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Signature Theatre Announces its 2010-2011 Season

Musicals include the Washington premiere of *Sunset Boulevard* plus *Chess*, *Side by Side by Sondheim*, and the world premiere of Joseph Thalken's *Wheatley's Folly*

Plays include the world premieres of Ken Ludwig's *A Fox on the Fairway* and Joe Calarco's *Walter Cronkite Is Dead.*, plus the Tony Award®-winning comedy *Art*

Five Weeks of Cabaret Performances

Season Spans August 10, 2010 – June 12, 2011

Arlington, VA, February 24, 2010 – Eric Schaeffer, Artistic Director of the Tony Award®-winning Signature Theatre, today announced the company's 2010-2011 season of four musicals and three plays, with the innovative company producing three world premieres and one regional premiere.

Schaeffer stated, "Signature's new season is full of music and mayhem! With three exciting world premieres, the Washington premiere of the brilliant musical *Sunset Boulevard*, and the first major regional production of *Chess*, Signature continues to bring Washington audiences theatrical experiences that can't be found anywhere else." Managing Director Maggie Boland added, "Building on the success of Signature's 20th Anniversary season and with our audience at an all-time high, we are thrilled to offer an outstanding variety of shows and to continue to be Washington's destination for the best musicals and funniest comedies in town."

Signature's four musicals in the 2010-2011 season are headlined by Andrew Lloyd Webber's Tony Award-winning musical *Sunset Boulevard* about the fading silent screen star Nora Desmond, performed December 7, 2010 through February 13, 2011. Eric Schaeffer directs the regional premiere featuring Florence Lacey, star of Broadway's *Evita* and Signature's *Follies*. Signature will also produce the region's first major production of *Chess* (Aug. 10 – Sept. 26, 2010), the cult musical of Cold War competition in love and chess by Tim Rice, the lyricist of *Evita* and *The Lion*

King, and *Mamma Mia!* composers Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson. Signature continues its innovative American Musical Voices Project with its third world premiere: *Wheatley's Folly* (March 15 – April 10, 2011), Joseph Thalken's manic backstage take on the 1866 creation of the first musical comedy. The season ends with Signature's "signature," Sondheim – a brand new production of the great revue *Side by Side by Sondheim* (April 26 - June 12, 2011). All four musicals will take place in Signature's 276-seat MAX Theatre.

On the dramatic comedy front, the company will produce two world premieres and a Tony Award-winning comedy in the 2010-2011 season. Internationally acclaimed playwright Ken Ludwig, creator of *Crazy for You* and *Lend Me a Tenor*, will premiere his latest romp *A Fox on the Fairway* (Oct. 12 – Nov. 14, 2010) in The MAX, about the antics of the golf-crazed denizens of two competing country clubs, directed by John Rando, the Tony-winning director of Broadway's *Urinetown*. In the 110-seat ARK Theatre, New York-based director, playwright, and Signature Artistic Associate Joe Calarco will introduce his new comedy of the culture wars *Walter Cronkite Is Dead*. (Oct. 26 – Dec. 19, 2010). The 1998 Tony Award-winning comedy *Art* (March 29 – May 22, 2011), the international hit play by Yasmina Reza who also wrote the 2009 Tony winner *God of Carnage*, will also be performed in the intimacy of The ARK.

One of the most popular cabaret venues in the Washington area, Signature also has five outstanding cabaret weeks planned, from **Julia Nixon** and **Katie Thompson** (the red-headed Vashti in last year's *Giant*) to the Lost Songs of Broadway, Broadway Duets, and the annual Holiday Cabaret.

Subscription packages are now on sale by calling Signature's Box Office at (703) 820-9771. Single tickets will go on sale in July, with the exception of *Sunset Boulevard* which will not go on sale until fall 2010.

SIGNATURE THEATRE'S 2010-2011 SEASON

CHESS

Book by Richard Nelson

Music by Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson

Lyrics by Tim Rice

Directed by Eric Schaeffer

August 10 – September 26, 2010

The MAX

From the composers of *Mamma Mia!* and the lyricist of *Evita*, *The Lion King*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar*

In 1989, the two greatest chess masters in the world—one American, one Russian—compete to be the best in the world, yet their greatest contest is for the love of the same woman. Amidst political intrigue and international conspiracies, American Freddie Trumper and Russian Anatoly Sergievsky fight to take the queen in a romantic triangle that mirrors the heightened passions of the Cold War. Originally produced on Broadway in 1988, this Tony-nominated cult rock musical explores the classic themes of love, loss and betrayal. *Chess* features the hit single "One Night

in Bangkok”, and unforgettable songs like “Anthem,” “I Know Him So Well,” “Nobody’s Side,” and “Pity the Child.” Eric Schaeffer directs.

“One of the best rock scores ever produced in the theater!”
– *Time Magazine*

World Premiere
A FOX ON THE FAIRWAY
A New Comedy by Ken Ludwig
Directed by John Rando
October 12 – November 14, 2010
The MAX

A tribute from Ken Ludwig (*Lend Me A Tenor, Crazy for You*) to the great English farces of the 1930s and 1940s, *A Fox On the Fairway* takes Signature audiences on a hilarious romp which pulls the rug out from underneath the stuffy denizens of two competing golf country clubs. Filled with mistaken identities, slamming doors, and over-the-top romantic shenanigans, it’s a furiously paced comedy that recalls the Marx Brothers’ classics. It’s a charmingly madcap adventure—directed by Tony Award-winner John Rando (*Urinetown*)—about love, life, and man’s eternal love affair with...golf.

"Ken Ludwig is one of those rare contemporary playwrights who thinks in terms of old-fashioned knockabout farce, and that's something to be cherished." – *The New York Times*

World Premiere
WALTER CRONKITE IS DEAD.
Written and Directed by Joe Calarco
October 26 – December 19, 2010
The ARK

In a world that seems to be spinning beyond their control, two women find themselves sharing a table at a snowed-in airport. Representing two sides of the culture wars—one red state, the other blue state—Margaret and Patty reluctantly strike up a conversation that encourages them to open up, challenge their preconceived notions, and find common ground. Joe Calarco, the Helen Hayes Award-winning director of *Side Show* and *Assassins*, and a Signature Artistic Associate, has written a charming and intimate new comedy that explores the choices we all make, the regrets with which we burden ourselves, and the losses we suffer as we age, mature, and stride through an incomprehensible world.

“Joe Calarco is a theater man of imagination and vision.”
– *The New York Times*

The Washington Premiere of the Legendary, Tony Award-winning Hollywood Musical Andrew Lloyd Webber’s

SUNSET BOULEVARD

Book and Lyrics by Don Black and Christopher Hampton

Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber

Based on the Billy Wilder film *Sunset Boulevard*

Directed by Eric Schaeffer

Starring Florence Lacey

December 7, 2010 – February 13, 2011

The MAX

“All right, Mr. DeMille, I’m ready for my close-up” are the infamous words from a legendary character – silent film star Norma Desmond. And this December, this tragic figure will be singing the glorious songs of Andrew Lloyd Webber in Signature’s production of *Sunset Boulevard*. Starring Florence Lacey (star of Broadway’s *Evita* and Signature’s *Follies*) as the faded screen star, *Sunset Boulevard* is a noir musical and one of the greatest Hollywood tales ever told. With such stunning songs as “With One Look,” “As If We Never Said Goodbye” and “Perfect Year,” Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Sunset Boulevard* is a lush romantic tragedy.

American Musical Voices Project: Part Three

World Premiere

WHEATLEY’S FOLLY

Book by Michael Slade

Music by Joseph Thalken

Lyrics by Mark Campbell

Directed by Eric Schaeffer

March 15 – April 10, 2011

The MAX

Ever wonder how the first musical was created? Well, if *Wheatley’s Folly* is to be believed, the process was fraught with confusion, disorder, and a whole lot of humor. *Wheatley’s Folly*, a valentine to musical comedy, is a classic backstage comedy about the creation of the first American musical. In 1866, producer William Wheatley finds his play a disaster, the actors in revolt, the costumes and scenery destroyed, and his production in shambles. When a fire at a theater next door leaves a French ballet troupe stranded without funds in New York City, Wheatley decides to turn sour apples into apple sauce, adds a touch of music and dance - *et voila*, the American musical is born.

SPONSORED BY THE SHEN FAMILY FOUNDATION

Winner of the 1998 Tony Award

ART

By Yasmina Reza

Translated by Christopher Hampton

March 29 – May 22, 2011

The ARK

A simple white canvas. A 200,000 franc pricetag. The real cost? Decades-long friendships. Enter the world of Yasmina Reza's *Art*, where Serge's purchase of an expensive, abstract painting raises questions about the nature of art and friendship. Set in Paris, the story revolves around three friends who find their previously solid friendship on shaky ground when Serge invests in a new painting. The purchase reveals unsettling secret opinions and conflicting world-views. As their arguments shift from the theoretical to the personal, this Tony Award-winning comedy examines the pressures friends place on each other – and how different values can transform relationships.

SIDE BY SIDE BY SONDHEIM

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

Additional Music by Leonard Bernstein, Mary Rodgers, Richard Rodgers, and Jule Styne

April 26 – June 12, 2011

The MAX

Stephen Sondheim has been the leading composer of musical theater for the past fifty years. His work is timeless. From the streets of ancient Rome, through 19th century Japan and turn-of-the-century Sweden, to the high-rise apartments of 1970 Manhattan, his songs represent a definitive time and place, and yet move beyond their particular settings to speak to us all. Now, with this award-winning revue of his earlier work, Signature presents some of the most lush, unforgettable songs from this musical theater master whose work has so influenced Signature's history. *Side by Side by Sondheim* includes songs from *Anyone Can Whistle*, *Company*, *Do I Hear A Waltz?*, *Evening Primrose*, *Follies*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Gypsy*, *A Little Night Music*, *The Mad Show*, *Pacific Overtures*, *The Seven Percent Solution*, and *West Side Story*.

2010-2011 CABARET PERFORMANCES

An extension of Signature's commitment to musical theater and presented in true Signature style with a mix of traditional and cabaret-table seating, plus drinks and light fare from Ali's Bar, Signature's cabaret series evokes a lively night-club atmosphere.

The Lost Songs of Broadway, 1950-1960: September 14 – 18, 2010

The 1950s were Broadway's Golden Age – *Gypsy*, *The Music Man*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The King and I*, *West Side Story*, *The Pajama Game*, and *My Fair Lady*. But what about the songs that got away? Signature performers know their way around a lyric, and they'll showcase some of the best songs of the 1950s that have sadly been lost from the Broadway songbook.

Signature's Annual Holiday Cabaret: December 20 – 23, 2010

A holiday tradition, Signature presents its fourth annual holiday cabaret. Signature's *December Divas* and the *Swingin' Santas* join forces on stage to ring in the holiday season. No holiday is complete without this melodic dose of holiday cheer!

Julia Nixon: January 11 – 15, 2011

Helen Hayes Award-winner Julia Nixon is back at Signature in a return engagement that again showcases her soulful vocal instrument. In the vein of Sarah Vaughan, this powerhouse performer mixes jazz standards in with her own R&B compositions in an unforgettable act.

Katie Thompson: February 22 – 26, 2011

Red-headed Katie Thompson blew audiences away with her performance of Vashti's torch songs in 2009's *Giant*. Now she's back at Signature with her intimate cabaret show – mixing blues, standards, and some of her own songs with her singular smoky voice.

Broadway Duets: June 7 – 11, 2011

Solos are beautiful, but what's a love song without a partner to share it with? Some of Signature's favorite singers will unite for an evening of the greatest duets ever written for the Broadway stage – including classic songs by Rodgers and Hammerstein, Sondheim, Lloyd Webber, and Lerner and Loewe. Performers to be announced.

ABOUT SIGNATURE

Recipient of the 2009 Regional Theatre Tony Award®, Signature Theatre is a non-profit professional theater company 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 26 world premiere productions and is renowned for combining Broadway-quality productions with 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 John Kander and Fred Ebb, Cameron Mackintosh, Terrence McNally, and the company's signature composer, Stephen Sondheim. Since its founding in 1989, Signature has been nominated for 276 Helen Hayes Awards for excellence in the professional theater and has been honored with 69 Helen Hayes Awards, including Outstanding Musical in 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2005, 2006, 2008, and 2009, and Outstanding Play in 1999.

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

Signature Theatre is just nine minutes from downtown Washington, DC in Arlington's Shirlington Village. The new theater complex 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

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