

*University of Virginia Department of Drama presents the Spring Festival of One-Acts; Mud, Defying Gravity, Baggage, and Multiplicity of Movement: a Dance Concert*

The U.Va. Drama Department is pleased to announce its Spring Festival of One-Acts. The Festival will consist of three student-directed plays and a faculty/student choreographed dance concert. The Festival format will be the double bill (2 short plays book-ending an intermission), and two, distinct double bills will be performed on alternating nights. Program #1 will comprise the dance concert *Multiplicity of Movement*, followed by *Mud* by Maria Irene Fornes, performed April 21, 27 & 29. Program #2 features *Defying Gravity* by Jane Anderson, followed by *Baggage*, an original play by student Walt McGough, performed April 22, 26 & 28. All performances will take place in the Culbreth Theatre of the U.Va. Drama Building, and curtain time is 8:00 p.m.

The first offering of program #1 is *Multiplicity of Movement*, a dance concert in six parts. Choreographed by students, faculty, and guest artists, the six pieces represent a variety of dance styles reflecting the diverse interests and talents of dance students at U.Va. and in the Charlottesville/Albemarle community. The choreographers include Justine Okerson, Meghan Spigle, Sarah Moss, Shane O'Hara (JMU Dance Faculty), Anna Scholl, and Tricia Gooley.

The second half of program #1, *Mud* by Maria Irene Fornes, is a stark and gripping play about the search for identity in a large pile of dirt. Directed by Jonathan Green, the play profiles three despondent individuals: the yearning Mae, the sick Lloyd, and the lonely Henry. The three characters wallow in mire, desperately seeking their place in life. *Mud* traces their escalating love/hate relationships and culminates with an explosive and shocking climax. "Fornes is one of the most influential American playwrights of the past fifty years, but it is not often that you see her plays in collegiate performance. This is a very exciting opportunity," says Green.

Program #2 begins with *Defying Gravity* by Jane Anderson, and centers on the Challenger shuttle disaster of 1986. The play follows the lives of those directly and indirectly affected by the space mission. *Defying Gravity* is not a strict biography of well-known astronaut Christa McAuliffe, but rather a metaphorical and philosophical journey of life, space, and the power of dreams.

Suzy Quinn, the show's director, says that "*Defying Gravity* has been on my mind for a few years now, because I think all of us are in search of ways to reconcile with our pasts in order to improve our futures. I also wanted to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Challenger space disaster and bring awareness to a newer generation. Most importantly, though, I chose *Defying Gravity* to represent the human need for journeys."

Program #2 concludes with *Baggage*, the story of two strangers, Shannon and Keith, who own identical suitcases, travel on the same flight, and share the longest and most improbable night of their lives. The dark comedy unfolds when their bags are switched at the airport, and they discover how incriminating the contents of a suitcase can be.

Brinton Lukens, who is directing *Baggage* explains, "Working as a student director on a student-written play has been a great experience. The process of starting with a rough draft of a script,

and really being able to help the playwright shape the story has taught me a lot. It has given all of us involved a chance to create something from beginning to end.” McGough adds, “As a student playwright, I couldn’t have asked for a better experience than to work in such a supportive environment, with so many incredibly talented people. The experience has gone above and beyond anything I could have anticipated when writing *Baggage*.”

Tickets for each double bill of the Spring Festival of One-Acts are \$14 for adults, \$12 for seniors (60+) and \$8 for students; full-time U.Va. students can use their ART\$ Dollars to purchase tickets. For more information, call the Drama Department Box Office at 434-924-3376 or visit the U.Va. Department of Drama website at [www.virginia.edu/drama](http://www.virginia.edu/drama). The box office is open from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.