

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: John Kelly
John Kelly PR
434-296-5577
john@johnkellypr.com

**UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA
CONTINUES SEASON WITH CHEKHOV CLASSIC *THE SEAGULL***

Show Opens February 18th at Culbreth Theatre

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – February 8, 2010 – What do you get when you take a fascinating and disparate group of characters, put them in a single house and watch as they wrestle with the timeless themes of unrequited love, lust, ambition, jealousy and the intoxicating allure of celebrity?

When you put it all in the hands of one of the most gifted minds in theater history, you get Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*, which continues the 2009-2010 UVA Drama Department season at Culbreth Theatre starting February 18th.

The Seagull, translated by Christopher Hampton and directed by U.Va. Drama alumna Amanda McRaven, will be presented at the Culbreth Theatre and will run from February 18-20 and February 24-27. All performances begin at 8:00 p.m. There will be a post-show talk-back with the director and members of the cast on February 25. Single tickets are now on sale and are \$14 for the general public; \$12 for seniors and U.Va. faculty, staff and Alumni Association members; and \$8 for students.

Anton Chekhov's timeless classic pulls back the curtains on a Russian farmhouse to reveal a collection of indelible characters whose lives and longings have fascinated generations of theater lovers. The play, according to McRaven, is as relevant, if not more relevant, than ever before.

"The theme of unrequited love resonates with everybody, and in Chekhov's plays you often have these people living together in a big house so there are characters in constant close proximity to people they are desperately in love with but who don't love them back. I feel like this is something we all have been through in some way."

Another relevant aspect, she said, is one that is almost overpowering in our society today. "The play is also about celebrity worship," she said, "about what we think celebrities are versus what they are in real life. You have Arkadina, the central character, who is a major actress on the level of a Meryl Streep. She brings with her a writer with great storytelling talent that gives him a certain magnetism and appeal. The two create a sort of dramatic vortex in the way celebrity can. The people around them will do anything for them. You have young Nina who will do anything to pursue her own acting dreams, to Arkadina's son Konstantin, a tortured playwright himself. What I love about the play is even the estate manager, the guy who plows the fields, used to be an actor and loves theater and performing."

The students in the play's cast have eagerly embraced everything about the play, she said, and the process of finding what its resonance might be for them. "I think they recognize the dustier qualities in the script and they are eager to find the life in it for them. So they really embrace discovering the sensuality, and there is a lot of that in the script."

Part of this embrace, she said, lies in the actors accepting who they are as opposed to trying to be what they are not. "This is a young company, so we are embracing that quality and that they are telling a story but not trying to be old. The oldest couple in the play is in their mid 50s, so this allows our cast to play the sensuousness without worrying about playing what is not true, because they are only 24. I am basically letting them discover what they believe in the script and working together to make decisions on that every day."

Single tickets for all spring semester productions can be purchased online at <http://www.artsboxoffice.virginia.edu/>. Tickets are also available by phone at 434-924-3376 between noon and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and in person at the Arts Box Office, located in the lobby of the Culbreth Theatre also from noon to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. A \$3.50 processing fee applies to Internet, phone and mail orders.

The season will also include Sarah Ruhl's smart and funny *Dead Man's Cell Phone* (Helms Theatre, March 25-27; March 30-31 and April 1-3) and the favorite musical theatre fairy tale *Pippin* (Culbreth Theatre, April 22-14, April 28-30 and May 1).

Parking is free at the Culbreth Road Parking Garage, conveniently located alongside the theaters.

Press images for *The Seagull* are available at www.virginia.edu/drama/press.htm.

For complete information on the 2010 Spring Season, visit www.virginia.edu/drama.

###