

# Village Theatre

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

August 23, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Cast Announcement: Ethnically Diverse Company takes on Immigration in New Musical, TAKE ME AMERICA**

**What:** *Take Me America*  
Book and Lyrics by Bill Nabel  
Music Composed and Arranged by Bob Christianson  
Based on the film "Well Founded Fear" Directed by Michael Camerini and Shari Robertson

**Where:** In Issaquah  
Francis J. Gaudette Theatre  
303 Front Street North  
Issaquah, WA 98027

In Everett  
Everett Performing Arts Center  
2710 Wetmore Avenue  
Everett, WA 98201

**When:** Issaquah  
September 15-October 23, 2011-- **ON SALE NOW**  
Everett  
October 28-November 20, 2011-- ON SALE 9/28/2011

**Tickets:** Issaquah  
\$20-\$60, Box Office (425) 392-2202 or (866) 688-8049  
Everett  
\$19-\$54, Box Office (425) 257-8600 or (888) 257-3722  
[www.villagetheatre.org](http://www.villagetheatre.org)  
*Student/Military Rush: ½ price 30 minutes prior to curtain. Group rates available for 10+.*

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**Issaquah and Everett, WA** – Village Theatre's 2011-2012 Mainstage Season opens September 15, 2011 with the West Coast Premiere of the new musical TAKE ME AMERICA. This show was last seen as a development reading at the 2009 Festival of

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New Musicals. The story follows the lives of seven refugees seeking political asylum in the United States, as well as the three government agents who are tasked with determining who gets in. The completely local cast of this relevant and gripping rock musical was announced today, and features a collection of ethnically diverse individuals.

Ben Gonio returns to Village Theatre as Wu, a Chinese poet, seeking asylum in the United States alongside his Chinese wife, Fan (played by Diana Huey). Gonio was last seen on the Mainsage in the 2007 production of *The King and I*. His theatre credits include work at Guthrie Theatre, Theatre Under the Stars, Minneapolis Children's Theatre, The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and others.

The sweet sounds of Ekello Harrid, Jr.'s rendition of "Ol' Man River" melted hearts in the 2009 Village Theatre production of *Show Boat*. Harrid returns to the Mainstage as Malith, a member of the Dinka people seeking safety in the United States. Harrid is Seattle-favorite and theatre veteran having played Coalhouse Walker Jr. in *Ragtime*; Pharoah in *...Joseph*; The Wolf in *Into The Woods*; Olin Britt in *The Music Man* and others.

Funny lady Leslie Law (*Show Boat*; *42<sup>nd</sup> Street*) and tenor Aaron Finley (*Jesus Christ Superstar*) both return to Village Theatre to take on the emotionally challenging roles of two of the American government agents forced to choose who stays and who goes in this gripping drama. Law has been seen on nearly every Seattle stage; from 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Seattle Repertory Theatre and Seattle Shakespeare Company to ACT Theatre. Finley's recent portrayal of both Jesus and Judas on the Village Theatre Mainstage launched him onto the Seattle theatre scene; once again he lends his incredible vocal range to this production.

**Full Cast List:** Heather Apellanes-Gonio (*Beauty and the Beast*; *The King and I*); Dennis Bateman (*Anne of Green Gables*); Iris Elton (*The Full Monty*); Aaron C. Finley (*Jesus Christ Superstar*; *The Gypsy King*); Ben Gonio (*The King and I*); Ekello Harrid, Jr. (*Show Boat*); Diana Huey (Village Originals: *Rocket Science*); Eric Jensen (*Jesus Christ Superstar*; *Chasing Nicolette*; *Beauty and the Beast*); Leslie Law (*42<sup>nd</sup> Street*; *Show Boat*); J. Reese.

**Production Team:** TAKE ME AMERICA is directed by Jerry Dixon (*Show Boat*; *The Full Monty*); music directed by Tim Symons (*Jesus Christ Superstar*); scenic design by Scott Fyfe (*Stunt Girl*); lighting design by Alex Berry (*Beauty and the Beast*); sound design by Brent Warwick (*Hail Caesar* at Teatro ZinZanni); projection design by Martin Christoffel (scenic design for *Sleuth*) and Lara Kaminsky; costume design by Cynthia Savage (*Meet Me in St. Louis*).

**Show Description:** Seven desperate refugees know their chance for safety rests in the decision of three American agents. *Take Me America* is a gripping new musical about those who seek asylum in the United States, and the people who bear the responsibility of determining their fate. Inspired by true stories from across the globe, this compelling rock musical explores the humor in our humanity, the power of acceptance, and the delicate balance between caution and compassion.

**Photos:** Pre-production photos will be available in our online Press Room after September 1, 2011.

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**About Village Theatre**

Based in Issaquah, WA, with operations in Everett, Village Theatre is a leading producer of musical theatre in the Pacific Northwest. Producing entertaining, quality productions for the entire family since 1979, Village Theatre has grown into one of the region's best-attended Equity theatres, with over 18,000 Subscribers and 182,000 projected total attendance each season. Through its Village Originals program, Village Theatre is nationally recognized for its contribution to the development of new musicals, having launched over 95 new works to date. Village Theatre also takes pride in nurturing tomorrow's audiences through its youth education programs, Pied Piper and KIDSTAGE, serving over 54,000 young people, families, and schools annually.