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Acoustic Voice presents the North American Premiere of
Call Me Miss Birds Eye
A Celebration of Ethel Merman

In a Pre-Broadway run at A.C.T.'s Geary Theater
July 8 – July 19, 2015

SAN FRANCISCO (May 28, 2015) – Australia's **Acoustic Voice**, the only acoustic theater company in the world, announced today the North American premiere of ***Call Me Miss Birds Eye: A Celebration of Ethel Merman***, in its pre-Broadway run at **A.C.T.'s Geary Theater, July 8 through July 19, 2015**. Written by **Jack Tinker** and starring **Denise Wharmby** as Ethel Merman, *Call Me Miss Birds Eye* chronicles and celebrates the life of one of Broadway's most legendary performers who came to be known as the First Lady of Musical Theater. The revue includes more than 30 songs from Merman's extensive song catalogue and follows her journey from a day job as a stenographer to when she became the star in her first musical *Girl Crazy*, and how she balanced her family life, handled rejection and stood her ground against the opinions of musical theater's most famous composers. The story of Merman's life on and off the stage, is punctuated by the songs that defined her career, including "There's No Business Like Show Business," "Everything's Coming up Roses," "I Get A Kick Out of You" and "Anything You Can Do." Highlighting the work of the songwriters who were inspired by her, including George Gershwin, Irving Berlin and Cole Porter, *Call Me Miss Birds Eye* is performed Bel Canto, the traditional Italian vocal technique that Merman perfected and which engulfed audiences with the richness and nuances of the voice in a pure, acoustic form.

The performance schedule is as follows: Wednesday, July 8 at 7:30 p.m., **Thursdays – Sundays at 7:30 p.m. and Saturdays at 2 p.m.** Press night for *Call Me Miss Birds Eye* is Wednesday, July 8, 2015. **Tickets (ranging from \$20–\$65)** are available at the A.C.T. Box Office at **415.749.2228** or online at www.act-sf.org.

"As the only theater company in the world that works exclusively with the Bel Canto technique, Acoustic Voice has long celebrated Merman's talent and now we look forward to sharing her life and songbook in its most authentic form," said **Dr. Graham Clarke, Artistic Director, Acoustic Voice**. "Acoustic Voice uncovered the only remaining script of Tinker's *Call Me Miss Birds Eye* two years after we learned of the show's original and only

incarnation on the West End in 1985 and are excited to share this gem of a show with the San Francisco Bay Area this summer.”

The cast of *Call Me Miss Birds Eye* includes **Denise Wharmby** as Ethel Merman, **Martin Grimwood** as lead male including narration and performance and **Don Bridges** as supporting male, including some narration and performance. Directed by **Frank McCarty**, the creative team includes Musical Director **Dr. Graham Clarke**, Designer **Damien Muller**, Choreographer **Rick Wallace** and Production Manager **Daniel West**.

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About Acoustic Voice

Acoustic Voice evolved from Victorian Music Theatre, and was founded in 2012 by Dr Graham Clarke. Collectively, the members of Acoustic Voice bring years of experience to the stage. With their truly live performances, they hope to create thrilling, engaging theatre that will move an audience.

Acoustic Voice is dedicated to authenticity – in interpretation, sound and experience. The performers at Acoustic Voice examine what the composer’s original intention was in order to find the heart of the song and then they express it. Their unique vocal technique allows them to sing live, without microphones, amplification or auto-tuning. The theatre, the musicians and the singers unite as one; one composite, original instrument giving voice to a myriad of emotions – for the audience to experience.

In modern theatre, elaborate sound systems are used. The music and the performers’ voices are all projected through massive speakers. The sound is dislocated from the performers’ bodies, making it sometimes difficult to work out who is speaking. Artificial sound also means that the connection between the performers and the audience is no longer instantaneous. And the audience become passive observers of spectacle.

There was once a time when thousands could gather in an auditorium and find themselves completely captivated by the performers and orchestra. Without a single piece of technology, every voice could be heard. Acoustic Voice strives to re-capture this dynamic experience – to engage, excite, and connect with their audience.

For more information please go to www.acousticvoice.net

About Ethel Merman

Born in the Astoria section of Queens, New York City, Ethel Merman (1908 – 1984) was surely the pre-eminent star of 'Broadway' musical comedy. Though untrained in singing, she could belt out a song like quite no one else, and was sought after by major songwriters such as Irving Berlin and Cole Porter. Having debuted in 1930 in *Girl Crazy*, she is yet remembered for her marvelous starring appearances in so many great musicals that were later adapted to the silver screen. [\[IMDB\]](#)

About Denise Wharmby

Denise Wharmby is a versatile singer whose first professional singing engagements were in Australia, where she performed and played leading roles in national touring productions of musical theatre shows, including: 'Barnum', 'The Pirates of Penzance', and 'Jesus Christ Superstar'. As soubrette in the cast of 'Side by Side by Sondheim' for the Royal Queensland Theatre Company, Denise participated in a Royal Command performance before the Duke and Duchess of Kent, to open the Queensland Cultural Centre. She also music directed professional productions of children’s musicals including: 'Noddy comes to Town', 'Mr Men', and 'Puff the Magic Dragon' for Rainbow Management and was principal pianist on 'They're Playing our Song'.

She was 'discovered' singing opera at a Sydney barbeque by a visiting trio from the UK, 'Fascinating Aida', renowned for their original satire, who were at the time performing at the Sydney Festival. She soon moved on

to continue her career in England, as soprano in the group, beginning with a sold out engagement at the Edinburgh Festival, then fulfilled almost 3 years of non-stop touring commitments in hundreds of theatres all over the UK and internationally, including the Sydney Opera House and The Ballroom in New York. She was with the group when it successfully debuted its show in London's West End.

Other highlights include being selected as one of 12 writer/composers to study musical theatre writing with Stephen Sondheim at Oxford University in a course sponsored by Sir Cameron Mackintosh. She later contributed to 2 joint collaborative musicals for the 'Mercury Workshop', including 'The Challenge' written with 26 writers contributing, which was performed on stage in London, then recorded at Abbey Road Studios. She contributed to BBC's 'Music Makers' - a music in schools television series, as writer and performer.

Denise is also a vocal trainer and has conducted workshops and masterclasses in England, the United States, Australia, France, Austria and in Japan, for the SKD Theatre Company. She music directed and played piano for several of London's Central School of Speech and Drama cabaret & theatre performances, maintains teaching in private studio and corporate settings and she has produced and performed in several specialized cabaret shows at the Savoy and Claridge's Hotels in London. She toured to Hong Kong with the UK cast of *'Barnum'* and music directed 3 British pantomimes, before moving to California, where she now resides and continues music performance, writing, teaching and directing. She most recently completed a concert tour to Mexico with Acoustic Voice.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

WHAT: *Call Me Miss Birds Eye*
A Celebration of Ethel Merman

Written by **Jack Tinker** and starring **Denise Wharmby** as Ethel Merman, *Call Me Miss Birds Eye* chronicles and celebrates the life of one of Broadway's most legendary performers who came to be known as the First Lady of Musical Theater. The revue includes more than 30 songs from Merman's extensive song catalogue and follows her journey from a day job as a stenographer to when she became the star in her first musical *Girl Crazy*, and how she balanced her family life, handled rejection and stood her ground against the opinions of musical theater's most famous composers. The story of Merman's life on and off the stage, is punctuated by the songs that defined her career, including "There's No Business Like Show Business," "Everything's Coming up Roses," "I Get A Kick Out of You" and "Anything You Can Do." Highlighting the work of the songwriters who were inspired by her, including George Gershwin, Irving Berlin and Cole Porter, *Call Me Miss Birds Eye* is performed Bel Canto, the traditional Italian vocal technique that Merman perfected and which engulfed audiences with the richness and nuances of the voice in a pure, acoustic form.

WHO: Directed by **Frank McCarty**
Cast: **Denise Wharmby, Martin Grimwood, Don Bridges, Jillian Gundermann**
Creative team: **Jack Tinker** (writer), **Dr. Graham Clarke** (Musical Director), **Damien Muller** (Designer), **Rick Wallace** (Choreographer) and **Daniel West** (Production Manager).

WHERE: **A.C.T.'s Geary Theater**, 415 Geary Street, San Francisco, CA 94108

WHEN: **July 8 – July 19, 2015**
Press Night: Wednesday, July 8, 2015
Performance Schedule:
Wednesday, July 8 at 7:30 p.m.
Thursdays–Sundays at 7:30 p.m.
Saturdays at 2 p.m.

TICKETS: \$20–\$65

TIX & INFO: **415.749.2228** | act-sf.org

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