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Embargoed Until – March 30th at 12:00 PM

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Signature Theatre Announces 2015/16 Season

Season features two world premiere musicals: *Cake Off and Girlstar*

plus

**The DC Premiere of Annie Baker's 2014 Pulitzer Prize winner
*The Flick***

**The DC Premiere of Bathsbeba Doran's 2015 Play
*The Mystery of Love & Sex***

Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's *Road Show*

The return of Dempsey and Rowe's *The Fix*

and

Inventive new stagings of *West Side Story* and *La Cage aux Folles*

Arlington, VA – Artistic Director **Eric Schaeffer** and Managing Director **Maggie Boland** announce the full lineup for Signature Theatre's 2015/16 season.

"Signature's 26th season continues our commitment to presenting new works and reinventing great American musicals. We're proud that this season also highlights daring new plays by female playwrights," stated Signature Theatre Artistic Director **Eric Schaeffer**. "I'm excited to work with so many talented artists in the coming year."

Managing Director **Maggie Boland** added "This lineup showcases artists new to the Signature family alongside those who have been essential to the Theatre's success throughout our history, and offers Washington's audiences the opportunity to experience an extraordinary range of experiences and voices. With our trademark mix of new and classic, invention and re-invention — it's a thrill to announce a season with so much variety."

The 2015/16 season kicks off with an all-new production of ***The Fix*** (August 11 – September 20); the inside-Washington musical satire by **John Dempsey** and **Dana Rowe** will be directed by **Eric Schaeffer** (Broadway's *Gigi*, *Follies* and *Million Dollar Quartet*). Heralded as a "gleefully wicked musical comedy" by the *Associated Press*, Signature Theatre welcomes back the show that received its U.S. premiere at the Theatre in 1998, cementing a long-standing relationship with Dempsey and Rowe that has also included the American premiere of *The Witches of Eastwick* and the world premiere of *Brother Russia*.

In the fall, Signature will present two world premiere musicals. As part of the Women's Voices Theater Festival, Signature's Resident Director of New Works **Joe Calarco** (Signature's *Gypsy*) will direct ***Cake Off*** (September 29 – November 22), a new musical by **Julia Jordan** (*Murder Ballad*), **Sheri Wilner** (*Kingdom City*) and **Adam Gwon** (Signature's *The Boy Detective Fails*). Starring **Sherri L. Edelen** (Signature's *Gypsy*), this hilarious new musical is a battle-of-the-sexes set at the 48th Annual Twillsbury Bake-Off competition. Signature is proud to be an originating theater sponsoring the two-month festival, which boasts participation from more than 50 theaters throughout the Nation's Capital region. Women's Voices Theater Festival is dedicated to featuring new work by female playwrights and highlighting the scope of plays being written by women.

In October, Eric Schaeffer will direct ***Girlstar*** (October 13 – November 15). **Donna Migliaccio** (Signature's *Sunday in the Park with George*) stars as a record producer in search of her next big hit in this musical fairytale set to an electrifying pop score by **Anton Dudley** and **Brian Feinstein** (*Crowned*).

In the spring, Signature will continue to present exciting female voices with the DC area premieres of two plays. Annie Baker's **Pulitzer Prize-winning** play ***The Flick*** will get its DC area premiere directed by Joe Calarco (March 1 – April 17). *The Flick* follows the story of three minimum wage employees at a crumbling Massachusetts movie theatre and was called "the best argument anyone has yet made for the continued necessity, and profound uniqueness, of theater" by *New York Magazine*. In April, playwright **Bathsheba Doran** (Signature's *Nest*, Showtime's *Boardwalk Empire*) will return to Signature with her latest play ***The Mystery of Love & Sex*** (April 5 – May 8). Currently receiving its premiere production at Lincoln Center, *The Mystery of Love & Sex* was heralded as "perfectly wonderful" and "among the season's finest plays" by *The New York Times*. Doran's play is an unexpected love story of evolving friendship, finding your own path and the value of family.

The 2015/16 season also affirms Signature's passion to stage inventive new productions of classic musicals. Considered one of the greatest musicals of all time, ***West Side Story*** (December 8 – January 24), directed by Associate Artistic Director **Matthew Gardiner**, will feature a 17-piece orchestra and an inventive new staging in Signature Theatre's intimate 300 seat MAX Theatre. Two star-crossed lovers find themselves wrenched between two rival gangs in New York City's Upper West Side in this musical adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Featuring an iconic score by Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim that includes "America," "Maria," "Somewhere" and "Tonight," *West Side Story* will also mark the 25th production of a Stephen Sondheim musical in Signature Theatre's history. Signature will tackle

its' 26th Sondheim production with **Road Show** (February 9 – March 13) directed by **Gary Griffin** (Broadway's *Honeymoon in Vegas*, Signature's *A Funny Thing Happened...*). Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's musical, about the real-life Mizner brothers and their quest for the ever elusive American dream, was praised as "fierce, funny, lean and heartbreaking" by the *Chicago Sun-Times* when Griffin's production premiered at Chicago Shakespeare Theater in 2014.

To end the season, Matthew Gardiner will direct the Tony Award®-winning musical **La Cage aux Folles** (May 31 – July 10). With a score by Jerry Herman (*Hello, Dolly*, *Mame*), featuring "I Am What I Am" and "The Best of Times," and a book by Harvey Fierstein (*Newsies*, *Kinky Boots*), this musical comedy about identity will star Signature Theatre favorite **Bobby Smith** (Signature's *Simply Sondheim*, *Spin*) as Albin, the lead drag performer at The Saint-Tropez Night Club on the French Riviera. Albin and Georges face a test when their son announces his engagement to the daughter of ultra-conservative political parents.

Signature will present several cabaret performances in the 2015/16 Season. In the summer, audiences can escape the heat in the air-conditioned ARK for **Sizzlin' Summer Nights Series** (July 8 – 25, 2015); A four-show **Cabaret Series** (*Tracy Lynn Olivera*, October 27-31, 2015; *Nova Y. Payton*, December 15-19, 2015; *The Rat Pack*, April 19-23, 2016; and *Make 'Em Laugh*, May 19-23, 2016).

Signature offers flexible subscription options for the 2015/16 season. **Subscription packages are now on sale.** Custom packages can be created for 3-, 4-, 5-, 6-, 7- or the full 8-show season.

Package prices begin at \$187. Benefits of subscribing include first choice of seats, savings over individual ticket prices, fee-waived ticket exchanges and discounts on extra tickets. Season subscriptions are now on sale by calling Signature's Box Office at 703 820 9771 or by visiting www.signature-theatre.org. Subscribers may add the SHEN *Cabaret Series* and *Sizzlin' Summer* All-Access Pass to their subscription orders.

Patrons can get a preview of the upcoming season at Signature Theatre's annual Open House (Sunday, August 2). This FREE event includes special ticket offers, free performances every fifteen minutes, kids' activities and more!

Single tickets for the entire season will go on sale early July, 2014

SIGNATURE THEATRE'S 2015/16 SEASON

The Fix

August 11 – September 20, 2015

MAX Theatre

When a popular presidential candidate dies in his mistress's arms, his ambitious wife, Violet, immediately declares that if she can't be the *wife* of the president, then she'll be the *mother* of the president – and thrusts their lackluster son Cal into the spotlight in Dempsey and Rowe's outrageous musical comedy *The Fix*. With the help of her strategic brother-in-law, Violet transforms her son into the perfect citizen and ideal politician. Together, they create one of the most dysfunctional, yet brutally entertaining, almost-first families.

With a rock-laced, eclectic score and scandalous lyrics, the team behind *The Witches of Eastwick* and *Brother Russia* skewers the American bureaucratic machine. It's *The Manchurian Candidate* meets *Caligula*, with a voice uniquely its own; *The Fix* is a darkly brilliant, over-the-top, audaciously fun ride through the shenanigans of political elections.

Book & Lyrics by John Dempsey
Music by Dana P. Rowe
Directed by Eric Schaeffer

World Premiere

Cake Off

September 29 – November 22, 2015

ARK Theatre

A hilarious world premiere musical adaptation of Sheri Wilner's riotous battle-of-the-baking-sexes play starring Sherri L. Edelen.

It's the 48th Annual Twillsbury Bake-Off. The legendary jackpot: one million dollars for the best homemade sugary delight. After a chilly pre-heating, hardy contestants Paul and Rita don their aprons, strap on their oven mitts and square off. Armed with whisks, bowls, knives and eggs, the two engage in an increasingly ludicrous all-out brawl – and only one can remain standing when the timer dings.

Ferociously funny, there's nothing sweet about this wild musical satire, presented as part of the Women's Voices Theater Festival.

Based on the original play by Sheri Wilner
Book by Sheri Wilner & Julia Jordan
Lyrics by Julia Jordan & Adam Gwon
Music by Adam Gwon
Directed by Joe Calarco

World Premiere

Girlstar

October 13 – November 15, 2015

MAX Theatre

Signature favorite Donna Migliaccio stars in this fantastical world premiere musical fairytale, brimming with magic, darkness and blinding ambition.

Legendary record producer Daniella Espere is searching for her next international sensation. She discovers it in her long-lost niece, Tina, who dreams of being a world-famous pop star. Despite warning signs that all may not be as it seems, the two eagerly forge a mother/daughter bond and Daniella transforms Tina's image, voice and talent into star quality – but not by the usual means.

With an electrifying pop-laden score, *Girlstar* invites audiences of all ages to follow one girl's breathtaking journey and asks, how far is *too far* to go to become a star?

Book & Lyrics by **Anton Dudley**
Music by **Brian Feinstein**
Directed by **Eric Schaeffer**

West Side Story

December 8, 2015 – January 24, 2016

Considered one of the greatest musicals of all time, *West Side Story* makes its triumphant Signature debut.

In the late 1950s two rival gangs struggle for control of their West Side New York City neighborhood. Amidst the chaos, star-crossed lovers find themselves wrenched between their worlds. Beautiful, passionate, with shades of violence and heartache, this innovative adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* still dazzles after more than fifty years.

Written by the dream creative team of Leonard Bernstein, Arthur Laurents and Stephen Sondheim, *West Side Story*'s legendary jazz, Latin and classical-inspired score features the treasured songs "Something's Coming," "Tonight," "I Feel Pretty" and "America."

Book by **Arthur Laurents**

Music by **Leonard Bernstein**

Lyrics by **Stephen Sondheim**

Based on a conception of **Jerome Robbins**

Based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

Directed by **Matthew Gardiner**

The DC Premiere

Road Show

February 9 – March 13, 2016

MAX Theatre

The third collaboration between Weidman and Sondheim (*Assassins*, *Pacific Overtures*), *Road Show* is a freewheeling musical travelogue of the optimism and opportunism of the early twentieth century through the eyes of two ambitious, eccentric, yet playfully charming brothers.

Based on the real-life Mizner siblings, *Road Show* follows the dreamer and the schemer's quest for the ever elusive, shape-shifting American dream. From the Klondike gold rush to India, Hawaii, Guatemala, New York and finally the real-estate boon of Florida's Boca Raton, the dazzling pace scours not only the map, but also forty years of boom-and-bust and brotherly love (or hate).

For Signature's 26th Sondheim production, we welcome back director Gary Griffin (*A Funny Thing...Forum*) with his acclaimed Chicago Shakespeare Theater staging of *Road Show*.

Music & Lyrics by **Stephen Sondheim**

Book by **John Weidman**

Directed by **Gary Griffin**

The DC Premiere

The Flick

March 1 – April 17, 2016

ARK Theatre

Set in the popcorn-strewn, empty aisles of a crumbling Massachusetts movie theater, this 2014 Pulitzer Prize winner exposes the surprising tenderness and comedy in the everyday.

Spilled soda on the floor. Leftover food wrappers stashed in the seats. Three minimum wage employees perform the humdrum labor necessary to keep one of the last 35 millimeter projectors running. Through seemingly small conversations about movie actors, broom techniques and weekend plans, the characters divulge heartbreak, hopes and a compelling story all their own.

With her finely-tuned comic eye, Annie Baker (*Circle Mirror Transformation*, *The Aliens*) brings a rich humanity to three people who desperately strive to connect, help each other move on and accept their place in the world.

By **Annie Baker**
Directed by **Joe Calarco**

The DC Premiere
The Mystery of Love & Sex
April 5 – May 8, 2016
MAX Theatre

From the writer of HBO's *Boardwalk Empire* and Showtime's *Masters of Sex* comes an unexpected story of evolving friendship, finding your own path and the value of family.

Complete opposites, Charlotte and Jonny have been best friends since they were children. Now, as college students on the eve of graduation, they toy around with taking their friendship romantic. Or not. Why decide? After all, neither is sure they are even attracted to the other (or to anyone of the opposite sex). Meanwhile, Charlotte's parents, an unlikely couple themselves, push the kids for a definition even while their own relationship founders. Gradually, secrets and truths emerge as playing grown-up turns into actually growing up.

Funny, insightful, with an intense and complex core, Bathsheba Doran's (*Nest*) newest play brilliantly examines intimacy, identity and, of course, the many mysteries of love and sex.

By **Bathsheba Doran**

La Cage aux Folles
May 31 – July 10, 2016
MAX Theatre

The beloved gender-bending musical comedy and winner of six Tony Awards® including Best Musical closes out the Signature season with Bobby Smith.

The twenty year relationship between Georges, a club-owner, and Albin, the head drag performer, faces a test when their son announces his engagement to the daughter of ultra-conservative political parents. To please their son, Georges and Albin agree to hide their lifestyle and play it straight for a dinner with the potential in-laws. However, Albin's different definition of "normal" threatens to upend the entire supper with hilarious results.

With an iconic score by Jerry Herman (*Hello, Dolly*; *Mame*) featuring "I Am What I Am" and "The Best of Times" and hilarious book by Harvey Fierstein (*Newsies*, *Kinky Boots*), *La Cage Aux Folles* is a fabulously fun musical about family, identity and loving who you are.

Music & Lyrics by **Jerry Herman**
Book by **Harvey Fierstein**
Based on the play *La Cage aux Folles* by **Jean Poiret**

Directed by **Matthew Gardiner**

Special Events

Signature's Open House

Sunday, August 2

Kick off the 26th Season with Signature's Annual Open House. Starting at noon, come enjoy performances every fifteen minutes, special ticket offers and a grand finale concert.

FREE

Signature Cabarets

Sizzlin' Summer Nights Series

July 8 – 25, 2015

ARK Theatre

Signature opens our air-conditioned doors once more for the annual *Sizzlin' Summer Nights Series*. With a different concert act each night, there's always something to keep you entertained!

Cabaret Series – 4 show series

Tracy Lynn Olivera

October 27 – 31, 2015

The captivating chanteuse Tracy Lynn Olivera returns to Signature following her sold out 2014 cabaret with a Halloween spooktacular. Featuring classics such as "Thriller" and "Science Fiction Double Feature" along with Tracy's signature style and wit, it's sure to be a howling good time!

Nova Y. Payton

December 15 – 19, 2015

Octave-shattering Nova Y. Payton, star of *Dreamgirls* and *Hairspray*, delivers a delightful evening full of her cherished holiday tunes. Some of her favorites include "This Christmas," "Jingle Bell Rock," "Santa Baby" and "I saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus." With Nova at the mic, this cabaret is the perfect holiday treat.

The Rat Pack

April 19 – 23, 2016

They were the coolest cats of all time. In the vein of the legendary crooners Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis, Jr. and Dean Martin, three suave Signature gentlemen take the stage for a sophisticated evening of ballads, booze and banter. Featuring classic songs from the '50s and '60s such as "King of the Road," "That's Amore" and "I've Gotta Be Me."

Make 'Em Laugh

June 21 – 25, 2016

In a hilarious mix of improv and song, Signature's funniest ladies and gents come together for a whirlwind expedition through the art of the joke. With humorous rewritings of classic songs, to comedy ditties, to some of contemporary musical theater's whimsical gems, Signature has one goal for this cabaret – to make you laugh!

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 43 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 luminaries as Chita Rivera, Sheryl Crow, Barry Levinson, Christine Lahti, George Hearn, Hunter Foster, Emily Skinner, Ann Reinking, 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 90 Helen Hayes Awards for excellence in the Washington, DC region's professional theater and has been honored with 368 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 the Arlington Cultural Affairs Division of Arlington Economic Development and the Arlington Commission for the Arts.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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