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HERITAGE THEATRE FESTIVAL TO OPEN 2017 SEASON WITH WILL ENO'S *MIDDLETOWN*

OPENING FRIDAY, JUNE 23 AT THE RUTH CAPLIN THEATRE

Flippant-Yet-Poignant Slice of Small Town Life Offers Plenty of Laughs Along With Moving Looks at Love, Life, Death, and the Millions of Tiny Moments In Between

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – June 17, 2017 – Heritage Theatre Festival is kicking off its 2017 season with Will Eno's critically-acclaimed play *Middletown*, a deeply moving and often funny look into the lives, loves, fears, and hopes of residents of a most typical small town that examines and challenges our views of what passes for "normal" in today's world.

Middletown, directed by HTF Interim Artistic Director and UVA Drama Department Chair Colleen Kelly, will be presented in the Ruth Caplin Theatre from June 23 through July 1. Tickets for adults are \$25 if purchased before June 23 and \$30 if purchased on or after that date. Student/Child tickets are available for \$15 regardless of when purchased. Single and season tickets for the 2017 Heritage Theatre Festival season are available at the UVA Arts Box Office (located in the lobby of the Drama Building), online at www.heritagetheatrefestival.org or by phone at 434-924-3376.

Eno, once hailed by Christopher Isherwood of the *New York Times* as "Samuel Beckett for the Jon Stewart generation," has said that *Middletown* owes an "inspiration debt" to Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, he was conscious to take the play in a decidedly different direction. The result is a story full of quirky neighbors and new friends where characters use disarming honesty to highlight both the absurdity and the poignancy of the millions of tiny moments that make up all of our lives. From the budding friendship between an expectant mother and an itinerant local handyman to the prickly observations of the local beat cop to the brooding, and clearly troubled, mechanic, Eno weaves a tapestry that can feel both surprising and familiar while serving up plenty of food for thought about all of our lives.

"What really appeals to me about this play is the playfulness of Will Eno's language," Kelly said. "Characters weave and vault between waxing poetic and making pedestrian observation about life."

In addition, Kelly said, there is a universal nature to the situations in which the play's characters find themselves. "Like the residents of Middletown, we are all alive in the 'middle' of something—a world created by past and future ancestors, an existence between birth and death, a day that spans a sunrise and sunset, or, as is the case with one character, just between two crappy jobs. Regardless of differences, we are all humans just breathing and trying to get through life a day at a time. One character in the play observes, 'That's the trouble, the beauty, the trouble.'"

The 2017 Heritage Theatre Festival will continue with ***Woody Guthrie's American Song***, an ensemble musical celebrating the life and songs of one of our nation's true cultural treasures; (July 30-July 8 at the Culbreth Theatre); ***Chapatti***, Christian O'Reilly's touching drama about an unusual bond forged by late-in-life neighbors around finding homes for their respective pets (July 6-15 in the Helms Theatre); ***Ken***

Ludwig's Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery, a madcap whodunit in which five actors play 40 characters (July 22-29 in the Ruth Caplin Theatre) and Stephen Sondheim's classic musical ***Company***, featuring all-time classic Broadway hits like "Being Alive (July 28-August 4 in the Culbreth Theatre). Putting an exclamation point on the season's proceedings this summer will be International Clown Hall of Fame member Barry Lubin, the face of the Big Apple Circus, who will bring his iconic and irrepressible character "Grandma" for performances at the Ruth Caplin Theatre on August 4 and 5.

Parking for Heritage Theatre Festival performances is available at the Culbreth Road Parking Garage, conveniently located alongside the theaters.

To access photos of this production, visit <https://virginia.box.com/s/0nqsaai1o6tceg0uwbutllqstpn6mj1f>

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