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**UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA DRAMA DEPARTMENT TO PRESENT
FUDDY MEERS BEGINNING MARCH 19 AT HELMS THEATRE**

**Wacky and Wonderful Comedy Takes Funhouse Carnival Look At One Day in the Life of
a Cast of Characters That Takes the “Values” out of Family Values**

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – March 10, 2009– The University of Virginia Department of Drama is set to leave ‘em laughing and thinking with a wild, no-holds-barred comedy that combines Marx Brothers-style zaniness with meaningful observations about the true meaning of family.

Fuddy Meers, by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright David Lindsay-Abaire, is a rollicking roller-coaster ride of a theatrical experience that tells the story of Claire, a young woman whose memory is erased each night when she goes to sleep. Claire is surrounded by a manic menagerie of characters including a brother who kidnaps her with the help of an accomplice who speaks only through a sock puppet, a husband whose intentions and past are equally murky, and a mother who speaks in a form of gibberish only she can truly understand. When they all come together, it is an evening that serves as a passport to a world where the only real certainty is laughter, and no one is above suspicion.

Fuddy Meers, directed by Richard Warner, will run at the Helms Theatre from March 19-21 and March 24-28. Tickets for the show are \$14 for the general public, \$12 for seniors and U.Va. faculty, staff and Alumni Association members, and \$8 for students. Full-time U.Va. students can use their **Arts\$ Dollars** as a form of payment to purchase both individual show and season tickets. Tickets can be ordered by calling the Drama Box Office at 434-924-3376 or by visiting the Culbreth Theatre Monday through Friday between the hours of 1 p.m. and 5 p.m.

“Between the play itself and Tom Bloom’s jack-in-the-box sort of funhouse set, we want our audiences to feel like the experience of watching this play is sort of like life itself,” director Richard Warner said. “You could be going through a perfectly happy day and something terrible, or even violent, can happen. Or you could be going through a really terrible day and something plops in your lap that is absolutely deliciously, gorgeously happy.”

Warner says Claire’s form of amnesia allows the playwright to make unique observations about life while creating a hero everyone can believe in and root for at a time in our history where belief can be in short supply. “I think what he is saying is there are some memories you want to forget, but we have memories and they are a part of us. We can’t expect to figure life out. It’s going to offer you some pretty interesting thrills and spills, just like a funhouse does. I tell my

cast that we are doing the audience a service if we make them fall in love with Claire. We all love the innocence of her character and find ourselves wanting to protect it. I think that's true of America right now. We want to protect our innocence. We want to be positive, even while we are looking around at a world where it seems we are surrounded by tsunamis wherever we turn."

All this is not to say that these big issues dominate the play. It is good old fashioned laughs that dominate this play, and plenty of them. "There is a really funny kind of burlesque-y thing to it. The Marx Brothers come to mind." Other film influences have played an important part in the production as well, Warner said. "We have been inspired by the Coen Brothers and by Tim Burton's wonderful film *Big Fish* and the world he created there."

If Warner had to give one piece of advice for *Fuddy Meers* audiences, it would be to fasten their seatbelts. "I tell our actors that you want to have the thrills and spills of how it feels when you get strapped into a car in Adventureland and you go higher and higher up that hill knowing you are about to take that first dive into oblivion."

The 2008-2009 season will conclude next month with Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in which The Bard uses a pair of romantic rivals to explore the complexities of human nature and relationships as only he can. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* comes to Culbreth Theatre from April 16-18 and April 22-25. Single tickets are on sale now and are \$14 for the general public, \$12 for seniors and U.Va. faculty, staff and Alumni Association members, and \$8 for students.

Free parking is available at the Culbreth Road Parking Garage, which is located mere steps from the theatres.

Press images for Fuddy Meers are available at <http://www.virginia.edu/drama/press.htm>.

For complete information on the 2008-2009 season, visit www.virginia.edu/drama.

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