



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Hit Comedy Receives New Jersey Premiere** **At Two River Theatre Company**

(RED BANK, NJ) Starting January 15<sup>th</sup>, Two River Theatre Company will present the New Jersey Premiere of *Abigail's Party*, the wildly successful West End comedy by filmmaker Mike Leigh. Wonderfully satiric, and at times hilariously funny, *Abigail's Party* takes us back to the 70's, a decade of polyester leisure suits, mini-skirts, and the Sex Pistols. Academy Award nominee Mike Leigh, whose films include the highly regarded *Secrets and Lies* and *Topsy-Turvy*, wrote *Abigail's Party* twenty-five years ago and it became an instant cult classic.

*Abigail's Party*, a witty portrait of a suburban hell, will receive a rare American production January 15 through February 1. Mike Leigh's work is sometimes compared to that of Edward Albee, and *Abigail's Party* may just be the British *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. The two plays portray dysfunctional marriages and misplaced desires through a veil of alcohol and bitchy (or biting) humor.

Taking place during a debauched night of gin and tonics, cigarettes, and hors d'oeuvres of cheese and pineapple cubes, *Abigail's Party* is one of Mike Leigh's funniest works. Like many of his films and plays, his characters are quirky yet all too recognizable, mired in the wrenching comedy of everyday life, and set on a course of either self-redemption or destruction. Since first appearing in 1977, the play has become a cultural touchstone, engendering the phrase "Abigail's Party" as shorthand for an empty middle-class 1970's materialism, and for a garish style of suburban dress and home decoration.

(more)

“When our desires go unfulfilled, more superficial things – the style of our clothes or the decor of our homes, for example – take on a greater importance,” said director Jonathan Fox. “Keeping the play’s original 1970’s setting highlights how ephemeral fashion is, and adds another layer of irony to the play.”

The cast includes Broadway veteran Henny Russell as the outrageous Beverly, who imagining herself the perfect party hostess, force-feeds drinks and cigarettes on her uneasy guests. Playing the unsuspecting partiers are Anna Cody as the overly enthusiastic Angela, Randall Newsome as her uncommunicative husband Tony, and Pamela Wiggins as the middle-aged and put-upon divorcee, Susan. Warren Kelley (a favorite from TRTC ‘s *Noises Off*) plays Beverly’s husband, Laurence. As the laughs build, the party degenerates, and Beverly’s marriage starts to unravel.

The scenic designer is Andy Hall, the lighting designer is Brenda M. Veltre, and the costume designer is Moira Shaughnessy.

Performances begin on January 15, 2004 at the Algonquin Arts Theatre, 171 Main Street in Manasquan, and run through February 1st. Regular ticket prices range from \$19 to \$35, depending on the performance date. Immediately following the performance on Saturday, January 17th, TRTC will host a reception with the cast and director. A sign-interpreted performance scheduled for January 22 at 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$10 and reservations are required. A special matinee has been added on Wednesday, January 28th at 1:00 p.m. at the discounted price of \$19.

For tickets call TRTC’s box office at 732-345-1400, or online at [www.trtc.org](http://www.trtc.org). Student and youth tickets are available at \$11. Senior and group discounts apply. For more information about TRTC, visit [www.trtc.org](http://www.trtc.org).

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