

ADDRESS
4200 Campbell Ave.
Arlington, Virginia
22206

BOX OFFICE
703 820 9771
ADMIN OFFICE
571 527 1860

FACSIMILE
703 845 0236
WEBSITE
www.signature-theatre.org

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Eric Schaeffer
MANAGING DIRECTOR
Maggie Boland

signaturenews

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 11, 2010
Contact: Suzanne Stephens, Publicist
(571) 527-1833 (office) / (202) 438-6234 (mobile)
stephenss@signature-theatre.org

VA's Signature Theatre Announces Full Casting for First Major American Production of *Chess* since 1995

Rock musical headlined by Broadway's Jill Paice, Euan Morton & Jeremy Kushnier, & includes Helen Hayes Award winners Christopher Bloch, Eleasha Gamble, Chris Sizemore & Russell Sunday

Arlington, VA, June 11, 2010 – The Tony Award®-winning **Signature Theatre** today announced the full casting for its August/September 2010 production of the rock musical *Chess* headlined by Broadway's **Jill Paice** (*Curtains*, *The 39 Steps*), **Euan Morton** (Boy George in *Taboo*, *Sondheim on Sondheim*), and **Jeremy Kushnier** (*Footloose*, *Rent*) as Florence, Anatoly, and Freddie. Completing the cast is **Eleasha Gamble** (Svetlana), along with **Christopher Bloch** (Molokov), **Russell Sunday** (Walter) and **Chris Sizemore** (Arbiter). The ensemble includes **Jonathan Atkinson**, **Jamie Eacker**, **James Gardiner**, **Gregory Maheu**, **Katie McManus**, **Christopher Mueller**, **Bayla Whitten**, and **Rachel Zampelli**.

The new production will be directed by Artistic Director **Eric Schaeffer** (*Million Dollar Quartet*) with music direction and new orchestrations by **David Holcenberg** (*Mamma Mia!*). The creative team includes **Karma Camp** (choreography), **Daniel Conway** (sets), **Chris Lee** (lights), **Kathleen Geldard** (costumes), **Matt Rowe** (sound), and **Aaron Fisher** (projection design).

With music by *Mamma Mia!* composers **Björn Ulvaeus** and **Benny Andersson**, lyrics by *Evita* and *Lion King* lyricist **Tim Rice**, and book by award-winning playwright **Richard Nelson**, the 1984 cult musical of Cold War competition in love and chess is being given its first major American production since 1995 and is the very first professional 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 assembled a top-notch cast and design team to bring *Chess* to Washington. We're all looking forward to bringing this musical to life in this newly conceived production."

In *Chess*, two international chess masters—one American, one Russian—compete for the world championship only to find that their greatest contest is for the love of the same woman. Amidst political intrigue and international conspiracies, Freddie and Anatoly 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.”

SUBSCRIPTION TICKETS

Currently only available on subscription, *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 available by calling Signature’s box office at (703) 820-9771.

TICKETS

Single tickets for *Chess* go on sale July 5. Tickets range in price from \$55 - \$81 and are available by calling Ticketmaster at (703) 573-SEAT (7328) or visiting www.signature-theatre.org. Group discounts are available for parties of ten or more by contacting tickets@signature-theatre.org. For more information please visit www.signature-theatre.org.

PERFORMANCE DATES

Performances of *Chess* run from August 10 through September 26, 2010. The press performance is Sunday, August 29 at 7:00 pm. Show times are Tuesday and Wednesday at 7:30 pm, Thursday and Friday at 8:00 pm, Saturday at 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm, and Sunday at 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm. There are no performances of *Chess* on Saturday, August 14 at 2:00 pm and Tuesday, August 17 at 7:30 pm.

PHOTOS

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

MEDIA SPONSORSHIPS

MIX 107.3 / 105.9FM The Edge, and *Metro Weekly* are media sponsors for *Chess*.

AMENITIES – ALI’S BAR

Starting one hour before and extending for one hour after performances, patrons can visit Ali’s Bar for outstanding wine, beer, mixed drinks, and chef-prepared light fare. The theater’s much praised source of refreshment overlooking a tree-lined boulevard has been masterminded by wine expert Suzanne McGrath, the proprietor of Shirlington’s gourmet wine store, The Curious Grape. Ticket purchase is not required to eat or drink at Ali’s Bar.

CHESSE

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

Director.....Eric Schaeffer
Choreographer.....Karma Camp
Music Director/OrchestrationsDavid Holcenberg
Conductor.....Jenny Cartney
Set Designer.....Dan Conway
Costume DesignerKathleen Geldard
Lighting Designer.....Chris Lee
Sound Designer.....Matt Rowe
Production Stage ManagerKerry Epstein

Freddie.....Jeremy Kushnier
Florence.....Jill Paice
Anatoly.....Euan Morton
Molokov/Father.....Christopher Bloch
Walter.....Russell Sunday
Svetlana.....Eleasha Gamble
Arbiter.....Christopher Sizemore
Ensemble.....Jonathan Atkinson
Ensemble.....Jamie Eacker
Ensemble.....James Gardiner
Ensemble.....Gregory Maheu
Ensemble.....Katie McManus
Ensemble.....Chris Mueller
Ensemble.....Bayla Whitten
Ensemble.....Rachel Zampelli

PRINCIPAL ACTOR BIOS

Jeremy Kushnier plays the American chess master, Freddie. 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. 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. 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 Measure* 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's second, Florence, loved by both Freddie and Anatoly. 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

Located in Arlington, VA Signature Theatre is just nine minutes from the Washington Monument. The 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 theater. 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
Signature Theatre

4200 Campbell Avenue
Arlington, VA 22206
<http://www.signature-theatre.org>

#