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**Garry Marshall Theatre**

***The Spitfire Grill***

**Linda Kerns joins the cast as Effy**

**Music and Book by James Valcq**

**Lyrics and Book by Fred Alley**

**Based on the film by Lee David Zlotoff**

**Directed by Dimitri Toscas**

**25 performances only! | July 10 – August 11, 2019 (press opening July 12)**

Burbank, CA | July 3, 2019 -- Garry Marshall Theatre presents the off Broadway musical *The Spitfire Grill*, one of the most popular recent musicals with over 600 productions worldwide including in Germany, South Korea, Japan, Australia and London.

Broadway's Linda Kerns has joined the cast as Effy. She appeared on Broadway in the original productions of *Big River* and as Heidi von Sturm in *Nine*, and off Broadway in *Smoke on the Mountain*. She appeared in *Wicked* as Madame Morrible at the Pantages Theatre. Her film credits include *Les Misérables*, *Home on the Range*, and *Moscow on the Hudson*. Ashley Argota, Nicu Brouillette, Rachel Sarah Mount, Joey Ruggiero, Sarah Saviano, and Erich Schroeder round out the cast. Kerns replaces the previously announced Diane King Vann.

The winner of the 2001 Richard Rodgers Production Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (Stephen Sondheim, chair), *The Spitfire Grill* has music and book by James Valcq – who is currently artistic director of Third Avenue Playhouse, the regional theatre of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, and has lyrics and book by the late Fred Alley. It also received Best Musical nominations from the New York Outer Critics Circle and Drama League as well as two Drama Desk nominations.

*The Spitfire Grill* is based on the film by Lee David Zlotoff, which won the 1996 audience award at Sundance. Garry Marshall Theatre's artistic director Dimitri Toscas directs this new production. There are 25 performances only, July 10 to August 11 (the press opening is July 12). For tickets and information, please visit [www.garrymarshalltheatre.org](http://www.garrymarshalltheatre.org) or call 818-955-8101.

*The Spitfire Grill* takes place in Gilead, Wisconsin – a bucolic place for those who have dreamed of a town so small they roll the sidewalk up at night; a place where you can walk a hundred miles and leave the trees. At least that is how it seems when Percy, a feisty parolee following her dreams, arrives. She based her living there on a page from an old travel book, as she stumbled into Hannah's Spitfire Grill.

The Grill, the only eatery in this quiet town, is for sale but there are no takers; so newcomer Percy suggests to Hannah that she raffle it off. Entry fees are one hundred dollars and the best essay on why you want the grill wins. Soon, mail is arriving by the wheelbarrow full and things are definitely cookin' at the Spitfire Grill.

This stirring musical erupts when Hannah's troubled past is confronted with Percy's struggle to start again, making everyone's life in this small town anything but quiet. A searching wife, a mysterious vagrant, a gentle sheriff, a brutish husband, and an irritatingly irresistible busybody collide in a musical that bubbles over with toe-tapping fun and soaring, heartfelt melodies accompanied by mandolin, accordion, guitar, violin, and cello – and the musicians step forward to play many of the characters.

“In our new production of this beloved musical, we visit an America that never was – but somehow we always hoped it *would* be, an optimistic story of the American Dream,” said director Toscas. “This show taps into a nostalgia that feels familiar, like a place where we thought we lived, yet feels hopeful and new at the same time. The place we’ve yet to find; the place where our children will belong: some kind of proof that a new beginning could be as close as your back porch.”

Alvin Klein in *The New York Times* called *The Spitfire Grill* "Soul satisfying ... a compelling story that flows with grace and carries the rush of anticipation. In the stage version, [composer and librettist] Valeq and Alley make it clear that rebirth is not a matter of ritual but is instead a matter of human connection. That is one of the bountiful things that lifts the musical from its first impression as a homespun folk tale, with a dark side just around the bend, to a complete work of theatrical resourcefulness ... the story is all about is a belief system rooted in earthly caring ..."

Klein continued, “The warm, indigenous American folk sound of Mr. Valeq's score is, harmonically and melodically, as theatrical as it is grassroots. *The Spitfire Grill* is penetrated by honesty and it glows.” *Billboard* said, “like a breath of fresh country ... In a genre known for being big and brassy, it's always a pleasure to come across a musical that revels in its quiet moments. This elegy to a once-vibrant community is extremely powerful.”

*New York Magazine* called it "soulful ...the amiable country flavored tunes and lyrics are rendered with the kind of conviction and expertise that make them transcendent. What in normal times would be a joy is, in these troubled ones, sheer nourishment." *USA Today* said, “An abundance of warmth, spirit and goodwill!” and *The Wall Street Journal* said, “Well before the show reaches its conclusion, many ... in the audience may be ready to enter Percy's raffle.”

### **Calendar listing for *The Spitfire Grill***

Venue: Garry Marshall Theatre, 4252 West Riverside Drive, Burbank CA 91505

Dates: July 10 to August 11, 2019 (Press Opening Friday, July 12)  
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturdays at 8pm; Sundays at 3 pm  
No performance Wednesday, July 24 or Wednesday, July 31  
Additional performances Saturday, July 27 at 2:00pm and Sunday, August 4 at 7:30pm

Tickets: Prices \$25 to \$65

Visit [www.garrymarshalltheatre.org](http://www.garrymarshalltheatre.org) or call 818-955-8101

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**James Valcq** (Music and Book), the Artistic Director of the regional theatre Third Avenue Playhouse (TAP) in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, is best known as the composer of the Off-Broadway musical *The Spitfire Grill* (Playwrights Horizons, 2001), which won the Richard Rodgers Production Award administered by the American Academy of Arts and Letters (Stephen Sondheim, chair). *The Spitfire Grill* also received Best Musical nominations from the Outer Critics Circle and Drama League, as well as two Drama Desk nominations. Written with collaborator Fred Alley, *Spitfire* has been produced over 600 times across the United States, in Germany, South Korea, Japan, and Australia,

as well as a highly lauded London premiere in 2015. Also Off-Broadway, James was the composer/author of *Zombies from The Beyond*, which opened to critical acclaim in 1995.

James has composed scores for *Love's Labour's Lost* at Idaho Shakespeare Festival and Great Lakes Theatre Festival, *The Rivals*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Much Ado About Nothing* for Door Shakespeare, *Tomas and the Library Lady* at Idaho Theatre for Youth, an adaptation of the classic children's book *The Pancake King* commissioned by Milwaukee's Next Act Theatre, *The Passage* (another collaboration with Fred Alley), *Victory Farm* for Northern Sky Theatre, and *Anatole* for First Stage. For TAP, James has created the Irving Berlin cavalcade *I Love a Piano*, adapted the opera *La Serva Padrona* as *Maid to Marry* (the surprise hit of the 2015 Spring season) and created a new adaptation of the 1910 musical *Madame Sherry*. He recently completed the score for *Boxcar*, which will premiere at Northern Sky in the future.

Broadway credits as conductor and/or musician include *Chicago*, *Flower Drum Song*, *Cabaret*, and *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. Other conducting credits: Maurice Sendak's production of *Really Rosie*, *Candide*, *Lady in the Dark*, *South Pacific* (Skylight Opera Theatre), and *She Loves Me* (Indiana Rep). Television appearances include The Today Show (NBC) and Musical Theatre: New Directions (PBS).

Directing credits include *Zombies from The Beyond* off-Broadway, Northern Sky's *The Spitfire Grill*, and TAP's *Almost, Maine*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *The 39 Steps*, *The Drawer Boy*, *The Fantasticks*, *Steel Magnolias*, and The Amish Project (among others). Favorite acting roles include Cosme in *Souvenir* (Boise Contemporary Theatre, American Stage Company, and TAP), Feste in *Twelfth Night* (Door Shakespeare), Ernie in *Guys on Ice* (Milwaukee Rep), Erik Satie in *Velvet Gentleman* & Philippe in *Madame Sherry* (TAP), and Pierre in *How I Became a Pirate* (First Stage Milwaukee). James holds an MFA from New York University Tisch School of the Arts and is a proud member of the American Federation of Musicians and Actors Equity Association.

**Fred Alley** (Lyrics and Book) was the co-founder and Artist in Residence at American Folklore Theatre (AFT) in Door County, Wisconsin, a populist theatre with a seasonal audience of 50,000. At AFT, Mr. Alley collaborated on over twenty original shows with director Jeffrey Herbst, composer James Kaplan, co-founder Doc Heide, designers Neen Rock and Dave Alley, and frequent guest artists Paul Sills and James Maronek. It was at AFT that Mr. Alley first collaborated with James Valcq on *The Passage*, a new musical. His second collaboration with Mr. Valcq, *The Spitfire Grill*, received its world premiere at New Jersey's George Street Playhouse before its Off-Broadway opening at Playwrights Horizons. Mr. Alley was also the librettist and lyricist of the musicals *Guys on Ice*, *Lumberjacks in Love*, and *The Bachelors*, all of which set box office records at Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, and are now winning new fans at regional theatres all across the country. Fred Alley died unexpectedly in May 2001.

**Lee David Zlotoff** (screenwriter) is a producer, director and screenwriter best known as the creator of the TV series *MacGyver*, which ran on ABC between 1985 and 1992 and was sold throughout the world. He then produced the television series *The Man from Snowy River*, loosely based on the Banjo Patterson poem "The Man from Snowy River". Additionally, he wrote and directed the 1996 film *The Spitfire Grill*, which won the Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival and was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize. Zlotoff graduated from Brooklyn Technical High School in 1970. He then went on to St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland.

**Dimitri Toscas (Director)** is an Artistic Director at **Garry Marshall Theatre**. A well established, award-winning director of theatre, musical theatre and opera, his most critically-acclaimed Los Angeles productions include *Master Class* (Ovation Nominated: Best Play, Ovation Winner: Best Actress, Carolyn Hennesy) and Ovation Recommended plays *Buyer & Cellar*, *Bunny Bunny*, *Scott & Hem* and *Laurel And Hardy*. Toscas garnered national attention for writing and directing two contemporary versions of beloved operas: Verdi's *La Traviata* and Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, both featuring new English librettos and translations and both commissioned by Skylight Music Theatre in Milwaukee, WI). Toscas also garnered recognition from the *Los Angeles Times* for writing, directing and designing family productions for the Falcon Theatre: an original musical adaptation of *Cinderella* (based on the opera *Cenerentola*), *the MAGIC flute* (based on Mozart's comedic opera, which starred Paul Vogt of "MADtv" and Broadway's *Hairspray*, and *Chicago*), and *The Little Mermaid* (set in ancient Greece, featuring Jessica Rush from Broadway's *Gypsy*, *Jersey Boys* and *Summer*), each show commissioned and produced by celebrated film director Garry Marshall (*Pretty Woman*, *Princess Diaries*, *Valentine's Day* & *Happy Days*).

Besides stage directing for the theatre, Toscas served on a *Special Entertainment Task Force*, which developed new shows for Walt Disney World's EPCOT -- and has directed and developed improvisational, interactive and immersive shows for both Disneyland and Universal Studios Hollywood.

His film and television credits include "additional screenplay" credit for the animated feature, *Igor*, writer/researcher on the Universal/Imagine film, *Playboy* (a bio-pic of Hugh Hefner's life), and Toscas worked briefly as a freelance writer for the Development Department of Aardman Feature Animation Studios in London.

**Ashley Argota** (Shelby) is best known for her roles on TV shows such as *True Jackson, VP*, *The Fosters*, *Lab Rats*, and *How To Build A Better Boy*. She toured nationally in *The Lion King* as Young Nala and became the youngest performer ever to win five times in a row at *Amateur Night at the Apollo*, which led to her becoming a "Star of Tomorrow" at *Showtime at the Apollo*. In addition to shooting films (*Cover Versions*) and TV shows (*Girl Meets World*, *Liberty Crossing*), she has starred as Juliet in *Romeo & Juliet: Love Is A Battlefield*, as multiple Disney Princesses in the *Lythgoe Family Panto's*, and in the *UMPO Series* at Rockwell Table & Stage. IG: [@ashleyargota9](#)  
TW: [@ashleyargota9](#)

**Linda Kerns** (Effy) Linda Kerns is an American actress, best known for *Rat Race*, *Mulan*, *Titanic*, and *Mrs. Santa Claus*. Other film credits include *Les Misérables*, *Home on the Range*, *Surviving Christmas*, *Time Changer*, *Finding Interest*, *Moscow on the Hudson*, and *Over the Brooklyn Bridge*. Television credits include guest appearances on *Numb3rs*, *The Guardian*, *NYPD Blue*, *Without a Trace*, *The Practice*, *Ally McBeal*, *Snoops*, *Chicago Hope*, *Frasier*, *Party of Five*, *Picket Fences*, and *ER*. On stage, Broadway credits include her debut as Heidi von Sturm in *Nine* (46th Street Theatre) and in *Big River* (Eugene O'Neill Theatre); Off-Broadway, as Vera Sanders in *Smoke on the Mountain* (Lamb's Theatre) and in *One Two Three Four Five* (N.Y. City Center); and regionally, as Gladys Calhoun in *Memphis* (Cabrillo Music Theatre), Nat in *Rabbit Hole* and *The 1940's Radio Hour* (Crossley Theatre), Madame Morrible/Midwife in *Wicked* (Pantages Theatre), and Effy Krayneck in *The Spitfire Grill* (Laguna Playhouse).

**Rachel Sarah Mount** (Percy) is a vocalist and theatre artist currently based out of Los Angeles. Previous credits include: Squeak/Olivia in *The Color Purple*, Vivienne in *Legally Blonde*, Nina in *In The Heights* and Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*. TV credits include: ABC's *The Goldbergs* and *Schooled*. She has been heard on Childish Gambino's most recent album, *Awaken, My Love!*, and as a soloist for Scott Alan. TW: [@rachelsarahmount](#),  
[www.rachelsarahmount.com](http://www.rachelsarahmount.com)

**Sarah Saviano's** (Hannah) credits include: Woman/Musician in *Death of a Salesman* at ETC in Santa Barbara, Harper in the National Tour of *Angels In America*, and Helen in *A Taste of Honey* directed by Kim Rubinstein. In Chicago, several roles at Goodman, Victory Gardens, Steppenwolf, and Northlight theatres, as well as Louise in the Midwest premiere of *Always...Patsy Cline*. As a musician, Sarah has performed onstage and/or recorded with *Little Feat*, *The O'Jay's*, *Heat*, *Shaun LaBelle*, *Jules Day*, *Kenny Rankin*, and *Robert Irving III* (Miles Davis Electric Band).

**Garry Marshall Theatre** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization providing innovative performances, educational opportunities, and storytelling activities for all ages, year-round. Located in the heart of Burbank and Toluca Lake's media district, the critically acclaimed and Ovation Award-winning 130-seat theatre was founded in 1997 as the Falcon Theatre by Hollywood legend Garry Marshall. Reestablished as the nonprofit Garry Marshall Theatre in 2017, the theatre continues to cultivate new artists and experiences that spark ideas and build community.

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