

**News Release
Barksdale Theatre
Theatre IV**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Barksdale Theatre and Theatre IV to Merge and Form
Virginia Repertory Theatre Creating one of the Largest Performing Arts
Organizations in Central Virginia**

60th Anniversary Season Announced under Virginia Rep

Richmond, VA – Barksdale Theatre and Theatre IV announce that the two nonprofit theaters will formally merge effective July 1, 2012 under a new name - Virginia Repertory Theatre (Virginia Rep). With a budget exceeding \$5 million, four distinct venues, and an annual audience over 550,000, Virginia Rep will become the largest professional theater and one of the largest performing arts organizations in Central Virginia along with the Richmond Ballet, Richmond Symphony, and the Virginia Opera. Barksdale and Theatre IV will celebrate the announcement and the unveiling of the new Virginia Rep sign this Sunday, May 20, at the November Theatre (formerly the Empire Theatre) at 114 West Broad Street at 4:00 p.m. after the closing of *Seussical*, the last mainstage children's production under the Theatre IV name. Virginia Rep will transition into the new organization between May 20 and July 1.

With 47 full time employees and over 400 part-time and contracted actors, teaching artists, administrative personnel, and production staff, Virginia Rep provides consistent employment to many of the area's finest professional theater artists and is Central Virginia's only professional theater to perform under a seasonal contract with Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers. Annual mainstage productions total over 450 performances on four stages, and the touring arm reaches over 400,000 students annually in Virginia and 32 states. According to external calculations by Virginians for the Arts in 2008, the combined

economic impact of Barksdale and Theatre IV exceeds \$23 million, the largest of any independent arts organization in Central Virginia.

Managing Director, Phil Whiteway, says the process has been years in the making. “We are thrilled to finally bring our two theaters together. The merger reflects the real impact that our organizations make on the Central Virginia community and creates a more efficient and sustainable nonprofit structure, eliminating duplication and positioning us for national funding. Our new single identity with a common website and messaging better serves all our constituents and establishes a clear continuum of programming for children, families, schools and adults.”

Virginia Rep will continue to produce or co-produce three adult seasons and one children’s season in addition to our educational touring plays. Bruce Miller, Artistic Director for Virginia Rep, says the mission of Virginia Rep will not change. “While the merger positions the theater as a more solid, forward thinking organization, our artistic goals have not waivered. We will continue to provide high quality theatre that speaks to us artistically and appeals to the entire Richmond community, including new works, dramas, musicals, children’s theater, comedies, and classics. Our commitment to produce art for the community’s sake has only been elevated and we are more dedicated than ever to enhancing our community through theater arts and outreach.”

History

Founded in 1975 by Bruce Miller and Phil Whiteway, Theatre IV was the first professional children’s theater in Virginia. What began as a small touring group with a focus on education and children’s health and safety, has evolved to become the second largest children’s theater in America, known for its educational touring arm and acclaimed season of mainstage productions for children and families. This coming season marks the 30th anniversary of *Hugs and Kisses*, a musical play that teaches children awareness about sexual abuse and provides the language they need to communicate with a trusting adult about inappropriate behavior. This award-winning production is the Commonwealth of Virginia’s principal child sexual abuse prevention program. In 2002, Theatre IV’s *Buffalo Soldier*, inspired by the life of Richmond centenarian Jones Morgan, became the first professional production to be performed inside the Pentagon, as a morale booster after 9/11.

Established at the historic Hanover Tavern in 1953 by six actors from New York, Barksdale Theatre was Central Virginia’s first professional performing arts organization and our nation’s first dinner theater. Under the forty- year leadership of Pete and Nancy Kilgore and Muriel McAuley, Barksdale Theatre brought America’s most acclaimed works to a Greater Richmond stage and produced the state’s first professional production of a play based on African American experience. In 1954, Barksdale became the first performing arts organization in Virginia to defy segregationist laws and perform before a racially mixed audience. In 1996 Barksdale moved to Willow Lawn to accommodate Tavern renovations. In 2001, Bruce Miller and Phil Whiteway assumed the leadership of Barksdale Theatre. They re-established the season at the renovated Hanover Tavern in 2006 and continued the Barksdale Signature Season at Willow Lawn. Since 2001, Barksdale and

Theatre IV have shared management and some resources, but continued to operate as two separate nonprofit organizations with two boards, two budgets, and two communication systems.

In 2003 the landscape of professional theater changed in Richmond with the folding of TheatreVirginia, the leading professional theatre at the time. The Community Foundation and what is now CenterStage assembled a task force to look at the future of professional theater in Central Virginia. That Task Force and a rigorous community survey determined that the next major professional theater should build on the foundations established by Barksdale and Theatre IV. The task force findings prompted the boards of both Barksdale and Theatre IV to engage in years of strategic planning, an external development analysis, and a brand study finally leading to the merger and name change.

Upcoming Season

Virginia Rep continues the legacy established at Barksdale Theatre in 1953 and celebrates the beginning of the 60th Anniversary Season this August, building on the significant artistic contributions of both Barksdale and Theatre IV - over 21 World Premieres, important second productions, and some of the finest regional productions of nationally acclaimed works. Virginia Rep remains dedicated to producing at least one world premiere annually and bringing in national theater artists to fill approximately 10% of all acting, directing and design responsibilities.

The upcoming season will bring several venue changes. The entire downtown complex will be called Virginia Rep Center and house both the 100 year old, historic Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre (formerly the Empire Theatre) and the smaller, studio style Theatre Gym. Virginia Rep's adult Signature Season and large family musicals will move downtown to Virginia Rep Center, taking advantage of the enhanced artistic capacity of the stage and bringing more adults downtown to enjoy the restaurants and galleries of the arts district. Valet parking is available at the downtown venues.

Virginia Rep's Children's Theatre of Virginia (formerly Theatre IV) will relocate to Willow Lawn, where the thrust stage provides an intimate experience for younger audiences, and the newly renovated Willow Lawn provides family friendly shopping and dining along with convenient parking. Virginia Rep's Barksdale Season at historic Hanover Tavern will continue the legacy of the country playhouse. Finally, Theatre Gym will feature works produced in partnership with Cadence Theatre Company.

Virginia Rep's Signature Season

Spring Awakening Book & Lyrics by Steven Sater Music by Duncan Sheik

Winner of eight 2007 Tony Awards, *Spring Awakening* examines the unbridled energy that ignites the journey from youth to adulthood. Charged with sexual power, poignancy and passion (plus a brilliant contemporary score), *Spring Awakening* was named "Best Musical of the Year" by nearly every critic including the New York Times.

June 15 - July 22 at the November Theatre at Virginia Rep Center

Tickets \$24 -\$44

Night Blooms by Margaret Baldwin

This new work by St. Catherine's graduate Margaret Baldwin reveals the subtleties of racial dynamics among white and black families on the eve of the Civil Rights march in Selma, Alabama. First premiered last year at the Horizon Theatre in Atlanta.

September 26-October 21 at the November Theatre at the Virginia Rep Center

Tickets range from \$20 - \$46 *

The Producers by Mel Brooks

Winner of 12 Tony awards – the most in history - this blockbuster Mel Brooks musical follows the elaborate scheme of two producers to get rich on a theatrical flop.

November 14 – January 13 at the November Theatre at the Virginia Rep Center

Tickets range from \$25 - \$60

When We Are Married by J. B. Priestly

Part of the Acts of Faith Theatre Festival, this world-classic British comedy by J.B. Priestley portrays three couples who learn on their 25th anniversary that the parson that married them was unauthorized and they have been living in sin for over two decades.

February 13 – March 10 at the November Theatre at the Virginia Rep Center

Tickets range from \$20 - \$46

Red by John Logan

Winner of the 2010 Tony Award for Best Play, this story by John Logan examines the life and work of Mark Rothko and the dichotomy between his generation and that of his assistant.

April 24 – June 16 at Theatre Gym at the Virginia Rep Center

Tickets range from \$28 - \$34

The Color Purple based on book by Alice Walker, music and lyrics by Brenda Russell, Allee Willis, Stephen Bray

This musical based on the work by Alice Walker, is a well-known saga depicting the challenging and inspiring life of an African American woman in the 1930's and her family's struggle to overcome adversity.

Jun26 – August 11 at the November Theatre at the Virginia Rep Center

Tickets range from \$25 - \$60

Virginia Rep's Barksdale Season at Hanover Tavern

Hound of the Baskervilles adapted from the book by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Chock-full of verbal and visual hilarity, this sublimely funny adaptation of the classic Sir Arthur Conan Doyle will leave you rolling in the aisles as you follow Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson on the mystery of the decade.

September 14 – October 14 at the Hanover Tavern

Tickets range from \$33 - \$40

A Lug Nuts Christmas

This WORLD PREMIERE musical follows a group of grease monkeys re-uniting their a capella group for a one night only holiday concert and doo-wopping their way into the hearts of Mechanicsville.

November 23 – January 6 at the Hanover Tavern

Tickets range from \$35 - \$42

Cotton Patch Gospel by Tom Key and Russell Treyz with music and lyrics written by Harry Chapin
Written by Harry Chapin just prior to his death in 1981, this musical based on the book “The Cotton Patch Version of Matthew and John” retells the life of Jesus set in modern day, rural Georgia. With its touching tale and bluegrass treatment, *Cotton Patch* is the perfect Southern treat.

January 25 – April 28 at the Hanover Tavern

Tickets range from \$35 - \$42

Steel Magnolias by Robert Harling

This comedic drama by Robert Harling depicts the special bond between women of several generations in southern Louisiana and their undying strength and loyalty to each other.

July 12 – August 18 at the Hanover Tavern

Tickets range from \$33 - \$40

Virginia Rep’s Children’s Theatre of Virginia at Willow Lawn

Busytown Based on the book by Richard Scarry and adapted by Kevin Kling. Music by Michael Koerner and lyrics by Kevin Kling and Michael Koerner

With one catchy musical number after another, this delightful musical based on Richard Scarry’s vividly drawn world will be enjoyed by kids of all ages!

July 6 – July 29 at the Children Theatre of Virginia at Willow Lawn

Tickets \$10 - \$16

Young Tom Jefferson Book and lyrics by Bruce Craig Miller. Music by Richard Giersch.

This musical is based on the life and times of Tom Jefferson as he discovers the values and standards that gave him the knowledge to write the Declaration of Independence and lead this incredible country.

September 28 – October 12 at the Hanover Tavern and October 19 – Nov 2 at Children’s Theatre of Virginia at Willow Lawn

Tickets \$10 - \$16

Madeline’s Christmas Based on the book by Ludwig Bemelmans with book and Lyrics by Jennifer Kirkeby. Music by Shirley Mier.

A holiday treat for the whole family, this musical play follows Madeline and her friends as they arrive at a holiday adventure beyond their wildest dreams.

November 30 – December 30 at the Children’s Theatre of Virginia at Willow Lawn
\$14 to \$22

The Magic Flute Based on Mozart’s Opera with book, music and lyrics by Paul Deiss.
A wacky new musical based on Mozart’s opera will give the little ones an intro to the classic work while invoking many new laughs and smiles along the way.
January 18 – February 10 at the Children’s Theatre of Virginia at Willow Lawn
\$10 - \$16

Lyle, Lyle Crocodile Based on the book *The House on East 88th Street* by Bernard Waber with music and lyrics by Bruce Craig Miller.
With the arrival of a city-dwelling crocodile at the house on East 88th Street, the Primm family learns the value of understanding and acceptance in this tuneful original musical.
March 1 – March 24 at the Children’s Theatre of Virginia at Willow Lawn
\$10 - \$16

The Music Man book, music, and lyrics by Meredith Willson
A musical masterpiece as American as apple pie on the 4th of July follows River City, Iowans as Harold Hill comes to town and reinvigorates the small town and gives everyone hope in tomorrow. It will get your toes tapping and leave you with a song in your heart.
April 12 – May 19 at the November Theatre at the Virginia Rep Center
\$30 - \$40

Virginia Rep’s Theatre Gym in Partnership with Cadence Theatre Company

The Pillowman by Martin McDonagh
With echoes of Stoppard, Kafka, and the Brothers Grimm, Martin McDonagh’s dark comedy centers on a writer in a totalitarian state who is being interrogated about the content of his short stories.
October 19 – November 10 at Theatre Gym at Virginia Rep Center
Tickets \$28

Equus by Peter Shaffer
Part of the Acts of Faith Festival, this work by Peter Shaffer looks at the relationship and confrontation between a psychiatrist and a boy who has committed a hideous act of violence.
February 14 – March 9 at Theatre Gym at Virginia Rep Center
Tickets \$28

Next to Normal Book and Lyrics by Brian Yorkey and Music by Tom Kitt
This emotional powerhouse of a musical is about a family and a mother who struggles with worsening bipolar disorder and the effect that her illness has on her family.
April 25 – May 18 at Children’s Theatre of Virginia at Willow Lawn (note this is an adult production)

Tickets \$28

***All prices range from super saver value seats to premium seats. Subscriptions offer a 25% discount off of single ticket prices. Additional discounts for rush tickets, groups, and high school and college students. In addition Virginia Rep's *Tickets for Kids* program donates 8-10 percent of all mainstage tickets to less advantaged and/or disabled children and families. The new *Tom Tickets* program will provide discounted tickets to select senior citizens.**

Website and Contact Information

The new website www.va-rep.org will feature a Press Room with links to press releases, recent news coverage, and press kits including pass code accessible hi resolution production photos. Please contact Susan Davenport with any press inquiries or image requests at 804-513-8211 or susandavenport@comcast.net. The website will also provide descriptions of each venue and suggested wording for abbreviated venue names.

Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre at Virginia Rep Center

(Formerly the Empire)

114 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23220

Box Office 804-282-2620

Administrative Offices 804-783-1688

www.va-rep.org

Theatre Gym at Virginia Rep Center

114 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23220

Box Office 804-282-2620

Administrative Offices 804-783-1688

www.va-rep.org

Virginia Rep's Children's Theatre of Virginia (at Willow Lawn)

1601 Willow Lawn Drive, Richmond, VA 23230

Box Office 804-282-2620

Administrative Offices 804-783-1688

www.va-rep.org

Virginia Rep's Barksdale Season at Hanover Tavern

13181 Hanover Courthouse Road

Hanover, VA 23069

Box Office 804-282-2620

Administrative Offices 804-783-1688

www.va-rep.org