

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY'S
COLLEGE OF VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS
ANNOUNCES THE
MASON FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS
June 12 – 29, 2008

FAIRFAX, Va., March 5, 2008 – George Mason University's College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA) announces the first **Mason Festival of the Arts**, to be held on Mason's Fairfax campus June 12 - 29, 2008. This three-week festival will provide exciting opportunities for arts lovers of all ages. Offerings include performances by Mason's professional theater group, **Theater of the First Amendment (TFA)**, **The Fairfax Symphony Orchestra**, **The Fairfax Choral Society**, the **Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra**, and the **World Children's Choir**. In addition, CVPA will hold a **Community Arts Weekend** on June 14 and 15, which will feature booths for local artists and vendors and free community arts performances on the arts plaza and in the Concert Hall lobby.

"The Mason Festival of the Arts is making a statement to the world about the quality, diversity, and energy of the cultural life of our greater Fairfax community—with outstanding theater, music, opera, visual arts, educational, and family-oriented events, all concentrated in three dynamic June weekends," said Artistic Director Rick Davis. "I see it as a transformational moment in the life of this incredible area in which we live."

The Festival presents a diverse selection of artistic performances and events, and unites professional, community, and student artists, and arts organizations in a creative environment. In the **theater** realm, **TFA** will present the world premiere of *Two-Bit Taj Mahal* by Paul D'Andrea, directed by Heather McDonald, and the East Coast premiere of *Mariela in the Desert* by Karen Zacarias, directed by Nick Olcott. Both are works by local playwrights with national reputations. On **Theater Lovers Day** on Saturday, June 21, passes will be offered, which include a luncheon with a guest speaker and tickets to the TFA productions and readings held that day.

Music offerings include **The Fairfax Symphony Orchestra**, in a co-production with TFA, which will present Peter Boyer's *Ellis Island: Dream of America*, a patriotic symphonic score with live actors and multimedia, inspired by the Ellis Island Oral History Project, with William Hudson conducting. Also featured is James Beckel's *Liberty for All*, narrated by Fairfax County Chairman of the Board of Supervisors Gerry Connolly, and Leonard Bernstein's *Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*. **The Fairfax Choral Society**, under the baton of Doug Mears, will present *Hollywood Goes Choral III*, featuring choral classics from the cinema performed live by their Adult Chorus with full orchestra to film clips from *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars: Episode I*, *Amistad*, *Saving Private Ryan* and more. The **Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra**, under the direction of Jim Carroll, and the **World Children's Choir** also will perform. **Mason Festival Opera** presents the world premiere concert staging of *Love's Comedy*,

based on the Henrik Ibsen play of the same title, composed by Kim D. Sherman, with libretto by Rick Davis.

The **visual arts** will be represented with gallery shows by members of the **Fairfax Art League**, as well as additional local artists' work, including Northern Virginia Community College Art Professor **Todd Messegee's** tongue-in-cheek "Robot Series," and student work from Mason's *Department of Art and Visual Technology*.

Rounding out the program will be the **Mason Film Festival**, held in the nearby Johnson Center Cinema on the three weekends of the festival, featuring local independent and student films.

The festival also offers engaging arts programming for children and adults. During weekend theater matinees, *A Touch of Class* will offer a kid-friendly alternative through performing arts classes for ages 4 and up, so families can spend the day attending a variety of activities. TFA's annual play development program, *First Light*, will become part of the Mason Festival. Key to its mission as an incubator for new plays and playwrights, the *First Light Discovery Program* will include staged readings and script development opportunities for professionals and students, and will feature the inaugural *Generations Playwriting Project*, teaming middle-school students and senior citizens from the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) in a collaborative process of storytelling across generations. The *Potomac Music Academy* and *Acting for Young People* are also among the participants.

"In June, venues on the Fairfax campus of George Mason University become available as the academic year ends," added Managing Director Kevin Murray. "By producing and presenting multiple performances, we create an 'arts beacon' which will offer something for everyone. In a real sense, we will be producing a season's worth of work in a compressed period of time."

Jim Maiwurm, the Festival Manager, observed, "As we started talking to other area arts organizations, we realized that we all faced similar challenges. The Fairfax Symphony, The Fairfax Choral Society, and a dozen other regional arts groups lead a migratory existence, performing in multiple venues every season. By banding together, the Festival Arts Partners demonstrate the depth and diversity of the arts in Northern Virginia. Together, we will show the myriad ways that arts and arts education add to the quality of life in our community, and make the case for continued support for arts groups and new venues."

Complete program information is posted at www.masonfestival.org.

Ticket prices vary. Charge by phone at 888-945-2468 or visit www.tickets.com. Festival discount packages are available at the Concert Hall box office at 703-993-2787. The Center for the Arts complex is located on the Fairfax campus of George Mason University at the intersection of Braddock Road and Route 123. Paid parking is located in the deck adjacent to the mainstage Concert Hall and FREE parking is located in university lot K. Visit www.gmu.edu/cfa

The College of Visual and Performing Arts exists to create an academic environment in which the arts may be considered both as individual disciplines and as interdisciplinary forms that strengthen each other. Believing that an education in the arts is deepened by regular contact with the work of distinguished visiting artists, the College draws on a variety of professional presenting and producing units where artists from across the country and around the world regularly perform, give master classes, work with students during extended residencies, and interact with the community in a variety of other ways. These programs at the Center for the Arts Concert Hall, TheaterSpace, Galleries, Harris Theater, and other venues, provide a diverse selection of challenging and entertaining cultural experiences for the University community, as well as Northern Virginia and the greater Washington, D.C. area. The College houses four academic departments: Art and Visual Technology, Dance, Music, and Theater.

About George Mason University

George Mason University, located in the heart of Northern Virginia's technology corridor near Washington, D.C., is an innovative, entrepreneurial institution with national distinction in a range of academic fields. With strong undergraduate and graduate degree programs in engineering, information technology, biotechnology and health care, Mason prepares its students to succeed in the work force and meet the needs of the region and the world. Mason professors conduct groundbreaking research in areas such as cancer, climate change, information technology and the biosciences, and Mason's Center for the Arts brings world-renowned artists, musicians and actors to its stage. Its School of Law is recognized by U.S. News & World Report as one of the top 35 law schools in the United States.

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