Virginia Repertory Theatre

For Immediate Release 

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Contact: Susan Davenport  
Director of Communications  
Virginia Repertory Theatre  
susandavenport@comcast.net  
804-513-8211

Virginia Rep Opens the Joyful Broadway Musical Hit,  
*The Color Purple*  
Friday, June 20, 2014

Starring Felicia Curry, Desiree Roots Centeio, Jerold Solomon, Carolyn Minor-Daughtry and Josh Marin

Richmond, VA – Virginia Repertory Theatre announces the opening of *The Color Purple* at the Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre, 114 West Broad Street on Friday, June 20, 2014 with a Preview on Thursday, June 19. The show runs through August 3, 2014. Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Alice Walker, this joyful musical and epic story follows the life and personal awakening of Celie, a downtrodden young African American woman. With a book by Marsha Norman and music and lyrics by Brenda Russell, Allee Willis, and Stephen Bray, the uplifting score features jazz, ragtime, gospel, African music and blues. The Broadway production earned eleven Tony nominations.

Director Chase Kniffen has assembled an outstanding cast of thirty-five along with a live band. He speaks about the energy behind the production. “I am beyond excited to bring this beautiful production to the Richmond audience. This show is a story of hope and acceptance in the most challenging circumstances. The combination of authentic gospel voices with the most sought after musical theatre performers on the East Coast will bring a thrilling and emotional experience to the November Theatre.” Kniffen’s
directing credits include, most recently, *Other Desert Cities* for Virginia Rep and *Next to Normal* (2013 RTCC nomination for Best Director and Best Musical) for Cadence Theatre Company in partnership with Virginia Rep. He won the 2010, 2011, and 2012 RTCC Award for Best Director of a Musical for his work on *The Sound of Music*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, and *Spring Awakening*.

Ben Miller will serve as musical director for this production. Miller was the associate music director/conductor for *The Producers* at Virginia Rep and directed the music for *Urinetown* at SPARC and *The Wild Party* for Firehouse Theatre Project. Leslie Owens – Harrington, a seasoned choreographer, also joins the artistic team. Her diverse repertoire ranges from theme park mainstage productions to HBO’s featured movie, *Iron Jawed Angels*. For Virginia Rep she was the choreographer for *The Music Man*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*. Directing/choreography credits include *Crows* and *Beehive* for Virginia Rep.

Set Designer, Ron Keller, is a 2014 recipient of a Kennedy Center Gold Medallion for his many years of work with the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Other set designs for Virginia Rep include *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Scorched Earth*, *White Christmas*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and *Guys and Dolls*.

Virginia Rep is delighted to welcome Felicia Curry in the lead role of Celie. Curry is one of the region’s most sought after musical theatre performers. She has performed on stage at many of the nation’s leading regional theatres, including Arena Stage, Signature Theatre, Ford’s Theatre, Studio Theatre and has been seen in multiple productions on The Kennedy Center stage. She is a Helen Hayes Award recipient for her work in Signature Theatre’s groundbreaking production of *Les Misérables* and a Helen Hayes nominee for her work in *Godspell* and *Aida* at Toby’s Dinner Theatre. She has toured nationally with the Capital Steps and Roald Dahl’s *Willy Wonka*.

Veteran actor and Richmond favorite, Desiree Roots Centeio, joins the cast as Sofia. Recent credits include Alma Hix in Virginia Rep’s *The Music Man*, and as Dessa in Firehouse Theatre’s *Dessa Rose*. In 2004, Desiree received the Theresa Pollack Prize for Excellence in the Arts as Best Vocalist in Virginia. She has been the opening act for such internationally known performers as B. B. King, Kenny Garrett, Bobby Watson, Art Porter, Gerald Albright, Leslie Uggams, and Bill Cosby.

Virginia Rep is thrilled to welcome Jerold Solomon back to Richmond in the role of Mister. Solomon was recently in the Broadway production of *South Pacific* at Lincoln Center and the Off-Broadway production of *Bare*. National tours include *Ragtime*, *Big River*, and *Annie*.
Building on a singing career of 20 years, Carolyn Minor-Daughtry is making her professional acting debut as Shug Avery. Virginia Rep discovered Daughtry through the public auditions for *The Color Purple* held last September. She has been a back-up vocalist for artists such as Kurt Carr and Kirk Franklin. Josh Marin (Virginia Rep’s *Music Man, The Producers, Spring Awakening, The Magic Flute*) returns to the stage as Harpo and Katrina Carol Lewis (*Death of the Maiden* for Henley Street/Richmond Shakespeare, *Race* for Carol Peirsol, *Good People* for Cadence Theatre in partnership with Virginia Rep) joins the cast as Nettie.

**Corporate Sponsors**
Virginia Rep is grateful for the support from Altria, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, Union First Market, Shubert Foundation, Virginia Commission for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, The Richmond Times-Dispatch, Richmond.com, Radio One and Community Idea Stations.

**Ticket Information**
Box Office 804-282-2620
www.va-rep.org

**Full Price Tickets**: $48 - $60

**Discounted Group Rates and Rush tickets available.**

U-Tix for college and high school students $15. Available by phone or in person day of show only. Student ID required.

The Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre is equipped with a new state-of-the-art induction loop hearing system that is compatible with all telecoil-equipped hearing aids and cochlear implants. A handheld receiver and headphone system is also available free of charge for anyone who is hearing impaired.

Valet parking is available for $8 at all performances except the Preview on Thursday, June 19.

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Evening performances at 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and 7:00 p.m. on select Wednesdays
Matinee performances at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday and 2:00 p.m. on select Wednesdays and Saturdays
Direction & Design
Director: Chase Kniffen
Choreography: Leslie Owens-Harrington
Musical Director: Ben Miller
Scenic Designer: Ron Keller
Lighting Designer: Joe Doran
Costume Designer: Sue Griffin
Stage Manager: Wendy Vandergrift

Cast List
Celie: Felicia Curry
Shug Avery: Carolyn Minor Daughtry
Mister: Jerold Solomon
Sofia: Desiree Roots Centeio
Harpo: Josh Marin
Nettie: Katrina Lewis
Squeak: Ciara McMillian
Jarene: Shalimar Hickman-Fields
Darene: Stephanie M. Hill
Doris: Amanda Montague
Preacher/Ensemble: Billy Dye
Pa/Grady/Ensemble: J. Ron Fleming
Ol’ Mister/Ensemble: Thomas Nowlin
Church Soloist/Ensemble: Karla J. Brown
Buster/Chief/Ensemble: Tybias Whitehead
Young Nettie/Chief’s Daughter: Tyandria Jackson
Young Celie/Mister’s Daughter: Ayana Williams
Young Harpo/Young Adam: Donathon Arnold
Young Olivia/Henrietta: Jada Evans

Ensemble
Skye Hagood, Anthony Cosby-Knowles, Taylor Walls, Trent Williams, Courtney Jamison, Alana S. Thomas, Cariel Hughes, William Anderson, Pamela Shaw, Ashlee Heyward, Jessi Johnson, Andrew Reid, Antonio Garrett, Devon Custalow, Devante J. Wells, Mike Brown

^The choreographer is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

+Member of USA United Scenic Artists: local 829
* Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the U.S.A.

Full bios can be found at www.va-rep.org.

**About Virginia Repertory Theatre**
Virginia Repertory Theatre, located in Richmond, VA, combines the talents and strengths of two nonprofit companies that shared facilities, resources, and management teams for over a decade. Now the heritages of Barksdale Theatre (founded in 1953) and Theatre IV (founded in 1975) live on in their new form, as Central Virginia's leading professional theater company. Virginia Rep presents national caliber productions of the great dramas, comedies, and musicals as well as classics, contemporary works, and world premieres, always seeking to demonstrate the unique power of theater to engage, enthral, educate, and inspire. Productions are staged at four distinct venues: the Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre and Theatre Gym at the downtown Virginia Rep Center, Virginia Rep’s Children’s Theatre of Virginia located at Willow Lawn, and at Hanover Tavern, home to Virginia Rep’s Barksdale Season.