



PITTSBURGH IRISH & CLASSICAL THEATRE
Professional Theater in Residence at the University of Pittsburgh

**Opera Theater, Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre unite
to produce groundbreaking new show**
*Music of legendary Pittsburgh composer Stephen Foster featured
in Martin Giles' new music drama, "Beautiful Dreamers"*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pittsburgh, PA – March 23, 2010. Two local arts organizations have come together to produce the world premiere of a new music drama inspired by and containing the songs of Pittsburgh's best-loved musical legend.

Beautiful Dreamers is a new music drama set to the songs of Pittsburgh's hometown hero Stephen Foster, written and directed by Martin Giles with arrangements and musical direction by Douglas Levine. The story follows three unlikely companions – a broken-hearted New Yorker, a young widow woman, and a runaway slave – as they journey across mid-19th Century America and into the heart of the American Dream. The project is a co-production between Opera Theater of Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre, and is presented in conjunction with the Stephen Foster Museum and the Center for American Music. Joel Ripka, Stephanie Riso, and Kevin Brown star in the production, which also features Michael Fuller, Daina Michelle Griffith, Daniel Krell, and Allison Moody.

Stephen Foster, one of Pittsburgh's most famous native sons, was the original composer of American "pop music". His first hit, "Oh, Susannah!," written in 1846, quickly spread across the country after the Christy Minstrels picked it up. Though he struggled financially Foster was a prolific writer, penning such enduring classics as "Old Folks at Home (Swanee River)," "My Old Kentucky Home," "Jeannie with the Light

Local collaboration yields world premiere production

Brown Hair,” “Beautiful Dreamer,” and countless others. In addition to being widely-known, many of his songs addressed race in a manner that was advanced for the time period. His song “Nellie was a Lady” (which is included in the production of “Beautiful Dreamers”) portrays a black man grieving for his deceased wife in a sensitive and sympathetic fashion, dignifying the loss in a manner that was uncharacteristic for the time period. Foster spent much of his life in Pittsburgh, and is buried in Allegheny Cemetery in Lawrenceville.

Giles is a popular Pittsburgh actor, director and writer. Giles’ directing credits include many productions for the New Group Theatre, where he served as Artistic Director and playwright, as well as productions in PICT’s BeckettFest and Synge Cycle. Best-known for his work on stage, he has performed for both Opera Theater of Pittsburgh and PICT. His Opera Theater credits include *Beggar’s Holiday* and *Lost in the Stars*. For PICT, his recent credits include *The History Boys* and *What the Butler Saw*. He is the 2002 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* Performer of the Year.

Levine has composed original music and music directed for a multitude of companies in the Pittsburgh area. Original music for PICT productions include *Jane Eyre*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *The Shaughraun*. Levine has also written original scores for The Rep (*Eastburn Avenue*, *Mother Courage*, *Peer Gynt*), Attack Theatre (*Deadend*), and Pittsburgh International Children’s Theater Festival (*Colorfast*).

Joel Ripka, who starred in PICT’s acclaimed 2009 production of *Crime and Punishment*, is featured as Moses Walker, a young New Yorker who sets off on a journey across America after his heart is broken. Ripka’s recent local credits include the U.S. premiere of Stephen Massicotte’s *The Clockmaker* at City Theatre Company, and *Harry’s Friendly Service* at Pittsburgh Public Theater.

Stephanie Riso plays the young widow woman Susannah Milsap. Riso is the founding managing director of PICT, and currently serves as operations director. She holds a degree in vocal performance from Carnegie Mellon University, and her credits include PICT’s *James Joyce’s The Dead*, Pittsburgh Public Theater’s productions of *Sweeney Todd* and *Pirates of Penzance*, and CLO’s Musical *Christmas Carol*.

Local collaboration yields world premiere production

Kevin Brown, who plays escaped slave Caleb Jefferson, has been featured in numerous Opera Theater of Pittsburgh productions including the recent *Beggar's Holiday*, as well as *Lost in the Stars* and *Carmen Jones*. Other local credits include City Theater Company's *Flight*, and in Pittsburgh Playwright's Theater Company's *I Nipoti*.

The production also showcases popular Pittsburgh performers Daniel Krell (City Theatre's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Pittsburgh Public Theater's *Midsummer Night's Dream*), Michael Fuller (PICT's *Pride & Prejudice*, barebones productions' *Glengarry Glen Ross*) and Daina Michelle Griffith (City Theatre's *Speak American*, PICT's *James Joyce's The Dead*). Allison Moody (*Lend Me a Tenor*, Human Race Theatre, *Maritius*, Phoenix Theatre) makes her Pittsburgh debut.

Scenic design is by Tony Ferrieri, lighting by Cindy Limauro, costumes by Kelly LeVine (assisted by Peter Doukas), sound by Dave Bjornson, and properties by Cory F. Goddard. *Beautiful Dreamers* plays April 15 – May 1 in the Charity Randall Theatre.

WDUQ FM is the Media Sponsor for *Beautiful Dreamers*.

In conjunction with *Beautiful Dreamers*, the University of Pittsburgh will be hosting a first-ever Stephen Foster symposium April 23 and 24 entitled "Stephen Foster in American Cultural History." Foster scholars from all over the world will be in attendance and scheduled speakers include renowned baritone Thomas Hampson on "Foster's songs as part of America's classic vocal repertory" and Japanese professor Kazuko Miyashita on "America as understood through Foster's songs in foreign cultures." The full symposium schedule is available to download from the *Beautiful Dreamers* page on the PICT website, www.picttheatre.org.

Single tickets are available now through ProArtsTickets at 412.394.3353. For more information, visit www.operatheaterpittsburgh.org, or www.picttheatre.org.

Opera Theater is Pittsburgh's modern music drama company. Opera Theater crosses traditional boundaries in the musical and theatrical arts and focuses on creating new works, reinterpreting older works in new ways, building diversity in programming and casting, supporting emerging talent, and broadening audiences through outreach and education. The company was founded in 1976 and presents four productions a year in a variety of theaters and in non-traditional spaces.

Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre was founded in 1996 to diversify the region's theatrical offerings by providing Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania audiences with high-quality, text-driven, affordable productions of classical theatre and the works of classical and contemporary Irish playwrights and to significantly improve employment opportunities for local talent in all facets of theatrical presentation and production. PICT is a Small Professional Theatre (SPT) affiliated with Actors' Equity Association, and a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council. PICT is the Professional Theatre in Residence at the University of Pittsburgh and PICT productions at the Charity Randall and Henry Heymann Theatres are presented in cooperation with the University of Pittsburgh – Department of Theatre Arts.

Local collaboration yields world premiere production

Beautiful Dreamers FACT SHEET

Beautiful Dreamers

Written and directed by Martin Giles

Arrangements and Musical Direction by Douglas Levine

Music by Stephen Foster

The Charity Randall Theatre in the Stephen Foster Memorial
4301 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213

April 15 – May 1

produced by Opera Theater of Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre

CAST: Kevin Brown, Michael Fuller, Daina Michelle Griffith, Daniel Krell, Allison Moody, Joel Ripka, and Stephanie Riso

DESIGN TEAM: Tony Ferrieri (scenic design), Cindy Limauro (lighting design), Kelly LeVine (costume design), Dave Bjornson (sound design), Cory F. Goddard (properties)

PERFORMANCE DATES AND TIMES

First Week: Thursday, Friday, April 15, 16, Previews, 8 p.m.
Saturday, April 17, Opening Night, 8 p.m. (followed by reception)
Sunday, April 18, 2 p.m. (followed by talk-back with the company)

Second Week: Wednesday, April 21, 2 p.m. (special mid-week matinee), and 8 p.m.
Thursday – Saturday, April 22 – 24, 8 p.m.*
Sunday, April 25, 2 p.m.
*Preshow lecture series
Artistically Speaking – Wednesday, April 21, 7 p.m.
Behind the Scenes – Thursday, April 22, 7 p.m.

Third Week: Tuesday, April 27, 7 p.m. (Professional Tuesdays performance)
Wednesday – Friday, April 28 – 30, 8 p.m.
Saturday, May 1, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Special student matinee on April 14 at 10 a.m.

TICKET PRICES:

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| Saturday nights: | \$50, Seniors \$47 |
| Wednesday, Thursday, Friday nights : | \$46, Seniors \$43 |
| Professional Tuesdays, Saturday & Sunday Matinees: | \$42, Seniors \$40 |
| Preview Thursday and Friday: | \$34 for all seats |
| \$20 tickets available for youth under 25, with valid ID | |

SPECIAL EVENT:

Open to the public and free of charge

Stephen Foster Symposium

“Stephen Foster in American Cultural History” – April 23rd and 24th

Sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh

Full symposium schedule available to download from the PICT website, “Beautiful Dreamers” page

Call ProArtsTickets at 412.394.3353 or visit www.operatheaterpittsburgh.org or
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