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Rehearsals Underway for Animal Crackers!

The Marx Brothers Musical Comedy Classic Begins September 4

Baltimore, MD—August 6, 2013. Rehearsals began Tuesday for *Animal Crackers*, the first production of Center Stage's 2013-14 Season. This classic American musical comedy is set to feature City Paper Best Actor Bruce Nelson as Groucho Marx playing the ineffable Captain Spaulding. Under the direction of Northlight Theatre Artistic Director BJ Jones—who previously directed Center Stage's smash production of *A Skull in Connemara*—*Animal Crackers* begins previews on September 4 and runs through October 13.

"It's hard to overstate the genius of the Marx Brothers," says Artistic Director Kwame Kwei-Armah. "This is high-flying, laugh-a-minute lunacy at its best, and I can't wait to see families and kids of all ages come together to enjoy this remarkable musical comedy."

A toe-tapping, knee-slapping classic, *Animal Crackers* gets a zany new revival in this gem of American comedy. Filled with secret identities, love affairs, and stolen art, this timeless comedy proves the genius of the Marx Brothers is as spot on as ever. This new adaptation by Henry Wishcamper is based on the original book by George S. Kaufman & Morrie Ryskind, music and lyrics by Bert Kalmar & Harry Ruby, and features new orchestrations by Doug Peck.

Joining Bruce Nelson in the Marx Brothers family are Brad Aldous as Harpo and Jonathan Brody as Chico, who come to Baltimore from the recent Williamstown Theatre Festival production, where their performances as Harpo and Chico were hailed by critics and audiences alike (Brody also having played Chico previously at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago). Rounding out the Marx quartet as Zeppo is Sean Montgomery—fresh off the National Tour of *Mary Poppins*.

Completing the ensemble of actors are five talented performers making their Center Stage debuts. Sean Blake toured with the National and Australian tours of *Show Boat*, and has worked throughout regional theater as both a performer and choreographer. Dina DiCostanzo's credits in regional theaters across the country include musicals from *42nd Street* to *Hairspray* and *Singing in the Rain*. Erin Kommor comes most recently from *Goodspeed Opera*, where she performed in Stephen Schwartz's *Snapshots* and the new musical *Come From Away*. John Scherer is a Broadway veteran whose many credits include *LoveMusik*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *The Most Happy Fella*, *Mame*, and *42nd Street*. Rounding out the cast is Chicago native Catherine Smitko, whose work includes *Mme. Thenardier* in several productions of *Les Misérables*, as well as *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Cinderella*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

Also coming to Center Stage from the Williamstown and Goodman productions of *Animal Crackers* is Director of Physical Comedy Paul Kalina. A trained physical performer and director, Kalina is a Co-Founding member of the physical theater company *500 Clown*, a Represented Artist with *Cirque du Soleil*, and an Assistant Professor of Movement at The University of Iowa.

Animal Crackers, directed by BJ Jones, begins previews on Wednesday, September 4. The show opens officially on Wednesday, September 11, and closes October 13. Tickets start at \$19 and can be purchased by calling 410.332.0033, or visiting www.centerstage.org. Full information on the season can be found at www.centerstage.org/2013-14season.

Animal Crackers is sponsored by Bank of America, with additional support from McCormick & Company and KPMG. Center Stage is supported by a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC), an agency dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive. An agency of the Department of Business & Economic Development, the MSAC provides financial support and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations, units of government, colleges, and universities for arts activities. Funding for the MSAC is also provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. Maryland Public Television is a Media Partner for Center Stage's 2013-14 Season.

Center Stage

Under the leadership of playwright, actor, and director Kwame Kwei-Armah OBE (Artistic Director) and national arts leader Stephen Richard (Managing Director), Center Stage is an artistically driven institution committed to engaging, entertaining, and enriching audiences of today and tomorrow through joyous and bold performance. The professional, nonprofit theater company is dedicated to the creation and presentation of a dynamic and diverse array of new and classic work, and each year hosts an audience of more than 100,000 in its historic home in Baltimore's Mount Vernon neighborhood. With its signature focus on civic and community engagement, Center Stage, The State Theater of Maryland, enters its second 50 years with a commitment to exploring how art and entertainment communicate in the 21st century, and to igniting meaningful conversation in Baltimore and beyond.

CAST

Harpo/The Professor	Brad Aldous
Hives/Roscoe W. Chandler	Sean Blake
Chico/Emmanuel Ravelli	Jonathan Brody
Arabella Rittenhouse	Dina DiCostanzo
Grace Carpenter/Mary	Erin Kommor
Zeppo/Parker	Sean Montgomery
Groucho/Captain Spaulding	Bruce Randolph Nelson
Winston/Doucet	John Scherer
Mrs. Rittenhouse	Catherine Smitko

ARTISTIC TEAM

Book	George S. Kaufman & Morrie Ryskind
Music & Lyrics	Bert Kalmar & Harry Ruby
Adapter	Henry Wishcamper
Orchestrations	Doug Peck
Director	BJ Jones
Musical Director	Laura Bergquist
Director of Physical Comedy	Paul Kalina

Choreographer	Tammy Mader
Scenic Design	Neil Patel
Costume Design	David Burdick
Lighting Design	Mark McCullough
Sound Design	Zachary Williamson
Stage Manager	Captain Kate Murphy
Assistant Stage Manager	Benjamin Royer
Dramaturg	Gavin Witt
Casting Director	Pat McCorkle
Additional Casting	Lynn Baber, CSA
Music Contractor	Chris Hofer