

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

1 September, 2009

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OLD TOWN, NEW TOWN, OUR TOWN AT THEATREWORKS

Thanks to two plays coming to THEATREWORKS, our town will never have looked so familiar, or so new.

One begins in 1901 and ends in 1913, spending all its time in a small town in New Hampshire; the other reaches back to 1690 and forwards to 2009, and features characters and actors from the front range of Colorado. One may be America's best known and best loved play; the other is just as American, but never seen before on any stage. In pairing the world premiere of *Invisible Voices* created by Ping Chong with Thornton Wilder's classic *Our Town*, THEATREWORKS is producing a unique double bill of theater that speaks directly to the way we live—now and always—in our town. The plays will be presented in repertory September 24-October 25 in the Bon Vivant Theater at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. You've heard of Grover's Corner—it may be the most real and best known fictional local habitation in America. Wilder's meditation on ordinary life led by ordinary people in small town New Hampshire at the turn of the century spoke to ordinary people living ordinary lives everywhere and in every town. That is just as true now as it was in 1938, when the play was written. Wilder knew relatively few of us live in small New England villages, but he also knew that the way people live in Grover's Corners in 1901 is pretty much the way people have lived for millions of years—families sitting down for supper, coming home from work, “and the smoke going up the chimney.” *Our Town* famously strips away all the familiar trappings of ordinary life—all the *stuff*—in order to reveal what is deepest, most persistent, and most precious in our lives, whether they are lived in Babylon thousands of years ago or in Colorado in the 21st century.

The new THEATREWORKS production of the play will present something old and something new in *Our Town*. “This will not be a gimmicky production,” says director Murray Ross; “it will probably be more minimal and more straightforward than the production you saw or were in at high school. But it will also be more immediate and contemporary.” The idea, he says, is to preserve the particular quality of Grover's

Corners while also inviting the audience to see that this is the way we still are, “in our growing up and in our marrying and in our living and in our dying.”

THEATREWORKS has assembled an all-state cast to reside in *Our Town*. Steven Weitz, this summer’s Hamlet at the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, plays the Stage Manager—the role played by Hal Holbrook, Paul Newman, Spaulding Grey and so many great American actors. Newcomer Chrissey Bakken is Emily Webb; Ben Bonenfant is George Gibbs. Tom Paradise and Emily Paton Davies are Mr. and Mrs. Webb; Leslie O’Carroll and Steve Wallace are Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs. Mark Arnest plays Simon Stimson, the choir director, and also composes music for this production. Sixteen other actors swell the town’s progress. The scenic elements are by Roy Ballard; Elizabeth Ross is the costumer; the lighting is by Lloyd Sobel.

The actors and characters of *Invisible Voices* are not nearly as well known as the famous inhabitants of *Our Town*. You will not have seen Sandy Lahmann, Billy Allen, Kelly Tobin, Kevin Pettit, Rebecca Shields, or Rick Modderman on stage before—because they have never been there. These actors all play themselves, and tell their own stories in this new dramatic work created by Ping Chong, the internationally acclaimed director and documentary theater artist. *Invisible Voices* is about people living with disabilities—very different kinds of disabilities. People with disabilities form the largest minority group in the country—there are 54 million of them—one in six of us. Disability crosses all boundaries, affecting people of all ages, races and religion. Yet often this group’s presence has gone unrecognized and unseen, and their voices unheard. *Invisible Voices* tells the stories of people who have accepted, adapted and thrived with their disabilities—real people with real lives, real differences and real challenges. “The play is intended to change our perspective on what it means to have a disability,” says Ping Chong. The production is part of an ongoing series of community-specific oral history works which examines the lives and experiences of people who are often excluded from view in their own home towns. The stories themselves are illuminating—and also gripping, surprising and thrilling theater.

The production of *Invisible Voices* will be filmed and later put into a DVD in conjunction with the tenth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 2010. The production is co-sponsored by Meeting the Challenge and Windstar Studios. Both productions are presented in conjunction with the community based focus of the annual Pikes Peak Library’s All Pike Peak Reads project. The library will provide an exhibition of photographs of Colorado Springs at the turn of the twentieth century, on display in the theater during the run of the productions.

Our Town opens September 24 and plays for fifteen performances through October 25. *Invisible Voices* premieres October 1, and plays for eight performances through 17 October. Both productions are in the Bon Vivant Theater in University Hall on the UCCS campus. For further information and ticket reservations go to www.theatreworksCS.org or call the THEATREWORKS box office at 719-255-3232.

Our Town
by Thornton Wilder

in rep with

Invisible Voices
by Ping Chong

FACT SHEET

Our Town

DIRECTOR: Murray Ross

DESIGNERS: Roy Ballard – Set Design
Lighting Design – Lloyd Sobel
Elizabeth Ross – Costume Designer

WHEN/WHERE: Dusty Loo Bon Vivant Theater
University Hall
1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway
Colorado Springs, CO 80918
719.255.3232
www.theatreworksCS.org

In rep with Invisible Voices
Performances September 24 - 27, October 3 (2:00 p.m.), 4, 9, 10, 15, 17 (2:00 p.m.), 18, 22, 23, 24(2:00 p.m. & 7:30), & 25
Thursday through Sundays
Thursday-Saturday performances at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday Matinees where indicated at 2:00 p.m.
Sundays at 4:00 p.m.

10:00 a.m. Student Matinees: October 6, 8, 15, & 22.

TICKETS: \$25 Reserved Tickets
\$15 Children Under 16
\$15 Group Rate

Children under 5 will not be admitted.

For more information call the THEATREWORKS Box Office at (719) 255-3232 or e-mail: Tickets@uccs.edu. Reservations online at www.theatreworksCS.org

Invisible Voices by Ping Chong & Company

DIRECTOR: Ping Chong

DESIGNERS: Roy Ballard – Set Design
Lighting Design – Lloyd Sobel
Brian Freeland – Sound/Projection Designer

WHEN/WHERE: Dusty Loo Bon Vivant Theater
University Hall
1420 Austin Bluffs Parkway
Colorado Springs, CO 80918
719.255.3232
www.theatreworksCS.org

In rep with Our Town
Performances October 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 11, 16, 17

There is one 10:00 a.m. student matinee on October 13

TICKETS: \$25 Reserved Tickets
\$15 Children Under 16
\$15 Group Rate

Children under 5 will not be admitted.

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