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CONTACT: John Kelly
John Kelly PR
434-296-5577
john@johnkellypr.com

**UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA TO PRESENT
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**

Beloved Shakespeare Comedy Coming to Culbreth Theatre Beginning December 1

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – November 15, 2010 – The foibles of the heart and the infinite possibilities of the imagination will be on full display when the U.Va. Department of Drama presents Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Culbreth Theatre beginning on December 1.

The Bard wrote "The course of true love never did run smooth." And never did he prove it more poetically, or hilariously, than in this particular concoction of pure theater magic. The beloved comedy, filled with mismatched lovers, whimsical fairies, fabulous fools and more, offers up a treat for all the senses and for all ages with a divine dreamscape that has been transfixing and transporting audiences for centuries.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, directed by Brendon Fox, will be presented from December 1-4 at 8PM and December 4-5 at 2PM. Single tickets are \$14 for adults, \$8 for students and \$12 for seniors, U.Va. faculty, staff and alumni association members.

Full-time U.Va. students may receive one free ticket to every performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Free U.Va. student tickets must be reserved in advance and are not available on the day of a performance. For information, contact the U.Va. Arts Box Office.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.artsboxoffice.virginia.edu or by calling 434-924-3376. Tickets may also be purchased in person at the U.Va. Arts Box Office (located in the lobby of the Culbreth Theatre building), Mondays through Fridays from noon until 5:00 p.m. A \$3.50 processing fee applies to all Internet, phone and mail orders.

Fox said that he and his cast are well aware of the unique challenges of presenting a play as well known and loved as this one. "We have been working hard to what I call 'detach the barnacles' that have become attached to the play through past productions people may have seen or heard about. What was important to me was embracing the language of the play and its imagery. I feel like it's a play all about transformation: of love, of the seasons...and more."

It has been important to him, Fox said, to offer audiences, and especially those who have seen the play, the opportunity to find something fresh and new within it. One way he has done this is to cast a female in the role of Puck. "This has allowed us to set up a dynamic where Puck has a lot of feelings for Oberon, who is feeling frustration about his long term marriage to Titania So

we have created this sort of this interesting love triangle without imposing anything foreign on the play.”

The move, Fox said, may help younger and newer audiences to connect with the production. “We are trying to make sure that the play is accessible and identifiable. For instance, I think there is something really juicy about the fact that just because you have power, that doesn’t make you immune to emotion, and these characters go through a lot of turmoil to find what is important to them. They can still be neurotic, jealous, petty...not much different than the rest of us.”

Fox sees the play as an invitation to a shared journey. “For this play to work, it requires an audience member, whether you have seen it once or eight times or never, to be transported into other worlds. Shakespeare actually acknowledges how special it is when we get to watch people actually enjoy a play within *Midsummer*, and then to also allow the magic of the spirit kingdom to parallel that magic of live performance. It’s like a spell – you have to be present for it to work, you’ve got to let your imagination be part of it.”

In addition to the play itself, Fox said he and his design team are using costumes and sets to convey the otherworldliness of one of Shakespeare’s most classic tales. “We’ve set the play in the early 20th Century, with a kind of Celtic influence, and created beautiful, elegant costumes as a result of that. The set is going to be on a pretty big scale, with some elements of opera, or even James Cameron’s *Avatar*. We’ve got these set pieces in the forest that are really big and very high. It is pretty thrilling to watch the lights come up and see someone 25 feet in the air.”

The 2010-2011 U.Va. Drama MainStage season will continue with *The Beaux’ Stratagem*, by George Farquhar and adapted by Thornton Wilder and Ken Ludwig (February 17-19 and 23-26, 2011) and Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Evita* (April 21-22 and 27-30, 2011).

The RecentWorks series in the Helms Theatre will continue with Carlos Murillo’s *dark play, or stories for boys* (March 23-26, 2011).

Parking is free at the Culbreth Road Parking Garage, conveniently located alongside the theaters.

Press images for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* are available at www.virginia.edu/drama/press.htm.

For complete information on the 2010-2011 season, visit www.virginia.edu/drama.

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