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SIGNATURE THEATRE ANNOUNCES ITS 2005/2006 GRAND OPENING SEASON

- **Washington premiere of 3-time Tony Award-winning musical**
- **Exciting new voice in American theatre**
- **World premiere musical**
- **East coast premiere of smash-hit comedy**
- **Sondheim — Signature’s “signature”**
- **Signature moves into new \$12.5 million complex**

Arlington, VA — Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer is pleased to announce Signature Theatre’s **2005/2006 Grand Opening Season** — a landmark year with Signature moving from its converted garage space into a new \$12.5 million two-theatre complex in the Village at Shirlington. The upcoming season is densely packed with everything that makes Signature unique — original shows, loads of laughter, gut-wrenching emotion, and music, music, music. As only Signature could, it is the first to bring to the DC-area the Tony Award-winning hit musical *Urinetown*, a wonderfully imaginative dark comedy. Signature continues to break new ground with two innovative works: *Yemaya’s Belly* is a beautifully woven story of a rich, foreign culture and a young man’s pursuit of the American Dream, and the world premiere musical *Nevermore* provides a mysterious, lyrical exploration into the life of Edgar Allan Poe. The first three shows of next season are scheduled to be in Signature’s current space on South Four Mile Run Drive. For the show marking the Grand Opening of Signature’s new mainstage theatre there was no question that it could only be Sondheim. Signature brings to the stage his tangled, twisted telling of Grimm’s classic fairy tales, *Into the Woods*. The new stage two theatre opens with an East Coast premiere offering a hilarious peek into *The Sex Habits of American Women*.

“The **Grand Opening Season** is really extraordinary — one that has something for everyone,” stated Eric Schaeffer. “We’ve put together a slate of great works of American theatre and *Urinetown* is the perfect opener. This innovative musical will be done in the current theatre — it’s dark and gritty, and I just feel like it belongs at the garage and director Joe Calarco (*Sideshow, Elegies*) is a perfect match with the script. *Yemaya’s Belly* is a beautiful new work by one of the freshest young voices in theatre today. Playwright Quiara Alegria Hudes is a 2004 recipient of both The Paula Vogel Award for Playwriting and The Kennedy Center ACTF Latina/Latino Playwriting Award. I’m eager to introduce *Nevermore*, the world premiere of Signature’s newest musical commission. This show has been a labor of love between two highly talented local artists: composer/lyricist Matt Connor and playwright Norman Allen (*Nijinsky’s Last Dance, Fallen from Proust*). I can’t wait to once again get my hands on *Into the Woods* when we move into the new building. To help us celebrate the Grand Opening, I’m assembling a cast of Washington area performers who’ve starred in Signature musicals over the last 15 seasons. Perhaps what I’m most excited about is the fact that the mainstage theatre in the new space will allow us to do fantastic things with this show that the current space would not. The hysterical modern comedy *The Sex Habits of American Women* inaugurates the new stage two theatre. With all the excitement surrounding the opening of the new building, it’s sure to be an unforgettable season.”

—MORE—

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Schaeffer continued, “It’ll be bittersweet to say goodbye to the little garage we’ve called home for the past 12 years, but the move to a bigger space is overdue. The new complex will provide Signature the muscles it needs to focus energy on the art and not the physical and technical obstacles. The great thing about the new space is that we’re building two intimate, flexible black box theatres that will maintain the unique feel of our current theatre, but with state-of-the-art acoustics allowing for unamplified musicals and unobstructed ceiling height allowing unlimited set design capabilities.”

THE 2005/2006 GRAND OPENING SEASON

3 Shows in the Garage on South Four Mile Run Drive...

Washington Premiere of the Tony Award-Winning Broadway Musical

URINETOWN

Music and Lyrics by Mark Hollman

Book and Lyrics by Greg Kotis

Directed by Joe Calarco

“What kind of musical is this? **An original one.**” — *The New York Times*

“A fresh, unique, original, impudent, colorful, exciting, irreverent, surprising and wonderful musical.”

— *New York Observer*

Expect the unexpected, because you’ve never experienced anything like *Urinetown*. This highly original, zany musical is a wild, happy mix of biting satire and loving parody. A terrible water shortage has crippled the sewer system of a Gotham-like town in this wonderfully imaginative, hilarious dark comedy. In a mad attempt to regulate water consumption, the government outlaws the use of private toilets forcing residents to use public, pay-per-use amenities. Anyone refusing to pay for the privilege to pee is immediately and without question hauled off to Urinetown — a mysterious place where people go but never return.

August 16 – October 2, 2005

An Exciting New Work

YEMAYA’S BELLY

By Quiara Alegria Hudes

Directed by Rick DesRochers

Feel the heat and infectious vibrations of the Caribbean in this enthralling coming-of-age story. A unique young voice in the theatre, Hudes weaves a tragicomic journey about a boy, a bottle of coke, and the boat that sails him toward his dreams of the Promised Land. The inclusion of poetry, songs and movement drawn from Santeria, the religion of many African Caribbean and Latin American cultures in which Yemaya is a central deity ruling over the sea, creates a landscape where the characters and audience move effortlessly between the real and the surreal. *Yemaya’s Belly* is a tapestry that is at once wonderfully simple and highly complex — audiences will delight in the beautiful language and striking visual style of this award winning new work.

November 8 – December 18, 2005

World Premiere

NEVERMORE

Music by Matt Conner

Lyrics adapted from the writings of Edgar Allan Poe

Book by Norman Allen

Directed by Eric Schaeffer

— MORE —

This world premiere musical takes a dark and mysterious journey into the life of Edgar Allan Poe, using his poetry as its base and his shifting obsession with the women in his life as its catalyst. With hauntingly (in more ways than one) beautiful melodies, *Nevermore* breathes new life into Poe's work and explores a twisted true-life tale that is as bizarre as his classic stories of the macabre. **January 10 – February 18, 2006**

2 Shows in the New Theatre at the Village at Shirlington...

Sondheim. Signature's "Signature."

INTO THE WOODS

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

Book by James Lapine

Directed by Eric Schaeffer

"Into the Woods simply sings ... you float into an enchanted world." — *The New York Times*

"Tirelessly inventive score ... rich material, juicy characters." — *Time Out, New York*

The Sondheim classic is back! As only Signature can, we bring you this tangled, twisted telling of Grimm's fairy tales featuring a cast of Signature favorites. As the cast of characters work towards the goal of living "Happily Ever After," they eventually must deal with the consequences that traditional fairy tales conveniently ignore. Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer directs his twelfth Sondheim musical to bring the grandest opening to our new home. **Dates TBA**

East Coast Premiere

THE SEX HABITS OF AMERICAN WOMEN

By Julie Marie Myatt

Directed by Rick DesRochers

Starring Tony nominee Helen Carey and Rick Foucheux

"Smart and edgy." — *San Francisco Weekly*

"A clever new comedy." — *San Francisco Chronicle*

The Kinsey Report meets *Desperate Housewives* in this voyeuristic peep into the sex lives of American women during the era of pointy bras and pompadours. Beginning in 1950, a respected male psychotherapist is writing a handbook on female sexuality. His wife of 47 years and their unmarried daughter meanwhile are conducting their own "research." Juxtaposed against this 1950s story is a videotaped documentary-style interview with a contemporary single mom — a feisty product of women's liberation. Bridging the 50 years between these moments in social history, the intertwined stories ask provocative questions and take a hard and hilarious look at the unexpected repercussions of the sexual revolution. **Dates TBA**

THE 2005/2006 CABARET SERIES

An extension of Signature's commitment to musical theatre, the Cabaret series provides a truly distinctive entertainment experience. This four-part series will be held in the lobby of Signature's current space, which is transformed into a fabulous nightclub setting. Signature's Cabaret acts allow the rare opportunity to enjoy performers away from the larger stage in an even more intimate personal interaction. The brightest artists from Washington and beyond entertain with a special evening of popular show tunes, jazz numbers, and powerful ballads intertwined with storytelling.

Featured performers for the upcoming season include:

— **MORE** —

August 12 and 13, 2005

Dan Cooney, Tamryn Hayden and Greg Stone in
MASS TRANSITS

This trio of Broadway performers team up for the first time to make their cabaret debut at Signature Theatre. Dan Cooney is familiar to Washington audiences from his appearance in *Company* during The Kennedy Center’s Sondheim Celebration and he recently appeared in the world premiere musical *Under the Bridge* directed by Eric Schaeffer at the Zipper Theatre in New York. Tamryn Hayden has appeared in *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Les Misérables*. Greg Stone starred as Jean Valjean and Chris in the national touring companies of *Les Misérables* and *Miss Saigon*, respectively.

November 4 and 5, 2005

Stephen Gregory Smith and Eleasha Gamble in
EBONY & IVORY: THE SECOND COMING

They’re back! Helen Hayes Award-winner Stephen Gregory Smith and Eleasha Gamble bring audiences part two of their cabaret on love and friendship.

January 6 and 7, 2006

Sherri L. Edelen and Ty Hreben in
SHERRI & TY: TOGETHER AGAIN

Sherri and Ty return to the Signature cabaret bringing an evening of unconventional solo and duet styling. Together they present a tender, delightful, hilarious evening that you won’t want to miss.

Date TBA

Graduates of Catholic University’s Musical Theatre program in
THE KIDS FROM CATHOLIC

Discover the hottest young talents being trained as the newest generation of musical theatre stars.

THE LAST GARAGE HURRAH!

What better way to say good-bye to the garage we’ve called home all these years than a night of song? Held in the current theatre, this special limited-engagement Cabaret performance features a cast of Signature’s brightest and best singing their personal favorites. This last hurrah will be the final blowout show held in the current building — the perfect send off before closing the doors for good and making the big move to Shirlington. *Dates and more details TBA*

All shows, performers and dates are subject to change.

Signature Theatre

Signature Theatre is a non-profit professional theatre dedicated to producing contemporary plays and musicals and to the development of new work. Now in its 15th season under Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer, Signature has been nominated for 191 Helen Hayes Awards for excellence in the professional theatre and has been honored with 37 Helen Hayes Awards, including Outstanding Musical in 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2004 and Outstanding Play in 1999. Signature Theatre is a member of the Theatre Communications Group, The League of Washington Theatres, the Cultural Alliance of Greater Washington, the Arlington Arts Alliance, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Washington Board of Trade.

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