

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 9, 2009  
CONTACT: Chris Boneau / Kelly Guidod / Owen Spruill

# “LOMBARDI”

## A NEW BROADWAY PLAY BY ERIC SIMONSON

*Based on the bestseller “When Pride Still Mattered”  
by Pulitzer Prize-winning author David Maraniss*

*Tells the life story of Vince Lombardi,  
one of America’s Most Quoted and Legendary Personalities*

## OPENING ON BROADWAY IN FALL 2010

**LOMBARDI**, a new play by Oscar winner and Steppenwolf Theater Company member **Eric Simonson**, is based on the best-selling biography *When Pride Still Mattered*, by Pulitzer Prize winning author David Maraniss. Opening on Broadway in the fall of 2010, this original work will bring the audience into the life and times of one of America’s most inspirational and mercurial personalities, Hall of Fame football coach **Vince Lombardi**.

**Tony Ponturo** and **Fran Kirmser** announced today that they have joined forces to bring the life story of Vince Lombardi to the stage. One of the most influential figures in sports and entertainment in the last 20 years, Ponturo is the head of Ponturo Management Group LLC, the New York-based sports and entertainment management, investment and marketing company. **Fran Kirmser**, a fixture in the arts community who backs projects in both non-profit and commercial realms, met **Ponturo** while collaborating on the Tony Award-winning Broadway revival of *Hair*.

“Sometimes we need to go back in our history to learn lessons for today. Vince Lombardi’s name is on the Super Bowl trophy, but many young people do not know the story of this man,” Ponturo said. “In a time where people continue to look for the shortcuts to success, Vince Lombardi’s story teaches that hard work, discipline, respect and time are the elements needed to succeed. I expect **LOMBARDI** to entertain those who love the stage with the classic tale of triumph by a very diverse and sometimes misunderstood soul, while also bringing in those who enjoy sports but never thought that such drama could be played out on the stage.”

“Vince Lombardi - his inspiration, passion and ability to drive people to achieve what they never thought they could - is more relevant now, in these challenged times, than ever before,” Kirmser said. “Sport produces great human drama, and there is no better dramatic character from sport to bring to life in theater than a man who overcame great obstacles to become a success and is always identified as one of America’s most inspirational leaders.”

“Vince Lombardi was not just a great coach. He was one of the most compelling individuals in American popular culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. I am very pleased to bring the essence of my work and his life to Broadway in this play,” Maraniss added.

Additional production information including director, casting for the multi character roles, design team, and production schedule will be announced shortly.

For more information on **LOMBARDI**, log onto [www.lombardibroadway.com](http://www.lombardibroadway.com),  
or follow **LOMBARDI** on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/LombardiPlay](http://www.twitter.com/LombardiPlay).

**ERIC SIMONSON** is an ensemble member of the renowned Steppenwolf Theatre Company, a post he maintains while working as a writer and director for film, television, theatre and opera. Most recently he completed a documentary for HBO called *STUDS TERKEL: LISTENING TO AMERICA*. His documentary *A NOTE OF TRIUMPH: THE GOLDEN AGE OF NORMAN CORWIN* won the 2006 Oscar for Documentary Short. That film also received a nomination from the International Documentary Association (IDA) for Distinguished Achievement. He was also nominated for an Oscar for his documentary *ON TIPTOE; GENTLE STEPS TO FREEDOM* in 2001. That film won the IDA Distinguished Achievement Award, and received an Emmy nomination after it aired on HBO/Cinemax. Other films include *HAMLET* (co-directed with Campbell Scott) for Hallmark Entertainment, and an independent feature, *TOPA TOPA BLUFFS*. In addition to these directing credits he has also written and developed three pilots for HBO: *FIVE POINTS*, *HOMELAND* and *US*.

Mr. Simonson’s directing and writing credits in theatre include work at Steppenwolf Theatre, The Huntington Theatre, Milwaukee Rep, Kansas City Rep, The Kennedy Center, Pasadena Playhouse, Seattle Rep, Milwaukee Rep, Arizona theatre, San Jose Rep and Court Theatre in Chicago. His work at Steppenwolf includes premieres of his plays *CARTER’S WAY*, *HONEST* and *FAKE*; the critically acclaimed and nationally produced *NOMATHEMBA* (co-written with Ntozake Shange and Joseph Shabalala), and *THE SONG OF JACOB ZULU*, which was invited to the Perth International Arts Festival, ran on Broadway, and received six Tony nominations including Best Director.

His several plays include published works *BANG THE DRUM SLOWLY* and *WORK SONG* (co-written with Jeffrey Hatcher) and the adaptation of Kurt Vonnegut’s *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE*, all of which have been produced at theatres across the country. Opera credits include the North American premiere of *THE HANDMAID’S TALE* at Minnesota Opera, and, recently, the world Premiere of *THE GRAPES OF WRATH* (composed by Ricky Ian Gordon), for Minnesota Opera, Utah Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, and Opera Pacific. In October 2005, Mr. Simonson was presented with the Princess Grace Foundation’s Statuette Award for Sustained Artistic Achievement.

**DAVID MARANISS** is an associate editor at The Washington Post and the author of five critically acclaimed bestselling books about history, sports, and politics. Among the most honored writers/journalists of his generation, Maraniss won the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting for his reportage on Bill Clinton, was part of a Post team that won the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for coverage of the Virginia Tech tragedy, and has been a Pulitzer finalist twice more for his journalism and once in history for his Vietnam work, *They Marched into Sunlight*. His other major books include *First in His Class: A Biography of Bill Clinton*; *Rome 1960: The Summer Olympics that Stirred the World*; *Clemente: The Passion and Grace of Baseball’s Last Hero*; and *When Pride Still Mattered: A Life of Vince Lombardi*. The Lombardi biography, winner of the Frankfurt International Book Prize, was hailed by Sports Illustrated as “maybe the best sports biography ever published.” It was a New York Times bestseller for more than five months and remains immensely popular ten years after its first publication. In January 2010, Simon and Schuster will publish a collection of his works titled *Into the Story: A Writer’s Journey through Life, Politics, Sports, and Loss*. Maraniss is also at work on a biography of Barack Obama that is to be published in 2011. He lives

in Washington, D.C. and Madison, Wisconsin, with his wife, Linda. They have two grown children and two little redheaded granddaughters.

**PONTURO MANAGEMENT GROUP, LLC** Is a New York based consulting, management and investment company in media, sports and entertainment established by Tony Ponturo in Jan 2009. Annually recognized as one of the most powerful executives in sports, Tony was mostly recently ranked by *Business Week* as #14 out of the top 100 in 2008. He was ranked as the 12th most influential person in sports by the *Sports Business Journal* in 2007 and the #1 sports advertiser executive in 2004. With his vast amount of experience and knowledge, Tony Ponturo is developing Ponturo Management Group in many different prominent venues, including associate producing *Hair*, the 2009 Broadway Tony Award winner for Best Revival of a Musical and producing the new Broadway musical, *Memphis*. He is also co-executive producer of a soon to be produced film, *Keeper of the Pinstripes*.

**FRAN KIRMSER PRODUCTIONS LLC** provides consulting and fundraising support to productions large and small in both Non-profit and Commercial Theater. A fixture in the arts, she began her professional career as a dancer at 14, and has worked on and off the stage with hundreds of artists and producers in theater. Fran has contributed to the development of new theatrical works at Williamstown Theater Festival and Musical Theater Works. On Broadway, her production of *August Wilson's Radio Golf* garnered a host of awards, including the New York Drama Critics Circle for Best Play along with four Tony Award nominations. Her most recent show, *Hair*, won the 2009 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical. Off Broadway in the Non-Profit realm she has provided production support to shows at the New 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Theatres including the Duke on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music), The Joyce Theater, Second Stage Theater, Primary Stages, and Lincoln Center/Lincoln Center Festival.

# # # #