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**U.VA DRAMA DEPARTMENT SET TO OPEN RODGERS AND
HAMMERSTEIN'S TIMELESS CLASSIC OKLAHOMA! ON NOVEMBER 20**

*One of Most Important Shows In Musical Theater History Combines Timeless Love
Story With Classic American Tale of Adversity, Perseverance and Triumph*

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – November 10, 2008 - Don't worry...that breeze you are about to feel around Culbreth Theatre is just what happens when the "wind comes sweepin' down the plain." The U.Va. Drama Department will unveil its new production of Oklahoma! - one of the musical theater world's most enduring and beloved classics, beginning November 20.

The first and most memorable collaboration between Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, *Oklahoma!* is a show that has launched millions of voices and touched even more hearts since its 1943 Broadway debut. The story of love on the plains against the backdrop of an evolving nation is loaded with an entire score's worth of unforgettable tunes, including "Oh What a Beautiful Mornin'," "The Surrey With The Fringe On Top," "People Will Say We're In Love" and, of course, the iconic title song.

Oklahoma! will run at the Culbreth Theatre from November 20-22 and December 3-5. Performances begin at 8 p.m. with a special matinee performance on November 22 at 2 p.m. Single tickets are \$16 for adults; \$14 for seniors and U.Va. faculty, staff and Alumni Association members; and \$10 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..

"Doing this show has been like revisiting an old friend," said the show's director, Robert Chapel, whose friendship with this particular musical runs both deep and long. "This was the first movie musical I ever saw. The cast recording was the first 33RPM recording I ever bought, and it was the first musical theater role I ever played, as Will Parker in high school." In addition, Chapel directed a production of the show 22 years ago as head of a summer theater in upstate New York.

"As a musical theater historian, I am so very well aware of where this show fits in the musical theater canon. It is one of the most important musicals ever written. And that,

coupled with the fact that the students have embraced in such an open and enthusiastic way, has just been great”

Like everything in the worlds of theater and in life, the show is a case of timing being everything, Chapel said, “This show is really about finding the American spirit again, a spirit that was embodied both in show’s characters and setting as well as in the World War II era when it was written and first performed. So I think it is particularly appropriate that audiences will have a chance to not only be entertained but to do so at a time when a sense of American pride and spirit seems resurgent.”

Perhaps more than anything else, however, *Oklahoma!* is about unforgettable music. “This is one of the truly great scores,” Chapel said. “It features not only luscious music but also very witty music. In many cases, it represents Rodgers and Hammerstein at their very best.”

The 2008-2009 U.Va. Drama season will continue with the surreal dreamscape *The Love Song of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, which comes to Culbreth Theatre from February 12-14 and 18-21, 2009.

Future productions will include *Fuddy Meers*, a tale of a wild farcical day in the life of a family like no other you have ever met before (Helms, March 19-21 & 24-28, 2009) and Shakespeare’s early comedy *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (April 16-18 & 22-25, 2009).

Culbreth season subscriptions are still on sale and are available for \$38 Adult, \$33 Senior and U.Va. faculty/ staff/alumni, \$26 Student and may be ordered by calling the Drama Box Office at 434-924-3376 or by visiting Culbreth Theatre. Tickets for each individual production will go on sale approximately two weeks prior to the opening date.

Parking is available at the Culbreth Road Parking Garage. Opened last spring, the garage is free of charge and located mere steps from the theatres.

Press images for *Oklahoma!* 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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