

ADDRESS  
2800 S. Stafford St.  
Arlington, Virginia  
22206

BOX OFFICE  
703 820 9771  
ADMIN OFFICE  
571 527 1860

FACSIMILE  
703 845 0236  
WEBSITE  
[www.signature-theatre.org](http://www.signature-theatre.org)

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
Eric Schaeffer  
MANAGING DIRECTOR  
Sam Sweet

## signaturenews

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 13, 2007

Suzanne Stephens, Publicist

Email: [press@signature-theatre.org](mailto:press@signature-theatre.org)

Phone: (571) 527-1833

Signature Presents

*Nest*

by British Playwright Bathsheba Doran

First World Premiere Commission for 99-seat ARK Theatre

Performances April 24 – June 24, 2007

Arlington, VA – Signature Theatre presents *Nest*, by the exciting, young British playwright, **Bathsheba Doran**, in the company's second installment of the Female British Invasion Play Festival. The work is the company's first world premiere commission for its 99-seat ARK Theatre. Based on historical fact, *Nest* is the story of Susanna Cox, an indentured servant accused of infanticide and hanged by the state of Pennsylvania in 1809. As the play examines the events surrounding her hanging, the challenges of the brand-new nation come to life, and look surprisingly familiar. Director Joe Calarco, whose work at Signature has won numerous Helen Hayes awards, will stage the premiere. **Performances of *Nest* are April 24 – June 24 and are recommended for mature audiences only. Tickets are on sale now at Tickets.com (800) 955-5566, online at [www.signature-theatre.org](http://www.signature-theatre.org), and at the Signature Theatre Box Office, Monday – Friday from 10am to 6pm and during performances.**

**Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer** stated, "I'm very excited about commissioning this world premiere. For a long time I thought that the story of Susanna Cox would be a good subject for a play. I grew up in Berks County, Pennsylvania and the reenactment of Cox's trial and hanging still takes place there every year at the Kutztown Folk Festival. Even after 200 years, Susanna's situation still speaks to us, and the historical implications are fascinating. And even then, the real-life event inspired art – there was a very popular ballad written at the time: 'A New Mournful Song Containing the History of Susanna Cox.' Bathsheba Doran is a terrifically smart and talented writer, and when I saw her play *Living Room in Africa* in New York, I knew she was the right person to write this play for Signature."

Playwright **Bathsheba Doran** was born in the UK, but moved permanently to the United States on a Fulbright scholarship in 2000. Her own changing identity as a "new" American, British-born, gives her particular insight into the "new" America of the early nineteenth century. "I explore the story of Susanna Cox," says Doran "through a multifaceted prism of the turbulent times when America comes into its own and attempts

to understand, explain and exonerate itself as a new-born nation with new ideals, new geography, new literature, new ethics, and new heroes. Susanna's hanging creates a vortex, whose power draws in every character and makes them confront their dreams of a future and freedom in their brave new world. It is the play about breaking taboos and crossing frontiers, whether sexual, social, or spiritual."

**Ms. Doran** began her career as a writer and performer at Cambridge University, where she studied English Literature. Her plays include, among others, *Living Room in Africa* (Off-Broadway), *Until Morning*, *Odes and Gameshows*, *The Parents' Evening*, *2 Soldiers*, and *Feminine Wash*. She has been produced at the Edinburgh Festival, The Atlantic Theater in New York City, The Old Vic Theatre, and the Drury Lane in London. Her adaptations include Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* directed by Andrei Serban, *Great Expectations* (Off-Broadway with Kathleen Chalfant at the Lucille Lortel), and Maeterlinck's *The Blind* for CSC. She is the recipient of three Lecomte du Nouy Lincoln Center playwriting awards, and her work has been developed by the O'Neill Playwrights Center, the McCarter Theatre, and Sundance among others. A former playwriting fellow at Juilliard, her work spans both drama and comedy, reflecting her roots as a comedy writer for VH1, BBC TV and Radio, and The Cambridge Footlights. *Time Out NY* calls Doran's work, "Thought-provoking... elegantly understated and touchingly conveyed."

## DIRECTION & DESIGN

Called "a theatre man of imagination and vision" by **The New York Times**, **Joe Calarco** is a frequent director at Signature Theatre. Three of the productions that Calarco has directed at Signature received the Helen Hayes Award for either Outstanding Musical or Play, as well as Outstanding Director: *Urinetown*, *Side Show*, and *Nijinsky's Last Dance*. Select additional credits include *Elegies* at Signature (Helen Hayes nomination, Outstanding Musical), and Off-Broadway productions of *Shakespeare's R&J* (adapter/director, Lucille Lortel Award); *Boy, in the absence of spring*, *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, and *The Summer of the Swans*. He is a current directing nominee for a Helen Hayes Award for Signature's production of *Assassins*.

Joining Calarco are seven-time Helen Hayes Award-winning Scenic Designer **James Kronzer** (*Urinetown*, *Elegies*, *in the absence of spring*, *Floyd Collins*), Costume Designer Kate Turner-Walker (Round House: *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, Folger: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; Studio: *Red Light Winter*, *Fat Pig*), Lighting Designer Chris Lee (*Saving Aimee*, *Into the Woods*, *Urinetown*, *Elegies*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *in the absence of spring*, *Side Show*), and Sound Designer/Composer Matthew Nielson (Signature: *Ten Unknowns*; Off Broadway: The Public Theatre: *Shakespeare's Villains*, *Lackawanna Blues*; Round House: *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (Helen Hayes nomination)).

## CAST

The seven characters in **Nest** include the historical figures of Susanna Cox, her master Jacob Geer and his wife Elizabeth, and Daniel Boone. Fictional characters include a successful publisher Drumble, a young writer Joe, and the Chaplain. Making her professional debut **Anne Veal**, a third-year student at American University, plays the role of Susanna Cox. The ensemble cast also includes **Michael Grew** (Kennedy Center: *The Brand New Kid*), **Vanessa Lock** (Signature: *Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love*, *in the absence of spring*), **Stephen Patrick Martin** (Shakespeare Theatre: *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Hamlet*; Ford's Theatre: *The Grapes of Wrath*), **Charlie Matthes** (New York's 4th St. Theatre: *Suburbia*; Seattle Rep: *The Lady From Dubuque*; LA Theatre Works: *Becket or the Honor of God*), Richard Pelzman (Signature: *Four Dogs and a Bone*, *The Rink*, *Over & Over*; Shakespeare

Theatre: *Pericles* (Helen Hayes nomination), and James Slaughter (Off-Broadway: *Scenes from an Execution*; Olney: *An Enemy of the People* (Helen Hayes nomination); Arena: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*).

## DETAILS

### NEST

By Bathsheba Doran

### Cast (in alphabetical order)

Joe **Michael Grew**

Elizabeth **Vanessa Lock**

Chaplain **Stephen Patrick Martin**

Jacob **Charlie Matthes**

Daniel Boone **Richard Pelzman**

Drumble **James Slaughter**

Susanna Cox **Anne Veal**

### Direction & Design

Director **Joe Calarco**

Set Designer **James Kronzer**

Costume Designer **Kate Turner-Walker**

Lighting Designer **Chris Lee**

Sound Designer/Composer **Matthew Nielson**

Production Stage Manager **Katherine C. Mielke**

### Schedule

**April 24 – June 24, 2007**

*Press Date:* Sunday, April 29, 2007

*Show Times:* Tuesday and Wednesday at 7:30pm, Thursday and Friday at 8pm, Saturday at 2pm and 8pm., and Sunday at 2pm and 7pm

There is no Saturday matinee on April 28.

### Tickets

Tickets are \$33 to \$55 and sold through Tickets.com (800) 955-5566 and online at [www.signature-theatre.org](http://www.signature-theatre.org) Discounts are available for students, seniors (60+, military, and groups of ten or more. The Signature Box Office is open Monday through Friday from 10 am to 6 pm and during performances.

## ABOUT SIGNATURE

Signature is a non-profit professional theater company dedicated to producing contemporary plays and musicals, reinventing classic musicals, and developing new work. To date, Signature has presented more than 20 world premiere productions and commissions. The works of Stephen Sondheim, however, are the Theatre's "signature." Signature is renowned for combining Broadway-quality productions with an intimate playing space, and using live orchestras with unamplified performers. In addition to the finest talent from the D.C. metropolitan area as well as New York, Signature has been a home to such theater luminaries as Cameron Mackintosh, Terrence McNally, John Kander and Fred Ebb, and, of course, Stephen Sondheim.

In January 2007, Signature moved into its new \$16 million two-theater complex in the Shirlington Village area of Arlington, Virginia.

In its 17 years under Co-Founder and Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer, Signature has been nominated for 209 Helen Hayes Awards for excellence in the professional theater (18 nominations in 2006) and has been honored with 50 Helen Hayes Awards, including Outstanding Musical in 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2005, 2006, and Outstanding Play in 1999.

**Directions**

Signature Theatre is located just five miles from downtown Washington, DC at 2800 South Stafford Street in Arlington, VA, immediately off I-395 at the Shirlington exit.

**Contact Info**

Tickets.com (800) 955-5566

Box Office (703) 820-9771

Administration (571) 527-1860

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