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# signaturenews

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **SIGNATURE OPENS 2006-07 SEASON WITH THE LERNER AND LOEWE CLASSIC *MY FAIR LADY***

- **2005 Helen Hayes Award-winner Eric Schaeffer directs final production in Signature's current theater**
- **Cast features Andrew Long and Broadway performer Sally Murphy**

Arlington, VA — Signature Theatre opens its 2006-07 season with “probably the greatest musical of all time” (*Daily Telegraph*). The classic *My Fair Lady* by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe is the standard by which all other musicals are measured. Henry Higgins, an opinionated linguistics professor and confirmed bachelor, makes a wager with a colleague that within six months he can transform a cockney flower seller, Eliza Doolittle, into a high society lady. He wins the bet, but doesn't bargain on the profound effect she has on his life. With such musical favorites as “Rain in Spain,” “I Could Have Danced All Night,” and “I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face” it's no wonder everyone, not just Higgins, falls in love with Eliza. Signature Theatre brings new life and a unique vision to this timeless classic. Signature's Artistic Director **Eric Schaeffer**, winner of the 2005 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Director, Resident Musical (*Allegro*), helms the project — directing the final musical in Signature's current space. *My Fair Lady* runs **September 26 – November 19, 2006, at Signature Theatre. Tickets are on sale now at [Tickets.com](http://Tickets.com) (800) 955-5566 or online at [www.signature-theatre.org](http://www.signature-theatre.org).**

“*My Fair Lady* is perhaps one of the most perfect musicals ever written,” said **Eric Schaeffer**. “As Lerner and Loewe discovered when trying to adapt George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* into a musical, every character existed for a precise purpose. Also, you can't help but appreciate the language of the show — the script and the score as so beautifully written. What I find most interesting is how these two individuals, Eliza and Higgins, come from opposite ends of the British class system, collide and survive. This is the idea I want carried through every aspect of the show. We're stripping the show down to its core, as we're known for often doing at Signature. We aren't developing a show with lavish costumes and gigantic sets like people tend to expect for *My Fair Lady*, but are instead focusing on the characters and the human connection.”

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## **DIRECTION & DESIGN**

Signature's production of *My Fair Lady* is so integrated with movement and staging that choreographer **Karma Camp** and director Eric Schaeffer are spending the majority of their rehearsal time working together rather than in separate rehearsal rooms. The two are creating movement for the show that's very atypical. "It becomes very stylized, even mechanical and goes into tap at points — something no one expects with this traditional show," explained Schaeffer.

*My Fair Lady* marks the final production in Signature's converted-garage space, the company's home for the past 14 years. The inspiration for the design of the show pays homage to Signature's building. Set Designer **James Kronzer** also wanted to pull away from the traditional larger-than-life sets done with past productions of *My Fair Lady* so that Schaeffer's unique vision could come to life. The goal was to let the characters and story become what emanates most strongly from the stage. Kronzer married the look of the set, which is industrial in feel and entirely black, with the theater's existing architecture to create a world where the lower-class live.

Costume Designer **Jenn Miller** was given a similar challenge of creating a look that allowed the actors, not lavish costumes, to be the focal point. In researching the clothing of the period, Miller discovered that what set apart the different societal classes were accessories — hats, gloves, collars, jewels. Her approach was to give characters the same basic silhouette — a camisole, petticoat, and corset for the women and for the men, trousers and a shirt. Creating the look of the different classes for the female characters is achieved by adding accessories such as an apron and belt to indicate the lower-class versus a collar, decorated hat, and gloves representing the upper-class, and finally coats, cuffs, and jewels for the ball. Much like the women, the men change vests, collars, and jackets to become the different characters among the class levels.

Choreographer **Karma Camp** is a Signature Artistic Associate where she's worked on almost 20 productions, most of with Eric Schaeffer. Camp won the 2006 Helen Hayes Award for her work on Signature's production of *Urinetown* and recently collaborated with director Joe Calarco on *Assassins* at Signature earlier this year. Select Signature credits include *Nijinsky's Last Dance* (Helen Hayes nomination), *Follies*, *110 in the Shade*, *Cabaret* (Helen Hayes nomination). Music Director **Jenny Cartney** returns to Signature for this unique two-piano version of the show. Earlier this year she was Music Director for Signature's world premiere of *Nevermore*. Additional Signature credits include Assistant Music Director for such productions as *The Highest Yellow*, *Allegro*, *Follies*, and *The Christmas Carol Rag*. A seven-time Helen Hayes Award recipient, Set Designer **James Kronzer** was most recently nominated in 2006 for his design of *Urinetown* at Signature. Other shows at Signature include the recent production of *Assassins*, *Elegies*, *Twentieth Century*, and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. Costume Designer **Jenn Miller** created the sexy, macabre look for the world premiere of *Nevermore* and additional Signature credits include *Fallen from Proust*, *One Red Flower*, and *Mack and Mabel* in concert at Lubber Run Park. Lighting Designer **Mark Lanks** returns to Signature where he was the assistant lighting designer on *Assassins* and *Urinetown* and designer for *The Sex Habits of American Women*, *Nevermore*, and *Pacific Overtures*. For Signature, Sound Designer **Tony Angelini** recently worked on *Assassins*, *The Sex Habits of American Women*, *Nevermore*, and *Urinetown*.

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**CAST**

“Casting this show was a challenge because of the cast size — 19 actors to be exact. Of course, Higgins and Eliza are by far the hardest,” said Schaeffer. “I knew wanted to cast a younger, sexier Higgins than people expect. I also wanted the relationship between Eliza and Higgins to be very believable in their physical attraction and need for each other.”

Starring in the legendary leads are **Sally Murphy** as Eliza Doolittle and **Andrew Long** as Henry Higgins. Murphy is known for her Broadway appearances in *Carousel*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The Wild Party*, and *The Grapes of Wrath*. She was most recently seen at Lincoln Center in Michael John LaChiusa’s *Bernarda Alba*. A regular at the Shakespeare Theatre, Long wowed D.C. audiences this past season in his critically-acclaimed performance in *Frozen* at Studio Theatre. His numerous credits at the Shakespeare Theatre include *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, *Coriolanus*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear* among others.

The cast includes **Steven Cupo** (Jamie) who returns to Signature where he was last seen in *Urinetown*. Additional Signature appearances include *Pacific Overtures*, *Follies*, *Grand Hotel*, and *Cabaret*. Making his Signature debut is accomplished actor **Terrence P. Currier** (Alfred P. Doolittle) who has appeared on Broadway in *Damn Yankees*, at Studio Theatre in *Cripple of Inishmaan*, and over 80 productions at Arena Stage as a resident actor. **Will Gartshore** (Freddy Eynsford-Hill) has been seen on the Signature stage in such recent productions as *Assassins*, *The Sex Habits of American Women*, *Urinetown* (2006 Helen Hayes Award), *Elegies*, and *Allegro*. New to the Signature stage is **Dave Joria** (Professor Zoltan Karpathy) who is a recent graduate of Shenandoah University where he performed in productions of *Sweeney Todd* and *Pippin*. Also new to Signature is **Maureen Kerrigan** (Mrs. Pearce) who has performed Off-Broadway in *Monster* and *Miss Lonelyhearts*, at Arena Stage in *South Pacific* and several productions at The Kennedy Center. **Dana Kreuger** (Mrs. Higgins) is best known to Signature audiences for her Helen Hayes Award-winning performance in *Wings*. Other Signature credits include *Allegro*, *Follies*, *Grand Hotel*, *The Christmas Carol Rag*, and *Sweeney Todd*. **Channez McQuay** (Mrs. Eynsford-Hill) was seen at Signature earlier this season in *Nevermore*, and in last year’s production of *Pacific Overtures*. She is scheduled to appear in *Into the Woods* directed by Schaeffer in January. **Thomas Adrian Simpson** (Harry) most recently appeared at Signature in *Urinetown*, *Pacific Overtures*, *Twentieth Century*, and *110 in the Shade*. A regular to the Signature stage, **Harry A. Winter** (Colonel Hugh Pickering) was a 2006 Helen Hayes nominee for *Pacific Overtures*. Additional Signature credits include *Allegro*, *A Funny Thing ... Forum*, and *110 in the Shade* among others.

The ensemble includes **Matt Conner**, **Priscilla Cuellar**, **Kathryn Fuller**, **Eleasha Gamble**, **LC Harden Jr.**, **Evan Hoffmann**, **Stephen Gregory Smith**, and **Lauren Williams**.

**DETAILS**

**MY FAIR LADY**

Book and Lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner

Music by Frederick Loewe

Adapted from George Bernard Shaw's play and Gabriel Pascal's motion picture *Pygmalion*

**Cast** (in alphabetical order)

Second Cockney	Matt Conner
First Maid	Priscilla Cuellar
Jamie	Steven Cupo
Alfred P. Doolittle	Terrence P. Currier
Second Maid	Kathryn Fuller
Fourth Maid	Eleasha Gamble
Freddy Eynsford-Hill	Will Gartshore
Fourth Cockney	LC Harden Jr.
Third Cockney	Evan Hoffmann
Professor Zoltan Karpathy	Dave Joria
Mrs. Pearce	Maureen Kerrigan
Mrs. Higgins	Dana Kreuger
Professor Henry Higgins	Andrew Long
Eliza Doolittle	Sally Murphy
Mrs. Eynsford-Hill	Channez McQuay
Harry	Thomas Adrian Simpson
First Cockney	Stephen Gregory Smith
Third Maid	Lauren Williams
Colonel Hugh Pickering	Harry A. Winter

**Direction & Design**

Director	Eric Schaeffer	Costume Design	Jenn Miller
Choreography	Karma Camp	Lighting Design	Mark Lanks
Music Direction	Jenny Cartney	Sound Design	Tony Angelini
Set Design	James Kronzer	Stage Manager	Kerry Epstein

**Schedule**

**September 26 – November 19, 2006**

Press Date: Sunday, October 1

Show Times: Tuesday and Wednesday at 7:30 p.m., Thursday and Friday at 8:00 p.m., Saturday at 2:00 p.m.\* and 8:00 p.m., and Sunday at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Exceptions: There is no performance on October 3.

\*Saturday matinees on select dates only: October 7 & 21, November 14 & 18.

**Tickets**

Tickets are \$37 to \$63 and are sold through Tickets.com (800) 955-5566 and online at www.signature-theatre.org. Discounts are available for students, seniors (60+), military and groups of ten or more. The Signature Box Office is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and during performances.

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## **ABOUT SIGNATURE**

Signature is a non-profit professional theater dedicated to producing contemporary plays and musicals, reinventing classic musicals, and developing new work. To date, Signature has presented 21 world premiere productions and six world premiere commissions. The works of Stephen Sondheim, however, remain Signature's signature. Signature is renowned for combining Broadway-quality productions with an intimate playing space, and using live orchestras with unamplified performers. In addition to the finest talent from the D.C. metro-area, Signature has been a home to such luminaries as Cameron Mackintosh, Stephen Sondheim, Terrence McNally, John Kander and Fred Ebb. Now in its 17<sup>th</sup> season under Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer, Signature has been nominated for 209 Helen Hayes Awards for excellence in the professional theater (18 nominations in 2006) and has been honored with 50 Helen Hayes Awards, including Outstanding Musical in 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2005, 2006, and Outstanding Play in 1999. Signature was also recognized by the Jonathan Larson Performing Arts Foundation for "its artistic vision and commitment to the support and development of musical theatre artists." Signature was recently awarded a \$1 million grant from The Shen Family Foundation for the creation of *The American Musical Voices Project*, a two-pronged program consisting of *Musical Theatre Composer Grants* and *Musical Theatre Leadership Awards*. The Composer Grants support the commissioning and presentation of three emerging composers' new musicals over the course of the next four theater seasons. Commissions were awarded to Ricky Ian Gordon, Michael John LaChiusa, and Joseph Thalken. The Leadership Awards, presented on May 1, 2006, recognized Bruce Coughlin, Adam Guettel, Audra McDonald, and Ted Sperling for their extraordinary influence on and contribution to the advancement of new musical theater. This fall Signature moves into a new \$12.5 million two-theater complex in Shirlington Village with a grand opening scheduled for January 2007. Signature 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.

## **Directions**

Signature Theatre is located just five miles from downtown Washington, D.C. at 3806 South Four Mile Run Drive in Arlington, VA immediately off I-395 at the Shirlington exit.

## **Contact Info**

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