



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Two River Theater Company

presents

Our Town

By Thornton Wilder

Directed by Aaron Posner

Puppets Designed by Aaron Cromie

September 11 – September 30, 2007

Red Bank, NJ –Two River Theater Company kicks off its 14th season with **Thornton Wilder's** Pulitzer Prize winning masterpiece ***Our Town***. Combining seven actors with thirteen beautiful and imaginative puppets, this bold new interpretation directed by Artistic Director **Aaron Posner** is scheduled to run September 11 through September 30.

Set in the tiny town of Grover's Corners at the turn of the century, Wilder's stunning play captures the simple beauty and fragile elegance of ordinary lives." *Our Town* is the most eloquent play I know. It is also one of the simplest," says director **Aaron Posner**. "Its ambitions are enormous, but its manner is amazingly unassuming. *Our Town* talks about all the things that matter most in our lives, and manages to do so with truth and grace. It is a joy to work on."

Adding puppets to his creative mix isn't new for Posner. Last season, he successfully collaborated with *Our Town's* puppet designer **Aaron Cromie** for the Folger Theatre's *Measure for Measure* in Washington, D.C. The production played to great critical acclaim and Posner was honored with Helen Hayes Awards for both outstanding play and outstanding director.

"Wilder wants the audience to enjoy the ride while keeping the focus on what he is saying. Using these elegant puppets for the rest of the town accomplishes what Wilder set out to do in a fun and surprising way. For a play to really work it needs to be constantly reinvented and rediscovered. We are respecting what Mr. Wilder wrote while bringing a fresh perspective to the play," Posner says.

Puppet designer Aaron Cromie describes his 13 creations as a version of bunraku puppets, a full-body puppet (three to four feet high) that's operated by one or multiple puppeteers. A graduate of The College of New Jersey and the Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre, Cromie has created masks and puppets for several regional theater companies in addition to his work as an actor and director. "I love working with puppets for adult shows because it gives the audience more responsibility to invest in the story," explains Cromie. "A puppet is also a great tool, like a musical instrument, that the actor can play, using their voice to

express who the character is. The puppets for *Our Town* represent some of the characters of the town in a way that heightens the theatricality. It's engaging in a way that has the audience see the play through a different lens. The puppets are sophisticated, atypical representations of the character."

All of the seven-member cast will play multiple characters – each playing one main character and each operating a number of the townspeople puppets. Leading the cast, **Doug Hara** (Broadway: *The Boys of Winter, Metamorphoses*. Off Broadway: *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci, Lookingglass Alice*. Regional: *A Prayer for Owen Meany*) will play the Stage Manager. A newcomer to TRTC audiences, Hara is an ensemble member of Chicago's renowned Lookingglass Theatre Company. TRTC veteran **Maureen Silliman** (*The Real Thing, Uncle Vanya, Beauty Queen of Leenane, The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*) returns to portray Mrs. Gibbs. Dr. Gibbs will be played by **Stephen D'Ambrose** (Regional: *Edgardo Mine, Molly's Delicious, To Kill a Mockingbird, Sherlock Holmes, Quills, The Tempest*) and **Joe Binder** takes on the role of George Gibbs. The Webb family will be played by **Wynn Harmon** (Broadway: *Porgy and Bess*, Off-Broadway: *Tibet Does Not Exist, The New Yorkers, As You Like It*), **Lisa Gunn** (Broadway and National Tours: *Annie and Marvin Hamlisch in Concert*. Regional: *Hello Dolly, 1776, Taming of the Shrew*), and **Erin Weaver** (National Tour: *Les Miserables*. Regional: *The Tempest, Mark Twain's A Murder, A Mystery & A Marriage, Jack & The Beanstalk*).

In addition to puppet designer **Cromie**, the creative team includes scenic designer **Aleksandra Maslik** (TRTC's *The Underpants, Dance of the Holy Ghost, The Life and Death of King John, Tock Tick, Pride & Prejudice*), costume designer **Emily Pepper** (Regional: *Bell, Book and Candle, Villa America, Blood Wedding, Frankenstein, Diary of Anne Frank, Driving Miss Daisy, Frankenstein*), lighting designer **Joel Moritz** (International: Blue Man Group, New York: *Tatjana in Color, wAve, Just as If, The Tempest, Elliot a Soldier's Fugue, Phedre*), and sound designer/composer **Dr. Greg Wilder** (TRTC's *The Underpants*).

As the Borough of Red Bank prepares for its upcoming centennial in 2008, TRTC will celebrate its home town with an extraordinary photo exhibit created by Dorn's Classic Images. **Relive 100 Years of Red Bank** will be on display in Two River Theater's lobby throughout September. This fascinating walk through Red Bank's history reflects and celebrates the *Our Town* in all of our lives.

Our Town begins previews on Tuesday, September 11; opens Saturday, September 15; and runs through Sunday, September 30. **Tickets are \$20 - \$56** and are available by calling the TRTC Box Office at **732.345.1400**, online at **www.trtc.org** or by visiting the Box Office at 21 Bridge Avenue in Red Bank. The production is sponsored by **Giordano, Halleran & Ciesla Attorneys at Law**.

B4 Play, TRTC's **free, pre-show discussion series**, is scheduled 45 minutes prior to every performance. This window into the creative process will be hosted by two members of the *Our Town* cast who will talk about the life of Thornton Wilder.

Post-show discussions are scheduled following the 8pm performance on Wednesday, September 19 and following the matinees on Sunday, September 23 at 3pm and Wednesday, September 26 at 1pm. **Student matinee performances** are scheduled at 10am on Tuesdays, September 18 and September 25. **Discounted**

group rates and **dinner / theater packages** are available through the Box Office or by calling TRTC's Sales Line at 732.345.1400 ext 813.

TRTC is accessible to people with disabilities, including wheelchair accessibility, assisted listening devices and large print programs at every performance. Accessible seating is available by reservation. For more information call the Box Office at **732.345.1400**.

CALENDAR NOTICE: OUR TOWN EVENTS:

Tuesday, September 11 through Sunday, September 30 – historical **photo exhibit** created by **Dorn's Classic Images** will adorn Two River Theater's lobby. Patrons will walk through 100 years of Red Bank.

Tuesday, September 11 – Community preview performance sponsored by Zager, Fuchs, Ambrose & Krantz PC. More than 100 local community leaders will be treated to the first public performance of *Our Town*.

Saturday, September 15 –The 2007/2008 season kick-off celebration begins with the Opening Night performance of *Our Town*.

Sunday, September 16; Wednesday, September 19; and Sunday, September 30 – **Story circles** led by Associate Artistic Director **KJ Sanchez** will follow the matinee performances. Patrons are encouraged to bring old photos and to share stories of their own towns. The stories may be used in a play currently in development – *The 732 Project*.

Wednesday, September 19, 8pm; Sunday, September 23, 3pm; Wednesday, September 26, 1pm – **Post-show discussions** led by Artistic Director **Aaron Posner** will follow each performance.

Thursday, September 27 – An **audio-described performance** is scheduled at 8pm. Tickets are \$12 for those needing audio-description. Call 732.345.1400.

WHERE:

Two River Theater Company
21 Bridge Street
Red Bank, NJ 07701

WHEN:

September 11 – September 30, 2007

Members of the reviewing press are invited to the opening night performance of *Our Town* on **Saturday, September 15 at 8pm**. Please schedule tickets through Jayme Powers, Director of Communications, by phone at **732.345.1400 ext. 830** or via email at **jpowers@trtc.org**.

WHO:

Written by **Thornton Wilder**
Directed by **Aaron Posner**
Puppet Design by **Aaron Cromie**
Scenic Design by **Aleksandra Maslik**
Costume Design by **Emily Pepper**
Lighting Design by **Joel Moritz**
Sound Design / Composition by **Dr. Greg Wilder**
Dialect Coach **Leigh Wilson Smiley**

CAST:

Doug Hara – Stage Manager / others
Stephen D'Ambrose – Dr. Gibbs / others
Maureen Silliman – Mrs. Gibbs / others
Joe Binder – George Gibbs / others
Wynn Harmon – Mr. Webb / others
Lisa Gunn – Mrs. Webb / others
Erin Weaver – Emily Webb / others

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TWO RIVER THEATER COMPANY is a professional not-for-profit regional theater company, providing outstanding plays and educational programs for audiences of central New Jersey and beyond. TRTC was founded in 1994 by Robert and Joan Rechnitz as Monmouth County's first professional regional theater in 30 years, and over the past 13 seasons has grown into

one of the most vital and dynamic arts organizations in the region. Since opening its new theater in May of 2005, TRTC has hosted a number of luminaries and award winners, including Bruce Springsteen, Olympia Dukakis, Jackson Brown, Jon Bon Jovi, Edward Albee, and Sheldon Harnick. In 2006, the company received "Theatre of the Year" awards from both *The Star Ledger* and the New Jersey Theatre Alliance. TRTC is supported in part by grants from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Dept. of State, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, and contributions from hundreds of local and national corporations, foundations, businesses and individuals. Two River Theater Company is a member of Theatre Communications Group and the New Jersey Theatre Alliance.