



**Press Release**  
**Henley Street Theatre and Richmond Shakespeare**

**THEATRE WORTH TALKING ABOUT**

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**Henley Street Theatre and Richmond Shakespeare Join and Form Quill Theatre  
31st Season Announced and Kickoff of \$10,000 Matching Grant**

Richmond, VA – Henley Street Theatre and Richmond Shakespeare announce that the two non-profit theatres formally united under the new name of Quill Theatre on May 16, 2015. As the region's only theatre dedicated to producing the classics, its vision will be "to create theatre rooted in the genius of Shakespeare, that provokes the mind and speaks to the soul," with a mission to produce "theatre worth talking about." Quill Theatre will continue to produce four mainstage productions each year and the beloved Richmond Shakespeare Festival at Agecroft Hall, in addition to offering the only Shakespearean educational programming for students and adults in the region.

Jacqueline O'Connor, Managing Director for Quill Theatre says, "I am so proud of the hard work and dedication of our board and staff. We have come together to bring the community the very best of Henley Street Theatre and Richmond Shakespeare – creating a vibrant, bold, forward-thinking theatre company."

Henley Street Theatre and Richmond Shakespeare began working toward a union in early 2013, operating together with a shared vision of fully integrating into a single entity within two years. Board President Brendan Williamson says, "Under our new, unified brand, we will remain dedicated to providing the Richmond community with the highest quality theatre and educational outreach." Artistic Director Dr. Jan Powell adds, "I am energized by the multiple meanings of "quill" – it's a writing instrument with infinite flexibility, a penetrating sharp, a delicate and ephemeral adornment. As Quill Theatre, we will adventure through the full spectrum of our theatre's capability, elasticity, and potency."

Quill Theatre's 31st season will celebrate the union by offering the utmost variety in our Shakespearean selections – a delightful comedy, a devastating tragedy a wicked bloodbath, and a poignant synthesis of them all – along with a recent Helen Hayes Award winner for Best New Play, an early masterwork by one of America's finest 20th century theatrical writers, and a tender, haunting story of rural Southern childhood. The full listing of plays can be found below.

Henley Street Theatre and Richmond Shakespeare announced their new name, revitalized mission and 31st season at this year's Bootleg Ball. Also at the ball, the company announced that it had received a

\$10,000 matching grant from an anonymous donor. The unrestricted grant is aimed at strengthening the underpinnings of the theatre, which has undergone tremendous growth over the past two years.

“This grant is from one of our strongest supporters, one who believes in our mission and who wants us to continue offering the quality programming we have become known for,” said Christiana M. Roberts, Vice President of Development and chair of the Bootleg Ball committee. “Our Bootleg Ball is the perfect place to kick off the campaign for the matching grant.”

## **Our History**

### **Encore Theatre! Inc. (Richmond Shakespeare)**

In the late 1970's, a group of recent graduates from the University of Richmond Theatre Arts program founded Rising Sun Repertory Company. The young group served as members of the board of directors as well as actors, technicians and producers for their plays. Performing in a black box theatre space at the university, Rising Sun's mission was to produce works of literary and historic interest.

After a short dormant period in the early 1980's, a group of artists from Rising Sun decided to formally incorporate under a new name, and on August 21, 1985, Encore! Theatre Inc. was born. The name embodied the company's dedication to “taking a second look” at the past for new meaning and relevance.

Grant Mudge became the first full-time paid Artistic Director in August 1996. Cynde Liffick joined the company as Managing Director in December of the same year, later becoming the company's Education Director. In 1998, Grant and Cynde founded the Richmond Shakespeare Festival, with performances in the bandshell at The Boulders. The following season, the Richmond Shakespeare Festival found its permanent home at Agecroft Hall, where that beloved Richmond tradition is now in its 17<sup>th</sup> season.

Sensing a hunger in the community for great works of theatrical literature, Grant and Cynde took Encore in a bold new direction and changed the company name in 2006 to Richmond Shakespeare. The new mission was to *create unique performances of theater, using original or established works and emphasizing the plays of William Shakespeare, striving to demonstrate that Shakespeare's works are understandable, exciting, and applicable to modern life.*

Richmond Shakespeare established a dynamic mainstage season, Shakespeare tours and outstanding educational programming, and was the first in the nation selected to offer Will Power to Youth, a program developed at the Shakespeare Center of Los Angeles for at-risk youth, combining hands-on artistic experience with paid job training. Grant and Cynde were also an integral part of the planning process for Richmond CenterStage; Richmond Shakespeare was the first to perform in the Gottwald Playhouse when it opened in 2009. The company also has partnered with local NPR affiliate WCVE to produce Bard Bits: Shakespeare-themed video shorts aired as part of “Shakespeare Uncovered,” a national public television series focusing on the stories behind Shakespeare's greatest plays.

Grant Mudge departed Richmond Shakespeare at the end of 2011 and is now the Producing Artistic Director of the Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival. Dr. Jan Powell arrived in Richmond in January 2012 as guest director of *Macbeth*, stayed on as Interim Artistic Director and was named Artistic Director in November 2012.

In 2013, Cynde Liffick left to found her new Richmond nonprofit, Bard Unbound, where she offers Shakespeare performances and educational opportunities in nontraditional spaces.

## **Henley Street Theatre**

Henley Street Theatre's story began in 2006 when Alex Previtera moved to Richmond from Los Angeles with a dream of developing a professional theatre company rooted in the classics. A recent graduate of Penn State's School of Theatre, Previtera recognized Richmond as an excellent prospect for his theatre, as a culturally rich city with a growing arts scene. The company's name was inspired by his passion for Shakespeare, who was born on Henley Street in Stratford-upon-Avon.

A March 2007, an article in the *Richmond Marquee* about Alex and his plans for Henley Street attracted the notice of Richmond theatre veteran Jacqueline O'Connor. She met with Alex that week to ask how she could help, and at the end of that meeting she agreed to volunteer as Henley Street's Managing Director. She was officially hired as Managing Director by the Board of Directors in the spring of 2008.

The first season (2007-08) debuted with *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*. The successful show served as an effective launching point for the rest of the season: *The Seagull*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *The Spanish Tragedy*.

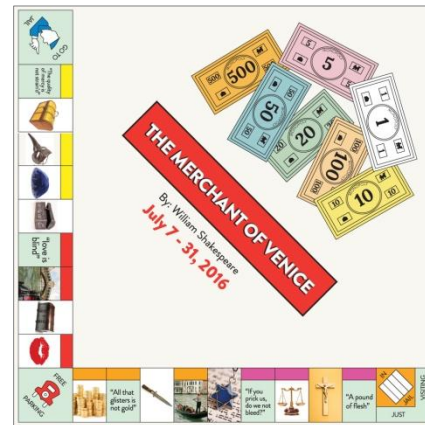
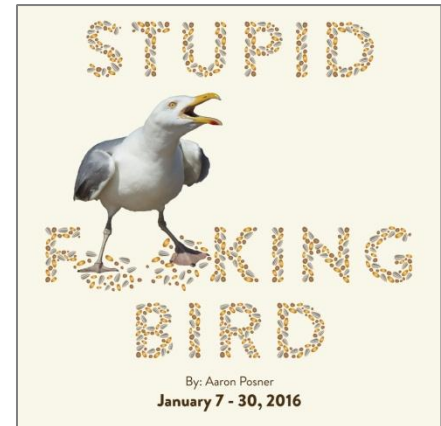
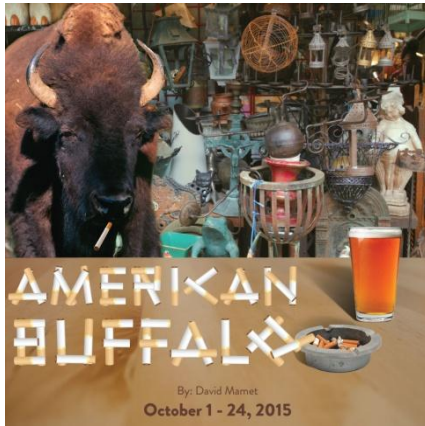
Alex Previtera stepped down at the end of Henley Street's second season to pursue a new career path. James Ricks took the helm as Artistic Director and propelled the company forward with a variety of innovations. He revitalized the mission, to produce theatre with *a reverence for language, a commitment to diversity and a spirit of adventure*, and established the free "Bootleg Shakespeare," which continues to be one of the most anticipated theatre events each year. Over the next four years under the leadership of James and Jacqueline, Henley Street Theatre quickly rose to become a valued member of the theatre community, winning numerous awards for mainstage productions and providing a variety of educational opportunities for youth. At the end of the sixth season, Ricks resigned as Artistic Director to pursue opportunities outside Richmond, and the company began talks with Richmond Shakespeare about coming together.

## **Henley Street Theatre and Richmond Shakespeare**

In March 2013, the boards of Henley Street Theatre and Encore Theatre! Inc. (Richmond Shakespeare), executed a Memorandum of Understanding toward achieving a full unification by 2015. Dr. Jan Powell and Jacqueline O'Connor joined forces to leverage the strengths of both organizations in a shared vision of artistic excellence.

This year, the companies were nationally recognized as one of forty theatres in the United States to receive a prestigious National Endowment for the Arts — Shakespeare in American Communities grant. With the assistance of generous individuals and community partners, the grant allowed them to bring a free hour-long performance of *Romeo and Juliet* to all Richmond City middle and high schools, with hands-on workshops, study guides and talkbacks. This unique opportunity for Richmond's youth is set to expand into surrounding counties with two shows in the 2015-16 school year.

# Welcome to our 2015-2016 season



## American Buffalo by David Mamet | Directed by Daniel Moore

October 1 - 24, 2015

*You make your own right and wrong.*

During a single day in an unremarkable junk shop on a nondescript street in Chicago in the mid-70s, three small-time would-be crooks scramble to pull off a fast heist for easy money. As they plan the unlikely caper, an increasing tension between them tests their friendship and threatens to shatter everything they fight for. Hilarious and appalling, this brute race for a lowlife version of the American dream is brilliantly syncopated by Mamet's rapid-fire two-bit bum's lingo. Adult themes and language.

At TheatreLab – 300 E. Broad Street, Richmond VA 23219

## Holiday Memories by Truman Capote

Adapted by Russell Vandenbroucke | Directed by Dr. Jan Powell

December 3 – 26, 2015

*Oh my...it's fruitcake weather!*

Following the success of *Mr. Dickens' Christmas Carol* and *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, we continue our tradition of theatrical adaptations of great seasonal works with this touching pair of tales adapted from two Truman Capote short stories, set in rural Alabama, 1933. *The Thanksgiving Visitor* finds Buddy, a young boy, struggling under the cruel torment of the local bully, Odd Henderson. Buddy's "best friend" his older, childlike cousin Sook, invites Odd to a Thanksgiving party where the surprising truth unfolds about Odd's hidden depths. In *A Christmas Memory*, Buddy has an

eventful Christmas with Sook as the pair and their dog Queenie embark on the kinds of imaginative adventures a child will always remember, including baking thirty-one fruitcakes to be given as Christmas presents to everyone they can think of, including Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt!

At VCU's Grace Street Theatre - 934 W Grace St, Richmond, VA 23220

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## **Stupid F\*\*king Bird** by Aaron Posner | Directed by Jon Kretzu

**January 7 – 30, 2016**



A part of the Richmond Acts of Faith Festival

*Here we ARE. Here WE are. HERE we are.*

Winner of the prestigious Helen Hayes Award for Best New Play! An exquisitely narcissistic family of directors, actors, and admirers warily orbit, swoop, dive and devour one another as they grapple with the fatal truth that life goes on, no matter what. Loosely inspired by Chekhov's classic *The Seagull*, this is a powerful, sharply contemporary re-imagining of the eternal struggle between artists and those who both inspire and are destroyed by them. Posner has created a unique metatheatrical experience that swings wildly between farcical hilarity, searing heartbreak and an intensely intimate exploration of the thin line that separates audience and actor. One of the hottest new plays in American theatre!

At Richmond Triangle Players – 1300 Altamont Ave, Richmond VA 23230

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## **King Lear** by William Shakespeare | Directed by Dr. Jan Powell

**March 31 – April 23, 2016**

*Thou shouldst not have been old, till thou hadst been wise.*

Starring Joe Inscoe in the title role, this most epic, heart-rending of Shakespeare's tragedies will rock our return to the VMFA's Leslie Cheek Theater. Lear, the aging King of Britain, intends to divide his kingdom among his daughters and live out his remaining years untroubled. His attempt to force their public declarations of love goes disastrously awry and leads to the devastation of his kingdom, his family, and himself. Loyalty crumbles in this fretful world, sanity is fleeting, and primal emotion dominates. All that can be trusted is...nothing.



In partnership with Virginia Museum of Fine Arts at the Leslie Cheek Theater  
200 N Blvd, Richmond, VA 23220

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## **Twelfth Night** by William Shakespeare | Directed by Steve Perigard

**June 2 -26, 2016**

*I was adored once, too.*

In this captivating comedy, love is an overwhelming force of nature that sweeps all away in a flood of longing. Shipwrecked on the shores of Illyria, Viola grieves for her lost twin brother and disguises herself as a boy to serve the Count Orsino, with whom she falls hopelessly in love. The passionate Countess Olivia also falls in love—with what she thinks is Orsino's handsome young page. With some of Shakespeare's most beloved comic characters including the imperious Malvolio, idiotic Andrew Aguecheek and drunken Sir Toby Belch, life in Illyria is a sublime whirligig of hopes and blunders, disguises and ruses, songs and silliness.

The 18th Annual Richmond Shakespeare Festival at Agecroft Hall - 4305 Sulgrave Road, Richmond, Virginia 23221



# The Merchant of Venice

by William Shakespeare | Directed by Dr. Jan Powell

July 7 – 31, 2016

*If you wrong us, shall we not revenge?*

A controversial tragicomedy set in the divided world of Renaissance Italy: the glittering golden privilege of the Christian aristocracy and the powerful underworld of the Jewish ghetto. To court the wealthy heiress Portia, Bassanio asks for a large sum from his devoted friend Antonio, who must borrow the funds. Shylock, the lender, strikes a deadly deal: if Antonio does not repay the loan, he must forfeit a pound of his own flesh. The insidious venom of prejudice poisons all, and mercy's love is held hostage to the mighty sway of justice.

The 18th Annual Richmond Shakespeare Festival at Agecroft Hall - 4305 Sulgrave Road, Richmond, Virginia 23221

BOOTLEG  
SHAKESPEARE



## Free Event

### 7th Annual Bootleg Shakespeare: Macbeth

by William Shakespeare | Directed by Foster Solomon

October 31, 2015

*It will have blood, they say. Blood will have blood.*

Oct 31st. One night only! Seize some hilariously terrifying Halloween chills and thrills with Macbeth and Lady Macbeth—two of the most compelling murderers of all time, in our Bootleg version of Shakespeare's wicked expedition into the heart of evil. We will bring together some of Richmond's finest talent for one crazy day of rehearsal and a single performance, free of charge. It's fun! It's scary! It's our gift to you!



In partnership with Virginia Museum of Fine Arts at the Leslie Cheek Theater  
200 N Blvd, Richmond, VA 23220

*Avoid standing on line and secure your seats by including a \$25 donation with your subscription*

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### HOW TO ORDER

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Or call our box office at (804) 340-0115.