



[FDR with Ed Asner at San Jose Rep a real winner](#)

[Thursday, July 15, 2010](#)

FDR based on the play *Sunrise at Campobello* by Dore Schary. Dramaturg by Allan Williams. San Jose Repertory Theatre, 101 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose, CA 95113-2603. 408.367.7266 or www.sjrep.com. July 14 – July 18, 2010

ED ASNER BRINGS *FDR* BACK TO LIFE

When you go to see the **must see FDR** play at San Jose Rep don't expect to see the **Ed Asner** as Lou Grant the newspaper editor of the *Mary Tyler Moore Show* and his own Emmy Award winning TV show *Lou Grant*. Be prepared for a tour de force performance by an actor who has earned his strips with superb curriculum vitae from his early days in Chicago improv to President of the Screen Actors Guild. That latter position certainly honed his skill to play The President regarded as probably the greatest President of our time or of any time, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Ed Asner is a standout for 95 minutes without intermission and without the ubiquitous glass of water used by monologists. He brings to life the decisive highlights, including failures with successes and intermingling personal vignettes of FDR's life based on the Dore Schary Broadway hit *Sunrise at Campobello*.

At age 40 FDR was a rising political star when he was struck down with polio paralyzing him from the waist down. This is where *FDR* play begins as Asner, with a pair of canes assumes the mantle of FDR who would not run for political office if he had to use crutches. His greatest personal triumph was overcoming this physical limitation, never referring to it as a handicap. Asner does not look like FDR nor does he attempt to recreate his voice or imperial style. He does manifest the inner fortitude of FDR and sparingly uses the trademark cigarette holder and princeps eyeglasses always included in the many caricatures found in the press.

After the joy of the first 100 days of his Presidency, known as the honeymoon, many of the press became his adversaries. To counteract this hostility he held open press meetings and devised the fireside radio chats that endeared him to the common man. When he entered the oval office there were 13 million people without jobs with men selling apples on the street corners. His vision was that government should take an active role in bringing America out of the depression. The opposition rebelled against his formation of National Recovery Act and the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional causing him to threaten expanding The Court from 9 to 15 and stacking it with Liberals! Asner, with his perfect timing injects just the right amount of humor. When Asner delivers FDR's lines there is no doubt that the tone in which they are spoken are of FDR. When asked, "Are you a Communist or Socialist?" The reply is a confident "I am an American, a Protestant and a Democrat. . .but not necessarily in that order."

Although no other person shares the stage, Asner adroitly maneuvers around on two canes and has conversations with those who surrounded him by the expediency of his dialog reflecting the words or demeanor of the unseen personages. You will meet, Eleanor whom he calls "Babs", his trusted advisor Lou Howe, Harry Hopkins, Harold Ickes, Alfred E. Smith, Sumner Welles and others. With Asner's unique delivery, inflection and sincerity the unseen characters become real.

Roosevelt, through three terms led our country through the Great Depression and World War II. He instituted social reforms that were appropriate for their time including the Social Security System and Regulatory reforms on banks and the stock market. There are a plethora of conversations, personal /political vignettes tying in with the historical events of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's life as President and Asner with his commanding presence does great justice to the man and his words.

Kedar K. Adour, MD

Courtesy of www.theatrworl dinternetmagazine.com

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