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**UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA
OPENS 2011-2012 SEASON WITH TONY AWARD-WINNING *PARADE***

Epic American Musical Based on Sensational 1913 Murder Trial of Leo Frank

Opens October 6 at Culbreth Theatre

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – September 20, 2011 – The 2011-2012 U.Va. Drama season kicks off on October 6 at Culbreth Theatre with the epic American musical *Parade*.

Written by Alfred Uhry (*Driving Miss Daisy*), with music from Jason Robert Brown, one of the most acclaimed composers on the contemporary theatre scene today, this Tony Award-winning musical tells the story of one of the most infamous trials of the 20th Century.

Parade is based on the true story of Leo Frank, a Jewish man convicted of murdering young factory worker Mary Phagan in 1913 Atlanta. It's a gripping depiction of the mob mentality that demands someone to blame in the name of justice, contrasting the deadly power of prejudice with a love story packed with lessons that transcends eras.

Parade, directed by Robert Chapel, will be presented in the Culbreth Theatre October 6-8 and 12-15 at 8:00 p.m.

Ticket prices for *Parade* are \$16 for adults, \$14 for seniors and U.Va. faculty, staff and alumni association members and \$10 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.

Full season subscription packages for 2011-2012 are \$60 for adults, \$35 for students, \$55 for seniors and U.Va. faculty, staff and alumni association members and are also available online, in-person or by phone. A \$3.75 processing fee applies to all online or phone orders.

When Leo Frank was accused of murdering young factory worker Mary Phagan in 1913 Atlanta on the day of the Confederate Memorial Day Parade, he found himself facing impossible odds when it came to justice. He was a Jewish man from the North, making him an instant target for prejudice and the victim of a bloodthirsty mob mentality that found people hell-bent on vengeance at the total expense of the truth.

Featuring a score that combines pop, folk, R&B and gospel influences, *Parade* is a riveting murder mystery, a gripping courtroom drama, a moving love story and perhaps most of all, a riveting reminder of the deadly consequences of prejudice that are all too familiar to us to this day.

Director Robert Chapel said the complex show is a perfect fit for a story that is rather naturally operatic in its scope and power. "This is an epic in the true sense of the word," Chapel said. "It's a story that transcended its time and had lasting impacts on our society by playing a role in both the formation of the Anti Defamation League and in the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. So when Hal Prince first went to Jason Robert Brown about doing the show, he said he wanted to create an American opera."

The operatic elements go beyond the story itself, Chapel said. "The music is employed not for its melodic value, but for its ability to set a tone, and to drive the narrative. In that way it is far closer to opera than it is to Rodgers and Hammerstein. Between the pure power of this story and this uniquely modern theatrical style, I think the audiences are going to find this to be an incredibly interesting evening."

"The combination of its modern feel and timeless lessons makes the show a great fit for the members of his student cast, who have completely immersed themselves in their efforts," Chapel said.

"I have been really impressed with the amount of research our actors have taken it upon themselves to do. In fact, many times during the Heritage season last summer, I would see the actors in our leading roles holed up with a book or research materials about the case in an effort to better understand what motivated their characters."

The 2011-2012 U.Va. Drama Department season continues with *Troy is Burning*, by U.Va. fourth-year Matthew Minnicino. *Troy is Burning* comes to the Helms Theatre November 30-December 3 at 8:00 p.m. and December 3 and 4 at 2:00 p.m.

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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