

ADDRESS
4200 Campbell Ave.
Arlington, Virginia
22206

BOX OFFICE
703 820 9771
ADMIN OFFICE
571 527 1860

FACSIMILE
703 845 0236
WEBSITE
www.signature-theatre.org

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Eric Schaeffer
MANAGING DIRECTOR
Maggie Boland

signaturenews

For Immediate Release:
May 13, 2008

Contacts:

Signature Theatre

Suzanne Stephens, (571) 527-1833 (office) / (202) 438-6234 (mobile)
stephenss@signature-theatre.org

National Press Representatives:

Adrian Bryan-Brown/Jim Byk/Matt Ross, Boneau/Bryan-Brown, (212) 575-3030
jbyk@bbbway.com
mross@bbbway.com

SIGNATURE THEATRE
PRESENTS
THE EAST COAST PREMIERE OF
THE VISIT
STARRING TWO-TIME TONY AWARD® WINNERS
CHITA RIVERA & GEORGE HEARN

Book by **TERRENCE McNALLY**

Music by **JOHN KANDER**

Lyrics by **FRED EBB**

Based on the play by Friedrich Dürrenmatt – Adapted by Maurice Valency

Choreographed by **ANN REINKING**

Directed by **FRANK GALATI**

With **MARK JACOBY**

PRODUCTION RUNS MAY 13 – JUNE 22, 2008
IN SIGNATURE'S MAX THEATRE

Arlington, VA — Signature Theatre (**Eric Schaeffer**, Artistic Director) presents the East Coast premiere of *The Visit*, the final mainstage show in the theatre's **Kander & Ebb Celebration**, a four-month festival devoted to the works of **John Kander & Fred Ebb**, the longest song-writing partnership in the history of the American musical theater.

The Visit stars two-time Tony Award® winners **Chita Rivera** and **George Hearn** with **Mark Jacoby**, and features a book by Terrence McNally, music by **John Kander**, and lyrics by **Fred Ebb**, based on the play by **Friedrich Dürrenmatt**, adapted by **Maurice Valency**. The production will be choreographed by **Ann Reinking** and directed by **Frank Galati**. *The Visit* will be performed from May 13 through June 22 in Signature's MAX Theatre.

One of the great plays of the 20th century, *The Visit* tells the story of Claire Zachanassian (**Chita Rivera**), who was driven from her hometown in disgrace when she was 17, having been betrayed by her lover, Anton (**George Hearn**). Several decades and seven husbands later, Zachanassian has become the richest woman in the world, yet her hometown has fallen on hard times. When Zachanassian returns with an offer to save the town, salvation comes with an outrageous price tag. The musical *The Visit* had its world premiere at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago in October, 2001.

The production will also star **Mark Jacoby** as The Mayor, with **Bethe B. Austin** (*Annie*), **Leslie Becker** (*Townsperson*), **D.B. Bonds** (*Young Anton*), **Matthew Deming** (*Louis Perch*), **Alan H. Green** (*Benny*), **James Harms** (*Rudi*), **Michael Hayward-Jones** (*The Priest*), **Howard Kaye** (*Lenny*), **Doug Kreeger** (*Evgeny*), **Mary Ann Lamb** (*Young Claire*), **Jerry Lanning** (*The Doctor*), **Ryan Lowe** (*Jacob Chicken*), **Karen Murphy** (*Matilda*), **Brianne Moore** (*Townsperson*), **Christy Morton** (*Townsperson*), **Brian O'Brien** (*Kurt*), **Cristen Paige** (*Ottillie*), **Kevin Reed** (*Karl*), **Hal Robinson** (*The Policeman*), and **Jeremy Webb** (*The Schoolmaster*).

The Visit will feature set design by **Derek McLane**, costume design by **Susan Hilferty**, lighting design by **Howell Binkley**, and sound design by **Matt Rowe**. Orchestrations are by **Michael Gibson**, with additional orchestrations by **Larry Hochman**. Musical supervision and vocal and dance arrangements are by **David Loud**. The musical conductor is **Jon Kalbfleisch**.

Signature is also currently presenting a rare production of Kander & Ebb's 1968 musical, *The Happy Time*, featuring **George Dvorsky**, **David Margulies**, and **Michael Minarik**, directed by **Michael Unger**, through June 1 in The ARK Theatre. From June 4-7, Signature will present six performances of *Kander & Ebb Overtures*, with graduates from Signature's Overtures Musical Theater Institute performing in a special showcase of Kander & Ebb's most popular songs. Other events include the Bowen McCauley Dance company dancing Kander & Ebb (June 12 – 15), a free Kander & Ebb film series (June 2 & June 16), The Kander & Ebb Celebration Gala (May 17) and *Colored Lights*, a special exhibition highlighting Kander & Ebb in Signature's Meade Lobby. Signature's first mainstage offering of the Celebration was Terrence McNally and Kander & Ebb's 1993 Tony Award®-winning *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, starring **Will Chase**, **Natascia Diaz** and **Hunter Foster**, directed by **Eric Schaeffer** in The MAX Theatre. **Karen Akers** also performed her critically acclaimed cabaret, "First You Dream: The Songs of Kander & Ebb."

Tickets to *The Visit* are \$56 - \$77 and are now on sale at Ticketmaster by calling (703) 573-SEAT (7328), or by visiting www.signature-theatre.org. *The Visit* is sponsored in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

SCHEDULE

The Visit will run May 13 – June 22, with the press opening on Wednesday, May 28 at 7:30 pm. The performance schedule is: Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 7:30 pm, Thursdays and Fridays at 8:00 pm, Saturdays at 2:00 pm and 8:00 on, and Sundays at 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm.

PHOTOS

Advance photos for *The Visit* are available for downloading at http://www.signature-theatre.org/photo_downloads.htm. [Information for press only – do not publish link].

BIOGRAPHIES

CHITA RIVERA (*Claire*) An accomplished and versatile actress/singer/dancer, Ms. Rivera has won two Tony Awards (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *The Rink*) and received seven additional Tony® nominations. She recently starred on Broadway and on national tour in *Chita Rivera: The Dancer's Life* and in the revival of the musical *Nine* with Antonio Banderas. In December, 2002, she received the coveted Kennedy Center Honor in Washington, DC. Ms. Rivera created the role of Velma Kelly in the original Broadway production of *Chicago* opposite Gwen Verdon (1975) and appears in the film version. Chita starred in the London, Las Vegas and Toronto productions of *Chicago The Musical*. Her recent starring roles include *The Visit* (Goodman Theatre) and *The House of Bernarda Alba* (Mark Taper Forum). Chita trained as a ballerina (age 11) before receiving a scholarship to the American School of Ballet from the legendary George Balanchine. Her first appearance (age 17) was in the chorus of *Call Me Madam*. Her electric performance as Anita in the Broadway premiere of *West Side Story* (1957) brought her stardom, which was repeated in London. Her career is highlighted by starring roles in *Bye Bye Birdie* and *Jerry's Girls* (original Broadway casts), *Guys and Dolls*, *Can-Can*, *Seventh Heaven* and *Mr. Wonderful*. On tour: *Born Yesterday*; *The Rose Tattoo*; *Call Me Madam*; *Threepenny Opera*; *Sweet Charity*; *Kiss Me, Kate*; *Zorba*; and *Can-Can* with the Rockettes. Chita played Nicky in the film version of *Sweet Charity* with Shirley MacLaine. Her most treasured production is her daughter, singer/dancer/choreographer Lisa Mordente.

GEORGE HEARN (*Anton*) Broadway: *Wicked*, *Putting It Together* (Tony® nomination); *The Diary of Anne Frank*; *Sunset Boulevard* (Tony® Award); *La Cage aux Folles* (Tony® Award, Olivier nomination); *Sweeney Todd* with Angela Lansbury (Emmy Award for TV version); *I Remember Mama* with Liv Ullman; *Ah, Wilderness!* with Colleen Dewhurst and Jason Robards; *A Doll's Life* (Tony® nomination); *An Almost Perfect Person*; *The Changing Room*; *Meet Me in St. Louis*; and *Watch on the Rhine* (Tony® nomination). He appeared in *Follies in Concert* at Avery Fisher Hall and also starred there with Patti LuPone in a concert version of *Sweeney Todd*, which they reprised in San Francisco and Chicago. He was seen in many productions at the NYSF and at the Long Wharf. TV includes Hallmark Hall of Fame's "Durango" and "Sarah Plain and Tall, III," and guest spots on "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and "Murder, She Wrote." Films include *See You in the Morning*, *The Vanishing*, *Sneakers*, *The Devil's Own* and *Barney's Great Adventure*.

MARK JACOBY (*The Mayor*) Broadway: *Padre*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Original Father*, *Ragtime*; Gaylord Ravenal, *Showboat* (Tony®, Outer Critics, and Joseph Jefferson Award nominations); the Phantom, *The Phantom of the Opera*; Baron von Gaigern, *Grand Hotel*; Vitorio Vidal, *Sweet Charity* (Theatre World Award). Off-Broadway: the Playwright, *Enter the Guardsmen* (Drama Desk nomination). National tour: John Jasper, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Regional: Peter Dummerut, *The Visit* (Goodman Theatre, world premiere); King Arthur, *Camelot* (St. Louis MUNY); Guido Contini, *Nine* (Chicago premiere, Joseph Jefferson Award); Oscar Jaffe, *On the Twentieth Century* (Goodspeed Opera House, Connecticut Drama Critics Award); Robert, *Robert and Elizabeth* (Paper Mill Playhouse inaugural production).

TERRENCE McNALLY (*Book*) Mr. McNally's most recent work, *Deuce*, recently played on Broadway. His play *Some Men* premiered last season at Second Stage Theatre. Mr. McNally also recently wrote the books for the musicals *Chita Rivera: The Dancer's Life* and *A Man of No Importance*. Recent Broadway credits include the revival of his play *The Ritz*, the revival of *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*, and the book for the musical *The Full Monty*. He won his fourth Tony Award® for Best Book of a Musical for *Ragtime* (music and lyrics by Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens). McNally won the Tony® in 1996 for his play *Master Class* in which Zoe Caldwell created the role of Maria Callas; the 1995 Tony®, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards for Best Play as well as the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best American Play for *Love! Valour! Compassion!*; and the 1993 Tony® for his book of the musical *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (music and lyrics by Kander and Ebb). His other plays

include *Dedication* or *The Stuff of Dreams*; *The Stendhal Syndrome*; *Crucifixion*; *Corpus Christi*; *A Perfect Ganesh*; *Lips Together*; *Teeth Apart*; *The Lisbon Traviata*; and *It's Only a Play*, all of which began at the Manhattan Theatre Club. Earlier stage works include *Bad Habits*; *The Ritz*; *Where Has Tommy Flowers Gone?*; *Things That Go Bump in the Night*; *Next*, and the book for the musical *The Rink* (music and lyrics by Kander and Ebb). For the Central Park Opera trilogy presented at the New York City Opera in the fall of 1999, he wrote the libretto for *The Food of Love*, with music by Robert Beaser. The San Francisco Opera presented *Dead Man Walking* with McNally's libretto and music by Jake Heggie. McNally has written a number of TV scripts, including *Andre's Mother* for which he won an Emmy Award. He has received two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Rockefeller Grant, a Lucille Lortel Award, and a citation from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He has been a member of the Dramatists Guild since 1970.

JOHN KANDER (*Music*) and **FRED EBB** (*Lyrics*) The John Kander and Fred Ebb collaboration of four decades has created what many would consider Broadway standards and contemporary classics. One of their first collaborations became a hit song for Barbra Streisand, "My Coloring Book," earning John and Fred a Grammy nomination. In 1965 the pair worked on their first Broadway show *Flora, the Red Menace*. Produced by Hal Prince and directed by George Abbott, *Flora* also introduced a rising new star - Liza Minnelli. Followed by: *Cabaret* (Tony Award® for music and lyrics), *The Happy Time*, *Zorba*, *70 Girls 70*, *Chicago*, *The Act*, *Woman of the Year* (Tony Award® for music and lyrics), *The Rink*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (Tony Award® for music and lyrics) and *Steel Pier*. Their collaboration also transferred itself to movies and television as they wrote original material for the Academy Awards, "Liza with a Z" and HBO's "Liza Minnelli's Steppin' Out" (both Emmy winners), "Baryshnikov on Broadway," "Goldie and Liza Together," *Funny Lady*, *Lucky Lady*, *New York, New York*, *Steppin' Out* and *Chicago*, the movie. In 1985 their song "New York, New York" became the official anthem of New York City. At the time of the unfortunate death of Mr. Ebb, Kander and Ebb had several projects in different stages of completion waiting in the wings, *The Visit* which had a successful run at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago starring Chita Rivera, *All About Us* (a musical adaptation of Thornton Wilder's play *The Skin of our Teeth*) and *The Minstrel Show*. Currently running on Broadway: *Chicago*, *Curtains*. Life goes on.

ANN REINKING (*Choreographer*) Director, co-conceiver, co-choreographer of Tony Award®-winner *Fosse* (nominated Best Director 1999); choreographer of *Chicago* (Tony®, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, Astaire, NY Drama Critics awards, Best Choreography, 1997). Received Tony® nominations for *Dancin'* (Featured Performer) and *Goodtime Charley* (Best Actress) and Theatre World, Clarence Derwent and Outer Critics Circle awards for *Over Here* (Actress). Films: *Movie, Movie*; *All That Jazz*; *Micki and Maude*; *Annie*. Choreography: American Ballet Theatre, Joffrey, Missouri State Ballet, Williamstown Theatre Festival, ABC-TV, Ballet Hispanico, Goodman Theatre (Jefferson Award). Directed/choreographed: *Tonight at 8:30* (Williamstown). Ann is artistic director of the Broadway Theatre Project.

FRANK GALATI (*Director*) received two Tony Awards® in 1990 for his adaptation and direction of *The Grapes of Wrath*. He was nominated for a Tony Award® in 1998 for directing the musical *Ragtime*. He is a member of the Steppenwolf Theatre Company and an associate director at Chicago's Goodman Theatre. He has directed for the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago Opera Theatre, San Francisco Opera, Dallas Opera, the Roundabout Theatre, the Mark Taper Forum, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, La Jolla Playhouse, Long Wharf Theatre and the Metropolitan Opera. In 1989 he was nominated for an Academy Award for his screenplay (with Lawrence Kasdan), *The Accidental Tourist*. Mr. Galati is an emeritus professor of performance studies at Northwestern University. In 2001, he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

ABOUT SIGNATURE

Signature is a non-profit professional theater company dedicated to producing contemporary musicals and plays, reinventing classic musicals, and developing new work. To date, Signature has presented over 20 world premiere productions and commissions and is renowned for combining Broadway-quality productions in intimate playing spaces. In addition to the finest talent from the DC metropolitan area and New York, Signature has been a home to such theater luminaries as Cameron Mackintosh, Terrence McNally, John Kander and Fred Ebb, and, of course, Stephen Sondheim, the company's signature.

In 2007, Signature moved into a new two-theater complex in Arlington, Virginia. Of Signature Theatre's new space, Charles Isherwood of *The New York Times* wrote "the company must find the sleek, new campus — with a large bar, two lobbies and two theaters — positively swanky,"....stating that "The Signature's flexible Max Theater...recalls the beloved Cottesloe at the National Theater in London."

Under Co-Founder and Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer, Signature has been nominated for 234 Helen Hayes Awards for excellence in the professional theater and has been honored with 59 Helen Hayes Awards, including Outstanding Musical in 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2005, and 2006, and Outstanding Play in 1999.

Directions

Signature Theatre is situated at the head of Arlington's Shirlington Village. The new theater complex is located at 4200 Campbell Avenue (22206) off I-395 at the Shirlington exit, please follow the blue signs. For directions visit www.signature-theatre.org <<http://www.signature-theatre.org>>. Free parking is available in the adjacent public garage. Please note, as Campbell Avenue is a new street, GPS online mapping systems such as mapquest.com do not recognize Signature Theatre's address.

Contact Info

Ticketmaster (703) 573-SEAT (7328)
Signature Administration (571) 527-1860
Signature Theatre
4200 Campbell Avenue
Arlington, VA 22206

###

www.signature-theatre.org