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Playbill

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ART CENTER OF CITRUS COUNTY

Art Center Theatre

PRESENTS

Cookin' with Gus



By Jim Brochu

Directed by Patrick Erhardt & Susan Jobson

"Cookin' With Gus" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc.

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Cookin' with Gus



PLACE: The kitchen of a townhouse on the Upper West Side of New York City.

ACT ONE

At rise: 2:30 in the afternoon.

ACT TWO

A few minutes later.

20 min Intermission

ACT THREE

Scene 1: Two days later, about 2 pm.

Scene 2: About an hour later.



Capt. Daniel Leeder (Walter Richardson) is a seasoned actor of several troupes within Citrus County, Art Center of Citrus County, Under Siege Productions, Woodview Players, Valerie Players, roles in: *Ripcord*, *Wedding from Hell*, *War of the Worlds*, *Four Old Broads on High Seas*, *Murder on Lido Deck*, *Murder on Lido Deck* (abridged). Presently performing as Walter in *Cookin' with Gus*. Also, a multi-million-dollar Realtor with Tropic Shores Realty when he is not on stage or singing somewhere in Citrus County.



Michael Shier II (Bernie Rae Luskin) is a graduate of the University of Central Florida's School of Performing Arts and former theatre educator. He has been directing and performing in theatrical productions in Citrus County since 2004. Michael is excited to appear in his second show at the Art Center this season, following his turn as Titus Savage in *The Curious Savage* earlier this year! His favorite credits also include *Evil Dead the Musical*, *Jekyll and Hyde the Musical*, *HAIR*, *A Doll's House Part 2*, and *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Michael would like to send his thanks to his family, friends, and the Art Center community for their love and support!

Cookin' with Gus



MEET THE CAST



Frances Maurino (Gussie Richardson) hails from Long Island, New York. *Cookin' with Gus* is her second show for the Art Center Theatre. She is thrilled to work with a most talented cast. She has appeared with the Valerie Players in *California Suite*, *Tower Stories* and *A Christmas Carol*. Other stage performances include Karen Holt in *Something to Hide* for the Art Center

Theatre and Felicia in *I Hate Hamlet* at Ocala Civic Theatre. She directed *Ripcord* for the Valerie Players in 2023 as well as *Last of the Red Hot Lovers* in 2024 where she also played the role of Elaine Navazio. Her New York roles include Hannah in *California Suite*, Maggie in *Jake's Women*, Myra in *Hay Fever* and Hillary in *Sex Please, we're Sixty* to name a few. Fran is retired from careers in teaching, law enforcement and law and is also a trained Ballroom and Latin dancer. She sends much love to caring and supportive friends and faithful dog, Sammy. She gives special thanks to director Pat Erhardt for trusting her with the role of Gus and for the supportive environment he always provides for his cast!



Nikki Vantilburg (Carmen) moved to Inverness in 2019 from SW FL with husband Tim and son, Jackson (and 3 of our now 5 dogs). In 2023, she got her 1st role (in 29 years!) as Sylvia Montgomery in *Wedding From Hell*, then *War of the Worlds*, *Here and Now* ('23), *Evil Dead The Musical* ('23), *Angeline's Door* ('24), *Last of the Red Hot Lovers* ('24), *Murder on the Lido*

Deck ('24), and *Curious Savage* ('25). This is her 2nd show with Art Center, and she plans many more!

Cookin' with Gus

CAST

Gussie Richardson **Frances Maurino**
Carmen **Nikki Vantilburg**
Walter Richardson **Capt. Daniel Leeder**
Bernie Rae Luskin **Michael Shier II**

PRODUCTION TEAM

Directors Patrick Erhardt & Susan Jobson
Stage Manager Emily van Sickle
Construction Lead Richard Flury
Construction Crew Chris Peters, Paul Sunseri, Kim & Jean Lott, Doug Haynes
Set Design Richard Flury
Set Painting MaryBeth, Emily, Patrick, Susan
Costuming/Prop Design Cast
Light/Sound Design Scott & MaryBeth van Sickle, Kyle Flanagan
Sound Technician Scott van Sickle
Light Technician John Telschow
House/Usher Managers Karen Vona-Mac Donald, Jaret Lubowiecki
Concessions Frank & Carol Hayes
Graphic Design/Playbill Doug & Dianna Haynes
Marketing/Advertising Mel Rustom
Box Office Volunteers Carolyn Moss, Stephen Moran

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Performing Arts Administrator - Karen Vona MacDonald
Visual Arts Chair - Loretta Bell
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Director's Notes

Augusta "Gussie" Richardson is a famous gourmet cook who has her own newspaper columns and cookbooks to her credit. Her hero is Julia Child, and dreams of the day when she will join the ranks of culinary TV stars. As luck would have it, Gus is offered the opportunity to star in her own multi-year cooking show and she's ecstatic. Only two major problems are mixed in the batter: she is paralyzingly camera-shy and a boyfriend with other ideas.

Her live-in boyfriend of 18 years, Walter, loves Gus madly and wants to marry her. However, she gets the TV gig he'll be second potato to her career. Postponing indefinitely their nuptials.

Walter, a retired self-made man with endless free time, has taught himself how to put people in hypnotic states and help them quit bad habits among other things.

He's willing to help Gussie achieve her dreams, and agrees to help Gus overcome her stage fright by hypnotizing her to relax in front of the camera.

Their wacky gypsy neighbor Carmen, who sort of has the gift of prophecy, was cured of smoking by Walter. She offers to help Gus as well by means of spells, incantations, but mostly by conjuring through liquid libations.

Gussie's long time agent Bernie who gets her the TV show booking, also tries boosting her confidence by setting up a mock video episode to present to the studio producers.

While it looks like, thanks to Walter's post hypnotic suggestions, Gus is cured, the camera is "Rolling", but wouldn't cha know it ... all hell breaks loose.

Things go off the rails turning into a comic nightmare when the food starts flying.

We would like to thank the entire cast and crew for all your incredible work on *Cookin' with Gus*. From the first rehearsal to the curtain calls, your dedication, talent, and commitment were truly inspiring. We will especially remember how well you brought to life a good 'ol fashioned food fight, and hypnotized us at every turn "clucking" in laughter.

Thank you for your hard work, positive attitudes, and for making this production so memorable. We are so proud to have been part of this team.

Sincerely,
Pat Erhardt and Susan Jobson

DIRECTORS



Director

Patrick Erhardt has over 40 years of theatrical experience as an actor, singer, director and playwright. He was last seen on the Art Center stage in *Assisted Living*, *The Home for the Holidays*. He is one of the founders of the Valerie Players in Inverness. *Cookin' with Gus* is his debut as a director at the Art Center and he is thrilled to have Susan Jobson as a co-director on this culinary comedy. Pat has assembled a stellar cast of four of Citrus County's favorite actors. Sit back and enjoy the show, as laughter and food will be flying on the stage. We promise not to get any on you.



Co-Director

Susan Jobson is a native Floridian raised in Hollywood, FL & Inverness began as a ballet dancer and gymnast. She received her college degree in Theatre/Dramatic Arts Broward College in Davie, FL. She joined the Valerie Players last year as a set painter and choreographer for the *Addams Family Musical*, set painter for *Dracula*, performed in the holiday production of *Christmas Through the Ages* playing Molly and Jenna and performed in *The Wedding Singer Musical* in various ensemble roles. Susan is delighted to join the Art Center Theatre as Co-Director for *Cookin' with Gus* and enjoys being a volunteer of the Citrus County theatre community.