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Signature Theatre to Honor Bernadette Peters with Sondheim Award at Gala Benefit April 11th at the Embassy of Italy

Philanthropists Ted and Mary Jo Shen to Chair Gala

Stephen Sondheim, Helen Henderson, His Excellency Gary Doer and Ms. Ginny Devine, The Honorable James Moran, His Excellency Giulio Terzi and Ms. Antonella Cinque, The Honorable Jim Webb and Mrs. Webb to Serve as Honorary Hosts

Arlington, VA, March 21, 2011 – On **April 11, 2011**, Virginia's Tony Award®-winning **Signature Theatre** will honor esteemed stage and screen actress **Bernadette Peters** with the company's second **Stephen Sondheim Award**. The award, established in 2009 in honor of America's most influential contemporary musical theater writer and composer, will be presented at a black-tie Gala Benefit at the **Embassy of Italy**. The 2011 Sondheim Award Gala is chaired by **Ted and Mary Jo Shen**; Honorary Hosts include **Stephen Sondheim, Helen Henderson, His Excellency Gary Doer and Ms. Ginny Devine, The Honorable James Moran, His Excellency Giulio Terzi and Ms. Antonella Cinque**, and **The Honorable Jim Webb and Mrs. Webb**. The Sondheim Award Gala will help to benefit Signature Theatre's numerous artistic, education, and community programs. Last year's recipient was stage, screen, and television icon **Angela Lansbury**.

To commemorate the evening and to help celebrate Ms. Peters' impressive body of work, special musical performances will be given by Broadway stars **Stephen Buntrock** (*A Little Night Music, Beauty and the Beast*) and **Rebecca Luker** (*Mary Poppins, Show Boat, and The Phantom of the Opera*), as well as Signature favorites **Eleasha Gamble** (*Chess, Les Miserables, Into the Woods*) and **Euan Morton** (Broadway's *Sondheim on Sondheim* and *Taboo* and Signature's *Chess*).

Stephen Sondheim stated, "This award is given for artistry and achievement, and it is a joy for me that Bernadette, who so deserves it, is the recipient."

To date, Platinum Level Sponsors are The Boeing Company, Bonnie and Kenneth Feld, and Ted and Mary Jo Shen. Gold Level Sponsors are A+ Government Solutions, Adrienne Arsht, BNA, Enrico and Andrea Cecchi, Mercedes and Giuseppe Cecchi, Chevy Chase Trust, Citi Private Bank, Susan Gage Caterers, Marty and Perry Granoff, Maxine Isaacs, Wes Pickard and Jeanette Studley, Robert H. Rosen and Jay Fissette, Kathleen and Douglass Ross, Susan C. Schwab, Victor Shargai, Patty and Jerry Sowalsky, Target, and J. Watkins and Bradley Frey.

Signature Theatre Artistic Director **Eric Schaeffer** said, “The 2011 Stephen Sondheim Award Gala honoring Bernadette Peters promises to be an exciting and momentous evening in Washington. It will be wonderful to have so many ‘old friends’ here to celebrate her artistry and toast her long association with Stephen Sondheim.”

Most recently starring on Broadway in the acclaimed revival of Sondheim’s *A Little Night Music*, Bernadette Peters has dazzled audiences and critics with her performances on stage, screen, recordings, and in concert for decades.

She has often been recognized for her work with Sondheim, receiving Tony® nominations for her performances in Sondheim’s *Sunday in the Park With George* and *Gypsy*. Peters also earned a Drama Desk nomination for her portrayal of the Witch in the original Broadway production of Sondheim’s *Into the Woods*. She will play the role of Sally in a Kennedy Center production of Sondheim’s *Follies*, directed by Signature Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer, in May 2011.

In 1985, Peters received her first Tony Award® for her performance in Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Song and Dance*. She earned her second Tony® in 1999 for her performance in *Annie Get Your Gun*. Peters also received Tony® nominations for *The Goodbye Girl*, *Mack and Mabel*, and *On the Town*.

Peters made her Broadway debut in 1967 in *Johnny No-Trump*, and in 1968 starred with Joel Grey in the musical *George M!*, earning a Theatre World Award. That same year, she received a Drama Desk Award for her performance in the Off-Broadway hit *Dames at Sea*.

While best known for her work in the theater, Peters boasts an impressive list of television and film credits including *Pennies From Heaven* (Golden Globe Award), *The Jerk*, *The Longest Yard*, *Silent Movie*, *Annie*, *Pink Cadillac*, *Slaves of New York*, and Woody Allen’s *Alice*. She has been nominated for Emmys for her appearances on *The Muppet Show* and *Ally McBeal*.

In addition to her Grammy Award-winning Broadway cast albums, Peters has recorded six solo albums including *Sondheim, Etc.; Etc.: Bernadette Peters Live at Carnegie Hall*, *Bernadette Peters Loves Rodgers & Hammerstein*, and *Now Playing*.

She is the author of *Broadway Barks*, a children’s book named after the animal adoption organization she co-founded. Peters also devotes her time and talents to Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and The Gay Men’s Health Crisis.

THE SONDHEIM AWARD

In 2009, Signature Theatre inaugurated The Stephen Sondheim Award in recognition of the importance of Sondheim’s work to Signature and to theater in general. In April 2010, the first Award was given to stage, screen and television actress Angela Lansbury. The Award is given on a yearly basis to an individual for his or her career contributions to interpreting, supporting, and collaborating on Stephen Sondheim’s music works. Signature has produced 18 productions of the works of Stephen Sondheim, more than any other theater in the United States. In 2002,

Signature's Eric Schaeffer was the Artistic Director of "The Sondheim Celebration" at the Kennedy Center.

Sponsorship packages for the 2011 Sondheim Award Gala range from \$1,000 to \$50,000 and include rewarding, year-long visibility and entertainment benefits. Individual tickets and ticket packages range from \$650 to \$5,000. For more information about sponsorship and tickets contact Mari Chin, Development Coordinator at (571) 527-1828 or events@signature-theatre.org.

PERFORMER BIOS

Stephen Buntrock BROADWAY: *A Little Night Music* (Fredrik Egerman, w/ Bernadette Peters), *Oklahoma!* (Curly), *Beauty and the Beast* (Gaston), *Jane Eyre* (St. John, Original Cast), *Titanic* (Barrett), *Les Misérables* (Enjolras, Tenth Anniversary Cast), *Grease!* (Teen Angel). TOURS: *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Rueben, w/ Donny Osmond), *Martin Guerre* (Arnaud du Thil, dir. Cameron Mackintosh), *The Phantom of the Opera*. CONCERTS: Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (w/ Dame Julie Andrews), Louisville Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, Cleveland Orchestra, The Atlanta Symphony, The Dallas Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic at The Hollywood Bowl. He is married to Erin Dilly and is father to Haley Paige, Anna Louise and Catherine Caroline.

Eleasha Gamble SIGNATURE: *Chess*, *First You Dream*, *Les Misérables* (Helen Hayes Award, Best Ensemble), *Into the Woods*, *Urinetown*, *Follies*, *Grand Hotel*. OFF-BROADWAY: Zipper Theatre: *Under the Bridge*. DC AREA: Arena Stage: *Oklahoma!* (Helen Hayes Nomination for Outstanding Lead Actress), *The Women Of Brewster Place*; Ford's Theatre: *Civil War* (Helen Hayes Award winner for Outstanding Supporting Actress), *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Meet John Doe*; Kennedy Center: *Broadway: Three Generations*; Round House Theatre: *Once On This Island* (Helen Hayes nomination); Toby's: *Ragtime* (Helen Hayes nomination). REGIONAL: Alliance Theatre, Perseverance Theatre. CABARET: *Partial Eclipse*, *Last Garage Hurrah*, *Ebony & Ivory I&II*.

Rebecca Luker BROADWAY: *Mary Poppins*, *Nine*, *The Music Man*, *The Sound of Music*, *Show Boat*, *The Secret Garden*, *The Phantom of the Opera*. OFF-BROADWAY: *Indian Blood*, *The Vagina Monologues*, *Can't Let Go*, *X (Life of Malcolm X)*, *Brigadoon*. CONCERTS: *The American Songbook Series* (Lincoln Center), *The Boys from Syracuse* (Encores!), *Passion* (Kennedy Center). TV: *The Good Wife*, *Cupid and Cate* (CBS TV movie), *Law & Order: SVU*. RECORDINGS: *Greenwich Time*, *Leaving Home*, *Anything Goes: Rebecca Luker Sings Cole Porter, Aria 1 - 3*. Husband: Danny Burstein. Stepsons: Alex and Zach. EDUCATION: Received a Doctorate of Fine Arts from the University of Montevallo, Alabama.

Euan Morton SIGNATURE: *Chess*, *Signature Sings: 1995-1999*, Sizzlin' Summer Cabaret. BROADWAY: *Sondheim on Sondheim*, *Cyrano De Bergerac*, *Taboo*. OFF-BROADWAY: Roundabout: *Howard Katz*, *Leaves of Grass*. REGIONAL: Kansas City Rep: *Into the Woods*; Public Theatre: *Measure for Pleasure*; New Victory Theatre: *Brundibár*; Berkeley Rep: *Brundibár*; Bay Street Theatre: *The Who's Tommy*; New York Musical Theatre Festival: *Caligula*. FILM: *Showbusiness: The Road to Broadway*. CONCERTS: The Kennedy Center, CenterStage, Oak Room at the Algonquin, Town Hall, the Metropolitan Room, the Zipper, Joe's Pub, Birdland. RECORDINGS: *Caledonia-Songs for the Homecoming*, *NewClear*. AWARDS: OBIE, NYMF; Nominations: Olivier, Tony®, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, Drama League.
www.officiallyeuanmorton.com.

ABOUT SIGNATURE

Recipient of the 2009 Regional Theatre Tony Award®, Signature Theatre is a non-profit professional theater company in Arlington, Virginia dedicated to producing contemporary musicals and plays, reinventing classic musicals, and developing new work. Under the leadership of co-founder and Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer and Managing Director Maggie Boland, Signature has presented 32 world premiere productions and is renowned for combining Broadway-quality productions with intimate playing spaces.

In addition to hosting the finest talent from the DC metropolitan area and New York, Signature has been home to such theatre luminaries as Chita Rivera, George Hearn, Hunter Foster, Emily Skinner, Marc Kudisch, Judy Kuhn, John Kander and Fred Ebb, Cameron Mackintosh, Terrence McNally, and the company's signature composer, Stephen Sondheim. Since its founding in 1989, Signature has won 70 Helen Hayes Awards for excellence in the Washington, DC region's professional theater and has been honored with 293 nominations.

Signature is partially supported by a grant from the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts and by a gift from Arlington County through the Arlington Commission for the Arts and the Cultural Affairs Division of the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources.

Directions

The Signature Theatre is located at 4200 Campbell Avenue (22206) off I-395 at the Shirlington exit. After the exit, blue Signature signs mark the way to the theatre. Free parking is available in two adjacent public garages. Please note that Campbell Avenue is a new street and some GPS online mapping systems do not yet recognize Signature Theatre's address. For directions visit <http://signature-theatre.org/map.htm>.

Contact Information

Subscriptions: (703) 820-9771

Single Tickets: Ticketmaster (703) 573-SEAT (7328)

Signature Administration (571) 527-1860

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