

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Olivia F. Haas, Director of PR & Marketing

haaso@signature-theatre.org

(703) 820-9771 ext. 103

SIGNATURE THEATRE COMMISSIONS FOUR EXCITING NEW WORKS

Arlington, VA — Since Signature Theatre’s founding in 1989 the primary mission has been to develop and present powerful new works and reinvent overlooked musical projects. To date, Signature has presented 21 world premiere productions and six world premiere commissions. Signature’s new work development program feeds the Theatre’s future and the future of theatre. Signature continues this commitment with the announcement of four new commissions. With Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer’s recent hiring of veteran director/dramaturg Rick DesRochers from Chicago’s Goodman Theatre, Signature illustrates its serious, long-term commitment to a new work program.

“Rick was brought on board as Associate Artistic Director for his expertise in new play development,” stated Eric Schaeffer. “He is exactly what I was looking for as Signature continues its commitment to being a national leader of creating and producing new works for the American theatre. Rick is truly the driving force behind the commissioning of these exciting new works.”

eric schaeffer
artistic director

sam sweet
managing director

TRANSFORMATION MASK

By Quiara Alegría Hudes

Transformation masks are rare but extraordinary works of visual art and theatrical possibility. Stemming from the Kwakwaka-wakw tradition of the “potlatch” (huge parties featuring performances and feasts), these elaborate beautiful masks are intended for vivid performance. But they have an unusual twist: the audience watches a masked performer portraying some recognizable force of nature, when suddenly, unexpectedly, that mask opens like a door to reveal a completely different, contrasting mask underneath. Hudes’ play will explore this fascinating and extremely rare mask tradition, in its cultural context and for the theatrical possibilities suggested by faces within faces. Her research has already begun at the Portland Art Museum and will continue at the Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Natural History, and the University of Pennsylvania Museum.

Quiara Alegría Hudes’ plays include *Yemaya’s Belly*, being produced this fall as part of Signature’s 2005-06 Grand Opening Season (Portland Stage Company, People’s Light and Theatre, Miracle Theatre), *The Adventures of Barrio Grrr!* (Miracle Theatre), *Holy Broth* (Perishable Theatre), and *Cocunut Therapy* (Philadelphia Fringe Festival). Her work has been developed at the Goodman Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club, New Group, Signature Theatre, Curious Theatre, and The Kennedy Center. She has received honors for her plays including the Clauder Prize, Paula Vogel Award in Playwriting, Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival Latina Playwriting Award, Weston Prize, and first and second prizes in the Philadelphia Young Playwrights Festival. Hudes’ is the 2004-05 Playwriting Fellow at Page Seventy Three Productions to develop her newest play *Elliot (A Soldier’s Fugue)* and is also working on a commission for South Coast Repertory. She received a M.F.A. in playwriting from Brown University and a B.A. in music composition from Yale University. Originally from West Philadelphia, she attended Philadelphia public school, where she wrote her first play.

3806 s. four mile run dr.
arlington, va 22206

administration
703.820.9771

box office/tickets.com
703.218.6500

fax
703.820.7790

www.signature-theatre.org

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VROOOMMM! A NASComedy

By Janet Allard

Conceived and Developed with Michael Bigelow Dixon

This satiric spoof of America's fastest sport reveals how the country's competitive edge gets corrupted by our relentless drive for commercial success. When a female driver takes the lead in the NASCAR season standings, sabotage and scandal dent the polished reputation of this high-octane enterprise. A primarily female cast portrays the all-male universe of NASCAR daredevil antics — in an all-out race for love and money with some crazy gender-fender-benders. *Vrooommm!* will be workshopped at the Playwright's Center of Minneapolis in association with Signature Theatre in July 2005.

Janet Allard is a recipient of two Jerome Fellowships at the Playwrights' Center (2000-01, 2002-03). Recent works include: *Incognito* (commissioned by the Guthrie Theater), published in the 2002 September issue of "Dramatics Magazine" and *Loyal* (joint commission by the Guthrie and The Children's Theater Company in Minneapolis). Both works are published by Playscripts, Inc. *The Unknown: A Silent Musical* (collaboration with director Jean Randich and composer Shane Rettig) appeared in *New Work Now!* at the Public Theater in October 2004. *The Unknown* was awarded a Jonathan Larson Fellowship, and received a concert/reading at MTC in January 2003, produced by P73 productions. *Untold Crimes of Insomniacs* (commissioned by the Guthrie Theater and written for the graduating B.F.A. class of 2004), received a workshop at the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis as a part of Playlabs 2003. *Untold Crimes* premiered at the Guthrie Lab in April 2004. Her short play *Privates* premiered at Mixed Blood Theater in Minneapolis in February 2004 as part of the *Bill of (Wrights)* project. *TGIF or Who is Monster Mom*, written with Lisa D'Amour and commissioned by Gray Space Theater Company was produced in Minneapolis in the fall of 2004. Allard holds an M.F.A from the Yale School of Drama.

Michael Bigelow Dixon is the Literary Director for the Guthrie Theatre, and has directed and been production dramaturg for theaters across the country including the Guthrie Theatre, Actor's Theatre of Louisville, and the Magic Theater in San Francisco.

SAVE THE DATE

By Eric Pfeffinger

A comedy set in the waning hours of a ten-year High School reunion and its aftermath, during which an aging debutante (whose vestigial school spirit has gradually curdled into dissatisfaction and repressed resentment) meets up with a shaggy fugitive (who may or may not have even gone to this high school). She helps transform him into the most popular guy at the party, bringing together such disparate lost souls as a woman who's a radical animal-rights activist and a beleaguered salesman who recently declared war on God.

Eric Pfeffinger is a member of the Dramatists Guild and a Network Playwright with Chicago Dramatists. Last fall his full-length play *Accidental Rapture* was produced at the Visions & Voices Theatre Company in Chicago and was directed by Rick DesRochers. The *Chicago Tribune* named it one of the ten best shows of the year, proclaiming it "the most promising Chicago premiere by an unknown playwright since Rebecca Gilman." *Accidental Rapture* was presented during Signature's *Stages* series in fall 2004. In 2003, Pfeffinger's play *Closet Chronicles*, debuted off-off-Broadway, where the *New Yorker* magazine praised it as a "spry comedy." This season his play *Mouse Cop* premiered at Chicago's Noble Fool Theatre and his play *Scrooge Variations* will be produced in L.A. Eric's a contributor to *National Lampoon* and the co-author (with Lou Harry) of the novel *The High-Impact Infidelity Diet*, forthcoming in 2005 by Crown.

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DON JUAN**Adapted from Molière by Rick DesRochers with songs by David Maddox**

Writer-director Rick DesRochers and composer-lyricist David Maddox will collaborate on creating a play with music in the tradition of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill for this comedy classic of seduction, religion, and revenge.

Rick DesRochers is the Associate Artistic Director for Signature Theatre. Before coming to Signature, Rick served as Literary Director of The Goodman Theatre, Literary Manager of the Joseph Papp Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival, and subsequently as Artistic Director of Boston's New Theater, Inc. Rick has directed and produced plays in theatres nationwide, including the Joseph Papp Public Theater, New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Circle Repertory Theatre, and Rude Mechanicals in New York City; The Goodman Theatre, The Playwrights' Center of Minneapolis, The Boston Center for the Arts, and the Soho Theatre of London. Rick is the author of a new music theatre piece, *Faust: A Play for the Music Hall Every Evening and Matinees on Sunday* (developed at The Flea Theater, NYC), and is currently collaborating with performer Gerrit O'Neill on a new play, *Vegas Baby!* In addition, he has written several plays with music including *Lady Trane* (New Theatre, Boston), *Taxi-Dance* (New Theatre, Boston), and *A Point of Departure* (Huntington Theatre, Boston), as well as an English translation of *Cheech* (Melbourne Theatre Company, Australia and Centaur Theatre, Montréal), a play by French Canadian playwright, François Létourneau.

Composer and lyricist **David Maddox** has created four award-winning musicals with Mary Hall Surface (*Sing Down the Moon*, *Mississippi Pinocchio*, *Perseus Bayou*, and *The Odyssey of Telémaca*; the first three published by Dramatic Publishing) and two dance-theatres (*The Nightingale*, *Gandhara: East-West Passages*, both commissioned by The Kennedy Center). He has created scores and sound designs for more than 100 productions around the U.S., including the acclaimed *Never the Sinner* at the Houseman Theater in New York (Critic's Outer Circle Award), *Side Man* at the Guthrie in Minneapolis, *La Malinche* at the Arizona Theater Company, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* at the Alley Theater in Houston, and *Nijinsky's Last Dance* at Signature Theatre in Washington, DC, where he is an Artistic Associate and for which he won a 1999 Helen Hayes Award. David has received 13 Helen Hayes Award nominations and has produced six albums of original music. New work includes a commission for a new Surface/Maddox family musical entitled *LIFT: Icarus and Me* and a New Orleans Bayou musical comedy (written with Jon Carroll and Mary Hall Surface) called *Perfume River: A Swamp Water Love Story* which recently had a reading as part of Signature's Stages series.

Signature Theatre

Signature Theatre is a non-profit professional theatre dedicated to producing contemporary plays and musicals and to the development of new work. Now in its 15th season under Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer, Signature has been nominated for 191 Helen Hayes Awards for excellence in the professional theatre and has been honored with 37 Helen Hayes Awards, including Outstanding Musical in 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2004 and Outstanding Play in 1999. Signature Theatre is a member of the Theatre Communications Group, The League of Washington Theatres, the Cultural Alliance of Greater Washington, the Arlington Arts Alliance, the Arlington Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Washington Board of Trade.

Contact Info

Administration: (703) 820-9771

Fax: (703) 820-7790

Website: www.signature-theatre.org

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