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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 8, 2010
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SIGNATURE THEATRE PRESENTS ORIGINAL PLAY *SHAKESPEARE, WILL* PERFORMED AND TECHED BY STUDENTS FROM ARLINGTON'S WAKEFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

**Arlington Students in *Signature in the Schools* Learn from
Professional Playwright and Designers**

**Free Public Performance of *Shakespeare, Will* Offered on
March 15, at 7:30 pm in Signature's MAX Theatre**

Arlington, VA – On March 15 at 7:30 pm, Signature Theatre's award-winning educational program, *Signature in the Schools*, will present a free performance of *Shakespeare, Will*, a new one-act play by Joe Calarco performed by students from Arlington's Wakefield High School. In the play, students from an all-girls school accidentally invoke a young Will Shakespeare. Finding that his conjurers know more about his work than he does, Shakespeare gains confidence that his destiny is to create immortal characters and reveal timeless truths. His doubting wife, Anne Hathaway, follows him into the future to challenge his aspirations, and in confronting her, young "Will" becomes the "William" of his dreams.

Signature in the Schools is currently in its 15th year of producing world premiere plays that introduce high school actors and crews to professional theater. Each year a different historical or literary subject is explored, and for Shakespeare, this year's topic, playwright Calarco set out to reverse the conception that Shakespeare's work is dull and reveal the excitement of Elizabethan language to a modern, hip audience.

Wakefield's student actors include Houda Bekkali, Irene Casey, Jamé Jackson, Alexis Lodsun, Jocelyn Magsumbol, John "Waffles" Morgan, Lintle Motsoasele, and Loreal Watts. Production stage manager Max Rosenberg and backstage manager Amanda Smith are both freshmen at Wakefield.

Additional students from Wakefield High School comprise the 2010 technical crew. TC Williams High School senior Brenda Nascimento is also in the cast.

For tickets to *Shakespeare, Will*, please call the Signature Box Office at (703) 820-9971.

The annual production of an original play is a highlight of the *Signature in the Schools* program. Students are given unique opportunity to be part of the new play development process, while collaborating with a professional playwright. A professional director, actor, and designers act as mentors and guide the students through their production. In addition to public performances, the student actors also present five matinee performances for their peers in high schools across the region. Each student who attends a production receives an in-depth resource guide, researched and written by Signature's Education Director Marcia Gardner. Gardner also visits many classrooms, where she teaches students to explore history and theater and enact a scene from the play.

The student cast of *Shakespeare, Will* started rehearsals in December. In January, playwright Joe Calarco spent three days with the students forming a revised script. Joined by professional actress Anne Veal, the cast read through the play, examined the characters, discussed the pertinent issues and themes, and asked questions about the story and the Shakespearean language integral to the dialogue of the piece. Based on input from the cast and director, Calarco strengthened the conflict and language and created an ending that enhanced the magic and beauty of the entire piece. Afterwards, the cast and stage managers started rehearsing in earnest, leading up to the March 8 opening. Mentoring the students are director Marcia Gardner, assistant director and dialect coach Alexander Strain, set designer Jim Kronzer, costume designer Diana Khoury, lighting designer Mark Lanks, sound designer Matt Rowe, props director Eileen Garcia, and stage manager Kerry Epstein.

Signature in the Schools uses theater to open the minds of local teens to the revelations of history and literature, while creating a living piece of performance art. The program emphasizes learning outside of the classroom and reinforces the Virginia's Standard of Learning curriculum. A recipient of The Washington Post's prestigious Community Service Award, Signature in the Schools touches approximately one thousand students each year through theatre workshops, in-class discussions, apprenticeships, and the performance of an original play.

This season's donors to *Signature in the Schools* include The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, Marpat Foundation, Education Foundation of America, ExxonMobil, Sprint, STG International, Dallas Morse Coors Foundation for the Performing Arts, Clark-Winchcole Foundation, Prince

Charitable Trusts, Venable LLP, Washington Forrest Foundation, and Dominion Virginia Power.

Signature in the Schools is supported in part by grants from Arlington County through the Cultural Affairs Division of the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources and the Arlington Commission for the Arts, the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. It is also supported by a generous grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

ABOUT SIGNATURE

Recipient of the 2009 Regional Theatre Tony Award®, Signature Theatre is a non-profit professional theater company dedicated to producing contemporary musicals and plays, reinventing classic musicals, and developing new work. Under the leadership of co-founder and Artistic Director Eric Schaeffer and Managing Director Maggie Boland, Signature has presented 26 world premiere productions and is renowned for combining Broadway-quality productions with intimate playing spaces. In addition to the finest talent from the DC metropolitan area and New York, Signature has been a home to such theater luminaries as John Kander and Fred Ebb, Cameron Mackintosh, Terrence McNally, and the company's signature composer, Stephen Sondheim. Since its founding in 1989, Signature has been nominated for 276 Helen Hayes Awards for excellence in the professional theater and has been honored with 69 Helen Hayes Awards, including Outstanding Musical in 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2005, 2006, 2008, and 2009, and Outstanding Play in 1999.

Directions

Signature Theatre is just nine minutes from downtown Washington, DC in Arlington's Shirlington Village. The new theater complex is located at 4200 Campbell Avenue (22206) off I-395 at the Shirlington exit. After the exit, blue Signature signs mark the way to the Theatre. Free parking is available in two adjacent public garages. Please note that Campbell Avenue is a new street and some GPS online mapping systems do not yet recognize Signature Theatre's address. For directions visit <http://signature-theatre.org/map.htm>.

Contact Information

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