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**signature**news

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# Partly Historical...Totally Hysterical: Signature Theatre Premieres *And The Curtain Rises* by Joseph Thalken, Michael Slade, and Mark Campbell

Tony Award® nominee Kristin Hanggi directs cast led by Nick Dalton,  
Rebecca Watson, Kevin Carolan, Jennifer Smith, and Alma Cuervo

Part Three of Signature's American Musical Voices Project

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Arlington, VA, February 28, 2011 – Virginia's Tony Award®-winning **Signature Theatre**, through its groundbreaking **American Musical Voices Project (AMVP)**, announces the world premiere of the musical comedy *And the Curtain Rises* (formerly known as *Wheatley's Folly*). Beginning performances on **Thursday, March 17, 2011**, *And the Curtain Rises* marks the third production presented as part of Signature's AMVP, the largest commissioning program for new musicals in the country, following Michael John LaChiusa's *Giant* in 2009 and Ricky Ian Gordon's *Sycamore Trees* last year. *The Washington Post* has said that "Signature's AMVP is the most ambitious embrace of new musical theater in the DC region."

Directing *And the Curtain Rises* will be Tony Award® nominee Kristin Hanggi (Broadway's *Rock of Ages*). Music was composed by **Joseph Thalken**, one of five composers to garner Signature's prestigious **Musical Theatre Composer Grant**. The book for *And the Curtain Rises* is written by **Michael Slade** with lyrics by **Mark Campbell**. Working with Hanggi on the creative team are Music Director/Conductor **Boko Suzuki**, Choreographer **Josh Walden**, Set Designer **Beowulf Boritt**, Costume Designer **Kathleen Geldard**, Lighting Designer **Colin K. Bills**, and Sound Designer **Matt Rowe**.

Inspired by true events, *And the Curtain Rises* tells the outrageous and funny story of how the first American musical – 1866's legendary *The Black Crook* – was born. This musical comedy follows novice producer William Wheatley as he frantically struggles to save his mess of a

play. With a dreadful script, an uncompromising author, a cast on the verge of revolt, and scenery and costumes destroyed, the production is in shambles. Conditions are further complicated when a French ballet troupe is forced to seek refuge in their theatre after their theater burns down next door. Rather than throw in the towel and count his losses, Wheatley decides to take control and turn lemons into lemonade.

The cast for *And the Curtain Rises* features **Nick Dalton** (William Wheatley), **Rebecca Watson** (Millicent Cavendish), **Kevin Carolan** (C.H. Morton), **Jennifer Smith** (Rose Morton), **Sean Thompson** (Charles Barras), **Alma Cuervo** (Mme. Grimaud), **Anna Kate Bocknek** (Marie Bonfant), **Erick Devine** (Jeremiah Burnett), **Brian Sutherland** (Roman Korda), **Erik Altemus** (George C. Boniface), **William Diggie** (James Timoney), and a host of ballerinas.

**Eric Schaeffer**, Signature Theatre's Artistic Director stated, "We could not be more proud of all that we have been able to accomplish so far with our American Musical Voices Project. It is a vital part of who we are and what Signature represents in the world of musical theater. With this remarkably talented creative team – and the cast we have assembled – I am sure that audiences will thoroughly enjoy being among the very first to witness this very funny and very poignant show."

### PERFORMANCE DATES & TICKET INFORMATION

Performances of *And the Curtain Rises* run from March, 17 2011 to April 10, 2011. Show times are Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 7:30 pm, Thursdays and Fridays at 8:00 pm, Saturdays at 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm, and Sundays at 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm. There is no performance on Saturday, March 19 at 2:00pm. The Funders performance on Tuesday, March 29 is at 8:00pm.

Tickets range from \$55 - \$81 and are available by calling Ticketmaster at (703) 573-SEAT (7328) or visiting [www.signature-theatre.org](http://www.signature-theatre.org). Group discounts are available for parties of ten or more by contacting **Bethany Shannon** at [shannonb@signature-theatre.org](mailto:shannonb@signature-theatre.org) or by calling (571) 527-1831. For more information please visit [www.signature-theatre.org](http://www.signature-theatre.org).

### Pride Night

a special event held for members of the GLBT community will be held on **Friday, March 25 at 8:00pm**. Working with **Fleet Transportation**, Signature is offering shuttle service to DC residents (from Dupont Circle on P Street at 6:30pm) directly to the Theatre. The roundtrip bus ticket is \$5 (payable in cash at the pick-up point).

**Reservations for the shuttle MUST be reserved by calling the Box Office at 703-820-9771.**

### SPONSORSHIP

*And the Curtain Rises* is sponsored by the **Shen Family Foundation** and is a recipient of an **Edgerton Foundation New American Plays Award** and a grant from the **National Endowment for the Arts**.

### MEDIA SPONSORSHIPS

*WAMU Radio* and *Metro Weekly* are media sponsors for *And the Curtain Rises*.

### LOCATION – PROXIMITY TO WASHINGTON, DC

Located in Arlington, Virginia and complete with free parking, Signature Theatre is just 5.2 miles from the Washington Monument, an estimated 10-15 minute drive according to [googlemaps.com](http://googlemaps.com). Using public transportation, Signature can be reached by the 7, 25 and 25A buses from Pentagon Metro Station or via a \$12 taxi ride from the Pentagon City Metro stop (on both the Blue & Yellow lines) with a taxi stand located in front of the Ritz Carlton Hotel.

## **SIGNATURE'S 2010-11 SEASON TICKETS**

The remaining shows in Signature's 2010-11 season include Yasmina Reza's Tony Award-winning play *Art* and *Side by Side by Sondheim*. Tickets are available by calling Signature's Box Office at (703) 820-9771.

### **AND THE CURTAIN RISES**

**Book by Michael Slade**

**Music by Joseph Thalken**

**Lyrics by Mark Campbell**

**March 17, 2011 – April 10, 2011**

**The MAX**

### **Cast Bios**

**Erik Altemus** (George C. Boniface) OFF-BROADWAY: Matt in *The Fantasticks*. REGIONAL: Muny: *Annie, Meet Me in St. Louis, Camelot*; Musical Theatre Guild of Los Angeles: *Parade*; University of Cincinnati: Jesus in *Godspell, Passion, Cabaret, The Cradle Will Rock*. TV: HBO: *Miraculous Year* (Pilot). FILM: American Film Institute: *The Newman Shower*. EDUCATION: BFA, Musical Theatre, University of Cincinnati, College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) 2009.

**Anna Kate Bocknek** (Marie Bonfant) NEW YORK: MOMA: *Balcony Scene*. REGIONAL: American Stage: *Othello*; Theater at Monmouth: *Once Upon a Mattress*; Ensemble Theater of Cincinnati: *The Frog Princess*; Bigfork Playhouse: *Anything Goes; Grease; Crazy for You; Hello, Dolly!; Chicago*; Washington Ballet Internship 2005. EDUCATION: BA, James Madison University.

**Kristen Calgaro** (Ballerina) NEW YORK: New York Classical Theatre: *Much Ado About Nothing*; Broadway Workshop: *Brigadoon*. NATIONAL TOUR: *Dr. Dolittle* (w/ Tommy Tune). DC AREA: Kennedy Center: *Broadway: 3 Generations*; Bay Theatre: *The Glass Menagerie*. REGIONAL: Goodspeed: *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*; North Shore: *Cinderella*; 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue: *White Christmas*; Sierra Rep; *White Christmas*; Deertrees: *Out of Stereo*. TV: *Law and Order*. FILM: *Kumare*, South by Southwest Film Festival, March '11. EDUCATION: University of Virginia, Religious Studies & Spanish, Phi Beta Kappa.

**Kevin Carolan** (C.H. Morton) BROADWAY: *Chicago*, 10th Anniversary Celebration, *The Ritz, Dirty Blonde*. OFF-BROADWAY: Encores!: *Pardon My English*; NYMF: *Have A Nice Life* (Best Ensemble Performance, 2006). NATIONAL TOUR: *Chicago, Dirty Blonde*. DC AREA: Ford's Theatre: *Kudzu!*. REGIONAL: Barrington Stage: *A Streetcar Named Desire*; Goodspeed: *Happy Days! A New Musical*; Berkshire Theatre Festival: *Morning's At Seven*; George Street Playhouse: *Lips Together, Teeth Apart*; Studio Arena Theatre: *A Thousand Clowns*; Wilma Theatre: *Dirty Blonde*; American Stage Company: *The Butter And Egg Man, Lucky Guy*. TELEVISION: *The Middle, Boardwalk Empire* (dir. Martin Scorsese), *Curb Your Enthusiasm, White Collar, Fringe, Sonny With A Chance, Spin City, All My Children, Law & Order: SVU, Law & Order: CI, Trinity* (recurring). COMEDY: Member: Friars Club, The Improv (Miami), Upright Citizen's Brigade (NYC): *Gravid Water*.

**Alma Cuervo** (Mme. Grimaud) BROADWAY: *Beauty and the Beast* (Mrs. Potts), *Cabaret* (Schneider), *Titanic* (original Ida Straus), *The Heidi Chronicles, Ghetto, Quilters, Is There Life After High School?, Censored Scenes From King Kong, Bedroom Farce, Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*. NATIONAL TOURS: *Wicked* (Morrible), *My Fair Lady, Cabaret, M. Butterfly*. OFF-BROADWAY: Sondheim and Weidman's *Road Show* (directed by John Doyle). REGIONAL: Cincinnati: *The Three Sisters* (Sarah Ruhl's adaptation); Huntington: *The Miracle At Naples*; Northern Stage: *The Year of Magical Thinking*. AWARDS: OBIE for *Uncommon Women and Others*; Barrymore for *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (PTC); PHOEBE

for *Wit* (Theatre Virginia). TV: Norman Lear's *a.k.a. Pablo* (series co-star), *Law and Order*, *Criminal Intent*. EDUCATION: BA from Tulane; MFA from Yale Drama.

**Nick Dalton** (William Wheatley) BROADWAY TOURS: *Hair* (Europe), *Hairspray* (Las Vegas), *Legally Blonde* (1st National). NYC/OFF-BROADWAY: NYMF: *Trails*, *Don Imbroglia*, *Liberty*; York Theatre: *Its Not What I Say*, *Ethan Frome* (by Adam Gwon); Musicals Tonight!: *Ernest in Love*, *Love From Judy*; Active Theatre Company: *Romance Romance*. REGIONAL: Walnut Street Theatre: *Fiddler on the Roof* (Barrymore nomination); North Shore Music Theatre: *The Three Musketeers*; Ogunquit Playhouse + Gateway Playhouse: *The Full Monty*; Mill Mountain Playhouse: *Funny Thing Happened...*; Arizona Broadway Theatre: *Jekyll + Hyde* (title role); Mason Street Warehouse: *Wicked City* (by Chad Beguelin and Matt Sklar). TV: *Host of Zoo Sounds* (ABC & PBS), *All My Children*. FILM: *Liszt For President* (Euro Indie Winner). EDUCATION: Western Michigan University.

**Suzanne Darling** (Ballerina) NATIONAL TOUR: *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*. INTERNATIONAL TOUR: *42nd Street*. REGIONAL: *Debbie Does Dallas The Musical*; Carnegie Hall: *Holiday Spectacular with Elaine Stritch*; Avery Fisher Hall: *You Oughta Be In Pictures* (w/ Karen Ziemba); Brooklyn Lyceum: *All Is Full Of Love* (world premiere). TV: *Love Is Blind* (pilot).

**Erick Devine** (Jeremiah Burnett) BROADWAY: *Ragtime*, *Seussical*, *Cats*, *Sid Caesar & Co.* OFF-BROADWAY: *Enter Laughing*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *Lucky Stiff*, (all 3 on CD), *A Winter's Tale*. ENCORES: *Of Thee I Sing*, *Allegro*. NATIONAL TOUR: *Big River* (Deaf West), *Ragtime*, *White Christmas*, *Me & My Girl* (Helen Hayes nomination), *Annie Get Your Gun* (w/Cathy Rigby), *Grand Hotel*. DIRECTED: *HMS Pinafore*, *Candide* (both w/Kristin Chenoweth), *Anything Goes* (w/Kelli O'Hara), ...*Molly Brown* (w/Cathy Rigby), *Annie Warbucks* (w/Gavin MacLeod), *1776*, ...*Forum*, *Most Happy Fella*, *Compleat Wks of WmShkspr (Abridged)*, *Der Fledermaus*, *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street*.

**William Diggle** (James Timoney) SIGNATURE: *Sunset Boulevard*. DC AREA: Olney Theatre Center: *Call of the Wild* (World Premiere); Ford's Theatre: *Lincoln in Love* (World Premiere Reading); Kennedy Center TYA: *Chasing George Washington* (National Tour). REGIONAL: Texas Shakespeare Festival: *Amadeus*, *Twelfth Night*, *Julius Caesar*, *Much Ado About Nothing*; Wayside Theatre: *The Matchmaker*; *Kiss Me, Kate*, *A Christmas Carol*; Totem Pole Playhouse: *I Love You, You're Perfect...*; Prather Entertainment: *White Christmas*, *Hello Dolly!*; Monomoy Theatre: *Macbeth*, *Oklahoma!*, *A Servant of Two Masters*, *The Butter and Egg Man*, *Noises Off!*. EDUCATION: University of Houston PTHP: MFA.

**Greer Gisy** (Ballerina) REGIONAL: Queens Theater in the Park: *One Ride*; Knoxville Coliseum: *Nutcracker*; Clayton Center: *Coppelia*. NYC: *March*, *Broadway on Broadway*, *Carnegie Hall Presents: Jaccom*, *The Knocks*. TV: *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, *A Dance for Life*. FILM: *Step Up 3D*.

**Laura Keller** (Ballerina) REGIONAL: Goodspeed Opera House, Reprise! (LA), Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival: *A Funny Thing Happened...Forum*; Riverside Theatre: *La Cage Aux Folles*; St. George Theatre: *On the Town*; CRT: *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*. EDUCATION: The Rock School for the Pennsylvania Ballet.

**Rachel Schur** (Ballerina) TOURS: Phoenix Entertainment: *FAME!*, NETworks Tours: *A Chorus Line*. REGIONAL: The Papermill Theatre: *Seussical*, *West Side Story*. DC AREA: Toby's: *West Side Story*, *Oklahoma!*; MetroStage: *CabarYAY*. EDUCATION: James Madison University, BA, Musical Theatre.

**Jennifer Smith** (Rose Morton) BROADWAY: 11 shows including original companies of *La Cage Aux Folles*, *The Producers*, and *The Drowsy Chaperone*. TOURS: *Young Frankenstein*. REGIONAL: Goodspeed: *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (Miss Jones). TV: *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Law and Order SVU*, *Law and Order Criminal Intent*. FILM: *Confessions*

of a Shopaholic, *The Producers*. AWARDS: 2008 inductee into the Buddy Holly Walk of Fame, Lubbock, TX.

**Brian Sutherland** (Roman Korda) BROADWAY: *The Sound of Music, 1776, Victor/Victoria, Steel Pier, Cats, Dance a Little Closer, A Change in the Heir, 110 in the Shade* (NYC Opera). TOURS: *The Light in the Piazza*, Disney's *On the Record, Cabaret* (w/Joel Grey), *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* (European tour). DC AREA: Arena Stage: *Guys and Dolls*, Fords Theatre *Shenandoah*. REGIONAL: St. Louis Rep: *Kiss Me, Kate; Fantasticks*; Pittsburgh Public: *Man of La Mancha*; Guthrie Theatre: *Pirates of Penzance*; Coconut Grove Playhouse: *Breaking Legs*; Cincinnati Playhouse: *She Loves Me*; Indiana Rep: *Enter the Guardsman*. UPCOMING: Film: *Burning Blue*.

**Sean Thompson** (Charles Barras) SIGNATURE: *Sunset Boulevard*. REGIONAL: Walnut Street Theatre: *The Eclectic Society, Cinderella*; Arden Theatre Company: *Candide, A Year With Frog and Toad*; Bristol Riverside Theatre: *Honey Brown Eyes* (reading); Prince Music Theater: *Jamaica*; Wilma Theater: *The Life of Galileo*; Mauckingbird Theatre Company: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Flashpoint Theatre Company: *The Little Dog Laughed*; Media Theatre: *Oliver!*, *Sean Thompson In Concert*; Lenape Regional Performing Arts Center: *The Seduction of Sheila Valentine* (concert reading); Shawnee Playhouse: *Camelot, Wit*; Maples Repertory Theatre: *Oklahoma!*, *Run For Your Wife, CLUE The Musical, Barefoot in the Park*; Great Plains Theatre: *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. EDUCATION: Temple University, 2008, Theater and English, Cum Laude.

**Rebecca Watson** (Millicent Cavendish) BROADWAY/NY: *By Jeeves* (dir. Alan Ackybourn) *The Cocoanuts, Romeo and Juliet, Tim and Scrooge, Disney's Hercules*. TOUR: *Moon Over Buffalo*. REGIONAL: Berkeley Rep: *To The Lighthouse* (World Premiere/American Theatre Critics Nomination); Portland Stage: *Julius Caesar* (Cassius); Goodspeed: *1776, Me and My Girl, Annie Get Your Gun*; Barrington Stage: *Ring Round the Moon*; Studio Arena: *The Snow Ball*; Indiana Rep.: *The Miser*; Kimmel Center, PA: *I'll Be Seeing You* (World Premiere); Arkansas & Connecticut Rep.: *Into the Woods*; Alabama Shakespeare Festival: *Major Barbara, Measure for Measure, The Cherry Orchard, Twelfth Night*; PaperMill & Pioneer: *Peter Pan*; Arizona Theatre Co./Phoenix Symphony: *Oklahoma!*. TV: *Cupid, Third Watch, Law & Order, Guiding Light, All My Children, As the World Turns*. FILM: *By Jeeves*.

### **About the American Musical Voices Project (AMVP)**

Signature Theatre's **American Musical Voices Project** is the largest single musical theater commissioning and producing initiative of any U.S. theater. Founded in May 2006 and funded by **The Shen Family Foundation**, the AMVP demonstrates Signature's commitment to producing full productions of world premiere musical theatre works. Through the AMVP, **Musical Theater Composer Grants** have been awarded to **Ricky Ian Gordon, Michael John LaChiusa, Joseph Thalken, Adam Guettel** and **Jeanine Tesori**. Each of the grants includes a commission to create a new full-length musical, with a commitment for full production as part of Signature Theatre's mainstage season. In April 2009, *Giant* by Michael John LaChiusa received its world premiere at Signature Theatre. Ricky Ian Gordon's *Sycamore Trees* premiered in May 2010, and Joseph Thalken's musical, *And the Curtain Rises* (formerly known as *Wheatley's Folly*) premieres in March 2011.

As part of the AMVP, **Musical Theater Leadership Awards** have been made to four individuals in recognition of their extraordinary influence on and contribution to the advancement of new musical theater, orchestrator Bruce Coughlin, composer Adam Guettel, singer/actress Audra McDonald, and director/musical director/orchestrator Ted Sperling.

In June 2008, the AMVP added **The Next Generation** program. That year, emerging composers Matt Conner, Adam Gwon, & Gabriel Kahane each received a commission to write new musicals for Signature Theatre and honorees Peter Foley and Marisa Michelson were given grants for the development of their musical ideas. In July 2009, the Theatre launched "21/24 Signature Lab," three weeks of rehearsal & performances of new works by **The Next**

**Generation** composers. Also announced as part of The Next Generation segment of the AMVP were two additional musical commissions awarded to Peter Foley and Marisa Michelson, as well as honoree grants given to Chris Miller and Scott Davenport Richards for the development of future musical ideas. In 2010, Miller and Richards were awarded commissions through **The Next Generation** program, and Joshua Schmidt and Joshua Rosenblum were named honorees.

## **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 31 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 283 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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