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NEWS RELEASE

**FIRST TUESDAY DISCUSSION AT UD TO EXPLORE
IMPORTANT SOCIAL ISSUES IN 'THE LAST NIGHT OF BALLYHOO'**

DAYTON, Ohio — With his very first play, *Driving Miss Daisy*, Alfred Uhry earned a Pulitzer Prize for his ability to capture issues of intolerance and serve them up so sweetly as to make the experience as pleasantly palatable as it is disturbing.

Ten years later, in 1997, Uhry repeated his bittersweet moralization technique in *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, a comedic exploration of prejudice and, even more so, acceptance — the basic human need to belong.

Uhry's not-so-subtle messages will be the focus of "Social and Artistic Issues in *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*," one of the University of Dayton's First Tuesday Series of discussions in the arts and humanities. This discussion, which is free and open to the public, complements the Human Race Theatre Co.'s current production of *Ballyhoo* at the Loft Theatre and will be held at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 1, in Sears Recital Hall in UD's Jesse Philips Humanities Center.

Guest lecturers will be Marsha Hanna, artistic director for the Human Race; production director Gary Barker, resident artist with the theater company; and Wendi Williams, an intern from Cedarville College serving as historical researcher for the production. The discussion will explore the issues of prejudice and the struggle for acceptance as portrayed in Uhry's play, Hanna said.

UD's James Farrelly, professor of English and moderator for the discussion, said both the discussion and play will offer lighthearted yet profound insight into these timeless issues.

"Uhry is noted for weaving important social issues into his comedies," Farrelly said.

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“His Pulitzer for *Driving Miss Daisy* is a good indicator of how successful he is when he enters a world of prejudice and ultimately testifies to the triumph of the human spirit over the world’s conceits.

“*Ballyhoo* is set in 1939. Hitler is invading Poland, but the Jewish community in Atlanta, already enervated by the premier of *Gone With the Wind*, is busy preparing for the celebration of Ballyhoo, the social event of the Christmas season.”

Enter the Jewish Freitag family, blind to politics but keen on social acceptance and assimilation into the Southern gentry, Farrelly said. Against this backdrop, Uhry tells the story of the conflicting romantic journals two young women take along a path of pride, prejudice and denial of heritage that eventually comes full circle.

“Uhry’s ‘design of opposites’ includes not only abandoning Jewish for Gentile custom in the southern aristocracy but also the antipathy within the Jewish community between German and East European Jews,” Farrelly said.

“Through the discussion we’ll explore these issues as they relate to the staging of the play, the interaction between characters, and the final outcome of the play — which restores a family torn apart to a new unity and sense of self.”

The First Tuesday Series, which also includes “The Transformation of *Les Miserables* into *Les Miz*” on March 7 and “Bach After 250 Years” on April 4, is designed to highlight and provide insight into current arts events in the Dayton area.

For ticket and performance information on *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*, running Jan. 27 through Feb. 13, call the Victoria Theatre Ticket Center at (937) 228-3630.

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For media interviews, call **James Farrelly** at (937) 229-3435 and **Marsha Hanna** at (937) 461-3823.