Tales from the Salt City
A World Premiere Featuring Seven Local Residents

Conceived and Directed by Ping Chong
Written by Ping Chong and Sara Zatz

ARCHBOLD THEATRE at SYRACUSE STAGE
Previews: October 14-16 Open: October 17 Close: November 4

(Syracuse, NY)—This fall Syracuse Stage presents a world premiere conceived and directed by the legendary theatre innovator Ping Chong. Entitled Tales from the Salt City in reference to the salt mining history of Syracuse, the work will feature seven local residents who will voice each others rich and complex histories, extraordinary experiences and cultural identities. Running October 14 - November 4 at Syracuse Stage, Tales from the Salt City is sponsored by Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, Imagining America, National Grid, Residence Inn Marriott, Syracuse Symposium, and Syracuse University's Pulse performing arts series. Media sponsors are Syracuse.com and WAER 88.3. Syracuse Stage season sponsors are The Post-Standard and Time Warner Cable.

Tales from the Salt City is part of Chong's Undesirable Elements series, first produced during a residency at Artist Space in New York City. Since 1992, Ping Chong has created over three dozen productions in the series, in communities around the United
States and abroad. Most recently, he created a piece at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts called *Inside/Out* featuring voices from the disability community. Following *Tales*, Chong’s next project will be in Philadelphia with suburban and urban kids talking about the effects of violence in their lives.

Though hard to define, the term “documentary theatre” is perhaps the best way to describe *Undesirable Elements*, which uses real people, not actors, telling their own stories from a script based on interviews with the writers. “It’s about what it means to be different, something we have all experienced at one time or another. It’s about giving voice to people whose voices are not heard,” said Chong at a recent presentation for students in the Department of Drama in The College of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University. “It’s an unusual theatre piece because it’s not about creating an illusion on stage. What happens is what actually happened.”

True to the traditional format for an *Undesirable Elements* production, the participants will be sitting in a semi-circle on a basin filled with one and a quarter tons of salt. The production will include special moments of dance or song, and large-scale video projections (20 feet by 40 feet) will chronicle both the history of Syracuse and personal narratives of the cast.

Stage’s Producing Artistic Director Timothy Bond has known Chong for 13 years. “He is a great friend, mentor and a hero of mine,” said Bond. In 1995, Chong was commissioned to create his fourth *Undesirable Elements* production series at the Group Theatre in Seattle, where Bond served as Artistic Director.

“Ping was the first person I thought of when I started this job,” said Producing Artistic Director Timothy Bond, whose first season at Stage began September 9 with *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*. “I knew it would be a way for me to learn about Syracuse, a chance to meet our neighbors and embrace them. This is also a chance for students in the Department of Drama to see a different style of theatre, and for Stage to connect with Syracuse Symposium’s theme of ‘migration.’ For all these reasons, I knew I wanted Ping to be involved in my first season at Syracuse Stage.”

The Syracuse cast will feature seven local residents—both recent arrivals and longstanding residents—who are in some way living between cultures. They are from Cambodia, Cuba, Macedonia, Mexico, Onondaga Nation, Sudan and Syracuse, representing a broad range of ages.

The search for participants began in April 2008 through the outreach efforts of Kyle Bass, Literary Manager at Syracuse Stage, who recruited a pool of approximately 30 candidates who interviewed with Chong, Zatz and Bass. “We looked for a sense of openness and otherness, those who identify with cultures or heritages that are outside the historically dominant American culture,” said Bass. “It was also important that each person’s story was also a Syracuse story.”

The selected participants were then interviewed multiple times in person and via email. During this extensive process, Bass observed a commonality among the stories:
“Each person can pinpoint a person or group that helped them along their path. They did not take their journeys alone.”

At 7:30 p.m. on October 6 in the Joyce Hergenhan Auditorium in Newhouse 3 at Syracuse University, Ping Chong will be presenting a lecture on his work.

CAST

**Lino T. Ariloka**, originally from Sudan in Eastern Africa, has lived in Syracuse for almost 8 years. Most of his family is still in Sudan, except for his sister Margaret who he is putting through primary school in Nairobi, Kenya. Currently he works for The Bank of New York Mellon, and he interns at On Point for College, a program that helps inner city children get to college.

**Gordana Dudevski**, formerly a Kindergarten teacher in Veles, Macedonia, has lived in Syracuse for the past 15 years with her husband, Zoran, and their two children, Alexandra and Samuel. This is Gordana’s first time on stage, and she is happy to have this opportunity to tell the story of Liberty Deli, her current place of employment.

**Rebecca Isabel Fuentes** grew up in Tijuana, a city in northwestern Mexico. She has lived in Syracuse for 5 years along with her husband Jason Davis, daughter Ellain, son Roberto and mother Isabel Murillo. Currently she is working at the Red Cross as a Community Ambassador and is an Immigrant Rights Activist with the CNY Detainment Task Force. Previously she served as a Specialist in the US Army.

**José Miguel Hernández** is originally from Cuba and has lived in Syracuse for 11 years. For 10 years he has worked at Rosewood Heights Health Center as a Physical Therapy Aide, simultaneously with the Spanish Action League as a theatre dance instructor. He has a degree in nursing from The National Institute of Oncology and Radiobiology in Havana, Cuba, a theatre degree from Teatro Estudio, and in 1999 he founded La Joven Guardia del Teatro Latino (The Latino Theatre’s Youth Troupe) with Spanish Action League of Onondaga County.

**Albert Marshall** is a Syracuse native who raised his family in Syracuse. He has worked at Crucible for 35 years, and he is President of 1277 United Steel Workers Local Union. Albert has appeared in numerous theatre productions including Our Lady of 121st Street and The Member of the Wedding at The Redhouse, and 23 Skidoo (as Jim) and Annie (as Drake) at Theatre ’90.

**Emad Rahim** is originally from Cambodia and has lived in Syracuse for 17 years. He is currently working for SUNY Empire State College as Outreach and Recruitment Specialist, for the consulting company Innovative Development, Inc., as adjunct professor at Colorado Technical University and Bryant & Stratton College, and he is a member of 40 Below, "Its All Here" Taskforce and ACTS (Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse).

**Jeanne Shenandoah** has been a traditional homebirth midwife and herbalist for 25 years as a member of the Eel Clan of the Onondaga Nation. She works at the
Onondaga Nation Communications Office, serving on the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force. She is a past Vice President of the Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation.

ARTISTIC

Ping Chong (Conception, Director, Co-Writer) is an internationally acclaimed theatre director, playwright, video and installation artist. He is a seminal figure in the interdisciplinary theater community and the the Asian-American arts arena. In his 36 year career in the theatre, he has been a restless explorer of new possibilities and new directions always pushing at the boundaries of what theatre is and can be. Mr. Chong's work has been presented at major festivals and theatres around the world including: The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center Festival, Brooklyn Academy of Music, La MaMa E.T.C, Spoleto USA Festival, Holland Festival, Vienna Festival, RomaEuropa Festival, Lille European Capital of Culture, Barbican Theatre, Tokyo International Arts Festival, Singapore Festival of the Arts, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Walker Art Center, and many others. In 1992, Ping Chong created the first work in the Undesirable Elements series. Since then there have been over 35 productions in communities around the United States and around the world. His 2005 puppet theatre production, Cathay: Three Tales of China, a collaboration with the Shaanxi Folk Art Theatre of Xian, China, was chosen as one of the top 10 productions of the 2005 season by NY Theatre Wire, and received 3 Henry Hewes Design Awards by the NY Theatre Wing. Mr. Chong has taught at numerous universities, including Harvard and New York University. Among his many honors and awards, he has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, two BESSIE awards and two OBIE awards, including one for sustained Achievement in 2000, and in 2006, Ping Chong was named to the first class of USA Artist Fellows in recognition of his contributions to American arts and culture. Chong's first collection of plays, The East-West Quartet, was published by Theatre Communications Group in 2005 and is available for purchase online and at local bookstores. His next project will be a world premiere stage adaptation of Akira Kurosawa's film masterpiece, Throne of Blood, for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 2010.

Sara Michelle Zatz (Co-writer/Associate Director, Ping Chong & Company) has worked with Ping Chong & Company since 1997; she became the manager of the Undesirable Elements project in 2002. She managed the production of over a dozen original works in the series, and served as co-author with Ping Chong on eight productions, including Undesirable Elements (Asian America) which was recently published in the 2008 New York Theater Review. She has also worked with the Lincoln Center Festival, Henson International Festival of Puppet Theater, and the composer Tan Dun, among others. Sara holds a masters degree in Irish Theatre Studies from Trinity College, Dublin, and currently lives in Jackson Heights, Queens, where Scrabble was invented.

Kyle Bass (Dramaturg) is the recipient of the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) writing fellowship. Kyle’s full-length drama The Boy Millerd (a/k/a Wind in the Field) was a finalist for the Princess Grace Playwriting Award and was featured at the Great Plains Theatre Conference where it received a staged reading hosted by Edward Albee. Ithaca’s Kitchen Theatre produced Kyle’s 10-minute play “Fall/Out” as part of
their 48-hour Play Festival, and *The Heart of Fear*, published in the literary journal *Stone Canoe*, was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Kyle’s short play *Northeast* appeared in the 30th anniversary edition of *Callaloo*, and several of his other plays have received staged-readings presented by Syracuse’s Armory Square Playhouse, most recently his one-act play *Tender*, directed by Syracuse University faculty member Dan Labeille and featuring Al Marshall. Kyle is on the faculty at Goddard College in Vermont, where he teaches dramatic writing in the MFA Creative Writing program. He also teaches playwriting in the SU Department of Drama. Among other projects, Kyle is currently writing a one-man theatre piece about George Washington Carver for Syracuse Stage’s education program *Lockheed Martin Project Blueprint*. Kyle also serves as Literary Manager for Syracuse Stage and holds a MFA in playwriting from Goddard College.

**DESIGNERS**

**Maya Ciarrocchi** (Projection Designer) is a New York City-based video designer and installation artist. She has created video and projection design for such choreographers as Wally Cardona, Morph: Live Remix, Grisha Coleman, echo :: system, Merce Cunningham, Event, Bebe Miller, Landing/Place (for which she won a 2006 Bessie Award), Donna Uchizono, Approaching Green, and for such theatre productions as *Relativity* (Ensemble Studio Theatre), written by Cassandra Medley and directed by Talvin Wilks, and *Elvis People* (New World Stages), written by Doug Grissom and directed by Henry Wishcamper.

**Darren W. McCroom** (Lighting Designer) has been a lighting designer for 26 years. His work has been seen throughout the U.S.A., Europe and Asia. Some of his New York Credits include Juilliard School of Drama, Lincoln Center, La Mama E.T.C., The Soho Repertory Theatre and Joyce Theatre. Mr. McCroom designed the lighting for the national tours of *Children of Uganda* and *Spirit of Uganda*, which raised money for AIDS medicine and housing for those affected with HIV or AIDS in that country.

**Jonathan Herter** (Sound Designer) has been the resident sound designer and engineer for Syracuse Stage and SU’s Department of Drama since the 1997-1998 season. He has designed about 56 productions for the Stage, most recently *Fiddler on the Roof*, and he has designed shows for numerous other LORT theatres, Syracuse University’s Department of Drama and some local spaces including the Redhouse.

**WEBLINKS**

[www.PingChong.org](http://www.PingChong.org)

**TICKETS**

*Tales from the Salt City* runs October 14-November 4 at Syracuse Stage. Tickets are now on sale, ranging $15-$48, with discounts for seniors and students. Rush and student rush tickets are available at the door, two hours prior to curtain, ranging $12-$25. 6 play season subscriptions and Flex 6 Packs are also now on sale. Tickets can be
purchased in person at the Syracuse Stage Box Office at 820 East Genesee Street, by telephone at 315-443-3275, or online at SyracuseStage.org. For Group Discounts (10 or more) call 315-443-9844.

SYRACUSE STAGE

Syracuse Stage is Central New York’s premier professional theatre. Founded as a not-for-profit theatre in 1974 by Arthur Storch, Stage has produced more than 220 plays in 35 seasons including numerous world and American premieres. Each season upwards of 90,000 patrons enjoy an exciting mix of comedies, dramas and musicals featuring the finest professional theatre artists. In addition, Stage maintains a vital educational outreach program that annually serves over 30,000 students from 24 counties. Syracuse Stage is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, and a member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT). In addition to ticket sales, Syracuse Stage performances are made possible by funds from Syracuse University, the Central New York Community Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, The Shubert Foundation, Onondaga County, and corporate, foundation and individual donors.
Fact Sheet:

**Tales from the Salt City**  
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Written by Ping Chong and Sara Zatz  
Dramaturgy by Kyle Bass

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Sponsors:  
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Imagining America  
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Syracuse University's Pulse performing arts series

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Maya Ciarrocchi (Projection Designer)  
Darren McCroom (Lighting Designer)  
Jonathan Herter (Sound Designer)

Amber Dickerson (Stage Manager)

Cast:  
Lino Ariloka (Sudan)  
Gordana Dudevski (Macedonia)  
Rebecca Isabel Fuentes (Mexico)  
Jose Miguel Hernandez (Cuba)  
Albert Marshall (USA - Syracuse)  
Emad Rahim (Cambodia)  
Jeanne Shenandoah (Onondaga Nation)

*The names in bold are actors and stage managers who are members of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.*
Tickets range $15-$48
Previews: $24-$31
Sun-Thurs evenings: $24-$36
Wed, Sat & Sun matinees: $24-$41
Fri & Sat evenings: $24-$45
Opening night: $24-$48
Rush tickets: $15-$25 (available at the door, two hours prior to curtain)
$12 student rush tickets (at the door, two hours prior to curtain, with student ID)
*Discounts available for seniors and students

Box Office: 315-443-3275
Online: www.SyracuseStage.org
Group Tickets: 315-443-9844

Show Calendar: October/November

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P=Preview O=Opening D=Discussion S=Signed
*10:30 a.m. performances are for students only

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Syracuse Stage  I  Producing Artistic Director: Timothy Bond  I  Managing Director: Jeffrey Woodward