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Alabama Shakespeare Festival
The State Theatre of Alabama

***Because of Winn-Dixie*, a New Musical at ASF!**

Star-studded cast and creative team including multiple Tony Award Winners!

January 9, 2017 (Montgomery, AL) – The new musical adaptation of **Kate DiCamillo's** beloved best-selling Newbery Honor novel, ***Because of Winn-Dixie*** hits the Alabama Shakespeare Festival stage beginning January 27, 2017, for a limited run with the official opening on **February 3, 2017**.

This enchanting, richly textured musical is led by an acclaimed Broadway creative team with music by Grammy and Tony Award winner **Duncan Sheik** (*Spring Awakening*, *American Psycho*), book and lyrics by Olivier Award winner **Nell Benjamin** (*Legally Blonde the Musical*, *Mean Girls*), animal direction by Tony Award Honoree and veteran animal director **William Berloni** (*Annie*, *Wizard of Oz*), and is directed by Tony Award winner **John Rando** (*Urinetown*, *A Christmas Story*).

Tickets for this limited run start at \$30 and are available online at www.asf.net, by phone at **800.841.4273** and at the ASF box office located at 1 Festival Drive in the heart of Montgomery's beautiful Blount Cultural Park.

Because of Winn-Dixie tells the heartwarming story of a 10-year-old girl and her preacher father who move to a trailer park in the Florida panhandle. Opal takes in a lively stray dog, naming him Winn-Dixie. The scruffy but charming mutt teaches Opal how the smallest acts of kindness can transform a once-broken community.

The Alabama Shakespeare Festival production features an amazing cast of singers and actors with a host of Broadway credits accompanied by a live orchestra.

Because of Winn-Dixie is the first musical where the title character is played by a dog. Our canine star, **Bowdie**, is a rescue dog trained by Tony Award Honoree and animal director **William Berloni**. Bowdie made his acting debut as Nana in **Peter Pan Live** on NBC, and has subsequently appeared in music videos, commercials, an HBO series (*High Maintenance*) and *Sesame Street*.

Gabriella Pizzolo, who plays the intrepid Opal Buloni, was recently seen on Broadway as Small Alison in the Tony Award-winning musical **Fun Home** and as the title character in **Matilda the Musical**. Gabriella plays Young CC in the film remake of **Beaches** starring Idina Menzel which will premiere on the Lifetime Network on January 21, 2017.

Other child actors in the cast include **Leonay Shepherd** as Amanda Wilkinson, **Sawyer Nunes** as Dunlap Dewberry and local actors **Lillie Prestridge** (Redland Elementary) as Sweetie Pie Thomas and **Charlie Hill** (Montgomery Academy) as Stevie Dewberry.

Opal's father, the Preacher, is played by Broadway veteran **Adam Monley** who appeared as Javert in the Broadway revival of **Les Misérables** and also featured in **Mamma Mia** on Broadway. **Kacie Sheik**, who was nominated for the Helen Hayes Award for Best Actress for her role in **Hair** (Broadway, National Tour and West End) plays Callie Thomas. **Jacqueline Petroccia**, recently seen in the title role of ASF's 2015 production of **Always...Patsy Cline**, plays Jeanne Dewberry.

The role of Millie Wilkinson is played by **Laiona Michelle**, an ASU graduate who has gone on to star in Broadway musicals (*Amazing Grace*, *Book of Mormon* (National tour)) and television (*Law & Order*). Laiona also appeared in the 2007 production of *Crowns* at ASF. **Brandon Pearson** plays the role of Carl Wilkinson.

Brian Michael Hoffman who starred as “Horton” in the Off-Broadway revival of *Seussical* plays Jiggs Thomas, and **Joe Carroll** plays the role of Otis. **Carolyn Mignini**, who is currently filming a recurring role in the new HBO series *The Deuce* and has multiple off-Broadway credits to her name, plays Franny Block while film and television star **Roz Ryan** (*Amen*, *Good News*, *Disney’s Hercules*) and veteran of multiple Broadway musicals (*Chicago*, *Dreamgirls*, *Ain’t Misbehavin’*) plays wise woman Gloria Dump.

Olivier Award-winning Librettist and lyricist **Nell Benjamin** co-wrote the music and lyrics for the Broadway and West End smash hit musical *Legally Blonde*. She is also currently working on the upcoming Broadway musical *Mean Girls*. Composer **Duncan Sheik** is a Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter who won two Tony Awards for the groundbreaking hit musical *Spring Awakening*.

Director **John Rando** is an acclaimed Tony Award winner with Broadway credits that include *On The Town* (Tony Nomination for Best Direction of a Musical), *Penn & Teller on Broadway*, *A Christmas Story*, *The Wedding Singer*, *Urinetown* (Tony and Outer Critics Circle Awards for Best Director), *A Thousand Clowns* and Neil Simon’s *The Dinner Party*.

William Berloni (Animal Director) is a 2011 Tony Honoree for Excellence in Theatre. Starting with *Annie* in 1977, he has trained animals for twenty-five Broadway shows, hundreds of Off-Broadway, regional theatre, tours, television and movies. Dorothy Berloni and William are the originators of *Because of Winn-Dixie*. William is the author of the book *Broadway Tails* and his work in television includes *High Maintenance* and *From Wags to Riches with Bill Berloni*.

Choreographer **Chris Bailey’s** recent credits include *The Entertainer* with Kenneth Branagh (West End), *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Roundabout), *Assassins* (Menier Chocolate Factory), the Kennedy Center Honors, and the 2013 Tony Awards.

Music Supervisor and Orchestrator Jason Hart’s most recent Broadway credits include *American Psycho*. **Musical Director Joel Jones’s** recent credits include *Disney’s Beauty and the Beast*, *Ain’t Misbehavin’* and *Disney’s The Little Mermaid* at ASF. He recently retired as the Director of Choirs for the Alabama State University. Orchestra members include **Joel Jones** (keyboard), **Kat Vittetoe** (cello), **Andy Martin** (drums), **Drew Perkins** (viola), **Mike Rosengarten** (electric and acoustic guitars), **Frank “Skip” Krevens** (pedal steel, banjo and guitar) and **Joe Cosgrove** (bass).

The production features set design by Tony Award winner **Donyale Werle**, whose Broadway credits include *Peter & the Starcatcher* (2012 Tony Award), *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* (2011 Tony nomination) and *Allegiance*, and lighting design by **Jeff Croiter**, who has received Tony, Hewes, and Bass awards. His Broadway credits include *Falsettos*, *Something Rotten*, *Holiday Inn*, *Newsies*, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, among many others. Production sound design is by **Dan Moses Schreier**, who won Drama Desk Awards for Outstanding Sound Design for *Floyd Collins*, *Into the Woods*, *Assassins* and *American Psycho*. Costume designer **Pamela Scofield** returns to ASF where she has designed several productions, including *King Lear* and *Alice in Wonderland*.

Tickets are available on asf.net or by calling the Box Office at 334-271-5353.

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The Alabama Shakespeare Festival is among the largest Shakespeare Theatres in the world. Designated as the State Theatre of Alabama, ASF has been located in Montgomery since 1985 when it moved from Anniston as a result of Mr. and Mrs. Wynton Blount’s gift of a performing arts complex in the 250-acre Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park.