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## signaturenews

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### Signature Theatre Opens 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season with *Dirty Blonde*, the Broadway Hit about Mae West

#### Emily Skinner Stars in Claudia Shear's Play with Music Aug. 11 – Oct. 4 in Signature's Ark Theater

Signature Theatre, recipient of the 2009 Regional Theatre Tony Award®, opens its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary season on August 11 with the Broadway hit *Dirty Blonde*, a comedy with music about the notorious film legend Mae West. Called the “best new American play of the [2000] season” by *The New York Times*, *Dirty Blonde* runs in Signature's ARK Theatre from August 11 through October 4, 2009.

Signature's production of *Dirty Blonde* stars Tony Award®-nominee and Signature favorite **Emily Skinner** in the two roles she was born to play – the charismatic Mae West and West's most fixated fan Jo. Skinner says, “Mae West always played the woman who men desired, had the last word, and who WON. What actress wouldn't be drawn to a play an icon with such wit, humor, and utter confidence? Playwright Claudia Shear puts it perfectly in her script: ‘She was my teenage fantasy, my mother's revenge. She had my favorite quality, attitude.’”

Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer stated, “*Dirty Blonde* is the perfect way to kick off our 20th anniversary season. This production celebrates two great musical theatre artists – Mae West and Emily Skinner. It's going to be a sexy start at Signature!”

“No evening of mere impersonation,” *Dirty Blonde* is a “smart, tough, and tenderhearted comedy” (*New York Times*), revealing the spirit behind Mae West's sexy celluloid façade and examining why individuals like Jo are so mesmerized by the provocative sex goddess. Nominated for five Tony Awards® in 2000, *Dirty Blonde* will be directed by Signature Artistic Associate **Jeremy Skidmore**. Three-time Helen Hayes Award nominee **Hugh Nees** plays Jo's friend Charlie and characters ranging from W.C. Fields to West's trial judge. Three-time Helen Hayes winner **J. Fred Shiffman** takes on seven roles including Frank Wallace, Mae's abandoned husband and director Edward Elsner, and plays the piano as well. Set design is by **Dan Conway**, costume design by **Helen Huang**, lighting design by **Dan**

**Covey**, and sound design by **Matt Rowe**. **Gabriel Mangiante** is music director and musical staging is by **Matthew Gardiner**.

## PHOTOS

Editors: Photos of *Dirty Blonde* 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).

## SCHEDULE

*Dirty Blonde* runs in Signature's ARK Theatre from August 11 through October 4, 2009. The press performance is Sunday, August 16 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 *Dirty Blonde* performances Saturday, August 15 at 2:00 pm and Tuesday, August 18 at 7:30 pm.

## TICKETS

Tickets for *Dirty Blonde*, ranging in price from \$47 - \$71, are available by calling Ticketmaster at (703) 573-SEAT (7328) or visiting [www.signature-theatre.org](http://www.signature-theatre.org). Group discounts are available for parties of ten or more by contacting [carlj@signature-theatre.org](mailto:carlj@signature-theatre.org).

Signature's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary season continues with *Show Boat*, *I Am My Own Wife*, *Sweeney Todd*, [title of show], the world premiere of *Sycamore Trees*, and the world premiere run of "First You Dream" *The Kander & Ebb Concert*.

## BIOS

**Emily Skinner** SIGNATURE: *Ace*, *The Witches of Eastwick*. BROADWAY: *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* (Actor's Fund), *Side Show* (Tony® nomination, Drama League Award), *Jekyll & Hyde*, *James Joyce's The Dead*, *The Full Monty*, *Dinner at Eight* (Outer Critics Circle nomination). NATIONAL TOUR: Disney's *On the Record*. OFF-BROADWAY: City Center's Encores: *No Strings*, *Pardon My English*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, *Broadway Bash*; leading roles at the WPA Theater, Playwright's Horizons, Manhattan Theater Club, York Theater, The Paramount Theater at Madison Square Garden. REGIONAL: Guthrie Theater, Hangar Theater, The Kennedy Center, McCarter, Long Wharf, The Old Globe, Ford's Theater, St. Louis MUNY, TheaterVirginia. IN CONCERT: *Broadway By The Year* (director and performer), New York Pops at Carnegie Hall, Pittsburgh Symphony, Virginia Symphony, Jerusalem Symphony, Merkin Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Symphony Space. RECORDINGS: countless cast albums and audio books, *Duets*, *Unsuspecting Hearts*, *Skinner/Ripley Raw at Town Hall* (all with Alice Ripley), *Elegies for Angels*, *Punks and Raging Queens*, *The Stephen Sondheim Album*, *Wall to Wall Sondheim*, *Believe: The Songs of The Sherman Brothers*, *The Stephen Schwartz Album*, animated feature *Anastasia*, and her self-titled solo CD ([fynsworthalley.com](http://fynsworthalley.com)).

**J. Fred Shiffman** DC AREA: Shakespeare Theatre: *Twelfth Night, The Way of the World, The Taming of the Shrew, Lorenzaccio*; Arena (Affiliated Artist): *The Mystery of Irma Vep; Death of a Salesman; A View from a Bridge; She Loves Me; Cabaret; Passion Play, a cycle; Damn Yankees; Camelot; The Royal Family; Tom Walker; Lovers and Executioners; The Miser; The Three Sisters; On the Razzle; Animal Crackers*; Studio: *Souvenir, Privates on Parade, Ivanov, Sylvia, Rhinoceros, The Baltimore Waltz, Falsettos, March of the Falsettos*; Woolly Mammoth: *Vigils, Wanted*; Theater J: *The Seagull on 16th. Street*; Old Globe: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Additionally, Fred has recorded *Barefoot in the Park* for LA Theatre Works, with Laura Linney and Eric Stoltz. AWARDS: 12 Helen Hayes nominations; two Helen Hayes nominations for Outstanding Ensemble; 3 Helen Hayes Awards: Outstanding Actor/Resident Play (*Souvenir*); Outstanding Actor/Resident Musical (*Falsettos*); Outstanding Supporting Actor/Resident Play (*Lovers and Executioners*). Proud member of Actors' Equity.

**Hugh Nees** SIGNATURE THEATRE: *Gypsy, Over and Over, Three Nights in Tehran*; SHAKESPEARE THEATRE: *King Lear, The Beaux' Stratagem, The Tempest, Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*; FORD'S THEATRE: *The Heavens are Hung in Black*; ROUND HOUSE THEATRE: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest; Alice* (Helen Hayes nomination - Ensemble); *The Illusion* (Helen Hayes nomination - Best Supporting Actor); ARENA STAGE: *Christmas Carol 1941; Born Yesterday; Shakespeare in Hollywood; Polk County*; STUDIO THEATRE: *The Pillowman, Waiting for Godot, Bouncers* (SecondStage); SOURCE: *La Bete* (Helen Hayes nomination - Best Actor). EDUCATION: Santa Clara University. Member Actors' Equity Association (AEA), SAG, and AFTRA.

### **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**

Ticketmaster (703) 573-SEAT (7328)  
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