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## signaturenews

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### **Signature Theatre's *Chess* to Star Broadway's Jill Paice, Euan Morton & Jeremy Kushnier, directed by Eric Schaeffer**

#### **Washington's First Major Production of the 1984 Rock Musical by the Composers of *Mamma Mia!* Opens August 10**

Arlington, VA, April 21, 2010 – The Tony Award®-winning **Signature Theatre** today announced that Broadway's **Jill Paice** (*Curtains*, *The 39 Steps*), **Euan Morton** (Boy George in *Taboo*, *Sondheim on Sondheim*), and **Jeremy Kushnier** (*Footloose*, *Rent*) will star in the rock musical ***Chess***, to be directed by Signature's Artistic Director **Eric Schaeffer**. Written by *Mamma Mia!* composers **Björn Ulvaeus** and **Benny Andersson** with *Evita* and *Lion King* lyricist **Tim Rice**, the 1984 cult musical of Cold War competition in love and chess is being given its first major Washington area production. *Chess* will be performed in the fabulous intimacy of the 276-seat MAX Theatre from August 10 – September 26, 2010.

Eric Schaeffer stated, "We've been working for three years on producing *Chess* and it's thrilling that all the stars have aligned to bring this musical to Washington. With Euan, Jill, and Jeremy leading the cast, it promises to be the exciting production that we've all dreamed about!"

In the musical *Chess* two great chess masters—one American, one Russian—compete to be the best in the world only to find that 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 as such "Anthem," "I Know Him So Well," "Nobody's Side," and "Pity the Child." *Time Magazine* called it "one of the best rock scores ever produced in the theater."

#### **TICKETS**

*Chess* is the first show of the 2010-2011 season which also includes Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Sunset Boulevard*, Yasmina Reza's Tony Award-winning play *Art*, *Side by Side by Sondheim*, and the world premieres of Ken Ludwig's *A Fox on the Fairway*, Joe Calarco's *Walter Cronkite Is Dead.*, and Joseph Thalken's musical *Wheatley's Folly*. Subscriptions for three or more productions are now on sale by calling Signature's Box Office at (703) 820-9771. For more information please visit [www.signature-theatre.org](http://www.signature-theatre.org).

## PHOTOS

Editors: Photos of the three leads in *Chess* are available for downloading from [http://www.signature-theatre.org/photo\\_downloads.htm](http://www.signature-theatre.org/photo_downloads.htm). (Link for press only: please do not publish).

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Jeremy Kushnier** plays the American chess master, Freddie Trumper. Born in Canada, Kushnier made his Broadway debut originating the role of Ren in *Footloose*. He continued on Broadway as Roger in *Rent* as well as in the road companies of *Elton John and Tim Rice's Aida* (Radames) and *Rent* (Roger). Most recently he starred as Tommy Devito in the Toronto, Chicago, Las Vegas and touring companies of *Jersey Boys*. Regionally Kushnier has performed at Maine State Music Theater's *Full Monty* (Jerry), Prince Music Theater's *Bright Lights Big City* (Jamie), Kansas City Starlight's *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Judas), and in the original Canadian companies of *The Who's Tommy* and *Rent*. In film Kushnier has appeared in *The Adulterer* and on television on "Late Night with David Letterman," "FX" and John Woo's "Once a Thief." Jeremy has two independent CDs, *In Time* and his self titled EP *Jeremy Kushnier*, which can be found online at his web site [www.jeremykushnier.com](http://www.jeremykushnier.com). Kushnier is making his directorial debut this summer with the *Rent* at Rainbow Stage in Winnipeg, MB.

Kushnier performed in Signature Theatre's world premiere production of *The Rhythm Club* directed by Eric Schaeffer in the fall of 2000.

**Euan Morton** plays the Russian chess master, Anatoly Sergievsky. A native of Scotland, Morton is currently performing in the new Broadway show at Roundabout's Studio 54, *Sondheim on Sondheim*. He received an Olivier Award nomination for originating the role of Boy George in the musical *Taboo* and moved to New York in 2003 to reprise the role on Broadway, earning Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and Drama League Award nominations, as well as the Theatre World Award (for Outstanding Broadway Debut). He earned a 2006 Obie Award for his appearance in *Measure For Pleasure* at the Public Theatre. Other stage appearances include title roles in: Tony Kushner's adaptation of *Brundibár* at the New Victory Theatre and Berkeley Rep; *The Who's Tommy* at the Bay Street Theatre; and *Caligula* for the inaugural season of the New York Musical Theatre Festival (2004 NYMF Award for Outstanding Individual Performance). Morton also appeared in the Broadway revival of *Cyrano De Bergerac*. Off-Broadway, Morton performed opposite Alfred Molina in *Howard Katz* at the Roundabout Theatre and in the 2009 American premiere of *Leaves of Glass*. Regionally he starred in Moisés Kaufman's production of *Into the Woods* at the Kansas City Rep. On film, Morton can be seen in the documentary *Showbusiness: The Road to Broadway* which follows the history of a Broadway season and is now available on DVD.

Morton can be heard on various cast recordings and has released his debut solo CD, *NewClear*. He has appeared in concert in New York City at the Oak Room at the Algonquin, Town Hall, the Metropolitan Room, the Zipper, Joe's Pub and Birdland, as well as at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, and many other venues all over the country.

Morton performed in Signature's popular cabaret series in the summer and fall of 2009.

**Jill Paice** is Freddie Trumper's second, Florence Vassy, the woman that both Freddie and Anatoly Sergievsky love. On Broadway Paice has starred in *The 39 Steps* (Annabella et al), *Curtains* (Niki Harris), *The Woman in White* (Laura Fairlie), and *A Little Night Music* (Anne, Roundabout Gala with Vanessa Redgrave and Natasha Richardson). In London's West End she originated the role of Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* as well as Laurie Fairlie in *The Woman in White* and *Night of 1000 Voices* at Royal Albert Hall. Other credits include *Irving Berlin's White Christmas* (Betty Haynes, Fox Theatre Detroit), *Curtains* (Niki Harris, Ahmanson Theater), *Mamma Mia!* in Las Vegas (Sophie), the national tour of *Les Misérables*, *The Gig* (Lucy, York Theater), *Weird Romance* (Delphi/Susan, York Theater) and *Gypsy* (Great Lakes Theater Festival). Paice's television credits include *Beautiful Life* and *The Wonderful Maladys*. Paice has performed in the original cast recordings of *Curtains*, *The Woman in White*, *The Gig*, and *Andrew Lloyd Webber on Broadway*. She is a graduate of Baldwin-Wallace College.

Paice performed the role of the mother Elizabeth in *Ace* at Signature Theatre directed by Eric Schaeffer in the fall of 2008.

**Eric Schaeffer** (Director) is the artistic director/co-founder of Signature Theatre, recipient of the 2009 Regional Theatre Tony Award and home to the American Musical Voices Project, the largest musical theatre commissioning program in the country. Schaeffer has just directed the Broadway hit *Million Dollar Quartet* and has also directed *Putting It Together* and *Glory Days* on Broadway. On London's West End he directed *The Witches of Eastwick*. Schaeffer has directed over 40 productions for Signature including the world premieres of *The Hollow*, *First You Dream*, *Saving Aimee*, and *Nevermore*; the American premieres of *The Fix* and *The Witches of Eastwick*, as well as *Les Misérables*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Into the Woods*, among others. Known for his direction of the works of Stephen Sondheim, he has staged nine of the composer's musicals at Signature Theatre and was artistic director for the Kennedy Center's Sondheim Celebration where he directed *Sunday in the Park with George* and *Passion*. Regionally, he has directed at the Mark Taper Forum, the Goodman Theatre, Ford's Theatre, and Arena Stage. His awards include six Helen Hayes Awards for Direction. Next season at Signature, in addition at *Chess*, Schaeffer will direct Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Sunset Boulevard* and the world premiere of Joseph Thalken's *Wheatley's Folly*.

## **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 70 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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