

Release: On receipt

Note to Editors: Press preview performances of "1492" will be held Wednesday, Feb. 26, and Thursday, Feb. 27 at 8 p.m. in Reynolds Industries Theater, Bryan Center. (Feb. 26 is also the 10th anniversary of Reynolds Industries Theater, the site of previous Duke Broadway Preview plays.) To reserve seats or for additional information about the production and photography opportunities, call Debbie Selinsky, associate director, Duke News Service, (919) 681-8055.

## PREVIEW PRODUCTION OF MUSICAL AT DUKE TO FEATURE BROADWAY, DURHAM AND DUKE TALENT

DURHAM, N.C. -- The cast of the upcoming Duke Broadway preview musical, "1492," directed and choreographed by Duke alumnus Charles Randolph-Wright, has been selected and will feature one of Broadway's hottest new leading men as well as Duke students and a Durham boy.

The new play, written by Christopher Bishop and focusing on Columbus' famous journey and the preparations that preceded it, will run at Duke Feb. 21-March 7 (with a Feb. 29 black-tie-optional gala) in anticipation of a national tour.

Bob Cuccioli, described by the director as the next really important "leading man" on Broadway, will portray Columbus in "1492," which has been designated by the U.S. Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Commission as the official musical theater presentation of the U.S. commemoration.

Cuccioli's credits include New York productions of "And the World Goes Round," "The Rothschilds," "Gigi" and "Senior Discretion." He has appeared as Lancelot in the touring production of "Camelot" with Richard Harris and as the Pirate King on the "Pirates of Penzance" tour. He appears in recurring roles on television's "Loving" and "One Life to Live."

Cuccioli will be joined by a cast of experienced singers, dancers and actors who came to Durham this week; collectively they have 20 Broadway shows under their belts, according to line producer Linda Wright. These include Gregory Mitchell, a veteran who will perform the role of Pinzon; Nancy Ticotin, the play's Queen Isabella; and John Mineo, a lyric baritone who has appeared in Broadway productions of "Zorba," "A Chorus Line" and "West Side Story."

Duke students who were selected from local auditions last week include Thema (cq) Bryant, Nick Dewolff, Dubie Dubendorfer, Michelle Harris, Ian David Klein, Meghan Shanaphy and Josiane Wolff. Also selected were David Dannehl, a local actor and a member of Actors Equity Association; 12-year-old Nathan Harper, who was selected for

the role of Columbus' son, Diego; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill student Christie Hinson; and Durham resident and UNC-CH student Scott Maxwell.

Behind the scenes is also plenty of Duke-connected talent, Wright said. For example, Danny Kosarin, a Duke graduate who was musical director and conductor for "A Chorus Line" both on Broadway and for the national tour, will conduct the orchestra, and Duke graduate John Gromada will be production sound designer. In 1986 for "Long Day's Journey Into Night," the first production of Duke's Broadway preview series, Gromada, then a student, wrote and performed incidental music. He has worked since then with Phillip Glass on "Henry IV" and received a 1991 Obie Award for his musical score for "Machinal."

Randolph-Wright, a South Carolina native and 1978 Duke graduate with a wide array of theatrical credits including a performance in Broadway's original "Dreamgirls," said in an interview that he was reticent about the idea of directing a play on Columbus before he read Bishop's script.

"I'm African-American and I'm part Native American so that gives you an idea of what I'm feeling about what happened when Columbus reached his destination. But when I read Christopher's (Bishop) script -- he's half Puerto Rican, by the way -- I saw that it was a piece about a man's journey, his goals, his life and his pursuit of what was to him the ultimate dream. And it hit home with me, because as a kid from South Carolina I had dreams that, if I'd listened to other people, I would never have even tried to achieve. I recognize that sort of fearless stupidity that had to be part of Columbus," he said.

Randolph-Wright believes that most people will relate to Columbus, the human being. "Columbus had a major dilemma: he had an ultimate love of God and an ultimate love of gold, nobility, fame and fortune. These are disparate images but the challenge between the secular and the religious is one we still have," he said. "People might like him and people might hate him, but this could be a way to get people reading again. ... Wouldn't that be something?"

In keeping with his dedication to accuracy, Randolph-Wright deliberately cast a multi-ethnic group of actors -- ranging from Australian, British, Italian-American, Mexican-American, African-American -- to reflect the diverse cultures -- English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, African -- that merged on Columbus' ships in 1492.

He is particularly excited that the flamenco, his favorite dance, will figure largely in the play (he will be assisted by co-choreographer Roberto Amaral) as well as songs he describes as "as strong as anything on Broadway."

Tickets for the production are for sale by phone, (919) 684-4444, and at Page

Box Office on Duke's West Campus for the 18 evening and matinee performances in Reynolds Industries Theater in the Bryan Center. Admission is \$22.50 for the general public, \$15 for Duke students and employees, and \$13.50 for Broadway at Duke subscribers and Duke Drama patrons, according to Peter Coyle, Duke's producer for the project.

A black-tie-optional gala performance will be held on Feb. 29 at 6 p.m. (The early performance time was set to avoid conflict with the Beaux Arts Ball, planned at Duke for later that evening.) Tickets for the "1492" gala are \$50 per person and include a pre-performance reception in the lobby of Sheaffer Theater in the Bryan Center.

For more information on "1492," call Peter Coyle, (919) 684-2911; Diane Simons, 684-2306; or Debbie Selinsky, 681-8055.

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