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Casting and Creative Team Announced for Cider Mill Playhouse Production of *Stage Kiss*

(Endicott, NY) One of the newest plays to hit professional theatre, *Stage Kiss* by Sarah Ruhl, will run at Cider Mill Playhouse this spring. The production is the first in upstate NY and only months after its New York City premiere at Playwrights Horizons. "The play is part romantic comedy, part farce, part backstage drama – but all heart. There's something for everyone here," shares *Stage Kiss* director Emily Jackson. Artistic Associate of Kitchen Theatre Company in Ithaca, NY, this will be Jackson's directorial debut at Cider Mill Playhouse. "We are thrilled to have a director of Emily Jackson's caliber contributing to the Cider Mill Playhouse renaissance," states Executive and Artistic Director Gail King Belokur. "Smarts, creativity, and setting the example as a consummate professional are just some of the strengths Ms. Jackson brings to her work."

Joining Jackson on the creative team are Tyler M. Perry (Scenic & Lighting Design), Anna Grigo (Costume Design) and Ian Crawford (Sound Design). Perry's work has been enjoyed at CMP most of this season, in which he is serving as guest resident designer. Both Grigo and Crawford make their CMP debuts. "Sarah Ruhl's work is rich with warmth and humor, and she presents not one but two plays-within-a-play which makes the artistic team's work a wonderful challenge," explains Belokur. "The opportunity to work on one of the first productions of a play that enjoyed such a strong run at Playwrights Horizons by one of America's favorite contemporary playwrights is a draw that helped us assemble a strong artistic team and cast."

Indeed, the cast promises to be one of CMP's strongest yet. Actors' Equity Association members Erica Steinhagen and Ezra Barnes appear in the lead roles. Steinhagen makes her CMP debut but has extensive regional credits including Hangar Theatre and Kitchen Theatre Company in Ithaca, NY. Barnes' Off-Broadway credits include Signature Center & Theatre Row and his regional credits include Papermill Playhouse. He also appeared in Paramount's full-length film *Noah* and on television in *The Blacklist* and in several episodes of *Law & Order*. Joining Ms. Steinhagen and Mr. Barnes are local favorites Tim Mollen and Josh Sedelmeyer, NY-based actors Dennis Brito and Annie Fearheily and Ithaca College BFA Acting major Iris Driscoll-Garrison.

In *Stage Kiss*, we meet two actors, She and He, who have been cast playing lovers in a remount production of a campy 1930s melodrama. Sounds fun enough. The catch: She and He had a passionate, tumultuous relationship when they were in their 20s and haven't spoken since. Throughout rehearsals, She and He must manage the flights and fancies that love, or pretending to be in love, may bring. *Stage Kiss* is a wild, funny ride, and in its humor the play speaks to the human desire for honest connection. While the characters navigate a world of illusion and fantasy, audiences will discover what exciting adventures reality can actually provide.

Stage Kiss runs April 16 – May 3 and is sponsored by The Corner Drug Store and Gift Shop. Thursday, Friday and Saturday performances are at 7:30 p.m., with Sunday matinees at 3 p.m. Tickets for all Cider Mill Playhouse shows are available at the box office. CALL 607-748-7363, VISIT 2 S. Nanticoke Ave, Endicott, or CLICK www.cidermillplayhouse.org. This 254-seat, cabaret-style playhouse is honored to receive season support from the New York State Council on the Arts and the Broome County Arts Council.

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