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## **Broadway's Joel Rooks Brings George Burns to Life in "Say Goodnight, Gracie" at Cape May Stage**

Cape May Stage  
Box Office: (609) 884-1341  
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***Say Goodnight, Gracie***

**The Life, Laughter and Love of George Burns and Gracie Allen**

**Written by Rupert Holmes**

**Directed by Roy Steinberg**

**Previews** June 24, 2009

**Opens** June 25, 2009

**Closes** July 18, 2009

*Cape May, NJ – June 3, 2009-* Renowned Broadway actor, Joel Rooks will reprise his critically acclaimed role of the lovable George Burns in the Tony-nominated Best Play, *Say Goodnight, Gracie*, beginning June 24, 2009 at the Robert Shackleton Playhouse of Cape May Stage. Written by multiple Tony and Emmy award-winning writer Rupert Holmes, *Say Goodnight, Gracie*, will also feature the acclaimed actress Didi Conn's estimable talents as the singular voice of Gracie Allen.

Hailed by *The New Yorker*, as both "touching and hilarious, and a showcase for an era," *Say Goodnight, Gracie* previews June 24, officially opens June 25, and closes July 18.

In this 90-minute production, director Roy Steinberg takes theater audiences on a guided tour through the 20th century told through the eyes of Burns. Burns, who savored each day from his impoverished youth on the lower East side, to his career in Vaudeville, regales audiences with stories about his marriage to Allen, their rise to success on stage, screen, radio and TV, and ends his narrative touching upon his memorable "second time around".

Playwright Rupert Holmes celebrates the life of America's funniest centenarian in this life-affirming one-man show. Holmes, whose other Broadway credits include *Curtains*, *Accomplice* and *Solitary Confinement*, is the first person in theatrical history to win the Tony Award for Best Book, Best Music and Best Lyrics for his Tony award-winning musical *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

*Say Goodnight, Gracie* is an unforgettable theatre experience, centering around one man's devotion to his wife, a woman who was his friend, his sweetheart, and his partner for life, and beyond. A love story one hundred years in the making, it induces tears of laughter and compassion as it tells the remarkable adventures of Burns, a scrappy kid from the absolute poverty of New York's lower East Side (whose neighbors included Fanny Brice and The Marx Brothers) who fought his way with song and dance into Vaudeville.

When Burns met the romance of his lifetime, the deliciously delirious Allen, the pair teamed up as both entertainers and lovers and rode a rainbow to stardom that led them on to the heights of Hollywood and into the homes of America.

*Say Goodnight, Gracie* is chock full of delightful music and evocative moving images, including rarely seen moments from Talking Pictures and Television.

And the critical acclaim speaks for itself: "George Burns came alive again for ninety wonderful, endearing minutes! I strongly recommend it!!" hailed Jeffrey Lyons for NBC, while Robyn Carter for CBS proclaimed it "a mesmerizing, career-capping achievement!" THE NEW YORK TIMES vows that "you'll be in heaven yourself, at least for ninety minutes" while THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS declares it "an endearing journey into the past that you'll find irresistible!"

But perhaps USA TODAY defined it best: "*Say Goodnight, Gracie* is an old fashioned love story in which the joy of being alive is the greatest love of all." Set the date now to meet George (and Gracie!) ... and remember again what life and love and laughter can be.

### **About the Cast**

**Joel Rooks** first performed the role of George Burns on Broadway as understudy to the late Frank Gorshin. Other Broadway credits include *Taller Than A Dwarf* directed by Alan Arkin, *The Tenth Man*, *The Sisters Rosensweig* and the voice of the late night DJ in *Frankie and Johnny in The Claire de Lune*. Some of the many Off-Broadway productions he has done include *The Secret Order*, *Rocket to the Moon*, *Jewtopia*, *Iron*, *Comic Potential*, *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, *Richard II*, *School for Scandal*, *After The Rain* and the New York Theater Workshop's Obie award-winning production of *More Stately Mansions*. Films include *It Runs In The Family*, *The Sightseer*, *Why George?*, *On The Run*, *American Blue Note*, *The Gig* and *His and Hers*. TV Credits include *Copshop*, *Ed*, *The Beat*, *Winchell*, many appearances on all the various versions of *Law & Order*, and an assortment of doctors, lawyers and cops on several daytime dramas. He is a member of Ensemble Studio Theater, Circle East and New River Dramatists. He has been a guest teacher in the theater departments at NYU, the Mason-Gross School at Rutgers University and at the Hogeschool in Eindhoven, Holland.

**Didi Conn** is best known for her starring role in the film, *You Light Up My Life*, and as Frenchy, the beauty school dropout in *Grease* and *Grease II*. She recently commemorated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Grease* by writing Frenchy's *Grease Scrapbook-We'll Always Be Together*. Ms. Conn has recorded hundreds of commercials for radio and television. She and her husband, composer David Shire, and their son, Daniel, divide their time between homes in NY and Los Angeles.

**Production Team**

Production team includes Roy Steinberg (Director) Donald Toal (Production Stage Manager), J. Dominic Chacon (Lighting Designer), Will Knapp (Sound Designer).

**Ticket Information**

*Say Goodnight, Gracie* performances are Tuesdays thru Sundays at 8pm from June 24 thru July 18 at the Robert Shackleton Playhouse of the Cape May Stage. Tickets are \$35 adults, \$25 seniors, and \$12.50 students. Previews on June 24 will be half-price tickets. Call (609) 884-1341 for tickets and information or visit the theatre's website, [www.capemaystage.com](http://www.capemaystage.com). Audio enhancement, wheelchair accessible seating, and large print programs are available with advance notice by calling the box office at (609) 884-1341.

This production is generously sponsored by Café Promenade at the Montreal Inn and co-sponsored by The Fudge Kitchen.

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