

October 22, 2009

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American Repertory Theater
presents
Best of Both Worlds
Book & lyrics by Randy Weiner
Music by Diedre Murray
Co-written and directed by Diane Paulus
November 21, 2009 — January 3, 2010
Loeb Stage

WHAT: The American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) is pleased to present ***Best of Both Worlds***, a holiday musical for the whole family. Bursting with the sounds of R&B and gospel, ***Best of Both Worlds*** features book and lyrics by **Randy Weiner**, music by multiple Obie-winner **Diedre Murray**, and is directed by **Diane Paulus** (Director of HAIR - 2009 Tony Award – Best Musical Revival).

The Company of ***Best of Both Worlds*** includes **Gregg Baker**, **Jeanette Bayardelle**, **Mary Bond Davis** (original Motormouth Maybelle in *Hairspray* on Broadway), **Darius de Haas** (Obie Winner - Running Man), **Nikkieli DeMone**, **Cleavant Derricks** (Drama Desk Winner – Dreamgirls), **Brianna Horne**, and **Lawrence Stallings** and will feature a rotating roster of Greater Boston's most celebrated gospel choirs, including community, university, and church choirs.

WHEN: November 21, 2009 — January 3, 2010

WHERE: Loeb Drama Center, 64 Brattle Street, Cambridge

TICKETS: \$25 - \$75. Student rush \$20. Seniors \$10 off ticket price.
Group Rates available. Can be purchased online at
www.AmericanRepertoryTheater.org, by phone at 617-547-8300, or in person at
the A.R.T. box office.

CRITICAL ACCLAIM:

“Musical numbers that leave the audience whooping.”— *New York Times*

“Thrilling for Shakespeare enthusiasts, essential for gospel devotees, and an exciting new work for fans of the American musical . . . moving and meaningful, an allegory for the Holiday Season. *TheaterMania*

RATING: All ages.

Cambridge, MA — The American Repertory Theater (A.R.T.) is pleased to present ***Best of Both Worlds***, a holiday musical for the whole family. Bursting with the sounds of R&B and gospel, ***Best of Both Worlds*** features book and lyrics by **Randy Weiner**, music by multiple Obie-winner **Diedre Murray**, and is directed by **Diane Paulus** (Director of *HAIR* - 2009 Tony Award – Best Musical Revival.)

Best of Both Worlds is a soulful re-envisioning of *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare's timeless story of heartbreak and redemption. Clap your hands, jump out of your seat, and feel the power of love with this holiday treat. ***Best of Both Worlds*** takes us on a journey through the rich musical tapestry of R&B, rediscovering Shakespeare's characters with smooth sounds and funky beats. When jealousy rips apart love and friendship, only the revelatory power of gospel can restore the enduring bonds of faith, family, and forgiveness. The creative team also includes Set Design by longtime A.R.T. collaborator **Riccardo Hernandez**, Costume Design by **Emilio Sosa**, Lighting Design by **Aaron Black**, and Sound Design by **Brett Jarvis**. Movement is by **Tracy Jack**, Music Director is **Michael Mitchell**, and Associate Music Director is **David Coleman**.

THE CAST

The Company of ***Best of Both Worlds*** includes **Gregg Baker** as Ezekiel, **Jeanette Bayardelle** as Serena, **Mary Bond Davis** as Violetta, **Darius de Haas** as Maurice, **Nikkieli DeMone** as Camillo, **Cleavant Derricks** as Sweet Daddy, **Brianna Horne** as Rain, and **Lawrence Stallings** as Tariq.

Gregg Baker (Ezekiel) achieved international acclaim for his interpretation of Crown in *Porgy and Bess* at the Metropolitan Opera, the Glyndebourne Festival, Berlin Opera, and the Savolinna Festival. He has sung many roles at the MET in *Aida*, *Carmen*, *Il Trovatore*, and *Das Rheingold* and appeared in the great opera houses in Europe including Arena di Verona, Vienna State Opera, and throughout the United States. He also has sung in concert with many major American and European orchestras.

Mary Bond Davis (Violetta) created the role of Motormouth Maybelle in *Hairspray* on Broadway and also appeared in *The Women*, *Jerry's Last Jam*, *Marie Christine*, *Bring in 'Da Noise...*, *Show Boat*, *Mail*, and *Grease*. She was seen on film in *The Preacher's Wife*, *Romance and Cigarettes*, *New York Minute*, *Hook*, *Jeffrey*, *The Art of Dying*, and *JoJo Dancer* . . . Television credits include *Twin Peaks*, *The Bing Crosby Christmas* (with Fred Astaire), and *Gimme a Break*.

Jeanette Bayardelle (Serena) originated her role in the New York production of ***Best of Both Worlds***. She starred in *The Color Purple* on Broadway and on the first national tour, receiving an NAACP Award for Best Lead Actress in a Musical. She voiced the Disney films *The Princess and The Frog* and *Little Mermaid III*. Other credits include *Rent*, *Big River*, *Sister Act*, *Best of Both Worlds*, *Elegies*, and *Zinzi*.

THE CREATORS:

Randy Weiner (book and lyrics) is the President of the Weiner Entertainment Group, a leading New York-based production company whose most recent projects include the entertainment for the 2008 White House Press Correspondents' Association Dinner; SP08, a day-long festival on Randall's Island sponsored by Bloomberg, LP, featuring over 200 performers playing for an audience of 15,000; "The Jim Rose Circus in Stairway To Hell," in Edinburgh, Scotland; the entertainment for Art Basel 2008 in Miami, and a 15-city US tour of a new variety circus, "The Most Interesting Show In The World." He has created and produced events for American Express, Tribeca Film Festival, CBS Radio, and The Grammys. He is a managing partner of The Box, a performance venue in NYC that has presented Sting, Moby, Mos Def, Snoop Dogg, and Kid Rock, among others. Mr. Weiner is best known as the foremost producer and creator of a hybrid form of theater that mixes the music and energy of a nightclub with the drama and spectacle of theater. His shows have been presented at venues throughout the United States and Europe; in addition to other shows, he co-created and directed *The Donkey Show* with Diane Paulus. New York Magazine calls him "the master of the club spectacle." He is creative director and co-creator of *Beacher's Madhouse*, a variety show that recently ended its four-year run at The Joint at The Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas. As the Producing Director of Project 400 Theatre Group, he and partner Diane Paulus have produced over 40 productions. Weiner's work has been produced in New York by Music-Theatre Group, The Women's Project, Vineyard Theatre, the Shubert Organization, Classical Theater of Harlem, Coyote Theatre in Boston, Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis, and The Fountainhead Theatre in Los Angeles. He has been a guest lecturer on theater at Columbia University, Barnard College, NYU, and Yale University.

Diedre Murray (composer) is a Pulitzer Prize Finalist, two-time Obie Winner and master musician. She is an innovative composer, cellist, producer and curator. In the 1970s and 80s, she pioneered the use of the cello as a jazz and new world music instrument. Since the 90s she has turned her attention to composing for extended musical works and the theatre. Credits include *Unending Pain*, co-presented by the Performance Garage and the Whitney Museum of American Art, toured to the Studio Museum of Harlem and Productions Traquen'Arts Cello Festival in Montreal; *Lets Go Down to the River*, for the Willasau Jazz Festival in Switzerland; *The Eves of Nhor*, for National Dutch Radio and De Effenaar Festival in Eindhoven Holland; *Kamerados*, for mixed ensemble at The Women's Improviser Festival in New York; *Five Minute Tango*, for the inaugural concert at the Danny Kaye/Sylvia Fine Playhouse entitled, performed by the Manhattan Brass Quintet; *The Conversation* for the Seattle-based New Performance Group at the Walker Arts Center in Minnesota; *You Don't Miss the Water*, a music-theatre piece, in collaboration with noted poet Cornelius Eady, produced by the Music Theatre Group (MTG); *Women In The Dunes*, a dance piece created by Blondel Cummings for the Japan Society; the jazz-opera *Running Man*, for which she wrote the original story and score, and book with Cornelius Eady (two Obie Awards, finalist for the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for Drama); music arrangements for

Eli's Coming (Obie Award); *The Blackamour Angel*; an adaptation by Diane Paulus of James Baldwin's *Another Country*; an adaptation of *The Voice Within* with Marcus Gardley, Harlem Stage and the Apollo Theatre. Current projects include a new musical, *Sweet Billy and the Zooloo's*, with writer Lynn Nottage, for Colored Girl's Productions, scheduled for 2009; and *Spoletto*, a series of rags for solo piano in 2009. She received a B.S. degree from Hunter College in Ethnomusicology and has numerous recordings.

Diane Paulus (director) was recently appointed Artistic Director of the A.R.T. She is the creator and director of *The Donkey Show*, which ran for six years Off-Broadway, toured internationally to London, Edinburgh, Madrid, and Evian, France, and is currently at the A.R.T. Recent theater work includes the Tony Award-winning revival of *HAIR* on Broadway; *Kiss Me Kate* at Glimmerglass Opera; *Lost Highway*, based on the David Lynch film, an ENO co-production with the Young Vic in London; *Another Country* by James Baldwin at Riverside Church; *Turandot: Rumble for the Ring* at the Bay Street Theatre; *The Golden Mickey's* for Disney Creative Entertainment; *Best of Both Worlds*, a gospel/R&B adaptation of *A Winter's Tale* produced by Music-Theatre Group and The Women's Project; and *The Karaoke Show*, an adaptation of "Comedy of Errors" set in a karaoke bar, produced by Jordan Roth Productions. Also for Music-Theatre Group, she directed the Obie award-winning and Pulitzer Prize finalist *Running Man* by jazz composer Diedre Murray and poet Cornelius Eady; and *Swimming with Watermelons*, created in association with Project 400, the theater company she co-founded with her husband Randy Weiner. Other work Off-Broadway: *Brutal Imagination*, and the Obie-award winning *Eli's Coming*, featuring the music and lyrics of Laura Nyro. Opera credits include *Don Giovanni*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Turn Of The Screw*, *Così fan tutte*; and *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, and *Orfeo* at the Chicago Opera Theater. She is a frequent collaborator with British conductor Jane Glover; in 2002, their critically acclaimed production of *Orfeo* was presented as part of The Monteverdi Cycle at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York City. She is currently working on *Death and The Powers*, a new opera by composer Tod Machover, librettist Robert Pinsky, with story by Randy Weiner.

The AMERICAN REPERTORY THEATER (A.R.T.) is one of the country's most celebrated resident theaters and the winner of numerous awards — including the Tony Award, the Pulitzer Prize, and numerous local Elliot Norton and I.R.N.E. Awards; it was recently named one of the top three theaters in the country by *Time* magazine. Over its twenty-nine-year history the A.R.T. has welcomed major American and international theater artists whose singular visions generate and define the theater's work, presenting a varied repertoire that includes new plays, progressive productions of classical texts, and collaborations between artists from many disciplines. The Company has performed throughout the US, and worldwide in twenty-one cities in sixteen countries on four continents. Last fall the organization welcomed its new Artistic Director, Diane Paulus, under whose helm the Company begins its 30th Season. Under the leadership of Diane Paulus, A.R.T. has developed a new initiative, *EXPERIENCE THE A.R.T.*, which seeks to revolutionize the theater experience through a sustained commitment to

empowering the audience. This audience-driven vision will completely transform the way the company develops, programs, produces, and contextualizes its work. This speaks directly to the A.R.T.'s core mission — “to expand the boundaries of theater.” A.R.T. resources will give equal importance to the social aspects of theater and the potential for a full theater experience, including interaction and engagement with its audience before, during, and after the production. The initiative involves producing theater cycles that create a festival atmosphere and allow audiences to experience productions in the context of a larger event. By producing and promoting these cycles as citywide events, A.R.T. will seek to attract larger audiences from the greater Boston area and from the rest of the country and world.

The A.R.T., located at the Loeb Drama Center at 64 Brattle Street, and at its second space, the theatre-club OBERON, at 2 Arrow Street, (corner of Arrow Street and Massachusetts Avenue), Harvard Square, Cambridge, is accessible to persons with special needs and to those requiring wheelchair seating or first-floor restrooms. Deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons can also reach the Theater by calling the toll-free N.E. Telephone Relay Center at 1-800-439-2370.

Public transportation and discount parking are available nearby.

CALENDAR AND RELATED EVENTS AT A GLANCE

WHAT:

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Book and Lyrics by	Randy Weiner
Music by	Diedre Murray
Directed by	Diane Paulus
Set Design by	Riccardo Hernandez
Costume Design by	Emilio Sosa
Lighting Design by	Aaron Black
Sound Design by	Brett Jarvis
Movement by	Tracy Jack
Musical Director	Michael Mitchell
Associate Music Director	David Coleman

CAST:

Ezekiel	Gregg Baker*
Serena	Jeanette Bayardelle*
Violetta	Mary Bond Davis*
Maurice	Darius de Haas*
Camillo	Nikkieli DeMone*
Sweet Daddy	Cleavant Derricks*
Rain	Brianna Horne*
Tariq	Lawrence Stallings*

WHEN:

Fr Nov 20 8:00pm
Sa Nov 21 8:00pm
Su Nov 22 2:00 pm & 7:30pm

Tu Nov 24 7:30pm
Fr Nov 27 8:00pm
Sa Nov 28 8:00pm
Sa Nov 28 2:00pm
Su Nov 29 2:00pm

Tu Dec 1 7:30pm
We Dec 2 7:30pm (PRESS OPENING)
Th Dec 3 7:30pm
Fr Dec 4 8:00pm
Sa Dec 5 2:00pm & 8:00pm
Su Dec 6 2:00pm & 7:30pm

Tu Dec 8 7:30pm
We Dec 9 7:30pm
Th Dec 10 7:30pm
Fr Dec 11 8:00pm
Sa Dec 12 2:00pm & 8:00pm
Su Dec 13 2:00pm & 7:30pm

Tu Dec 15 7:30pm
We Dec 16 7:30pm
Th Dec 17 7:30pm
Fr Dec 18 8:00pm
Sa Dec 19 2:00pm & 8:00pm
Su Dec 20 2:00pm & 7:30pm

Tu Dec 22 7:30pm
We Dec 23 7:30pm
Sa Dec 26 2:00pm & 8:00pm
Su Dec 27 2:00pm & 7:30pm

Tu Dec 29 7:30pm
We Dec 30 7:30pm
Th Dec 31 2:00pm & 7:30pm
Fr Jan 1 8:00pm
Sa Jan 2 2:00pm & 8:00pm
Su Jan 3 2:00pm

WHERE: Loeb Drama Center, 64 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA

TICKETS: \$25 - \$75

Tickets may be charged to American Express, Visa or Master Card

Group rates are available

Box Office Phone and A.R.T. InfoLine: (617) 547-8300, tickets also available online at www.AmericanRepertoryTheater.org

MEDIA INFORMATION:

Email Address: press@amrep.org

Production photos of *Best of Both Worlds* will be available on www.AmericanRepertoryTheater.org/media beginning 11/23/09.

In photo: Jeanette Bayardelle in a scene from ***Best of Both Worlds.***

Photo by T. Charles Erickson