

# TWO RIVER THEATER

**20** TH ANNIVERSARY

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**November 19, 2013**

**TWO RIVER THEATER PRESENTS *A WIND IN THE WILLOWS CHRISTMAS*, A HOLIDAY MUSICAL BY COMPOSER MIKE REID, LYRICIST SARAH SCHLESINGER, AND BOOKWRITER MINDI DICKSTEIN, CHOREOGRAPHED BY WARREN ADAMS AND DIRECTED BY DANIELLA TOPOL**

**Inside Two River events include a free open rehearsal on Sunday, November 24 at 10am; Día de la Familia, a performance with live Spanish-language translation on Saturday, December 21 at 4pm; and county-wide free events through One Book, One Community**

**Performances: December 7 – 29, 2013**  
**Press Opening: Friday, December 13 at 7pm**

RED BANK, NJ— Two River Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director John Dias and Managing Director Michael Hurst, announces the cast, creative team, and special events for *A Wind in the Willows Christmas*, a holiday musical written by composer Mike Reid, lyricist Sarah Schlesinger, and bookwriter Mindi Dickstein. The production is choreographed by Warren Adams (winner of the 2013 Fred Astaire Award for *Motown: The Musical*) and directed by Daniella Topol (*Charles Ives Take Me Home*), with music direction and vocal arrangements by John O'Neill.

Based on the children's classic by Kenneth Grahame, the musical takes audiences to a wintry wonderland where Mole, the Water Rat, Mr. Toad, and all the creatures of the Willows discover the true meaning of friendship. Performances will begin in the Rechnitz Theater, 21 Bridge Avenue, on Saturday, December 7 and continue through Sunday, December 29. The press opening is Friday, December 13 at 7pm. The lead production sponsor is Investors Bank and the co-sponsor is the Unterberg Children's Hospital at Monmouth Medical Center Barnabas Health.

Commissioned and premiered by Two River last season, *A Wind in the Willows Christmas* returns to the theater in a new production, visually reimagined by a new cast and creative team. The theater will continue to offer its popular creation station for children to display their artwork in Two River's lobby throughout the run of the show and a Q&A with the cast following every performance. Tickets

are available from 732.345.1400 or [www.tworivertheater.org](http://www.tworivertheater.org). *A Wind in the Willows Christmas* is recommended for ages 5 and up. Tickets are \$25 for patrons under age 18; ticket prices for adults range from \$20-\$55; \$20 tickets may be partial view. Discounts are available for groups, seniors, and U.S. military personnel, their families, and veterans.

The company includes **Becca Ayers** (*The Addams Family*) as Mrs. Otter; **Amanda Butterbaugh** (Two River's *Honk!*) as a Weasel; **Sean Patrick Doyle** (*La Cage aux Folles*, *The Sitter*) as a Weasel; **Cole Escola** (Two River's *Present Laughter*, the Second Annual *Backstage 30*) as Portly Otter; **William Thomas Evans** (*The Fantasticks*) as Dr. Badger; **Mike Faist** (*Newsies*) as Mole; **Justin Keyes** (*In Transit*) as the Water Rat; and **Caesar Samayoa** (*Love's Labour's Lost*, *Sister Act*) as Mr. Toad.

"Last season, Two River premiered *A Wind in the Willows Christmas* as a way to bring a holiday celebration of this wonderful story to our audiences," says Artistic Director John Dias. "This year, we are continuing to develop the piece as a great new musical for both children and adults. And this new production, with a team led by director Daniella Topol and choreographer Warren Adams, will have even more Christmas spirit."

Composer **Mike Reid** and lyricist **Sarah Schlesinger** are the composer and lyricist of musicals including *In This House* (which premiered at Two River in 2012) and *The Ballad of Little Jo*. Reid is a Grammy Award-winning songwriter with more than 30 Top-Ten pop and country hits recorded by many artists including Bonnie Raitt ("I Can't Make You Love Me") and Kenny Chesney ("Always Gonna Be You"). He received his Grammy for "Stranger in My House," recorded by Ronnie Milsap. Schlesinger is the Chair of the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. Bookwriter **Mindi Dickstein** wrote the lyrics for the Broadway musical *Little Women*. She has written several musicals for Theatreworks USA including *Black Beauty* and *Lyle, Lyle Crocodile*. Recent work includes the book for *Toy Story - The Musical*, with songs by Brendan Milburn and Valerie Vigoda (GrooveLily), for Disney Creative Entertainment.

The creative team for *A Wind in the Willows Christmas* includes scenic designer **Clint Ramos**, costume designer **Olivera Gajic**, lighting designer **Paul Whitaker**, and sound designer **Zachary Williamson**. The orchestrations are by **Danny Larsen**, the casting is by **Cindy Tolan & Adam Caldwell**, and the stage manager is **M. William Shiner**.

### **Inside Two River and Audience Extras**

New this season, Inside Two River is a series of free events—including open rehearsals, film screenings, literary chats, panel discussions, and more—specially curated for each Two River Theater production. Inside Two River events for this production are supported by family program sponsor the Unterberg Children's Hospital at Monmouth Medical Center Barnabas Health and the William T. Morris Foundation.

**One Book, One Community:** Now in its fourth year, this county-wide celebration of *A Wind in the Willows Christmas* includes partnerships with more than a dozen local libraries and businesses during the months of November and December. Free events include readings, movie screenings, arts and crafts, and other programs, as well as discounts at area retailers. For a complete schedule of events, supporters, and community partners, visit [tworivertheater.org](http://tworivertheater.org).

**Open Rehearsal on Sunday, November 24 from 10 to 11 am:** Audiences are invited to join members of the cast and creative team to observe a rehearsal that is free and open to the public. This look behind the scenes will be followed by coffee, juice, and light snacks. For reservations, call 732.345.1400 or visit [tworivertheater.org](http://tworivertheater.org).

**Día de la Familia, Saturday, December 21 at 4pm:** Each season, Two River offers a performance with live Spanish-language translation, performed by professional actors through audio-description headsets. Día de la Familia brings Spanish-speaking and bilingual children and their families to the theater—many of them for their first experience of seeing a play. This free performance also includes refreshments and theater games beginning at 3pm.

**Scout Day, Saturday, December 14 at 12pm:** Boy and Girl Scouts enjoy a backstage tour, workshops, and theater games in addition to the performance and receive a special-interest theater patch. Tickets are \$30 per scout and can be reserved through Jill Merriman at 732.345.1400 ext. 1813.

### **Accessibility**

Working with Google, Two River has created and launched a virtual tour of its facility, which lives on Google Maps and [tworivertheater.org](http://tworivertheater.org). This virtual tour provides an additional level of support and benefit for patrons who use wheelchairs or require other assistance by allowing them to virtually come through the theater's front doors and view the space in detail in advance of their visit.

**Sign-Language Interpreted Performance, Thursday, December 19 at 7pm:** This performance will be sign-language interpreted for the benefit of Deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons. Tickets are \$25 per person for those using this service. For more information, contact Adam Haratz, Access Coordinator, at [aharatz@trtc.org](mailto:aharatz@trtc.org) or 732.345,1400 ext. 1815 (v).

### **Full Performance Calendar**

Saturday, December 7 at 12pm  
Sunday, December 8 at 12pm and 4pm  
Wednesday, December 11 at 10am (Student Matinee)  
Thursday, December 12 at 10am (Student Matinee)  
Friday, December 13 at 7pm (Press Opening)  
Saturday, December 14 at 12pm (Scout Day) and 7pm  
Sunday, December 15 at 12pm and 4pm  
Wednesday, December 18 at 10am (Student Matinee) and 7pm

Thursday, December 19 at 7pm (Sign Language Interpreted)

Friday, December 20 at 7pm

Saturday, December 21 at 12pm and 4pm (Día de la Familia)

Sunday, December 22 at 12pm and 4pm

Monday, December 23 at 4pm

Thursday, December 26 at 12pm

Friday, December 27 at 12pm and 7pm

Saturday, December 28 at 12pm and 4pm

Sunday, December 29 at 12pm and 4pm

### Sponsors

The lead production sponsor of *A Wind in the Willows Christmas* is Investors Bank and the co-sponsor is the Unterberg Children's Hospital at Monmouth Medical Center Barnabas Health. The opening-night sponsors include Flowers on Front and Spirits Unlimited.

Two River Theater's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season is supported in part by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a division within the Department of State and a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, The Chicago Community Trust, The Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, Jewish Communal Fund, New Tamarind Fund, The Columbus Foundation, The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, The Stone Foundation of New Jersey, Monmouth University, The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation, Durso Wealth Management Group at Morgan Stanley, Wells Fargo, Investors Bank, Monmouth Medical Center, The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, Springpoint Senior Living Foundation at the Atrium at Navesink Harbor, and many other generous foundations, corporations and individuals.

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Two River Theater, under the leadership of Artistic Director John Dias and Managing Director Michael Hurst, is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of creating great American theater by developing and producing new works and world masterpieces. We cultivate an audience that cherishes the intimate joy of theater, enriched when shared by a community of others. Two River Theater supports adventurous theater artists and the development of new work making a sustained investment in the creative process, and cultivates a new generation of theatergoers through arts education programs. Two River Theater is a member of the League of Resident Theaters (LORT), Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the New Jersey Theatre Alliance, and ArtPride New Jersey, and has been designated a "Major Arts Institution" by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. For more information, visit [tworivertheater.org](http://tworivertheater.org).