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**UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA TO PRESENT FRESH
LOOK AT ONE OF THE MOST ICONOCLASTIC CHARACTERS IN
THEATER HISTORY WITH *HEDDA GABLER***

Ibsen Classic To Open In Helms Theater On October 25

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – October 15, 2007 – She’s perplexing. She’s enduring. She’s fascinating. And she’s back!

The University of Virginia Department of Drama will take on one of the theater world’s most iconoclastic characters in a new production of Henrik Ibsen’s classic *Hedda Gabler*. The play, directed by Drama Department Professor Richard Warner opens in the Helms Theatre on October 25 and will run through the 27th, return on the 30th and 31st and November 1-3.

All performances begin at 8p.m. Single ticket sales are \$14 for adults, \$12 for seniors and \$8 for students and 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 1pm and 6pm.

New this year, we are offering a 15% discount on all tickets and subscriptions to U.Va. Faculty and Staff. Also, full-time U.Va. students can use their **Arts Dollars** as a form of payment to purchase both individual show and season tickets. Visit www.virginia.edu/artsdollars for more information.

So, to paraphrase another theater classic, how do you solve a problem like Miss Hedda? To hear director Warner tell it, you don’t. “Here is the bottom line, when I think about what is so fascinating about her and what most great actresses say in taking her on is that you can’t solve her. She’s insoluble. Hedda has taken on an iconoclastic dimension; it is as if she has escaped her own play. It is almost like if you are sitting in Bodo’s, you could see Hamlet walking in, or Hedda walking in. They are so much a part of who we are, and they are so three dimensional that they have escaped their world.”

Though written in 1890, Warner observed that the play and the character have a unique ability to translate and resonate through the centuries and generations. One reason for this is that Hedda remains all too recognizable to us all. “I tell my cast that, whether we like it or not, there is a little Hedda in all of us. It is that part of us that doesn’t want to accept responsibility, that doesn’t want to accept commitments, that is looking for pleasure and doesn’t know how to find it, that is afraid of scandal.”

Warner and his cast are working hard to ensure that this character and this story resonate with younger audiences. "I ask this wonderful cast how this is going to matter to somebody that you know that you lived in a dorm with?" One tool they are using to promote this relevance is the script itself, a translation released in 2000 by acclaimed playwright and director Doug Hughes. The translation, he says, "kind of wrestles the play away from the sort of PBS version of it, which was perfectly legitimate, but had this sort of British polish to it. This translation releases it to an American audience, allowing us to convey that while this is the world of the 1890's, it has a flavor that we can all access, that it is very recognizable as our story too."

While it would be easy to imagine that the play is completely dominated by its main character, Warner said that in this production, that is not the case. "This is truly an ensemble piece. It's not just about Hedda but about the people around her. If our audiences go away and say I understand every one of these characters from the smallest, Berta and Auntie Julie, to Hedda herself, then the play is, I think, where it should be."

Finally, while many theater lovers might think they know this story and their character through and through, Warner and his design team have collaborated to surprise even the most avid Hedda-watchers through a combination of innovative sound and set designs that emphasize the nightmarish, dream aspects of Hedda's world. "We are treating it like Hedda has indeed escaped her play, and that some sort of ill wind has blown her into the Helms and that her particular hell is that she has to retell her story again and again."

The 2007-2008 season will continue with Shakespeare's beloved classic comedy *Twelfth Night* (Culbreth Theatre, November 29, 30; December 1, 5-8); the acclaimed musical revue *Songs for a New World* (Culbreth, February 14-16 & 20-23, 2008); U.Va. Drama Associate Professor Doug Grissom's drama *So Careless* (Helms, March 20-22 & 25-29, 2008) and the David Mamet-adapted Harley Granville-Barker play *The Voysey Inheritance* (April 17-19 & 23-26, 2008).

Tickets for *Twelfth Night* are on sale now, and tickets for the remaining productions will go on sale approximately two weeks prior to the opening date. All performances begin at 8p.m.

The new Arts Parking Garage is scheduled for completion by Spring 2008 and will feature parking conveniently located next to the theatres. Until that time, construction has closed the lots flanking Culbreth Road and Culbreth Road itself. Free parking is available in the Mad Bowl lot adjacent to the Peyton House and the Madison Hall lot. Free spaces may also be found on University Way, University Avenue or McCormick Road. Parking for an hourly rate is available at the Central Grounds Garage. You may purchase a short-term parking pass for the Emmet/Ivy Garage by contacting U.Va. Parking and Transportation at 434-924-7231. Please allow extra time to park and walk to the theatre.

For complete information on the 2007-2008 season, visit www.virginia.edu/drama.

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