



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Two River Theater Company

presents

**MELISSA
ARCTIC**

A play with songs by

Craig Wright

Directed by **Aaron Posner**

March 17 – April 5, 2009

Red Bank, NJ – Two River Theater Company presents ***Melissa Arctic***, a magical, effervescent story about the redemptive power of art and love. Written by **CRAIG WRIGHT** (*The Pavilion*, and television's *Six Feet Under*, *Lost*, *Brothers and Sisters*) and directed by **AARON POSNER** (*Macbeth*, *A Murder*, *A Mystery & A Marriage*, *Heartbreak House*), ***Melissa Arctic*** retells Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. ***Melissa Arctic*** begins previews on **Tuesday, March 17**, opens **Saturday, March 21**, and runs through **Sunday, April 5**.

Plays by **Playwright** and **Composer CRAIG WRIGHT** have been produced around the country. They include *Grace*, *Lady*, *Main Street*, *Molly's Delicious*, *Orange Flower Water*, *The Pavilion*, *Recent Tragic Events* and *The Unseen*. "I first wrote *Melissa Arctic* out of a sense of dissatisfaction with one plot point in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*," says Wright. "So I decided to write my own version. And now here we are in 2009, with a fresh script and a new production of *Melissa Arctic*. It has been my great honor to work with Aaron Posner many times over the past 15 years and I'm thrilled to have the chance to do it again." Wright has received a Drama Desk nomination, a Jeff Award nomination, an LA Ovation nomination, a Helen Hayes nomination and an LA Drama Critics Award.

"One of the joys of rehearsing a great play is grappling with abstract questions and big ideas," says **director Aaron Posner**. "Shakespeare wrote *The Winter's Tale* near the end of his life and I think he had far more questions than answers. Craig is one of most insightfully inquisitive artists I know, and has a deep love of hard

questions. This play asks us to open ourselves up to other ways of thinking about Life and Time and Art and, of course, Love.”

OBIE Award winner **JAMES SUGG**, known to TRTC audiences as the composer of last season’s musical *A Murder, A Mystery & A Marriage*, takes the stage as Alec Willoughby. Hailed by *The New York Times* last season as “superlative” and “amazing” for his performance in *Chekhov Lizardbrain*, Sugg is an actor, sound designer, composer and 10-year member of Pig Iron Theatre Company. **ERIC HISSOM** played the porter in TRTC’s *Macbeth*. He returns in the role of Paul Anderson. **CHRIS LOPEZ** (*Mad Dancer*, Piven Theater in Chicago; *Medea*, BackStage Theatre Co.; and *Orpheus Descending*, American Theatre Company), an actor who is deaf, portrays Carl Kuchenmeister, a character who is deaf.

Local teens and former TRTC Metro Scholars **PHOEBE HOLIDAY RYAN** and **LORENZO VILLANUEVA** play young sweethearts Melissa Willoughby and Ferris Anderson. A senior at Red Bank Regional High School, Phoebe studied with the British American Drama Academy and was a finalist on television’s American Idol Season 8. A senior at the Performing Arts Academy, Lorenzo played Donalbain and Seyton in last season’s *Macbeth*.

Sharing the role of Time are local 9-year old, fourth graders **OWEN DOHERTY** of Rumson and **ISABEL WALLACE** of Little Silver. Both are Two River Theater Company Summer Ensembles students. They will portray Time in alternating performances. Owen (*Oliver*, Axelrod Performing Arts Center; *Growin’ Up Broadway*, Children’s Theater Works) sang *America the Beautiful* at the US Open tennis tournament in both 2007 and 2008. Isabel attends Point Road School and studies voice and violin.

Real-life husband and wife Minnesotans **STEPHEN D’AMBROSE** (TRTC’s *Heartbreak House* and *Our Town*; *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* at Park Square Theater in St. Paul; *Macbeth* with New York Classical Theater in Battery Park; and *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* with Arizona Theater Company and San Jose Repertory Theater) and **BARBARA KINGSLEY** (Theatre de la Jeune Lune’s *The Miser*, Guthrie Theater’s *Great Expectations* and Jungle Theater’s *Gertrude Stein and a Companion*) play Minnesota married couple Alan and Cindy Linda.

Making Two River Theater Company debuts are **CHRISTOPHER RYAN GRANT** (*Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare Theatre Company; *The Horton Foote Project*, 78th Street Theatre Lab; *Circle of Influence*, Rattlestick Theatre) as Mike Goebel, **SIDNEY WILLIAMS** (*The Little Flower of East Orange*, Public Theatre; *Identical Same Temptation*, Theatre for the New City; *Pretty Chin Up*, LAByrinth) as Leonard Mattson, and **SARAH GRACE WILSON** (*Monsterface*, Audax Theatre; *Jump!*, The Exchange; *The Story*, The Public/NYSF; *Voyage of the Carcass*, Greenwich Street Theatre) as Mina Mattson.

Two River Theater Company newcomer **BRIAN SIDNEY BEMBRIDGE** leads the creative team with both the **Scenic and Lighting Design**. A Chicago designer, Bembridge is a multiple recipient of the Joseph Jefferson Award, LA Drama Critic Circle Award, Garland Award and an LA Weekly Award. His film work includes Wallace Shawn's *Marie and Bruce*, *Holding Out*, *Stray Dogs*, *Late for Church* and set designs for *Muppets From Space*. **Costume Designer DEVON PAINTER** (TRTC's *Macbeth* and *The Pavilion*; *House of Blue Leaves*, Juilliard; *Luminescence Dating*, The Ensemble Studio Theatre) and **Sound Designer DANIEL KLUGER** (TRTC's *Heartbreak House* and *A Murder, A Mystery & A Marriage*; *The Ones That Flutter*, SPF/The Public Theatre) round out the design team. **KRIS KUKUL** (TRTC's *A Murder, A Mystery & a Marriage*, Musical Director for Williamstown Theatre Festival, *Kaspar Hauser*, *The Flea*; *Gutenberg! The Musical!*, The Actor's Playhouse; *Much Ado About Nothing*, Public Theatre/Shakespeare in the Park) serves as the **Musical Director**.

Underwritten in part by Wachovia Securities, *Melissa Arctic* is scheduled to run **Tuesday, March 17** through **Sunday, April 5**. Tickets are \$34 - \$60. For more information, call **732.345.1400**, visit www.trtc.org or visit the **Two River Theater Company Box Office**, located at 21 Bridge Avenue in Red Bank, NJ. **Discounted group rates** and **dinner/theater packages** are available by calling TRTC's Sales Hotline at 732.345.1400 ext 813. Box Office Hours: Monday-Saturday: 10am-6pm; Sunday: Noon-5pm

Before Play, TRTC's **free, pre-show discussion series**, is scheduled 45 minutes prior to every performance. **Post-show discussions** are scheduled following the 8pm performance on **Wednesday, March 25**, and following the matinees on **Sunday, March 29** at 3pm and **Wednesday, April 1** at 1pm. One **student matinee performance** is scheduled on **Tuesday, March 24** at 10am. **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, assistive 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

Events for *Melissa Arctic*:

Tuesday, March 17 – Community preview performance sponsored by Zager, Fuchs PC. Beneficiaries are members of the Monmouth County Arts Council.

Saturday, March 21 – Opening Night performance of *Melissa Arctic* and post-show celebration.

Wednesday, March 25, 8pm; Sunday, March 29, 3pm; Wednesday, April 1, 1pm – Post-show discussions led by a member of the artistic staff will follow each performance.

Wednesday, April 1 – An **American Sign Language interpreted performance** is scheduled at 8pm. Tickets are \$14 for those needing ASL interpretation. Call 732.345.1400.

Thursday, April 2 – An **audio-described performance** is scheduled at 8pm. Tickets are \$14 for those needing audio-description. Call 732.345.1400.

Members of the press are invited to the opening night performance of *Melissa Arctic* on **Saturday, March 21 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.

WHERE:

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

WHEN:

March 17 – April 5, 2009

WHO:

Play and songs written by **Craig Wright**
Directed by **Aaron Posner**
Scenic and Lighting Design by
Brian Sidney Bembridge
Costume Design by **Devon Painter**
Sound Design by **Daniel Kluger**
Musical Direction by **Kris Kukul**
Production Stage Manager **Amanda Michaels**
Assistant Director **Erin Weaver**
Dramaturgy by **Nicole Ricciardi**
American Sign Language Consultant
Amanda Zimmer

CAST:

Stephen D'Ambrose*...Alan "Lindy" Linda
Owen Doherty...Time
Christopher Ryan Grant* ...Mike Goebel
Eric Hissom*...Paul Anderson
Barbara Kingsley*...Cindy Linda
Chris Lopez*...Carl Kuchenmeister
Phoebe Holiday Ryan...Melissa Willoughby
James Sugg*...Alec Willoughby
Lorenzo Villanueva...Ferris Anderson
Isabel Wallace...Time
Sarah Grace Wilson*...Mina Mattson
Sidney Williams*...Leonard Mattson

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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 and over the past 14 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 Browne, Jon Bon Jovi, Edward Albee, Sheldon Harnick, and the African Children's Choir. The company received "Theatre of the Year" awards from the New Jersey Theatre Alliance in 2006, and from *The Star-Ledger* in both 2006 and 2008. TRTC is supported in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, 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.