



## MEDIA RELEASE

Christopher Prentice  
773.347.1350 / 773.991.5446 cell  
[chris@signalensemble.com](mailto:chris@signalensemble.com)

# SIGNAL STAGES CLASSICAL 'HAMLET'

**Shakespeare's revenge tragedy plays Chopin Mainstage Apr. 19 – May 26, 2007**

CHICAGO, March 20, 2007 — Signal Ensemble Theatre (Ronan Marra, Christopher Prentice and Joseph Stearns, artistic directors) wraps up its fourth season with a grand-scale, classically themed staging of Shakespeare's seminal revenge tragedy, **HAMLET**, directed by Ronan Marra, running at the Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division, April 19 – May 26, 2007. **Press opening is Saturday, April 21 at 8 p.m.** Tickets may be purchased at [signalensemble.com](http://signalensemble.com) or reserved at 773-347-1350.

Following the death of his father, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, returns home to find his uncle now occupies the throne and the queen's bed. Spurred by the ghost of his father and surrounded by spies, Hamlet must avenge his father's murder. An incisive portrait of a thinking man forced to act under chilling circumstances, Shakespeare's greatest revenge tragedy is perhaps the most widely read play in Western literature.

"This is straightforward *Hamlet*," said director **Ronan Marra**, Signal's general artistic director. "Never will our reliance on the words be more apparent than in this production. Any time I hit a staging question, I defer to the text and it always answers. But at the same time, we're putting on a show. Sixteen actors, our most ambitious set, many of the costumes are being built from scratch, a full, cinematic score, some special effects... all charged by a lean but loyal script cutting."

"This production will stand out for its clarity based on simple faithfulness to the text and athletic, heartfelt performances," said **Christopher Prentice**, Signal's producing artistic director. "While not a specific reaction to recent trends, this production will show a marked contrast to the practice of radical textual changes and post-modern interpretations of Shakespeare."

Ensemble member **Christopher Prentice**, seen as Jerry in *The Zoo Story* and director of *The Weir* this season, leads the 16-strong cast in the title role of Hamlet. **Don Bender**, who played Charlie in last season's *Seascape*, and currently appears in Stage Left's *One Fine Day*, plays Claudius. **Meredith Siemsen**, last seen in BackStage's *The Ruling Class*, makes her Signal debut as Gertrude. Ensemble member **Joseph Stearns**, who played Brendan in *The Weir*, Ben in *The Dumb Waiter* and Peter in *The Zoo Story* this season, plays Horatio. Ensemble member **Aaron Snook**, who played Dan in *Closer* and directed *The Dumb Waiter* this season, plays Laertes. **Erin Myers**, who appeared in *Love in the Title* with Irish Rep, *Johnny Tremain* at Lifeline and several productions with the Hypocrites, plays Ophelia. Ensemble member **Vincent L. Lonergan**, seen in Vitalist's *Mother Courage and Her Children* and Porchlight's *A Wonderful Life* this season, plays Polonius. **Eric Leonard**, who spent the last two years touring with Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, makes his Signal debut as Rosencrantz. **Daniel Behrendt**, who currently appears in *Monster Garden* at Gorilla Tango, makes his Signal debut as Guildenstern.

(more)

**Michael Pacas**, who appeared in BackStage's *The Skin of Our Teeth* and *Terra Nova*, plays the Ghost. **Ronald Kuzava**, last seen in BackStage's *The Ruling Class*, plays the First Player King and Second Gravedigger. New ensemble member **Philip Winston**, who played Gus in *The Dumb Waiter* this season, plays Marcellus and the First Gravedigger. **Tim Garvey** makes his Signal debut as Francisco and Fortinbras. **Matt Pearsall** makes his Signal debut as Bernardo, Lucianus and Norwegian Captain. **Simone Roos**, Jeff-nominated for Circle Theatre's *Design for Living* and recently seen in *Noises Off* with Buffalo Theatre Ensemble, makes her Signal debut as the Player Queen. **Bries Vannon**, who appeared in Signal's *She Stoops to Conquer* last spring, as well as *The Crucible* with Speaking Ring earlier this season, plays Reynaldo and Osric.

Directed by **Ronan Marra**; the set is by **Melania Lancy** (*The Weir, Closer*); the costumes are by **Laura M. Dana** (Jeff Citation for *Seascape*); the lights are by **Julie E. Ballard** (*The Weir, Closer, The Dumb Waiter & The Zoo Story*); the sound and original score is by ensemble member **Anthony Ingram** (*The Weir, Closer, The Dumb Waiter & The Zoo Story*); and the props are by **Devon MacGregor** and **Sarah Elizabeth M.** (*The Weir*). **Kevin Asselin**, who recently choreographed the fights for *The Three Musketeers* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, is the fight director; and ensemble member **Stephanie Ehemann** is the stage manager.

Ensemble member **Ronan Marra** (Director), Signal's general artistic director, is a co-founder of Signal Ensemble. Directing credits with the company include Jeff-recommended productions of *Seascape* (Jeff Citation winner, Best Costume Design), *Waiting for Godot* and his own *Landslide* (Jeff Citation nomination, New Work), as well as *Closer, The Zoo Story, She Stoops to Conquer, Much Ado About Nothing* and his own *Learning to Fly*. He has also directed for Sansculottes Theatre Company and The Gallery Players (New York) as well as several productions at his alma mater, Kent State University. As a playwright, Marra's plays have been produced in Chicago and abroad, and he has received awards for New Work at ITN Theatre and Neverland Productions in New York. Marra is a recipient of the 2006 Illinois Arts Council Finalist Award in Scriptworks.

HAMLET will play at the Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division, April 19 – May 26, 2007. Previews are April 19 and 20 at 8 p.m. Opening is Saturday, April 21 at 8 p.m. Regular performances will continue through May 26 as follows: Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. Preview tickets are \$10. Tickets for the regular run are \$15-\$20 and may be purchased online at [signalensemble.com](http://signalensemble.com) or reserved at 773-347-1350. The Chopin Theatre is accessible by the CTA Blue Line train (Division) and buses (70-Division, 56-Milwaukee, 18-Ashland).

#### **About Signal Ensemble Theatre**

Known for its ensemble acting and producing a diverse slate of plays that range from classics to new works, Signal Ensemble Theatre uses the actor as focal point to clearly execute the playwright's vision. Founded by its three artistic directors (Ronan Marra, Christopher Prentice, Joseph Stearns), the company began producing in 2003. Signal's production of *Seascape* won a Jeff Citation and After Dark Award for best costume design. HAMLET follows *The Dumb Waiter & The Zoo Story, Closer* and *The Weir* in Signal's fourth season.

(more)

## HAMLET

### FACT SHEET

- WHAT:** Signal Ensemble Theatre presents **HAMLET** by William Shakespeare
- LOCATION:** Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division St., Chicago, On the Mainstage
- DATES/TIMES:** THURSDAY, APRIL 19 – SATURDAY, MAY 26, 2007  
PREVIEWS: 4/19 & 4/20 8:00 pm  
PRESS OPENING: SATURDAY, APRIL 21 8:00 pm  
Thursday, Friday & Saturday eves 8:00 pm  
Sunday mats 3:00 pm
- DESCRIPTION:** Signal Ensemble Theatre wraps up its fourth season with a straightforward, classically themed staging of Shakespeare's seminal revenge tragedy, **HAMLET**. Following the death of his father, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, returns home to find his uncle now occupies the throne and the queen's bed. Spurred by the ghost of his father and surrounded by spies, Hamlet must avenge his father's murder. An incisive portrait of a thinking man forced to act under chilling circumstances, Shakespeare's greatest revenge tragedy is perhaps the most widely read play in Western literature.
- WHO:** Written by William Shakespeare
- Directed by Ronan Marra
- Cast: Daniel Behrendt (Guildenstern), Don Bender (Claudius), Tim Garvey (Francisco, Fortinbras), Ronald Kuzava (Player King, 2nd Gravedigger), Eric Leonard (Rosencrantz), Vincent L. Loneragan (Polonius), Erin Myers (Ophelia), Michal Pacas (Ghost, Player, Priest, English Ambassador), Matt Pearsall (Bernardo, Lucianus, Captain), Christopher Prentice (Hamlet), Simone Roos (Player Queen, Lady), Meredith Siemsen (Gertrude), Aaron Snook (Laertes), Joseph Stearns (Horatio), Bries Vannon (Reynaldo, Osric) and Philip Winston (Marcellus, 1st Gravedigger)
- Production: Melania Lancy (sets), Laura M. Dana (costumes), Julie E. Ballard (lights), Anthony Ingram (sound), Devon MacGregor and Sarah Elizabeth M. (props), Kevin Asselin (fights) and Stephanie Ehemann (stage manager)
- PRICES:** Previews: \$10  
Regular run: \$15-\$20
- TICKETS:** INFORMATION/RESERVATIONS: (773) 347-1350 or [signalensemble.com](http://signalensemble.com)

###