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CONTACT: John Kelly
John Kelly
434-987-6513
john@johnkellypr.com

HERITAGE THEATRE FESTIVAL TO PRESENT WOODY GUTHRIE'S AMERICAN SONG

OPENING FRIDAY, JUNE 30 AT CULBRETH THEATRE

Musical Salute to A True American Folk Hero To Feature Unforgettable Guthrie Tunes Including "This Land is Your Land," "Bound for Glory," And More

Show To Mark Theatrical Debut of Popular Charlottesville Musician Michael Clem

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – June 23, 2017 – Heritage Theatre Festival is celebrating America's birthday this year with a musical tribute to one of our nation's greatest cultural treasures. *Woody Guthrie's American Song*, opening June 30 at Culbreth Theatre, is an acclaimed ensemble musical that has been delighting audiences for more than a quarter of a century with its foot-stomping, hand-clapping, and soul-stirring tribute to a man whose unforgettable music and enduring spirit are deeply woven into his beloved nation's cultural fabric.

Woody Guthrie's American Song, written by Peter Glazer (whose father was a longtime Guthrie sideman) and directed by Bryan Garey, will be presented in Culbreth Theatre from June 30 through July 8. Tickets for adults are \$30 if purchased before June 30 and \$35 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.

From "This Land is Your Land" to "900 Miles" to "Bound for Glory," Woody Guthrie's songs helped carry a nation through the dark days of the Great Depression and in many ways still carry it today, serving up lessons in humanity, humility, perseverance and hope that remain vitally important in the world we live in. They also served as an inspiration for a new generation of cultural standard bearers including Bruce Springsteen, Wilco, and U2, all of whom credit Guthrie as a primary influence.

Woody Guthrie's American Song, hailed as "A dazzling explosion of Guthrie's genius" by the *Boston Globe*, features a talented array of actors and musicians who will take audiences on a musical journey and across a range of tales that are as vast as the country Guthrie cherished - from the Dust Bowl to the California coast to the streets of New York City and beyond. The show also offers glimpses into Guthrie's own life through his humble musings and deft and timeless insight.

The production will also feature a familiar face for local music lovers. Michael Clem, known for his work with the internationally-acclaimed band Eddie from Ohio and for his work locally with his Michael Clem Trio, will make his theatrical debut in the production. The move to the stage is serendipitous for Clem, who first got the folk "bug" as a child while watching Pete Seeger and Arlo Guthrie in a PBS concert broadcast.

Woody Guthrie's American Song, Garey said, is far from your typical musical theatre experience. "This is a folk concert/storytelling experience as much as anything. It's a great chance for people to appreciate the work, and sort of humble genius, of an American master, no matter how much they knew about him

coming in. We have had people working on the show who didn't know much about Woody Guthrie, and now say they find themselves wanting to sing the whole time."

One of the pillars of Guthrie's simple genius is his ability to capture all of our most profound hopes and deepest fears, regardless of our age or era. "He is able to profoundly describe the human experience, including through great adversity," Garey said. "And he has the supreme gift of being able to use music to help people deal with their insecurity in a turbulent world, and to provide them with real empathy and comfort –which is obviously something that we can use more of in our world today."

Garey added that Guthrie's songs and stories transcend political affiliations, and speak to a larger need to come together as people first. "He talks about the power of the people and that there is power in togetherness in a way that is not about liberals or conservatives. It's a reminder that music has a unique power to inspire all of us to remember what is truly important. This July will mark the 105th anniversary of his birth and here he is still pushing us, through his music, to be better."

The show's appeal also transcends generational boundaries, Garey said. "This is a great evening that can be shared by an entire family that features great storytelling, fascinating history, and absolutely incredible music."

The 2017 Heritage Theatre Festival will continue with ***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/9jz8ul063cmnuxa1oj7deayf51kjovvb>