

For Immediate Release:
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SHAKESPEARE THEATRE COMPANY'S
2007-2008 SEASON ENDS WITH
The Imaginary Invalid
BY MOLIÈRE
ADAPTED BY ALAN DRURY
DIRECTED BY KEITH BAXTER

Production Features René Auberjonois in his STC Debut

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Shakespeare Theatre Company concludes its 2007-2008 season with Molière's ***The Imaginary Invalid***, adapted by Alan Drury. **René Auberjonois**, the Tony Award winning actor best known for his roles on *Boston Legal*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Benson*, makes his STC debut as Argan. **Keith Baxter** returns to direct the production at the Company's Lansburgh Theatre from **June 10 to July 27, 2008**.

Molière's final play, *The Imaginary Invalid* targets the medical quacks of 17th-century France. The eccentric and wealthy hypochondriac Argan decides to marry his strong-willed daughter Angélique off to a doctor, so that he'll always have a physician around. But Angélique loves another man, and her attempts to persuade her father to let her marry him lead to outrageous tricks and disguises. Molière's keen wit and hilarious characters take center stage in this knockabout farce.

The Imaginary Invalid is sponsored by the **HRH Foundation**. Media partner **DC magazine** provides promotional support throughout the run.

"*The Imaginary Invalid* is arguably Molière's most famous play. It is also unique among his other works in that it begins with an homage to Louis XIV and features three commedia dell'arte interludes," director Keith Baxter explained. "Producers and directors often remove these elements, but we have tried to capture the spirit of the original production by recreating the environment in which the play was first seen."

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Eager to have a doctor in the family to treat his supposed ailments, Argan informs his daughter Angélique that she is to wed a medical student named Thomas Diafoirus. Angélique, however, loves Cléante, whose lack of medical training takes him out of the running as a potential mate. Cléante and the family maid Toinette devise an outrageous scheme to win him the hand of Angélique and to knock Argan's money-grubbing wife out of the picture in the process.

THE IMAGINARY INVALID CAST

René Auberjonois makes his STC debut as Argan in *The Imaginary Invalid*. At the start of his acting

Michael Kahn Artistic Director Nicholas T. Goldsborough Managing Director www.ShakespeareTheatre.org

career, Auberjonois spent three seasons in Washington, D.C., at Arena Stage. Since then, the Tony Award winner has performed at American Conservatory Theatre, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Mark Taper Forum and on Broadway in productions of *Sly Fox* (Outer Critics Circle nomination), *City of Angels* (Tony Award nomination), *Coco* (Tony Award), *Big River* (Drama Desk Award, Tony Award nomination), *The Good Doctor* (Tony Award nomination), *Metamorphosis* opposite Mikhail Baryshnikov and *Dance of the Vampires*. Auberjonois has been a series regular on *Boston Legal*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Benson* (Emmy nomination), and made appearances on *Frasier*, *Judging Amy* and *The Practice* (Emmy nomination). His film roles include *M*A*S*H*, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, *The Feud*, *Inspector Gadget*, *Batman Forever* and *The Patriot*. Auberjonois voiced the roles of the Chef Louis in Disney's animated *The Little Mermaid* and The Skull in *The Last Unicorn* and narrated portions of NPR's 18-hour series *Jewish Stories from the Old World to the New*.

Helen Hayes Award winner **Nancy Robinette** returns to play Toinette. Robinette last appeared as Lady Bountiful in Michael Kahn's production of *The Beaux' Stratagem* and as Duchess of Berwick in Keith Baxter's production of *Lady Windermere's Fan*. Additionally, Robinette performed in the Company's productions of *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*, *The Rivals*, *The Silent Woman*, *The Little Foxes* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*. Her many Washington theatre credits include productions at Arena Stage, Round House Theatre, Signature Theatre, Woolly Mammoth and Studio Theatre, where her recent role in *Souvenir* earned her a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Resident Play. Off-Broadway she appeared in New York Theatre Workshop's *Finally Flannery* and *Trestle at Pope Lick Creek*, and Roundabout Theatre Company's *Give Me Your Answer, Do!*

The Imaginary Invalid also features **Gia Mora** as Angélique, **Kaitlin O'Neal** as Beline and **Tony Roach** as Cléante, with **Drew Eshelman**, **Vince Eisenson**, **Levi Ben-Israel**, **Peter Land**, **David Manis**, **Ian Pedersen**, **Kara Quick**, **Todd Scofield**, **Anne Stone**, **John Robert Tillotson**, **Emily Whitworth**, and ensemble members **Leslie Sarah Cohen**, **Danielle Davy**, **Chris Dinolfo**, **Marissa Molnar** and **Keith Scott McDonald**.

THE DIRECTOR

Keith Baxter returns to STC to direct for the first time since his 2005 production of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, which *The Washington Post* called "immensely pleasurable!" Baxter also directed the Company's productions of *The Rivals* and *The Country Wife*. In addition to directing at STC, He has appeared on stage in *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Part 2*, as Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* and as Vincento in *Measure for Measure* with Kelly McGillis. Additional directorial credits include the London premiere of Tennessee Williams' *The Red Devil Battery Sign* (in which he also starred), *Gaslight*, *Time and the Conways*, *Rope*, *Dangerous Corner* and *After October*.

As an actor on Broadway, Baxter won a Theatre World Award for Most Promising Young Actor in his first New York appearance as young King Henry VIII in *A Man for All Seasons*. He also starred on Broadway in *The Affair*, *Avanti*, *A Meeting by the River*, *Romantic Comedy* and *Sleuth* (Outer Circle Critics Award, Drama Desk Award). In 2001, the *New York Post* called him "the always-brilliant Keith Baxter" after his performance in *The Woman in Black*. His classical roles include Hamlet, Macbeth, Benedick and Marc

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Antony (with Dame Maggie Smith). He appeared opposite Joan Collins as Elyot in Noël Coward's *Private Lives*, and he was Prince Hal in Orson Welles' film *Chimes at Midnight*. His other films include *Peeping Tom*, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, *La Regenta*, *Ash Wednesday* (with Elizabeth Taylor), *Merlin*, *Golden Rendezvous* and *Berlin Blues*. Baxter also is playwright of *56 Duncan Terrace*, *Barnaby and the Old Boys* and *Cavell* (with Joan Plowright). His book, *My Sentiments Exactly*, was published in 1999.

THE DESIGNERS

Director Keith Baxter and his designers have recreated a 17th-century French theatre setting for *The Imaginary Invalid* at the Lansburgh Theatre by utilizing scenery technologies that were popular during the play's first productions. Set Designer **Simon Higlett** (*Lady Windermere's Fan*, *The Rivals*, *The Country Wife*) has created Argan's pseudo sickly world with stark bedroom chambers contrasted with exquisitely painted scenic panels that illustrate the outside world. Higlett's credits include productions in London's West End, with the Royal Shakespeare Company, and at the Savoy, Haymarket, Donmar and New Shakespeare Company. Costume Designer **Robert Perdziola**, who frequently designs for STC (*Major Barbara*, *The Beaux' Stratagem*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Cyrano*, *The Rivals*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Don Carlos*, *The Country Wife*, *King John* and *A Woman of No Importance*), has created an array of tunics, corseted dresses, harlequin costumes and stately regalia. *The Imaginary Invalid* design team also includes Sound Design by **Martin Desjardins**, Music Director/Additional Music by **Barbara Irvine**, Musical Staging by **Gillian Lynne**, Lighting Design by **Peter West**, and Text Coaching by **Ellen O'Brien**.

PRODUCTION SPONSOR

The Shakespeare Theatre Company is pleased that **The HRH Foundation** is generously sponsoring *The Imaginary Invalid*. Founded in 1997 by Helen Ruth Henderson to support the visual and performing arts and education, The HRH Foundation of Washington has become a leading underwriter of the arts in the nation's capital. The Foundation has previously supported the Company's productions of *Richard III* and *Love's Labor's Lost*.

A Washingtonian since 1995, the Foundation's Executive Director Helen Lee Henderson shares her mother's founding mission of being an active advocate for the arts as well as an influential benefactor. The Company is especially appreciative that The HRH Foundation shares its vision for the future of Washington as a cultural destination and is a major donor to the Campaign to build the Harman Center for the Arts.

MEDIA SPONSOR

The Shakespeare Theatre Company is pleased to welcome **DC magazine** as media partner for *The Imaginary Invalid*. A genuine style authority, Modern Luxury Media's 13 upscale city-regional magazines, including *DC* magazine, reach the most sophisticated residents in cities across the country

and cover everything from world-class dining, nightlife, design and travel to trendsetting local and international fashions and in-depth celebrity features.

SPECIAL PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

There will be audio-described performances of *The Imaginary Invalid* on Saturday, July 5, at 2 p.m. and Thursday, July 10, at 8 p.m. Sign-interpreted performances are Tuesday, July 15, at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, July 19, at 2 p.m.

A series of special events will be held in conjunction with the production of *The Imaginary Invalid* as part of Access to Classics, sponsored in part by American Express.

- On Sunday, June 15, at 1 p.m., members of the STC Artistic staff, Education Department and scholars will lead a lively Windows discussion on *The Imaginary Invalid*. All are welcome. Call 202.547.1122 and press 4 or visit ShakespeareTheatre.org to reserve a space.
- Following the evening performance of *The Imaginary Invalid* on Wednesday, June 18, all are welcome to the Lansburgh Theatre for a post-performance discussion with members of the cast. Those attending the evening's performance are guaranteed seats. Limited additional seating is available on a first-come basis. Call 202.547.1122 for the approximate start time. No reservations required.
- On Saturday, July 12, following the 2 p.m. matinee, STC sponsors a Classics in Context discussion titled *This Doctor's Disease: Medicine and Fantasy in "The Imaginary Invalid."* This lively discussion features scholars and artists discussing their connection to both of the repertory productions. Call 202.547.1122 and press 4 or visit ShakespeareTheatre.org to reserve a space.

**FACT SHEET: *The Imaginary Invalid*
By Molière * Directed by Keith Baxter**

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DATES: June 10-July 27, 2008
Press Night: Sunday, June 15, 2008
Opening Night: Monday, June 16, 2008

LOCATION: Lansburgh Theatre, 450 7th Street NW, between D and E streets, just off Pennsylvania Avenue, between the Capitol and the White House.

TIMES: Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. (except June 17), Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. (except July 4); Sundays at 7:30 p.m. (except July 27); matinees on Saturdays and Sundays at 2 p.m. (except June 15); noon matinee on Wednesday, July 23.

TICKETS: \$23.50-\$79.75 with discounts available for senior citizens and students.

ACCESSIBILITY: The Lansburgh Theatre is accessible to persons with disabilities, offering wheelchair-accessible seating and restrooms, audio enhancement, and Braille and large print programs.

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PARKING:

Lansburgh Theatre: Paid parking is available in the PMI parking garage on D Street, between Eighth and Ninth streets, and the Colonial Parking garage in the Lansburgh building (at 450 7th Street NW, enter on Eighth Street between D and E streets).

METRO: Archives-Navy Mem'l- Penn Quarter station (Yellow and Green Lines) is one and one-half blocks south of the Lansburgh Theatre. Gallery Pl-Chinatown station (Red, Yellow and Green Lines) is one block north of the Lansburgh Theatre at the Verizon Center. For further information, call Metro at 202.637.7000.

Box Office: 202.547.1122 (voice) TTY: 202.638.3863 Toll Free: 877.487.8849

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