

CHESTER THEATRE COMPANY OPENS 24th SEASON WITH THE WORLD PREMIERE OF **ARMS ON FIRE**

by Steven Sater, with Music by Duncan Sheik
Tony Award Winning Creators of **SPRING AWAKENING**
Running June 26 - July 7

CHESTER, MA (June 6, 2013) – Chester Theatre Company will open its 24th season with the world premiere of **ARMS ON FIRE**, a new play with music by Steven Sater and Duncan Sheik, the creators of the Tony and Olivier Award winning *Spring Awakening*. The production will run from June 26th to July 7th at the Chester Town Hall in Chester, MA.

ARMS ON FIRE tells the story of Smith, a young singer in search of a career break, who meets Ulysses, a factory worker living in New York's Hell's Kitchen. As Smith spins out dreams of his future, he also draws out Ulysses' past — memories of his lost love Josephina, a passionate nightclub singer from Ulysses' native Honduras. When Josephina appears, both men are forced to face truths about the present. This deeply moving and often funny play about an unlikely friendship will feature James Barry as Smith, Guiseppe Jones as Ulysses, and Natalie Mendoza as Josephina. CTC Artistic Director Byam Stevens will direct.

Playwright Steven Sater is making a return to CTC. "The first play I produced as Artistic Director of CTC was Steven's *Plains of Ilion*," said Byam Stevens, CTC Artistic Director, "It's truly great to have him back again -- to be working with him and Duncan on a world premiere! This will be our 25th world premiere in 24 years, a production record very much in keeping with our commitment to presenting the best in contemporary theatre."

ARMS ON FIRE has been a passion project for the Tony Award-winning team, who began work on the piece in 1999. It spawned their collaboration on the 2001 studio album *Phantom Moon*. Much of the musical material on that album was penned for the play, but will be heard in a new Latin-influenced orchestration for the world premiere production. Also incorporated into the play will be a never before published tune, "A Boat on the Sea," which was the first song the two penned together. According to Sater, "We decided to save it and not put it on the *Phantom Moon* album" he said. "All these years, the song has been in hiding."

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Steven Sater (Playwright) is the author of numerous plays, including the long-running *Carbondale Dreams*; *Perfect for You*; *Doll* (Rosenthal Prize); *Plains of Ilion* (Chester Theatre Company, The Pasadena Playhouse); *Asylum* (Naked Angels), *Umbrage* (Steppenwolf New Play Prize); and a version of Shakespeare's *Tempest* (London's Lyric Hammersmith). In addition to his Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critic Circle, Olivier, and London Critics Circle Award-winning work with composer Duncan Sheik on *Spring Awakening*, the duo has collaborated on *The Nightingale* (La Jolla Playhouse); *Nero* (Magic Theatre); and the critically acclaimed album *Phantom Moon*. He also wrote the script and lyrics for *Prometheus Bound*, with music by Serj Tankian, directed by Diane Paulus (A.R.T.) and *Some Lovers*, with music by Burt Bacharach, which premiered at the Old Globe in San Diego.

Duncan Sheik (Composer) is an American Grammy- and Tony-winning singer-songwriter and composer. Sheik's self-titled debut album was certified Gold and spawned the #16 hit single "Barely Breathing" in the United States, which remained on the Billboard Hot 100 for a record-setting 55 straight weeks. Sheik's other albums include *Humming*, *Phantom Moon*, *Daylight*, *White Limousine*, and *Whisper House*. Sheik composed original music for a New York Shakespeare Festival production of *Twelfth Night*, as well as the score for the film *A Home at the End of the World*. Beyond his collaboration with playwright Steven Sater on the award-winning *Spring Awakening*, Sheik's other musical works for theatre include *Nero*, *The Nightingale*, *Whisper House*, and *Alice by Heart*.

Byam Stevens has been the Artistic Director of CTC since 1998. His Off Broadway credits include: the current production of *Tea for Three: Lady Bird, Pat and Betty, The Dishwashers*; *The Bully Pulpit*, starring Michael O. Smith as Teddy Roosevelt; the World Premiere of *Carbondale Dreams* by Steven Sater and the American Premiere of *Beef* by David Pownall. For CTC, he's directed the World Premieres of: *The Darlings*, *Home Fires Burning*, *The Plains of Ilion*, and *John and Teddy*. Other productions for CTC: *Wittenberg*, *Last Train to Nibroc*, *Two Rooms*, *An Almost Holy Picture*, *Valley Song*, *The Interrogation of Nathan Hale*, and the American Premiere of *Sixteen Words For Water*.

James Barry (Smith) is returning to CTC after starring as Doctor Faustus in the 2011 production of *Wittenberg*, a portrayal hailed as Best Performance of 2011 by the *Berkshire Eagle*. James appeared in *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* both at New York's Public Theatre and on Broadway. He spent the last six months playing rockabilly legend Carl Perkins (Blue Suede Shoes) in the national tour of *Million Dollar Quartet*. His extensive theatre credits also include Philadelphia's Arden Theatre, Irish Repertory Company in New York, Chicago's Drury Lane and many appearances at Berkshire Theatre Group.

Guiseppe Jones (Ulysses) has extensive theatre credits in both classical and contemporary theatre, having played the title roles in *Othello* and *Julius Caesar*, Jaques in *As You Like It* and Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*; as well as Sam in Athol Fugard's *Master Harold and the Boys*, Freddy in Steve Martin's *Picasso at Lapin Agile* and Gabriel in August Wilson's *Fences* at theatres across America, from Syracuse Stage to San Francisco's American Conservatory Theatre.

Natalie Mendoza (Josephina) trained at the acclaimed Bristol Old Vic in the UK. Her theatre credits include Broadway (Arachne in *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*), West End (Molly in *Ghost*, directed by Matthew Warchus, and multiple appearances at The Melbourne Theatre Company, including Eponine in *Les Misérables* and Mimi in *Miss Saigon*). She is best known for the hit movie *The Descent* (playing cult sensation *Juno*). Other film work includes Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge* (playing China Doll) and *The Great Raid* starring opposite Joseph Fiennes.

Set Design by Travis A George, Lighting Design by Lara Dubin, Costume Design by Charles Schoonmaker, Sound Design by Hunter Spodee, Musical Direction by Joe Belmont.

TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets are available on CTC's website: www.chestertheatre.org, or by phone at 1-800-595-4TIX. To receive a brochure, contact the CTC office at 413-354-7770. CTC performances take place

at Chester's Historic Town Hall, 15 Middlefield Road, Chester, MA. Performances are Wednesday through Saturday at 8:00pm, with matinees Thursday, Sunday and Friday July 5th at 2:00pm. There will be no performances July 4th. Tickets are \$10-\$35; group rates are available. For further information visit CTC's website at: www.chestertheatre.org.

About Chester Theatre Company

Chester Theatre Company, a professional theatre company located in the foothills of the Berkshires, produces 4 plays each summer, performed by top-flight actors, directors and designers from across the country. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Byam Stevens, CTC has earned a reputation for producing the best in contemporary theatre -- 17 CTC productions have gone on to Off Broadway, regional, national, and international engagements in the last 16 years. For further information go to CTC's website, www.chestertheatre.org.

CTC performances are supported, in part, by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Local Cultural Councils of Blandford, Chester, Montgomery, Russell, Otis, Washington, and Worthington.

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