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**UVA DRAMA PRESENTS FRESH LOOK AT TIMELESS CLASSIC WITH
SHAKESPEARE'S *ROMEO AND JULIET***

OPENING APRIL 19TH AT CULBRETH THEATRE

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – April 4, 2012 – The U.Va. Drama Department is peeling back the layers of one of the most oft-told love stories in entertainment history with a new production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Set to debut at Culbreth Theatre on April 19th, this production is directed by Brantley M. Dunaway, the Producing Artistic Director/Executive Director at Kentucky Shakespeare.

Romeo and Juliet will be presented at 8 p.m. from Thursday, April 19th through Saturday, April 21st and from Wednesday, April 25th through Saturday, April 28th. There will be a 2 p.m. matinee performance on Sunday, April 29th. Ticket prices are \$14 for adults, \$12 for seniors and U.Va. faculty, staff and alumni association members and \$8 for students. Tickets are available online at www.artsboxoffice.virginia.edu, by calling 434-924-3376 or in-person from noon until 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday at the U.Va. Arts Box Office, located in the lobby of the Culbreth Theatre building.

This time around, the tale of the Montagues and Capulets is told from a whole new perspective. The story is set in the Mississippi Delta in the early 20th Century and, according its director, has been fashioned with accessibility in mind.

“When people think of Shakespeare, because of the heightened language and the poetry, they view it as erudite,” Dunaway said. “They see it as this sort of highbrow type of writing and medium. But we have to remember that when Shakespeare was writing, he wasn’t writing for the upper crust. He was writing for the groundlings, for the common man. So especially in this play, there is some bawdiness to it. We like to soften it up by saying it is the greatest tragic love story, but there is more to it than that.”

Dunaway has also chosen to add a new dimension to the play by borrowing from a sometimes controversial version. “The predominant edition of the play that was performed in the United States in the 1800’s was something called the Garrick edition. He basically came along and decided the play needed to be more sensible. So he compiled a new version through found pages. And since these pages had not necessarily been validated, they are quite controversial among scholars.”

The version, he said, will likely have audiences talking on their way out of the theater. .
“There is definitely a scene that audiences are going to be surprised at. We have only taken two pages from the Garrick edition, but it gives the story a brand new twist. Let’s just say it involves a monumental scene in the play that will have the audience rubbing their eyes and saying ‘Wait a minute, what just happened?’”

The Deep South setting, he said, allows the production to address an important issue that is largely ignored in the play itself. “We’ve always wondered why the Montagues and the Capulets fight? It’s never really addressed in the play. We address that by setting it in the Mississippi Delta during this time period. The Capulets are a very traditional conservative, established agricultural-based family. The Montagues’ back story is that they are a shipping family. He is a mogul. So it was kind of what was happening in the Delta at the time. You have a shipping mogul who is driving down the prices of agriculture. Both are dependent on each other, yet both are in constant conflict.”

Free parking for all U.Va. Drama performances is available at the Culbreth Road Parking Garage, conveniently located alongside the theaters.

For more information on the 2011-2012 U.Va. Department of Drama season, visit us online at www.virginia.edu/drama.

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