

THEATRE JACKSONVILLE'S  
**Classic in San Marco**

SEASON 105

# *Driving Miss Daisy*

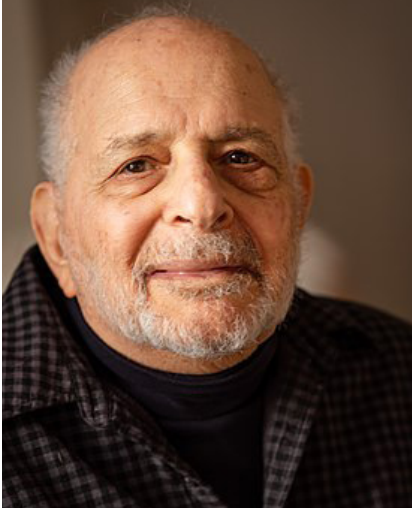
Directed by  
**Rhodie Jackson**

BY  
**ALFRED UHRY**



**SEPTEMBER 13-29, 2024**





## Alfred Uhry

Alfred Uhry, a playwright, lyricist, and screenwriter, was born in 1936 into a Jewish family in Atlanta, Georgia, the son of a furniture designer and a social worker. Uhry graduated from high school in 1954 and subsequently graduated from Brown University where he wrote two original musicals. Uhry's early work for the stage was as a lyricist and librettist for several commercially unsuccessful musicals. His first collaboration with Robert Waldman was the disastrous 1968 musical *Here's Where I Belong*, which closed after one performance. He celebrated more success with *The Robber Bridegroom*, which was mounted on Broadway in both 1975 and 1976, enjoyed a year-long national tour, and garnered Uhry his first Tony nomination.

*Driving Miss Daisy* (1987) is the first in what is known as his "Atlanta Trilogy" of plays, all set during the first half of the 20th century. Produced off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons, the play earned him the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

He adapted it into the screenplay for a 1989 film starring Jessica Tandy and Morgan Freeman, an adaptation which was awarded the Academy Award for Writing (Adapted Screenplay). He received a Tony Award for the second of the trilogy, *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* (1996). The third in the trilogy was a 1998 musical called *Parade*, which also earned him a Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical.

"I think the primary function of a playwright is to entertain audiences and take their minds away from their own lives while they are in the theatre. If they come away with something to think about, that's all the better." -Uhry

The play was inspired by Alfred Uhry's grandmother, Lena Fox, her chauffeur, Will Coleman, and his father. His grandmother, a Jewish woman who lived in Atlanta during the 1960s, had to give up driving after a car accident, and hired Coleman, who drove her for 25 years.

Uhry wrote his Atlanta Trilogy based on his own experiences living in Atlanta as a Jew. He set his three plays in the context of major events that happened in Atlanta: *Parade*, based on the 1913-1915 trial and eventual lynching of Leo Frank; *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, following the events at the city's 1939 *Gone with the Wind* premiere; and *Driving Miss Daisy*, addressing the impacts associated with the 1958 Hebrew Benevolent Congregation Temple bombing and the city's dinner honoring Martin Luther King Jr.'s October 1964 Nobel Peace Prize.

Uhry is the only playwright to win the Pulitzer Prize, an Academy Award and a Tony award for his work. He is married to Joanna Kellogg. They have four daughters and live in New York.

"I want people to know this is a story about regular people and how they learn, change and grow." -Uhry

## Sponsor



*Driving Miss Daisy*



# Driving Miss Daisy

BY  
ALFRED UHRY

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Directed by **Rhodie Jackson**

## Cast of Characters

DAISY WERTHAN ..... **Jen Mercer**  
BOOLIE WERTHAN ..... **Alec Hadden**  
HOKE COLEBURN ..... **Eugene Lindsey**

**Time:** 1948 to 1973

**Place:** Atlanta, Georgia (mostly)

*There will be no intermission.*

*DRIVING MISS DAISY* is presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service collection. ([www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com))

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## Technical Production Team

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Director ..... Rhodie Jackson  
Production Manager ..... Michelle Kindy  
Set Design ..... Ben Girvin  
Lighting Design ..... Johnny Pettegrew  
Costume Design ..... Classic Costumes  
Sound Design ..... Brent Mulberry

Graphic Design ..... Green Onion Creative LLC  
Stage Manager ..... Toni Philips  
Projection/Light Board Operator ..... Squirrel Pitts  
Sound Board Operator ..... Aspen Krill  
Set Construction/Running Crew ..... Lourdes Acosta,  
Ben Girvin, Daniel Locke

### SPECIAL THANKS:

Lora Christl, Theatre West End in Sanford, FL, Peterbrooke-San Marco and Minuteman Press Team



*Driving Miss Daisy* is a character-driven narrative that explores the evolving relationship between Daisy Werthan, a stubborn Southern Jewish widow, and Hoke Coleburn, her black chauffeur, set against the backdrop of the American South from the 1940s to the 1970s. The play's power lies in the subtle shifts in the characters' attitudes, behaviors, and relationship over time, underscored by the social and racial tensions of the period.

Daisy is proud, independent, and resistant to change. As the play progresses, her vulnerability becomes more apparent, revealing her humanity and the softening of her rigid exterior. In contrast to Daisy, Hoke is patient, wise, and has a deep sense of dignity. He understands the racial dynamics at play but handles them with grace and quiet strength. His humor is subtle, often disarming Daisy, and his kindness gradually wins her over. Daisy's relationship with Hoke is as much about trust and companionship as it is about confronting her own vulnerabilities.

Boolie, Daisy's son, serves as a bridge between the two worlds—he understands both his mother and Hoke and often acts as a mediator. His concern for his mother is genuine, but he is also a product of his time and environment, balancing both love and practicality.

The car is the fourth character in this show and the scenes taking place in it are central to the play. Their evolving friendship through these car trips mirrors the slow progress of social change in America, making the play both personal and political.

*Driving Miss Daisy*, spans 25 years, and while the focus is on Daisy and Hoke, the changing world around them also plays an important factor. At its heart, this show is about the connection between two very different people who come to understand and care for each other deeply. The slow build of their friendship shows that empathy and respect can overcome even deep-seated prejudices.

I am very honored to direct this show. Fostering the relationships between these characters shows us that there is hope. Hope that old prejudices can be broken, hope that people can see people for who they are despite their race, social class, or past. Everyone can learn and grow if we let love in and our prejudices go.

Enjoy the show!

-Rhodie

## The World of the Play

### The Plot

The play spans a period of twenty-five years during the civil rights movement. At the beginning of the play, Daisy Werthan, a seventy-two-year-old, southern Jewish widow, has just crashed her brand-new car while backing it out of the garage. After the accident, her son Boolie insists that she is not capable of driving. Over her protests, he hires a driver — Hoke Coleburn, an uneducated African American who is sixty. At first, Daisy wants nothing to do with Hoke. She is afraid of giving herself the airs of a rich person, even though Boolie is paying Hoke's salary. She strongly values her independence, so she also resents having someone around her house. The play follows the development of an unlikely and special relationship during a time of great change.

### The Characters

Daisy Werthan is a 72 year old Jewish widow and former schoolteacher when the play begins and is 97 years old by the end of the play.

Hoke Coleburn is 60 years old at the beginning of the play and 85 at the end. He is an uneducated, unemployed African American Christian man and a member of the

working class. He is hired by Boolie Werthan, Daisy's son, to work as Daisy's driver. He has previously worked as a driver and milk-delivery man.

Boolie Werthan, Daisy's son, is 40 years old when the play begins and 65 at the end. He has inherited his father's printing company, and as the years progress, it makes him one of the best established, leading businessmen in the community. He has a wife named Florine.

### THE THEMES OF INTEREST IN DRIVING MISS DAISY

#### Rules of Interaction and Social Etiquette

Etiquette is a system of rules that dictate how people should interact with one another. At the beginning of *Driving Miss Daisy*, it's 1948 and Miss Daisy Werthan is 72-years of age, having been born in 1876. In the early 1900s, when Miss Daisy was a young woman living in Georgia, she would have been highly aware of the rules of social etiquette and ensured that she followed these rules very closely. Southern manners at the turn of the century involved an extremely complex system of dos and don'ts that upheld the values of the day, such as order and stability; offering hospitality to guests; refinement and delicacy; diction and poise.





Observance, or non-observance, of the minute details and rules of etiquette indicated one's class and level of consideration for others. The rules of etiquette demanded conformity to certain norms of behavior in order to get along in society. Disregard for the rules of etiquette could be the cause of social ostracism.

### Transformative Power of Friendship

Daisy and Hoke come from two different worlds. Hoke is an uneducated, unemployed Christian, while Daisy is a Jewish, retired schoolteacher who has been able to retire comfortably. Despite these differences, their relationship transcends all societal boundaries placed between these two unlikely individuals.

At the beginning of the play, we see that Daisy wants nothing to do with Hoke. At the end, however, she trusts him and allows him to fully take care of her. This is achieved by Daisy and Hoke slowly developing their relationship through talking and sharing stories in their lives. Hoke is very honest with Daisy and while stubborn at times, she appreciates that he is so candid.



Elizabeth Eckford attempting to enter Little Rock Central High, in 1957 in Little Rock, AK

### A CIVIL RIGHTS TIMELINE

*Driving Miss Daisy* provides an overview of the changing values in the South between 1948 and 1973. In the story, acts of segregation and integration are fueled by the racism and prejudice of this time period. Not only is it a story about the transformative power of friendship that transcends all the societal boundaries placed between two unlikely individuals, it is also a story about civil and human rights of the elderly, as well as of religious, political, and ethnic groups.

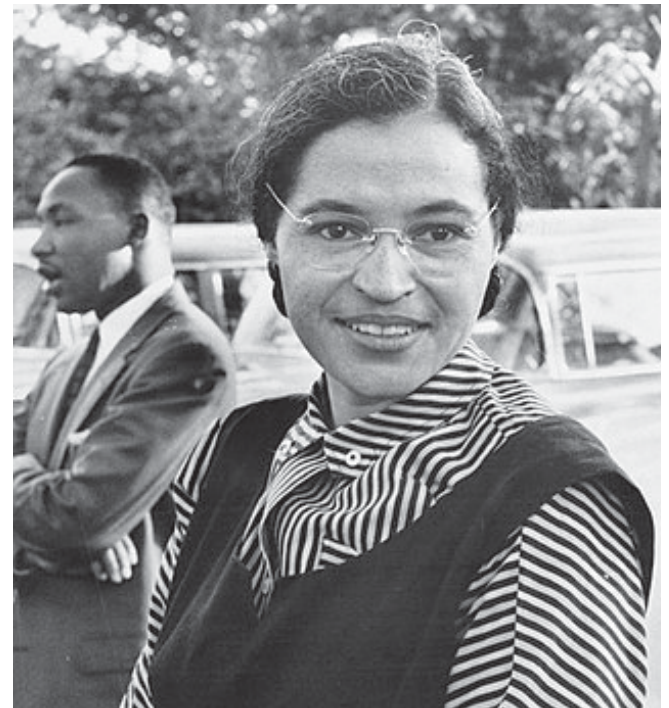
During these years, the civil rights movement gained considerable momentum and included some of its most important developments.

**1947** - Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) launches the Journey of Reconciliation to the American South, a predecessor to the Freedom Rides of the 1960s.

**1954** - U.S. Supreme Court declares school segregation unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling.

**1955** - Rosa Parks refuses to move to the back of a Montgomery, Alabama bus as required by city ordinance and is arrested. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a local pastor, is voted as leader of the movement that follows.

**1956** - As the boycott continues, the Montgomery Federal Court rules that the bus segregation ordinance is unconstitutional. The decision is upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court later that year.



Rosa Parks, with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**1957** - Arkansas Gov. Orval Faubus uses National Guard to block nine black students from attending a Little Rock High School; following a court order, President Eisenhower sends in federal troops to ensure compliance.

**1960** - Four black college students begin sit-ins at the lunch counter of a Greensboro, North Carolina, restaurant where black patrons are not served.

## 6 The World of the Play, cont.

**1961** - Freedom Rides begin from Washington, D.C., into Southern states to test the authenticity of desegregation.

**1962** - President Kennedy sends federal troops to the University of Mississippi to quell riots so that James Meredith, the school's first black student, can attend.

**1962** - The Supreme Court rules that segregation is unconstitutional in all transportation facilities.

**1963** - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivers "I Have a Dream" speech to hundreds of thousands at the March on Washington.

Civil rights leader and decorated WWII veteran Medgar Evers is killed by a sniper's bullet.

Race riots prompt modified martial law in Cambridge, Maryland.

Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, leaves four young black girls dead.

**1964** - Congress passes Civil Rights Act declaring discrimination based on race illegal after 75-day long filibuster.

Riots in Harlem, New York and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Mississippi "freedom summer": over 1000 students, teachers, and others converge on Mississippi to organize black voters.

**1965** - "Bloody Sunday" march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, to demand protection for voting rights; two civil rights workers slain earlier in the year in Selma.

Malcolm X is assassinated.

Riot in Watts, Los Angeles, California leaves 34 dead.

Congress passes The Voting Rights Act.

**1967** - First African American, Thurgood Marshall, is named to the Supreme Court.

**1968** - Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated.

**1972** - Congress passes the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, opening the door for Affirmative Action.

In the story, acts of segregation and integration are fueled by the racism and prejudice of this time period. We see examples in the story that some progress is being made. These instances are results of the civil rights movement that was gaining considerable momentum during this period.

"Things changin', but they ain't change all dat much."  
-Hoke



1963 March for Jobs and Freedom, Washington D.C.



1965 March from Selma to Montgomery, Aabama



Malcom X

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**RHODIE JACKSON** (Director) is excited to get the opportunity to direct *The Classic* this year, *Driving Miss Daisy*. Rhodie just recently directed *Beauty and the Beast* for the summer musical for SMTE; last year she directed *Sister Act* and was glad to be asked back this summer. She has directed shows throughout the Jacksonville area, *The*

*Royale* for The 5 & Dime Theatre, *The Clean House* and *4000 Miles* at All Beaches Experimental Theatre and shows at Orange Park Community Theatre. In addition to directing, you may have seen Rhodie on stage at various theatres in the area, most recently she was seen as the First Lady in *POTUS* at The 5 & Dime. She studied Acting, Voice/Speech, and Directing at Florida State College at Jacksonville. She has a bachelor's degree in Business Supervision and Management from Florida State College at Jacksonville. Rhodie would like to thank her family for being her biggest support system and you, the audience, for without you, our work would never be seen. Love your people.



**ALEC HADDEN** (Boolie Werthan) is excited to be back on the Theatre Jacksonville stage after last appearing as Raleigh in *Last Train to Nibroc*. Some of his other Theatre Jacksonville roles include Stephen Gardiner/Eusatche Chapuys in *Wolf Hall*, Chef Louis in *The Little Mermaid*, Enjolras in *Les Misérable*, and Jonathan in *Arsenic and Old Lace*. He has

performed extensively at The Alhambra Theatre & Dining, most notably as The Narrator in *The Rocky Horror Show Live*, Chris Bean in *The Play that Goes Wrong*, and Jud Fry in *Oklahoma*. He also performs with and arranges music for TheStaffJax, a local acapella group. When not on stage, Alec performs behind the mic as a professional voice actor. He would like to thank his family for their constant love and support.



**EUGENE LINDSEY** (Hoke Coleburn) is delighted about his return to the stage at Theatre Jacksonville. His last performance here was during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when he played Thurgood Marshall in our live-streamed production of *Thurgood*. Playing to a virtual audience just doesn't compare to having each of you right

here in the house! He can already feel your presence. As a veteran actor, he has given life to an array of characters over the years but some of his favorite roles include Troy Maxson in *Fences*, Nomax in *Five Guys Named Moe*, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in *The Mountaintop*, Simon in *The Whipping Man*, and Mister in *The Color Purple*. In addition to the stage, Eugene also enjoys creating in TV and film. He was recognized at the San Diego Black Film Festival as best actor for his portrayal of Henry in *Ocean Pond* and he enjoyed his feature role as Dr. Mitchell on Tyler Perry's *House of Payne*. He dedicates this performance in *Driving Miss Daisy* to his mother, Mrs. Flossie Lindsey.



**JEN MERCER** (Daisy Werthan) is thrilled to be making her Theatre Jacksonville debut. These characters have been near and dear to her heart since she was "nothin' but a little child", and she is honored to bring it to life with such an incredible cast. Jen has undergrad degrees in both theatre and vocal performance and attended Circle in the Square Theatre

School (NY). Over the past twenty years, she has worked as a commercial actor, a singer for Walt Disney World, and in regional and community theatres. Jacksonville credits include *Little Shop of Horrors* (Audrey), *Violet* (Violet), *The Prom* (Dee Dee), *Assassins* (Sara Jane Moore), and most recently *The American Dream* (Mrs. Barker) with Lumen Repertory Theatre. Other favorites: *Into the Woods* (Little Red), *A Children's Hour* (Karen), and *Father of the Bride* (Kay). About 12 years ago, she discovered a love of teaching, and Jen Mercer Studio was established to encourage and grow the next generation of performers. She would like to thank her husband and kids for their excitement and encouragement for this show especially, and for never ever expecting a homemade meal.



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# SEASON 105

2024-25

**The Classic in San Marco:** (included for All-Access Members)

## Driving Miss Daisy

By Alfred Uhry

September 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22\*, 26, 27, 28, 29\*, 2024

When the elderly Miss Daisy has an accident that prevents her from driving, her son hires Hoke Colburn, an African-American, to drive her. What starts out as a contentious feud, blooms into a 30-year friendship. Set against the backdrop of racial tensions in the south, this Pulitzer Prize-winning tale of the unlikely relationship between an aging, fiercely independent white Southern Jewish lady and a proud, soft-spoken black man is both humorous and heart-warming.

"Driving Miss Daisy is a total delight." —New York Daily News



**The Mainstage Season:** (included for All-Access Members & Subscribers)

## The Foreigner

By Larry Shue

November 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17\*, 21, 22, 23, 24\*, 2024

A fishing lodge in rural Georgia provides a needed holiday for Charlie, a painfully shy British gentleman. However, his plan for solitude turns hilariously awry when his friend introduces him as an exotic foreigner who doesn't understand any English. Soon, Charlie is in over his head as he unwittingly becomes the focal point of Southern hospitality and discovers mysterious schemes with hysterical and unexpected results. Winner of the Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Off-Broadway Play.

"...one comic surprise after another." —The New Yorker



## The Women of Lockerbie

By Deborah Brevoort

January 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26\*, 30, 31, February 1, 2\*, 2025

A mother from New Jersey roams the hills of Lockerbie, Scotland, looking for her son's remains that were lost in the crash of Pan Am 103. She meets the women of Lockerbie, who are fighting the U.S. government to obtain the clothing of the victims found in the plane's wreckage. The women, determined to convert an act of hatred into an act of love, want to wash the clothes of the dead and return them to the victim's families. Loosely inspired by a true story and written in the form of a Greek tragedy, it's a poetic drama about the triumph of love over hate.

"A moving, thoughtful exploration of how grief changes over time." —The New Yorker



## The Boys Next Door

By Tom Griffin

March 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16\*, 20, 21, 22, 23\*, 2025

In a New England town four mentally challenged young men are living in a communal residence. The story of their daily life is told through the perspective of Jack, the increasingly "burned out" social worker who looks after them. Filled with humor, the play is also marked by compassion and understanding. It touchingly communicates that these four men are like the rest of us who want to love and be loved and find some meaning and purpose in the all too brief time we have on earth.

"one of the most unusual...and one of the most rewarding plays in town." —BackStage



## Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors

By Gordon Greenberg and Steve Rosen

Very loosely based on the novel Dracula by Bram Stoker

April 18, 19, 24, 25, 26, 27\*, May 1, 2, 3, 4\*, 2025

Bram Stoker's legendary vampire tale is hysterically twisted in this lightning-fast, laugh-out-loud, gender-bending romp. When her sister Mina falls ill with a mysterious disease of the blood, Lucy Westfeldt and her fiancé, Jonathan Harker, enlist the help of famed female vampire hunter Doctor Jean Van Helsing. Their hunt for the dangerous and sexy Count Dracula abounds with clever wordplay and quick-change antics. Five actors play over a dozen roles in this bloodcurdlingly uproarious send-up of the literary classic.

"Over-the-top and bloody hilarious... a must-see!" —DC Theater Arts



## Desperate Measures

Book & Lyrics by Peter Kellogg; Music by David Friedman

June 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15\*, 19, 20, 21, 22\*, 2025

In this witty and wild new musical comedy, the dangerously handsome Johnny Blood's life is on the line, and he must put his fate into the hands of a colorful cast of characters including a mysterious sheriff, an eccentric priest, a narcissistic governor, a saloon girl gone good, and a nun out of the habit. Together, they face uncharted territory as laws are broken and hearts are won. Before the sun sets, will they be able to rise up and pull off the greatest act yet, or will Johnny be left hanging?

"A delight...such a hoot! Wonderful!" —New York Times



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