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Nicholas Barasch, Wayne Duvall, Charlie Franklin, Kyle Scatliffe, Tony Sheldon, Christopher Sieber, Lauren Worsham, and more will star in the *Encores!* production of *Big River*, directed by Lear deBessonet, Feb 8—12

December 15, 2016/New York, NY—*Encores!* Artistic Director **Jack Viertel** today announced casting for the *Encores!* production of *Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the Tony Award-winning musical based on Mark Twain’s classic American novel. *Big River* will star **Nicholas Barasch, Patrice Covington, Andrew Cristi, Wayne Duvall, Mike Evariste, Charlie Franklin, Annie Golden, Katherine A. Guy, Megan Masako Haley, Adrianna Hicks, Zachary Infante, Gizel Jimenez, Andrew Kruep, John-Michael Lyles, Cass Morgan, Tom Nelis, Horace V. Rogers, Kyle Scatliffe, Tony Sheldon, Christopher Sieber, and Lauren Worsham.**

A thoroughly original retelling of Twain’s historic tale of friendship, freedom, and the untamed Mississippi, *Big River* follows Huckleberry Finn (Nicholas Barasch, *She Loves Me*) as he escapes down the river and encounters Jim (Kyle Scatliffe, *The Color Purple*), a runaway slave, and the notorious pair known as the Duke (Christopher Sieber, *Matilda*) and the King (Tony Sheldon, *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*). A musical underdog as scrappy and restless as Huck himself, *Big River* was created in the age of British spectacles by a quintessentially American artist—the beloved country-western singer Roger Miller—and his Tony Award-winning score is a scintillating blend of bluegrass, gospel, and honky tonk. More than thirty years later, *Big River* remains an affecting journey through 1840s America in all its beauty and savagery.

The *Encores!* production will be directed by **Lear deBessonet** with musical direction by *Encores!* Music Director **Rob Berman** and choreography by **Josh Rhodes**. *Big River* will run for seven performances at City Center from February 8—12.

Big River

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Feb 8—12, 2017

Wed – Thu at 7:30pm, Fri at 8pm, Sat at 2 & 8pm, and Sun at 2 & 7pm

Music and Lyrics by Roger Miller
Book by William Hauptman

Adapted from the novel by Mark Twain
Featuring The *Encores!* Orchestra
Choreography by Josh Rhodes
Music Director Rob Berman
Directed by Lear deBessonet

BIG RIVER ARTISTS

NICHOLAS BARASCH (Huckleberry Finn) Broadway: *She Loves Me* (Dorothy Loudon Award, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Award nominations), *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, and *West Side Story*. BAM/New York City Opera: *Anna Nicole: The Opera*. Regional: Delaware Theatre Company, Ahmanson Theatre, and National Theatre. TV/Film: *Bull* (CBS), *Mr. Student Body President* (New Form Digital), *How to Make It in America* (HBO), and *The Backyardigans* (Nickelodeon). Mr. Barasch will attend Columbia University in the fall of 2017.

WAYNE DUVALL (Pap Finn) Theater: *The Legend of Georgia McBride*, *Bright Star*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Working*, *On The Wing*, *Happy Days*, and the *Encores!* production of *Of Thee I Sing*. Film: *Wolves* (upcoming); *The Greatest Showman* (upcoming); *Prisoners*; *Lincoln*; *Edge of Darkness*; *Duplicity*; *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*; and *Apollo 13*. Television: four years as Sgt. Phil Brander on *The District* (CBS) and recurring roles on *Madam Secretary*, *The Leftovers*, and *Braindead*. Member of The Actors Center.

CHARLIE FRANKLIN (Tom Sawyer) New York theater: *The Book of Mormon* (Broadway), *The Bridges of Madison County* (original Broadway cast), and *Parade* (Lincoln Center). Regional: *The Secret Garden* (Shakespeare Theatre Company), *Lord of the Flies* (Denver Center Theatre), and *SCKBSTD* (Virginia Stage Company). Education: BFA from Pace University.

KYLE SCATLIFFE (Jim) is a graduate of the American Musical and Dramatic Academy. His credits include Harpo in the Broadway production of *The Color Purple*, Enjolras in the recent Broadway revival of *Les Misérables*, Haywood Patterson in the London premiere of *The Scottsboro Boys* (Olivier Award nomination), Coalhouse in *Ragtime* (ZACH Theatre), Jud Fry in *Oklahoma!* (5th Avenue Theatre), and Marley in *A Christmas Carol: The Concert* (Baltimore Symphony Orchestra/PBS).

TONY SHELDON (The King) created the role of Bernadette in *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* in Australia, New Zealand, Toronto (Dora Award), London (Olivier Award nomination), and Broadway (Theatre World Award, Tony and Drama Desk Award nominations.) City Center *Encores!*: *The Band Wagon*. Other New York credits include *Charles Busch's Cleopatra* and *Icon*. In his native Australia, his starring roles include *Man of La Mancha*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Private Lives*, *Noises Off*, *The Producers*, and *Falsettos*.

CHRISTOPHER SIEBER (The Duke) Broadway: *Matilda* (two and a half years as Miss Trunchbull), *Pippin*, *Shrek* (Tony Award nomination), *Spamalot* (Tony Award nomination), *Chicago*, *Into the Woods* with Vanessa Williams, *Thoroughly Modern Millie* with Sutton Foster, and *Beauty and the Beast*. City Center *Encores!*: *Violet* and *Pal Joey*. Television: *Two of a Kind*, *Sex and the City*, *It's All Relative*, *Ed*, *Elementary*, *The Good Wife*, *Law & Order: SVU*, and numerous soaps where his recurring characters never went anywhere.

LAUREN WORSHAM (Mary Jane Wilkes) originated the role of Phoebe in *A Gentleman's Guide to Love & Murder* (Tony Award nomination and Drama Desk Award). City Center: *Where's Charley?* and *Sunday in the Park with George*. Favorite New York roles include Lisa in *Dog Days* for director Robert Woodruff, Flora in *The Turn of the Screw* for Sam Buntrock, and Cunegonde in *Candide* for Hal Prince. Ms. Worsham is a founding member of the band Sky-Pony.

LEAR DEBESSONET (Director) is currently a resident director at The Public Theater and the artistic director of Public Works, for which she has directed large-scale musical adaptations of *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Odyssey* at the Delacorte Theater. Also for The Public, she directed *Good Person of Szechwan*, originally produced by Foundry Theatre at La MaMa (Obie Award, Lucille Lortel Award, Lilly Award, and Drama Desk Award nomination); and the Mobile Unit production of *Romeo and Juliet*. She directed *Pump Boys and Dinettes* for City Center *Encores!* and has directed shows for La Jolla Playhouse, LCT3, the Old Globe Theatre, the Intiman, the Guthrie, Women's Project, PS122, Ten Thousand Things, 13p, and Clubbed Thumb. Recipient of the Doris Duke Impact Award, the Meadow's Prize, and TCG's Peter Zeisler Award.

ROB BERMAN (*Encores!* Music Director) is in his tenth season as music director of *Encores!*, for which he has conducted 25 productions and four cast recordings. Mr. Berman's Broadway credits include *Bright Star*, *Tuck Everlasting*, *Dames at Sea*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *Irving Berlin's White Christmas*, *The Pajama Game*, *The Apple Tree*, *Wonderful Town*, and *Promises, Promises*. For nine years he was music director of the Kennedy Center Honors on CBS, for which he won an Emmy Award for outstanding musical direction. He has conducted for Barbara Cook with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and he was also music director for the PBS presentation of *A Broadway Celebration: In Performance at the White House*. Other credits include *Sunday in the Park with George* (Kennedy Center, Helen Hayes Award) and *Passion* (Classic Stage Company). Recordings include the complete restored score of Jerome Kern's *Roberta* for New World Records.

JOSH RHODES (Choreographer) choreographed the Broadway productions of *Rodgers + Hammerstein's Cinderella* (Outer Critics Circle, Astaire, and Drama Desk Award nominations), *It Shoulda Been You*, *First Date*, and *Bright Star* (Outer Critics Circle and Astaire Award nominations). On London's West End, he choreographed *Sweeney Todd* starring Emma Thompson. City Center *Encores!*: *Zorba*. Other theater credits include *Company* starring Neil Patrick Harris (PBS), *Sondheim: The Birthday Concert* (PBS), *The Landing* (Vineyard Theatre), *Broadway: Three Generations* (Kennedy Center), *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (Shakespeare Theatre Company), and *Working* (Prospect Theater). Mr. Rhodes directed Ken Ludwig's *Baskerville* (Old Globe Theatre), *Guys and Dolls* (Asolo Rep), *Spamalot* (5th Avenue Theatre), and *Celestina Warbeck and the Banshees* in Diagon Alley at The Wizarding World Of Harry Potter. He is a proud graduate of the University of Michigan.

The 2017 *Encores!* season is made possible, in part, by Stacey and Eric Mindich, Nathalie and Pablo Salame, The Shubert Foundation, and the Stephanie and Fred Shuman Fund for *Encores!*

New York City Center (Arlene Shuler, President & CEO) has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city since 1943. For nearly 25 years, City Center's Tony-honored *Encores!* series has been "an essential New York institution" (*The New York Times*). In 2013, City Center launched the *Encores! Off-Center* series, which features seminal Off-Broadway musicals filtered through the lens of today's innovative artists. Dance has also been integral to the theater's mission from the start and programs like the annual *Fall for Dance* Festival remain central to City Center's identity. Home to a roster of renowned national and international companies including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (City Center's Principal Dance Company) and Manhattan Theatre Club, New York City Center was Manhattan's first performing arts center, founded with the mission of making the best in music, theater, and dance accessible to all audiences. That mission continues today through robust education and community engagement programs which bring the performing arts to over 9,000 New York City students each year and expand the theatrical experience beyond the proscenium to include pre-show talks, master classes, and art exhibitions that offer an up-close look at the work of the great theater and dance artists of our time. www.NYCityCenter.org

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