



**News Release**  
**Virginia Repertory Theatre**

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**Virginia Repertory Theatre**  
**Purchases Scottish Rite Temple to**  
**Expand Programs for Children, Families and Schools**

**Richmond, VA –** In a historic move, Virginia Repertory Theatre has acquired the Scottish Rite Temple, which will become the new home for its Children's Theatre. It will be known as the Virginia Rep Center for Arts and Education and will house children's theatre productions, educational touring programs, camps, classes, and workshops.

The Scottish Rite Temple will be ready to use upon acquisition of the property on Tuesday, October 11. The facility features three distinct performance areas – a 650-seat main auditorium and two smaller studio stages – that will allow for an increase in the number and diversity of performances. There is rehearsal space for the 18 annual tour productions that reach over 400,000 students and families across the country. In addition, there is room to double the number of camps, classes, and workshops currently offered.

The first show to be presented in the facility will be ***'Twas the Night Before Christmas***, just in time for the holidays. More details with show dates and times will be announced soon. It will also be the future permanent home for ***Gospel Nativity***, a new, annual holiday partnership with Virginia Union University, which houses the only Gospel Music degree program in the nation.

“Virginia Rep is arguably among the top five children’s theatres in the nation in terms of scope of programming, geographic reach, and audience size, but our facilities have not been on par with this distinction until now,” said Managing Director Phil Whiteway. “After leaving our rented space at Willow Lawn during COVID and months of careful planning and due diligence, this investment will allow us to create a new path for the future of Virginia Rep’s children’s, families, and schools programming, which represents about 50% of our total operation.”

The theatre company is paying \$3.5M for the purchase and will include a reserve of about \$1.5M as part of Phase 1 of the Great Stages Campaign, which has a goal of \$5.2M.

“Our internal goal was to reach 50% of the \$5.2M in commitments prior to closing. We are proud that we have met that goal. Leadership gifts include over \$1.1M in commitments from our Board of Directors, as well as a generous 2:1 challenge grant of \$750,000 issued by The Cabell Foundation, with additional support from numerous other sources,” Whiteway reported.

The new building offers a major advantage for families and schools with a safe and secure drop-off and pick-up area, as well as a large lighted parking lot with 230 spaces. It is also accessible by public transit on the GRTC bus line.

“One of the really exciting aspects of the new building is the full commercial kitchen and dining hall,” said Whiteway. “We envision many fun special events, community gatherings, themed character meals and school group lunches taking place in this large space.”

The new Virginia Rep Center for Arts and Education is located at 4204 Hermitage Road in Richmond’s Hermitage Road Historic District, adjacent to the Bellevue neighborhood, with close proximity to Bryan Park that allows for outdoor programming and new community partnerships. This landmark building, the former home of the Richmond Children’s Theatre, has a long history as a performing arts venue. Virginia Rep is preserving this legacy and will be making it available to other local theatres, dance companies, schools, community nonprofits, and other area arts and education organizations.

“With this project, we will be saving the historic Scottish Rite Temple, - ‘Richmond’s Kennedy Center,’ - as a performing arts space for RVA audiences,” Whiteway added. “Other parties interested in acquiring the property included real estate developers, who, due to its ideal central location and off-street parking, sought to raze the building to construct condos or apartments.”

In 1953, Virginia Rep (as Barksdale Theatre) saved the historic Hanover Tavern. And, 33 years later, in 1986, Virginia Rep (as Theatre IV) saved the historic Empire Theatre (now the November Theatre). Now, 36 years later, Virginia Rep will save the historic Scottish Rite Temple to become the Virginia Rep Center for Arts and Education.

Each year, Virginia Repertory Theatre performs live for approximately 530,000 children, teens, adults and seniors, giving the theatre the largest annual audience of any performing arts organization in Greater Richmond. The company produces professional seasons in three major venues; has an educational tour that has gone to every school district in Virginia; a national tour in 32 states and Washington, D.C. and important Community Health + Wellness initiatives that address complex social issues and educational challenges through the power of live theatre.

***Virginia Repertory Theatre is a non-profit professional theatre that is one of Central Virginia's largest professional performing arts organizations. This year, the theatre celebrates its 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a variety of events.***

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