

XANADU

Boston Premiere to be SpeakEasy's 100th Production

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FOR MORE INFORMATION
Jim Torres (617) 529-1670

(BOSTON) – Beginning May 11, SpeakEasy Stage will proudly present the Boston Premiere of the hit Broadway musical comedy **XANADU**. This acclaimed show will be the company's 100th production.

Based on the cult film of the same name, which starred Olivia Newton-John and Gene Kelly, this riotous musical follows the efforts of a magical Greek muse who drops in on Venice Beach, California in 1980, disguised as an Australian, to help a struggling artist achieve his dream of opening a roller disco.

XANADU features a book by the ingenious Douglas Carter Beane (*The Little Dog Laughed*, *Sister Act*, *Lysistrata Jones*) and a score full of chart-topping tunes by Jeff Lynne and John Farrar ("Magic," "Suddenly," "Evil Woman"). Mr. Lynne wrote and produced all of the music of Electric Light Orchestra (ELO), and Mr. Farrar was also responsible for most of the hits that were performed by Olivia Newton-John in the 1970s.

McCaela Donovan will star as the muse Clio/Kira in the SpeakEasy production, which will also feature Ryan Overberg as Sonny, Robert Saoud as Danny Maguire/Zeus, Kathy St. George as Calliope/Aphrodite, and Shana Dirik as Melpomene/Medusa. Cheo Bourne, Patrick Connolly, Kami Rushell Smith and Val Sullivan are also featured in the cast.

SpeakEasy's Producing Artist Director Paul Daigneault will direct this Boston premiere production of **XANADU**. Mr. Daigneault has directed over forty plays and musicals for SpeakEasy, and has twice been named Best Director by the Boston Theater Critics Association. In addition, Mr. Daigneault serves on the faculty at The Boston Conservatory; and this season, is also the Rev. J. Donald Monan S.J. Professor in Theatre Arts at Boston College.

Mr. Daigneault's artistic team includes music director Nicholas James Connell and choreographer David Connelly.

The SpeakEasy design team includes Crystal Tiala (scenic), Gail Astrid Buckley (costumes), Karen Perlow (lighting), and Aaron Mack (sound). Victoria S. Coady is the Production Stage Manager and Ryan A. Anderson is the Assistant Stage Manager.

XANADU will be performed beginning May 11 in the Roberts Studio Theatre in the Stanford Calderwood Pavilion at the Boston Center for the Arts, 527 Tremont St. in Boston's South End.

Ticket prices start at \$30 with discounts for students and seniors. Persons under age 25 are \$25 at all times. Student rush is \$14 one hour before curtain with valid ID.

For tickets or more information, the public is invited to call 617-933-8600 or visit www.SpeakEasyStage.com.

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XANADU is based on the 1980 movie musical of the same name, which was, in turn, inspired by the 1947 Rita Hayworth film *Down to Earth*. (The word ‘Xanadu’ means a beautiful, idyllic place, and is also referenced famously in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem *Kubla Khan*.)

Olivia Newton-John and Gene Kelly headlined the film (Kelly’s last), which sought to capitalize on the roller-disco craze sweeping the country at the time. Instead, the film was soundly thrashed by critics, and has since been blamed for killing interest in large scale movie musicals for decades. The movie’s soundtrack, however, did far better than the film itself, with five of the songs reaching No. 1 on the US and UK singles charts.

The announcement that the movie would be adapted into a Broadway musical drew much skepticism. However, it quickly became apparent that the musical version of **XANADU** was not going to be an exact replica of the movie. Douglas Carter Beane, whose play *The Little Dog Laughed* was nominated for a 2007 Tony Award for Best Play, wrote the book for **XANADU**, adding more storylines about Greek mythology and many parody references to the movie.

The first workshop of the show occurred in January 2007 and featured Jane Krakowski and Cheyenne Jackson in the leading roles. Both actors were subsequently cast in the Broadway production but were forced to pull out due to scheduling conflicts.

XANADU officially opened on July 10, 2007 and closed September 28, 2008, after 49 previews and 513 regular performances. The show received positive reviews and broke the one-day box office record at the Helen Hayes Theatre the day after the reviews came out. It was nominated for four 2008 Tony Awards, including Best Musical. The show also won a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Book of a Musical for Douglas Carter Beane, as well as the Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding New Broadway Musical.

A national tour of **XANADU** ran from late December 2008 to 2010.

Douglas Carter Beane (Book) has credits on Broadway that include *Lysistrata Jones*, *Sister Act*, *Mr. and Mrs. Fitch*, *Xanadu* (Outer Critics Circle & HX Awards for Best Musical, Drama Desk Award for Best Book, and four Tony nominations including Best Musical) and *The Little Dog Laughed* (Tony Award nomination, GLAAD Media Award & HX Award for Best Play). His other plays include *As Bees in Honey Drown* (Outer Critics Circle John Gassner Award), *Music from a Sparkling Planet*, *The Country Club*, *Advice from a Caterpillar*, *The Cartells*, and *Mondo Drama*. He wrote the film adaptation of his play *Advice from a Caterpillar* as well as the screenplay of *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar*.

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Jeff Lynne (Music and Lyrics) formed the Electric Light Orchestra, or E.L.O., in the 1970s. The group gradually developed from cult favorites into one of the 70's leading recording acts, scoring international success with several platinum-selling albums, including *A New World Record* and *Out Of The Blue*. Lynne's dual talents as a composer and producer ensured the group's status but, sensing an artistic sterility, he abandoned his creation in 1986. The artist then assumed an increasingly backroom role, but won praise for his production work with George Harrison (*Cloud Nine*), Randy Newman (*Land Of Dreams*) and Roy Orbison (*Mystery Girl*) and he has also contributed his distinctive production qualities to much of Tom Petty's recent output. Lynne's work with Orbison coincided with his position as 'Otis Wilbury' in the Traveling Wilburys, an informal 'supergroup' completed by Orbison, Harrison, Tom Petty and Bob Dylan. This particularly prolific period was also marked by his work with Brian Wilson on the ex-Beach Boys' first long-awaited solo album. In recent years, Lynne has produced the Beatles lost tapes, notably "Free as a Bird" and "Real Love". He co-produced Paul McCartney's *Flaming Pie* in 1997.

John Farrar (Music and Lyrics) left Australia in 1970 at the invitation of the legendary English group The Shadows, with whom he recorded six albums. During a break, he began recording with Olivia Newton-John. He went on to produce 14 albums for her. After winning a Grammy (Record of the Year) for "I Honestly Love You," he moved to LA, where he wrote and produced many of her hits: "Have You Never Been Mellow," "Hopelessly Devoted to You" - (Academy Award nomination), "You Are the One That I Want" (Golden Globe nomination), "Don't Stop Believing," "A Little More Love," "Magic," "Suddenly," "Sam," and "Make a Move on Me." He also produced the mega-hit "Physical." In 1995, he co-wrote the songs for the Cliff Richard musical *Heathcliff*. He also co-wrote with Francis Ford Coppola songs for a musical version of the hit 60s movie *Gidget* which has been indefinitely postponed.

Nine talented local actors will bring the characters of **XANADU** to life for the SpeakEasy Stage Company production:

CHEO BOURNE* (Thalia/Siren/Cyclops/80s Singer/Young Danny) happily returns to SpeakEasy where he last appeared in *Jerry Springer-The Opera*. Other Boston credits include *Passing Strange*, *Hot Mikado*, *Cabaret* (New Rep); *Of Mice and Men*, *Animal Farm* (New Rep on Tour); *Harriet Jacobs* (Underground Railway Theater); *HONK!* (Wheelock Family Theatre); and *The Comedy of Errors* (Commonwealth Shakespeare Company). He has studied acting at Connecticut College and the British American Drama Academy. Cheo made his NYC debut in the New York Musical Theater Festival's production of *Shine!*. He has also recently participated in numerous readings of Shawn Cody's *The Water Dream*. Cheo grew up in Boston and currently lives in Brooklyn.

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PATRICK CONNOLLY (Terpsichore/Siren/Hermes/Centaur/80s Singer) is ecstatic to be making his SpeakEasy debut! A native of Wellesley, Massachusetts and a 2011 graduate of Boston College, Patrick appeared as Freddy in *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, Oscar Lindquist in *Sweet Charity*, and Jamie in *The Last 5 Years*. He extends his extreme gratitude to Paul and to SpeakEasy for this amazing opportunity, and to Nick, David, Mrs. Joan Hung, Steven Wroblewski, The Robsham Theater Arts Center, José Delgado, his dear friends and family, and especially Mom and Dad.

SHANA DIRIK* (Melpomene/Medusa) is thrilled to return to SpeakEasy Stage where she last appeared as Mama Maddelena in *Nine*. Local credits include Mama Morton, *Chicago* (Palace Theatre, Manchester, NH); Mrs. Knowley, *Calvin's Monster* (Boston Children's Theatre); Lettice, *Lettice & Lovage* (Next Door Theater); Auntie Bessie, *A Child's Christmas in Wales* (Boston Playwrights' Theatre); Charlotte, *A Little Night Music* (Metro Stage, 2010 IRNE for Best Supporting Actress in a musical); and Mrs. Lovett, *Sweeney Todd* (Metro Stage, 2009 IRNE for Best Actress in a Musical). Past roles include Aldonza, *Man of La Mancha*; Anna, *The King & I*; Terri, *Sideman*; Kate, *Kiss Me Kate*; Mame, *Mame*; The Witch, *Into the Woods*; Phyllis, *Follies*; Mrs. Johnston, *Blood Brothers*; Sally Bowles, *Cabaret*; Diana, *California Suite*; Mother Superior, *Nunsense*; and Eva Peron, *Evita*. She can also be heard with the Colonial Radio Players on Sirius XM worldwide. Thank you, Paul, for this roller skating journey. And as always, much love to my family and friends.

McCAELA DONOVAN* (Clio/Kira) is so excited to be back (and be blonde!) with the SpeakEasy family after appearing last season as Janet in *The Drowsy Chaperone* and as Carla in *Nine*. Local credits: Huntington Theatre Company, American Repertory Theater, Berkshire Theatre Festival, Reagle Music Theatre (IRNE nom), Commonwealth Shakespeare Company, Actors' Shakespeare Project, New Repertory Theatre, Brandeis Theatre Company, and Company One. New York Credits: NYMT Festival, Primary Stages. McCaela holds a BFA in Musical Theatre (Ithaca College), an MA in Theatre Education (Emerson College), and an MFA in Acting (Brandeis University). She is a member of the Society of American Fight Directors, the Screen Actors Guild, Actors' Equity Association, and a founding member of mycollegeaudition.com. Special thanks to Paul D., and the amazing cast and crew. Love to Sean, Dotti, and my family.

RYAN OVERBERG (Sonny) is ecstatic to be making his SpeakEasy debut with *Xanadu*. Originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, Ryan has traveled the country in tours of *Hairspray* and *Saturday Night Fever*. Other professional credits: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Paper Mill Playhouse); *Oklahoma!* (Atlanta Theater of the Stars); *Hello, Dolly* (Arkansas Repertory Theatre); and the NYC premiere of *Show Choir! The Musical*. Film: *The Big Gay Musical Movie (Scott)*. Ryan is a rising senior at The Boston Conservatory, where he has appeared as Tommy in *The Who's Tommy*, and Roger in *Rent*, the latter also under the direction of Paul Daigneault. Ryan has also participated in 3 years of *Broadway Bares - Broadway Cares Equity Fights AIDS*. Ryan would like to thank Paul for another great opportunity and give a shout out to his own 3 muses: Mom, Maw Maw, and Kathy for being a fierce trio of ladies giving constant inspiration and drive from above.

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ROBERT SAOUD* (Danny) was most recently seen at SpeakEasy as Underling in *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Other SpeakEasy shows include *The New Century*; *Some Men*; *Anna in the Tropics*; and

Hello, Again. Nationally, Robert toured in *Groucho* as Chico Marx with Gabe Kaplan as Groucho. In New England, he has appeared at the Huntington Theatre, North Shore Music Theatre, Trinity Rep, Lyric Stage, New Rep, Stoneham Theatre, Wheelock Family Theatre, and The Publick Theatre. Robert has also appeared in numerous cabarets, and is a Fellow of the 2000 Eugene O'Neill Cabaret Symposium. He is also a proud member of Actors' Equity Association. Thanks to all the wonderful folks at SpeakEasy and to his INCREDIBLE FAMILY for putting up with him!

KAMI RUSHELL SMITH* (Euterpe/Siren/Thetis/40s Singer) is happy to be back at SpeakEasy after playing Our Lady of the Spa in last season's *Nine*. Other local credits: Lyric Stage Company - *Big River*; Underground Railway Theater - *Harriet Jacobs* (IRNE nomination - Best Actress); Reagle Music Theatre - *Hairspray*; New Repertory Theatre - *Passing Strange*, *New Rep's Darling Divas Deck the Holidays*, *Dessa Rose*; Actors' Shakespeare Project - *Much Ado About Nothing*; Wheelock Family Theatre - *The Phantom Tollbooth*, *The Little Mermaid*; Shakespeare Now! - *Macbeth* (Lady Macbeth); The Boston Conservatory - *The Life*. B.A. in English from Carnegie Mellon, Masters in Musical Theater from Boston Conservatory. Just happy to be here. www.KamiRushellSmith.com.

KATHY ST. GEORGE* (Calliope/Aphrodite) has appeared at SpeakEasy in *The Divine Sister*, *Ruthless!*, and *Johnny Guitar*. She has performed on Broadway in the Tony Award-winning revival of *Fiddler on the Roof* directed by Jerome Robbins (Gershwin Theatre), Off-Broadway in *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (Westside Theatre), Off-Off-Broadway in *Aphrodite* (Theatre For The New City), and wayyyyyy Off-Broadway in six National Tours. Recent credits include *Steel Magnolias* and *42nd Street* (Stoneham Theatre) and *The Producers* (Riverside Theatre, Vero Beach, FL). Regional/Local: Actors Theatre of Louisville, Barter Theatre, Kansas City Starlight, Long Wharf, Hanover Theatre, Lyric Stage, Charles Playhouse, Merrimack Rep. Kathy is a two-time IRNE Award recipient for *Das Barbecu* (New Rep), and *And Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, Miss Judy Garland*. Upcoming: *Dear Miss Garland* (June/July '12) at Stoneham Theatre. www.kathystgeorge.com.

VAL SULLIVAN (Erato/Siren/40s Singer/Eros/Hera) happily returns to SpeakEasy where she last appeared as Susan in [title of show]. Other SpeakEasy credits: *A New Brain*; *Songs for A New World*; *Triumph of Love*; *Putting It Together*; *A Grand Night for Singing*; *Schoolhouse Rock Live!*; *Merrily We Roll Along*; *A Fair Country*. Local credits: *Hamlet* (Publick Theatre), *Measure for Measure* (Theatre Cooperative), *The Snow Ball* w/s (Huntington Theatre), *The Summer Play Festival* (Boston Actors' Theater) and many cabarets and workshops with Centastage and NOMTI. She has directed several plays for the Massachusetts High School Drama Festival including *Antigone*, *Xingu*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Infernal Machine*. She was the recipient of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and studied at the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-Upon-Avon. She is an alumna of Boston College.

For tickets or more information on **XANADU**, the public can call the BostonTheatreScene Box Office at 617-933-8600 or visit www.BostonTheatreScene.com.

Press inquiries should be directed to **SpeakEasy Marketing Director Jim Torres**:
Office: 617-482-3279 Cell: 617-529-1670 Email: JimTorres@SpeakEasyStage.com.
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Calendar Listing Information

Xanadu

Music & Lyrics by Jeff Lynne and John Farrar, Book by Douglas Carter Beane

Based on the cult film of the same name which starred Gene Kelly and Olivia Newton John, this riotous new musical follows the efforts of a magical Greek muse who descends to Earth to help a struggling artist achieve his dream of opening a roller disco. Featuring an ingenious book by Douglas Carter Beane (*The Little Dog Laughed*) and a score full of chart-topping tunes (“*Magic*,” “*Suddenly*,” “*Evil Woman*”), *Xanadu* is hilarity on wheels.

Presented by: SpeakEasy Stage Company, the Calderwood Pavilion Resident Theatre Company at the Boston Center for the Arts; Paul Daigneault, Producing Artistic Director

Cast: Cheo Bourne, Patrick Connolly, Shana Dirik, McCaela Donovan, Ryan Overberg, Robert Saoud, Kami Rushell Smith, Kathy St. George, Val Sullivan

Director: Paul Daigneault
Musical Director: Nicholas James Connell
Choreographer: David Connolly

Production Stage Manager: Victoria S. Coady
Assistant Stage Manager: Ryan A. Anderson

Design Team: Scenic: Crystal Tiala
Costumes: Gail Astrid Buckley
Lighting: Karen Perlow
Sound Design: Aaron Mack

Performing at: Roberts Studio Theatre in the Stanford Calderwood Pavilion
at the Boston Center for the Arts, 527 Tremont Street in Boston's South End

Press Performances: Sunday, May 13 at 3PM.

Performance Schedule: Starts May 11, 2012
Wed., Thurs. at 7:30PM; Fri at 8PM; Sat. at 4PM & 8PM; Sun. at 3PM
Added performance – Tuesday, June 5 at 7:30PM

Run Time: 90 minutes with no intermission

Ticket Prices: Tickets Start at \$30. Seniors \$5 off at all times.
Under Age 25: \$25 at all times.

Student Rush: \$14 with valid college ID, at the box-office only, one hour
before curtain, subject to availability. Limit one per ID.

Box Office: 617-933-8600; www.BostonTheatreScene.com

Press Contact Only: Jim Torres – 617- 529-1670 (cell)
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