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## NEWS FROM THE O'NEILL

### **EUGENE O'NEILL THEATER CENTER ANNOUNCES 2009 NATIONAL MUSIC THEATER CONFERENCE SELECTIONS**

#### ***Picnic at Hanging Rock and Tales of the City* To Be Developed At The O'Neill This Summer**

Waterford, Connecticut –The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center announced today the two musicals to be developed at the 2009 National Music Theater conference. The conference, opening on June 27, will run through July 11 at the O'Neill's campus in Waterford, Connecticut. Tickets will go on sale beginning Wednesday, June 10.

Chosen from a record 152 musical submissions through the O'Neill's Open Submissions process—which allows any writer, with or without agent representation, to submit and utilizes readers from across the country to choose works based on merit—these projects will undergo the O'Neill's development process, employing acclaimed actors, directors, and music directors in an intensive series of rehearsals, discussions, and public readings.

Since its founding in 1978, the National Music Theater Conference has developed and presented more than 100 musical works, including early works of award-winning writers and composers such as Tan Dun, Kirsten Childs, Andrew Lippa, Joe Masteroff, Steven Sater, Duncan Sheik and Jeannine Tesori. Arthur Kopit, Mario Fratti and Maury Yeston's *Nine*, developed at the O'Neill in 1979, won Tony Awards for Best Musical and Best Score in 1982, and for Best Revival of a Musical in 2003; Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx's *Avenue Q*, developed at the O'Neill in 2002, won three 2004 Tony Awards, including Best Musical. *In The Heights*, a 2005 NMTC project, received the Lucille Lortel and Outer Critics Circle Awards for Outstanding Musical when it played off-Broadway in 2007 and four 2008 Tony Awards, including Best Musical.

National Music Theater Conference Artistic Director **Paulette Haupt** said, “The Conference received a record number of submissions this year. Among the 152 projects considered, we discovered many worthy and promising new works by extraordinary

writers and composers. Although we can only support the development of two of those projects this year, we extend our congratulations to hundreds of other deserving talents. We look forward to providing a supporting and challenging environment for the four artists selected, enabling them to further develop their visions and see their work come to life.”

The O’Neill’s Executive Director, **Preston Whiteway**, remarked, “Now in its 32<sup>nd</sup> Season, the National Music Theater Conference under Paulette Haupt will again host writers and works representing the best of new musical writing today. Daniel and the team of Jeff, Jason and John each have a unique voice which will give life to these well known tales. I look forward to welcoming them and our audiences this summer.”

**THE 2009 NATIONAL MUSIC THEATER CONFERENCE SELECTIONS ARE:**

***PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK***

**Librettist/Lyricist/Composer - Daniel Zaitchik**

*Performances: Saturday, June 27 at 8:00 pm; Sunday, June 28 at 3:00 pm; Wednesday, July 1 at 8:00 pm; Friday, July 3 at 8:00 pm*

*Picnic at Hanging Rock* is a new musical adaptation of Joan Lindsay's classic Australian novel, with book, music and lyrics by Daniel Zaitchik. This delicately haunting mystery follows a group of schoolgirls from a prestigious boarding school who are released from their studies for a picnic on Valentine's Day in 1900. When three of the girls vanish into the wilderness, we are lulled into a dark reverie of sexuality, repression, nature, and the unknown.

***TALES OF THE CITY***

**Librettist - Jeff Whitty**

**Lyricist/Composer - Jason Sellards**

**Composer - John Garden**

*Performances: Saturday, July 4 at 8:00 pm; Sunday, July 5 at 4:00 pm; Wednesday, July 8 at 8:00 pm; Saturday, July 11 at 8:00 pm*

Based on the beloved series of novels by Armistead Maupin, *Tales of the City* follows a community of friends, lovers, and others who reside at the mythical address of 28 Barbary Lane in 1976 San Francisco. Mary Ann Singleton, a fresh arrival from Ohio, falls into a diverse band of Bohemians and blue-bloods, as families are created and rediscovered under the watchful eye of mystical landlady Anna Madrigal.

The 2009 NMTC will also reinstitute two residencies, last offered in 2004, to writers and pieces earlier in their development. Names and projects of these residencies, along with directors for the two workshops, will be released shortly.

Schedules are subject to change. Tickets will be on sale beginning Wednesday, June 10. Please call the O’Neill Box Office at 860-443-1238 or visit <http://www.theoneill.org> for times, prices and reservations.

The Eugene O’Neill Theater Center, founded in 1964, is the pre-eminent center for the development of new works and new voices for the American theater. It has been home to

more than 1,000 new works for the stage and 2,500 emerging artists. Scores of projects developed at the O'Neill have gone on to full productions at other theaters around the world, including Broadway, off-Broadway and major regional theaters. The O'Neill itself is the winner of a special Tony Award, the National Opera Award, the Jujamcyn Award for Theater Excellence and the Arts and Business Council Encore Award. The O'Neill's programs include the National Playwrights Conference, National Music Theater Conference, Puppetry Conference, Cabaret Conference, National Critics Institute, and the National Theater Institute, which includes semester-long, fully accredited intensive theater training programs in Waterford and Moscow and a six-week accredited summer program, Theatermakers. In addition, the O'Neill owns and operates the Monte Cristo Cottage, a National Historic Landmark and the childhood home of Nobel Prize-winning and four-time Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, Eugene O'Neill. For more information regarding the Center, please visit the O'Neill website at [www.theoneill.org](http://www.theoneill.org) or call 860-443-5378.

### **ARTISTS' BIOS – 2009 NATIONAL MUSIC THEATER CONFERENCE**

#### **DANIEL ZAITCHIK (Libretto/Book/Lyrics/Composer, PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK)**

Daniel Zaitchik is a singer-songwriter, theatre writer/composer, and once (and maybe sometime again in the future) actor. Daniel's first full-length original musical, *Ula*, which follows the magical adventures of the curious son of lighthouse keeper, ran at the 45th Street Theatre and was developed further by Ars Nova Theatre. His musical adaptation of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* was also first read at Ars Nova and had its first workshop and staged reading at Lincoln Center Theatre. Daniel's current theatre projects include a collaboration with playwright Jordan Harrison. As an actor, Daniel has worked at theatres including Playwrights Horizons, Manhattan Theatre Club, Cherry Lane, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Long Wharf Theatre, and the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. He originated the role of Billy in the premiere of Craig Lucas's *Prayer for My Enemy* at the Intiman Theatre, directed by Bart Sher, and the role of Pete in *The Burnt Part Boys* at Barrington Stage Company, directed by Joe Calarco.

#### **JEFF WHITTY (Libretto/Book, TALES OF THE CITY)**

Jeff Whitty is delighted to return to the O'Neill Theater Center for the third time, the first as an actor, and now twice as a librettist. At the O'Neill's 2002 NMTC, he developed the musical AVENUE Q with composers Jeff Marx and Robert Lopez, under the direction of Jason Moore and musical direction of Stephen Oremus. With the same creative team, AVENUE Q moved Off-Broadway the next year, then to Broadway, where it is still running. In 2004 the show won three Tony Awards for Libretto, Score, and Best Musical. It also runs on London's West End and in dozens of international productions.

Jeff's other plays include *The Further Adventures of Hedda Gabler*, *The Hiding Place*, *The Plank Project*, *Balls* and *Suicide Weather*. Theaters producing his work include the Atlantic Theater Company, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, South Coast Repertory, and New York Stage and Film. He is currently developing a musical version of *Bring It On*. Jeff divides his time between Manhattan and upstate New York.

**JASON SELLARDS** (Lyrics/Composer, TALES OF THE CITY)

Jake Shears (real name Jason Sellards) is originally from Seattle and has lived in New York City for 10 years. Originally planning to be a fiction writer, Jake ended up writing a few songs and forming a band called Scissor Sisters in 2001. The band released their eponymous debut album in 2004, and it became the biggest-selling album in the UK that year (it was also banned from the shelves of Wal-Mart due to its "coarse language"). The album has since gone almost ten times platinum worldwide, was nominated for a Grammy and won 3 BRIT Awards in 2005. The band's second album, Ta-Dah, was released in September 2006 and reached number 1 in the UK Albums Chart in its first week of release, completing a first for the Scissor Sisters: both a single and album at the top of the UK charts simultaneously. Ta-dah has sold over 4 million copies worldwide to date. Jake and his bandmate and writing partner Babydaddy have written with the likes of Bryan Ferry, Kylie Minogue, Paul Williams, and Elton John. Jake and the band are currently working on the third Scissor Sisters record. He lives in downtown Manhattan with his partner Chris, dog Toby, and a tortoise named Cheeseburger.

**JOHN GARDEN** (Composer, TALES OF THE CITY)

John Garden is a London based composer and multi-instrumentalist. Since 2004 he has worked with Scissor Sisters as Musical Director, keyboardist, bassist and occasional co-writer, completing two world tours as well as performing at 2005's LIVE8 concert in London's Hyde Park. In 2006, John recorded keyboards (alongside Elton John and Paul Leschen) for their second album Ta-Dah, which went straight to number 1 in the UK charts in its first week of release. He also co-composed the song "The Other Side" from the same album.

Since 2002, John has been resident composer for the BBC Radio4 series "You'll Have Had Your Tea: The Doings of Hamish and Dougal", a spin-off from the cult UK comedy show "I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue".

Apart from working on Tales of the City – The Musical, John's other creative projects include an improvised film scoring duo with jazz drummer Tony Orrell – "JJ and the Birdman"; producer/arranger for Nathan Daniel and Tilted City's forthcoming album "Cheek Denied"; and a writing collaboration with Bristol singer/songwriter Lucy Harper. John currently lives in London, and divides his time between London, Bristol and New York.

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