

*The University of Virginia Drama Department Excavates a Family's History and Their Sordid Past in the Thought-Provoking Drama **Luminosity** by Nick Stafford*

How well do you know your family's past? How does that knowledge affect the way you live your life? One young woman is about to find out. Debra Mercer is the adopted, Black daughter of a wealthy, white, British family. When she delves into her family history, her bittersweet discoveries make her question herself and the people she calls kin. The lives of three centuries of the Mercer family are simultaneously exposed and interwoven in the mysterious and powerful drama *Luminosity* by Nick Stafford, which continues the UVa Department of Drama's 2005-2006 season. *Luminosity* will "shine" in the Helms Theatre March 23-25, 29-31, and April 1 at 8:00 p.m.

A cast of both graduate and undergraduate actors will appear as the Mercer family and those whose lives they touch. The family's stories are told in three separate time frames, 1799, 1899, and 1999, which allows audience members to solve a puzzle while putting the family chronicle in perspective. And a painful chronicle it is, as Debra Mercer discovers the source of her family's wealth and their involvement in the Slave trade.

Director Betsy Tucker, associate professor of acting and directing, says that since the play deals with complex British-South African relations "it is, perhaps, of particular interest to Americans, Virginians, and students at U.Va., as our histories are entwined with slavery — and the racisms it reflected, perpetuated, and implicitly stains us with." Tucker has most recently directed *Cloud 9* and *As You Like It* at U.Va.

Luminosity was originally produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2001 and premiered in the U.S. at Playmakers Repertory at UNC Chapel Hill. The U.Va. production will feature students John Bonner, Will Gatlin, Laurie T. Geigel, Joel Grothe, Emily Lacy, Walt McGough, Adanma Onyedike, Todd Patterson, Blake Segal, Autumn Shiley, and Ryan Stinnett.

Tickets for *Luminosity* are \$14 for adults, \$12 for seniors (60+) and \$8 for students; full-time UVa 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. The box office is open from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.