberg
- Set Painting: Jeffrey Dorfman, Brooke Robbins
- Sound Board Operator: Quinton Alan Kilgoe II
- Publicity and Graphic Design: Emily Morrison
- Photography: Johannes Markus
- Program Design: Michael Sherman

**Special thanks to—**

- Community Forklift
- Bob Elyea
- History for Hire
- The Keegan Theatre
- Kathryn Kelley
- Craig Miller

**Recorded by Bill Gordon.**

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Download the podcast. Artistic Director Jack Marshall, Director Stephen Jarrett, and cast members Lee Mikeska Gardner (Mrs. Fisher) and David Gram (Aubrey) talk about *The Show-Off*. Record by Bill Gordon.
the ingénue. The Show-Off became a talkie in 1930 and then served as Spencer Tracy’s debut vehicle in 1934 in yet another version, with Tracy playing the title role of Aubrey Piper. The Show-Off returned to the screen in 1946 with Red Skelton starring as Aubrey.

The enthusiasm and admiration that both Broadway producers and Hollywood moguls have held for The Show-Off might seem peculiar, given the reluctance of most regional theaters to produce it, but any puzzlement gives way as soon as one reads the script. In Mrs. Fisher and Aubrey Piper, George Kelly created two of the juiciest and most challenging comic acting roles to be found in any stage work, explaining the fact that accomplished and influential actors have always sought an opportunity to play them. Meanwhile, the play itself is as solidly crafted as a comedy can be. Broadway and Hollywood keep coming back to The Show-Off for the most basic of show business reasons.

It worked.

It has always worked.

—Jack Marshall
Artistic Director, The American Century Theater

[The 2012 Tony for Best Play went to Clybourne Park.]

Cast

Jenna Berk (Clara) is a recent transplant to the DC area from London. DC credits include Missy in The Poker Night (Taffety Punk reading), Clarence in Richard III (Brave Spirits Theatre Company), Ana in The Wind and the Breeze (Kennedy Center National New Play Network), and various roles with the Young Playwrights’ Theater. London credits include Rebecca/Reggie/Sherry in The Laramie Project (Wild Oats Productions), Nell/Alice in Henry V (The Merely Players), the Queen in Robin Hood (Pyramid Panto), Ida in Nothing Lasts (Canal Cafe Theatre), Maggie in If I Were You (Old Red Lion Theatre), and Ensemble in The Trojan Women (Saviour Theatre Company).

Joe Cronin (Mr. Rogers) is familiar to American Century Theater audiences from such roles as Father in Life with Father, MacBird in MacBird!, Pop Doyle in On the Waterfront, Captain Dick Scott in Beyond the Horizon, and many others. He last appeared in a George Kelly play, Philip Goes Forth, in the mid-eighties with the Heritage Theater of NYC, where he was a company member. More recently, he has appeared in Henry (II) (WSC Avant Bard) and in Candida and Harvey (Bay Theatre of Annapolis). He has performed in this area with Arena Stage, Theater J, Olney Theatre Center, Rep Stage, Solas Nua, Washington Stage Guild, and Everyman, Keegan, Spooky Action and Interact Theatres. Joe has an MFA in acting from The Catholic University of America.

Evan Crump (Joe) has performed with many local companies, including The American Century Theater (Richard Miller in Ah, Wilderness!, Jan Erlone in Native Son), the Kennedy Center (Talbott in The Other Room), First Stage (Bernard in Don’t Dress for Dinner), WSC Avant Bard (Caligula’s Shadow in Caligula, Yepikhodov in The Cherry Orchard, and Lord Rivers in Richard III), The Keegan Theatre (Jason in False Romance), Georgetown Theatre Company (Giovanni in ’Tis Pity She’s a Whore), Chesapeake Shakespeare Company (Fabian in Twelfth Night, Carbon in Cyrano), and Active Cultures Theatre (Vigo Jansen in The Resurrectionist King, Francis Crick in Photograph 51). His theater company, Unstrung Harpist Productions, won Best Drama honors at the 2010 Capital Fringe Festival for Genesis.

Nello DeBlasio (Frank Hyland) has been active in the DC theater community off and on since moving to the area in 1998. Other professional companies he has worked with include Project Y, Classika Theatre, Quotidian Theatre Company, The Source Festival, and (upcoming) Annapolis Shakespeare Company. Nello just received his MFA from the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s Academy for Classical Acting at George Washington University. This is his first production with The American Century Theater.

Lee Mikeska Gardner (Mrs. Fisher) splits her time between acting, directing, and teaching and is delighted to return to The American Century Theater, where she directed one of her personal favorites, Machinal. She
was most recently seen in Active Culture’s *HellSpawn II*, playing four roles in the one-woman play *Grief*, and as Terry in *Side Man* (1st Stage). Other favorite roles include Gertrude in *Hamlet* (Baltimore Shakespeare Festival), Mary in *A House in the Country* (Helen Hayes Award) and Fran in *Short Order Stories* (both with Charter Theatre), Luisa in *A Shayna Maidel* (Rep Stage), Hettie in WSC Avant Bard’s *Two-Headed* (a role she originated at the Shenandoah Playwright’s Retreat and played again at Mill Mountain Theatre), and Elizabeth in *The Crucible* (The Keegan Theatre). Lee has three additional Helen Hayes nominations for acting and, as a director, three more Helen Hayes nominations and a Theatre Lobby Award. She looks forward to her upcoming directing projects: *Blythe Spirit* (1st Stage) and the world premiere of *Caesar and Dada* by Allyson Currin (WSC Avant Bard). She is teaching acting this spring at The Catholic University of America.

**Bill Gordon** (Mr. Gill) last appeared on The American Century Theater stage as Reverend Henry Dupas in *Little Murders*. Previous TACT roles include the police officer in *The Tenth Man*, Hoffs in *Stalag 17*, “Jingle Bill” Gordon in *An American Century Christmas* (for which he also designed and ran sound), Von Konigswald in *Happy Birthday, Wanda June*, and the cabbie and Lt. Buchevski in *Cops*. During the 2012 Capital Fringe Festival, Bill portrayed Guildenstern in Infinite Jest’s critically-raised production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, which he also produced. A former radio professional, Bill also produces TACT’s “Before the Curtain Is Raised” podcasts.

**David Gram** (Aubrey) hails from Toronto but is currently a DC-based theatre and opera director, actor, and teacher. Recent acting credits: Kulygin in *Three Sisters*, Thomas in *A Question of Mercy*, and forty different characters in the one-man show *I Am My Own Wife* (Boston Center for American Performance). Selected credits: *The Tempest*, *The Birthday Party*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *The Day Room*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Three in the Back/Two in the Head*, and the musical *Assassins*. David has directed and produced over sixty productions across the US and Canada, ranging from Shakespeare to Sondheim, from farce to Brecht, from contemporary American dramas to original plays, musicals, and opera. He is also a freelance acting coach who works with actors and opera singers on audition and performance techniques. David received his MFA in Directing from Boston University. Upcoming: directing the New England premiere of the opera *Dead Man Walking* for Boston Opera Collaborative; *La Cage Aux Folles* (Steel River Playhouse); *The Barber of Seville* (Hubbard Hall Opera Theatre).

**Erin E. McGuff** (Amy), a graduate of NYU/Tisch, is fresh off the Bolt Bus from NYC, where she spent several years making exciting theatre in overpriced venues. Recent/favorite credits: Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing* (Extant Arts), Antebellum in *Alligator Summer* (NY Fringe), Ulita in *The Forest* (NYU Mainstage). She has been fortunate to work with directors from Columbia’s MFA program performing new plays (*The Dogs of Babel*, *The Pinter Project*) and workshop productions (*Miss Julie, Mother Courage*). Film: *Last Night’s Symphonie*. Erin’s play, *A Refusal*, was published by the journal *Literary Laundry*. She also co-wrote the screenplay *Hiding in the Spotlight*, produced by Global Vision Group.

**Craig Miller** (Mr. Fisher) is in his sixth production with The American Century Theater, where he was last seen as Mr. Dankle in *Marathon ’33*. Since 1985 he has performed with many area theatre companies. Prior to that he performed and directed extensively for ten years in Germany, England, and Norway. He received his formal theatre training at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London.

## Production Staff

**Stephen Jarrett** (Director) previously directed *Treadwell: Bright and Dark, Cops, Luv* for The American Century Theater. His other local productions have been *Murder as a Fine Art* (Source Theatre), two double-bills for the Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia, *The Tender Land* (Opera Americana), and *Spoon River Anthology* (Theater Alliance). His New York directing credits (nine productions) include the first NYC revivals of Frank D. Gilroy’s *Who’ll Save the Ploughboy?* (Equity Library Theatre), Lawrence and Lee’s *The Gang’s All Here* (Riverwest Theatre), and *The Ballad of Baby Doe* (Bronx Opera). Other career highlights include production stage managing in New York and elsewhere, running a US Army theatre in Germany, and serving for twelve years as Staging Director and Production Manager for the Hispanic Heritage Awards at the Kennedy Center. Stephen was the founding Director of Performing Arts at BlackRock Center for the Arts in Germantown. Since 2005 he has been the Executive Director of Washington Area Performing Arts Video Archive (WAPAVA). His theatre training was at Yale Drama, the University of Iowa, and The Catholic University of America.

**Leigh-Ann Friedel** (Scenic Design) is the 2012–2013 recipient of the William R. Kenan, Jr. Fellowship in Scenic Design at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Design credits include: *You Can’t Take It with You* and *Hot I Baltimore* (University of North Carolina School of the Arts), and *The BFG: A Royal Reading* (Peppercorn Children’s Theatre). She has painted at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company and created props at Opera New Jersey. Her work has been seen at two national portfolio reviews, US Institute for Theatre Technology’s 2012 Young Designers Forum, Long Beach CA, and the 2012 National Design Portfolio Review, New York NY. http://leighannfriedel.com

**Jonathan Hudspeth** (Master Carpenter) is happy to return to The American Century Theater to begin 2013. In the past Jonathan has sculpted scenery across the country from Utah and Los Angeles to the DC area. Graduating from the University of Northern Iowa with a double emphasis in Production and Design and Performance, he has designed
and built scenery for Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Dog Sees God, and Almost Main, among others. Upcoming: designing and constructing Prince George’s County’s Shakespeare in the Park in July, incorporating a “green theatre” project which he has been working on for the past two years.

Quinton Alan Kilgoe II (Sound Board Operator) worked on Puttin’ on the Hits, God’s Trombone, and Black Nativity while at University of Maryland/ Eastern Shore. Quinton has worked in four independent films (The Golden Glans, Awesome Movie, Police State, and Crispin’s House) in actor and crew positions.

Lindsey E. Moore (Stage Manager) is in her fourth production with The American Century Theater, where she stage managed Stage Door and Marathon ‘33. She has been involved with stage management in Roanoke VA for shows including Antigone, The Laramie Project, and The Good Woman of Setzuan.

Edward Moser (Sound Design) is a regional audio production veteran whose designs include Vis to a Small Planet, Country Girl, Little Murders, Marathon ’33, and J.B. (The American Century Theater), Long Day’s Journey Into Night, A Little Trick, Afterplay, and Master Harold and the Boys (Quotidian Theatre), Amelia (a Kennedy Center Page-to-Stage reading), and A Christmas Carol and Underneath the Lintel for Paul Morella. Favorite musical credits include Señor Discretion Himself (Arena Stage), Urinetown (University of Maryland), David in Shadow and Light (Theater J), and Godspell (Olney Theatre Center).

Erin Nugent (Costume Design) has designed Blues Journey (Kennedy Center), On the Eve of Friday Morning (Shakespeare Theatre Company), All My Sons, August: Osage County, Twelve Angry Men, Laughter on the 23rd Floor, Golden Boy, Steel Magnolias, and Glengarry Glen Ross (The Keegan Theatre, where she is also a company member), Gross Indecency, Blue/Orange, In on It, Ambition Facing West, and The Night Before Christmas (Theater Alliance), The Last Five Years (No Rules Theatre Company), and I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change; Unnecessary Farce; CHAPS! The Musical; Travels with My Aunt; Almost, Maine; and Cole (Totem Pole Playhouse), among many others. She was the recipient of a Kenan Institute Fellowship at the Kennedy Center. She holds an MFA in costume design from the North Carolina School of the Arts.

Jedidiah Roe (Lighting Design) is proud to be designing his first show at The American Century Theater. His has previously worked for Theater J as Associate Lighting Designer on Our Class and Assistant Lighting Designer on The Odd Couple and Lost in Yonkers. Other lighting design credits include Breaking the Code at Performance Workshop Theater, and The Seagull, Everything in the Garden, and Gilgamesh at the University of Maryland. He has served as Associate Lighting Designer for Maryland Opera Studio’s Miss Havisham’s Fire and Postcard from Morocco. He also has served as Assistant Lighting Designer at Round House Theatre and Olney Theatre. Jedidiah holds an MFA from the University of Maryland and a BA from Florida State University.

Joshua Aaron Rosenblum (Properties Design/Set Dressing) most recently appeared in The American Century Theater productions of J.B. and Marathon ’33, but is enjoying being on the other side this time around. He was previously Properties Designer for Body Awareness and In a Manger, Stage Manager for Oy Vey in a Manger, and Assistant Stage Manager for Lost in Yonkers, The Four of Us, and In Darfur (all at Theater J) and ASM for Othello with Synetic Theater Company. As an actor, he has also been seen in Peter Pan: The Boy Who Hated Mothers (No Rules Theatre Company), By Jeeves (1st Stage), and Rough-Faced Girl and The Magic Paintbrush at Synetic Family Theater. Josh is a graduate of Muhlenberg College with a BA in Theatre, concentrating in directing.

Johanna Schoenborn (Assistant Stage Manager) returns to The American Century Theater after being Assistant Stage Manager for J.B. She has worked with VpStart Crow Productions (Sapphire in Princess and the Pea, Lights for Hamlet, Costumes for Rumors, ASM for Romeo and Juliet) and Barter Theatre (Production Assistant for Jimmy Rogers: America’s Blue Yodeler and The Foreigner and Spot Op for Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Little Shop of Horrors, and Forever Plaid). Johanna holds a degree in Theatre from Radford University.

Providing reviews, interviews, and articles about professional, community, university, school, and children’s theatre in the DC Metro area.

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The American Century Theater dedicates its 2012–2013 season to the memory of longtime patron Suzy Platt.

The following is from Jack’s letter to the TACT board and staff on the day we learned Suzy had died.

She may have been our most loyal, dedicated, and courageous subscriber . . . fan, really. Muse, perhaps.

If she was not with us from the start, she came on board soon after, and often sent me e-mails applauding our daring, cheering our successes, and comforting me and the staff when we fell on our faces. She once sent me a letter that said that she regarded TACT as an especially exotic and passionate restaurant, in which each diner trusted the chef to produce recipes and dishes that they had never tasted before. “I might not always like the taste,” she wrote, “but I am grateful for the opportunity to try it, and always come in the door expecting something different.”

I don’t know what Suzy’s malady was, but as she became more and more bent over and limited in movement, it seemed that her determination and passion for theater, at least our theater, increased. I know that The American Century Theater was important to her, but for me, she was even more important to the company. She epitomized the intelligent, thoughtful, educated and adventurous theater-lover with an open mind that this company was created to serve, and every single time I saw her at a performance, it reminded me why we do what we do.

She really was an inspiration, and we will miss her very much.
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