



News Release
Virginia Repertory Theatre

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Virginia Repertory Theatre Presents
Mr. Popper's Penguins
Book by Robert Kazlaric
Music and Lyrics by George Howe
Based on the book by Richard and Florence Atwater

Richmond, VA -- Virginia Repertory Theatre announces the company of the first production of the 2018/19 Children's Season: ***Mr. Popper's Penguins***, opening Saturday, October 27, 2018, at the Children's Theatre at Willow Lawn. Based on the popular children's book by Richard and Florence Atwater, *Mr. Popper's Penguins* tells the tale of the gentle British house painter, with a fondness for Antarctic exploration, who finds himself and his family the proud domesticators of a family of penguins. This heartwarming tale will be a holiday treat for the entire family as they follow Mr. Popper, his family, and his talented little penguins.

The show will be the first show in the newly renovated space at Willow Lawn. Virginia Rep is adding lights, new bathrooms, and fresh paint to make the theater even more family-friendly. *Mr. Popper's Penguins* will be onstage through December 30, 2018 at the Children's Theatre at Willow Lawn, 1601 Willow Lawn Drive, Richmond, Virginia 23230.

Virginia Rep newcomer **Josh Chenard** will be directing this wintry tale. Chenard hails from Portland, Maine and has recently re-joined the faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University from Las Cruces, New Mexico where he served as the Head of Acting at New Mexico State University. Recent Richmond directing credits include *Invalid* and *Desire Under the Elms* (Firehouse Theatre) and *Moth* (TheatreLAB).

Jason Marks will join the team as Music Director, after most recently musical directing this summer's production of *Knuffle Bunny* and last summer's *The Little Engine That Could*, a musical commissioned by Virginia Rep that he co-wrote with Scott Wichmann. Other Virginia Rep musical directing credits include *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* and *Croaker the Musical*, for which he also wrote the music. **Wes Seals**, who served as Associate Director of this summer's Signature production of *West Side Story*, has been brought on to choreograph.

A cast of four has been assembled to portray the eighteen people and thirteen "birds and beasts" of the play. **Derrick Jaques** returns to the Virginia Rep stage, after last being seen in *Mary Poppins* as Mrs. Corry. Another Virginia Rep veteran, **Keaton Hillman** joins the company, after previously being seen in *1776* and *Shakespeare in Love*. Newcomers to the Virginia Rep stage, **Renee McGowan** and **Emma-Claire Polich** round out the ensemble, and **Eve Marie Tuck**, who recently completed the run of *Knuffle Bunny*, joins as a swing.

Set Design is by **Chris Raintree** (Assistant Scenic Design, *A Christmas Story*), Lighting Design is by **BJ Wilkinson** (*West Side Story*, *Knuffle Bunny*, *River Ditty*) and Costume Design is by **Jeanne Nugent** (*Mary Poppins*, *Croaker*). **Kylie Clark** returns to design the puppets, after serving as Props Master for both *Knuffle Bunny* and *Crimes of the Heart*.

The full company is listed below.

Sensory Friendly Performances

Sensory Friendly performances will be offered on Wednesday, November 7 and Saturday, November 17, 2018, both at 10:30 a.m. Please see the website for more details:

http://va-rep.org/sensory_friendly.html

Audio Described Performances

In collaboration with Virginia Voice, Virginia Rep is pleased to offer Audio Described performances, in which actions, expressions and gestures are described during gaps between dialogue throughout the performance for patrons with low vision or blindness. In addition to live audio description during performances, patrons are also invited to participate in a tactile tour before the performance.

Community Tickets Grant

Virginia Rep is thrilled to offer a **free** Community Tickets Grant for nonprofit organizations. We encourage all organizations who have a demonstrated need for complimentary tickets to fill out a short application on our website: bit.ly/CommunityTix

Ticket Information

Box Office: 804-282-2620

www.virginiarep.org

Full Price Tickets: \$21

Discounted Group Rates available.

Performance Schedule

Evening performances at 7:00 p.m. on select Fridays

Matinee performances at 2:00 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday

Press Kits will be available at <http://va-rep.org/press.html>

Passcode accessible Hi-Res photos will be available to media on October 29.

username = press

password = HiRes121

Direction & Design

Direction	Josh Chenard
Music Direction	Jason Marks
Choreography	Wes Seals
Set Design	Chris Raintree
Lighting Design	BJ Wilkinson
Costume Design	Jeanne Nugent
Puppet Design	Kylie Clark
Stage Management	Justin Janke

Cast List

Mr. Popper	Derrick Jaques
Mrs. Popper	Renee McGowan
Ensemble	Emma-Claire Polich
Ensemble	Keaton Hillman
Swing	Eve Marie Tuck

About Virginia Repertory Theatre

Virginia Repertory Theatre is the regional professional theatre in Richmond, Virginia. With an operating budget of \$5 million, four distinct venues, an educational touring arm, and an annual audience approximately 530,000, Virginia Rep is one of the largest performing arts organizations in Central Virginia. Virginia Rep stages four seasons annually: the Signature Season at the Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre, Theatre Gym Season in partnership with Cadence Theatre Company, Virginia Rep's Children's Season at Willow Lawn, and the Hanover Tavern Season.

Sponsors

Virginia Rep's Children's Theatre is grateful to our Premier Sponsors: Federal Realty Investment Trust and the Shops at Willow Lawn, as well as the Shubert Foundation, The Virginia Commission for the Arts, The National Endowment for the Arts, and *Richmond Family Magazine*.