

NEWS RELEASE



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PHOTOS: The online press kit for *Buzz* can be found [here](#). For access to ASF's full digital media kit, visit asf.net/media-kit.

Emmy-Award winner Carrie Preston to direct *BUZZ*

A new work depicting the fascinating, brief life of Mary Ann 'Buzz' Goodbody

MONTGOMERY, Ala., (June 6, 2019) — Alabama Shakespeare Festival presents the world premiere of Susan Ferrara's *Buzz*, September 4 – 15, 2019. Emmy Award-winning actor Carrie Preston returns to ASF to direct the provocative new play, which will be performed in an alternative space, ensuring that every performance is a unique experience for the audience.

Buzz is the story of charismatic, visionary director Mary Ann "Buzz" Goodbody, who was one of five women to direct theatre in the UK in the 1970s and the first woman to direct at the Royal Shakespeare Company, a prestigious organization and the ultimate boys' club. During her eight-year tenure at RSC, she developed plays in The Other Place, a small tin shack that lent itself to experimental productions. There, she famously directed a then-unknown Ben Kingsley in the title role of *Hamlet*, but four days after it opened, Buzz was gone.

"Susan [Ferrara]'s play epitomizes one of the main issues impacting women in our country right now: how to excel in what is still, remarkably, a man's world," said Preston. "We think of Buzz as a fighter, a trailblazer, a leader, and an iconoclast. Like so many of history's forgotten women, very few people have heard of her. Everyone knows Ben Kingsley. Why don't they know the name of the woman who helped put that man on the map? We want to remedy that."

Actor-director-producer Preston is best known for her roles on television. She played Arlene Fowler, the sassy, redheaded waitress in the Golden Globe-nominated *True Blood* and won an Emmy Award as the scatterbrained, genius lawyer Elsbeth Tascioni on *The Good Wife*. She currently stars in the TNT comedy-drama series *Claws*. A crucial role for Preston was Ophelia in Alabama Shakespeare Festival's 1994 production of *Hamlet*. It was there that she met her husband, Emmy Award-winning actor Michael Emerson, who was playing Guildenstern.

Preston describes her return to ASF 25 years later – to direct a play about a woman directing a production of *Hamlet* – as bringing things full circle. "I am thrilled to come back and share this story with the ASF audiences," she said.

Award-winning playwright Susan Ferrara is a three-time O'Neill semifinalist, and two-time New Dramatist and Leah Ryan finalist. Her script for *Buzz* has already garnered international acclaim: Winner, Hidden River Playwriting Award; Winner, Reverie Next Generation Playwriting Award; developmental readings with Off-Broadway's Atlantic Theater Company and

New York Theatre Workshop's Mondays @ 3 Series; Finalist, Baltic Writing Residency (Brora, Scotland); Semifinalist, Women's Project Lab; Honorable Mention, Jane Chambers Award.

"When Susan trusted me with this play, I knew that I had to honor Buzz's memory and stage the play in a nontraditional space," Preston commented. "Accustomed to going to the traditional main stages at ASF, our audiences will experience something magical and unexpected by watching a play in a space that never meant to be theatre."

The world premiere of *Buzz* will be presented in the ASF Scene Shop. General admission tickets are \$50. To purchase, call 334.271.5353, stop by the ASF Box Office, or visit asf.net/buzz. Evening performances begin at 7:00 p.m.; matinees start at 2:00 p.m. on weekdays and Saturdays and at 3:00 p.m. on Sundays.

Seating for this unique theatrical experience is limited, so it is best to reserve early.

About Alabama Shakespeare Festival

Alabama Shakespeare Festival is a not-for-profit organization under the direction of Artistic Director Rick Dildine and Executive Director Todd Schmidt. As a beloved Alabama arts institution, ASF broadens the cultural identity of the South by producing Shakespeare, contemporary plays, musicals, and exciting new works that focus on the Southern experience. A leader in education and outreach, ASF serves more than 40,000 students annually with artistic programming. ASF is supported by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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