

*For Immediate Release*  
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**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF THEATER IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE ITS  
2014-2015 SEASON OF INNOVATION**

**"THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD," A COLLABORATION BETWEEN  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF THEATER AND SCHOOL OF MUSIC,  
WILL BE THE FLAGSHIP PRODUCTION OF THEATER AT MASON'S NEW SEASON**

*Musical by Rupert Holmes*  
*Based on the unfinished mystery by Charles Dickens*  
*Musical direction by Dennis M. Layendecker*  
*Directed by Ken Elston*

**With performances in George Mason University's Center for the Arts Concert Hall in Fairfax and  
the Hylton Performing Arts Center's Merchant Hall in Manassas**

FAIRFAX, Va., April 16, 2014 – **George Mason University's School of Theater** revealed its **2014-2015 performance season**, which features a collection of plays inspired by the theme of **"Innovation."**

"Introducing something new is both our season's theme and our pleasure," said **Ken Elston**, director of Mason's School of Theater. "Theater is the lively art, and we are planning a lively slate of offerings that explore and test dramatic invention. By examining the past, we discover much about our present, and we will be reflecting on modern day ethics while shining a light on historic innovations. And, when we use new technologies to promote audience interaction, each performance will be truly unique. During the musical, our audience's active contributions will shape the performance and determine the climax."

Audiences may be thrilled to hear, "Ladies and gentlemen, please *turn on* your mobile devices," at the start of **"The Mystery of Edwin Drood,"** one of two **Mainstage Series** offerings, directed by Elston with musical direction by **Dennis M. Layendecker**, director of Mason's School of Music. At each performance, the audience votes for "whodunit" in **Charles Dickens'** unfinished murder mystery, by means of a free downloadable app, available upon arrival at the theater.

As another Mason first, this catalyst for the season will open at **George Mason University's Center for the Arts on the Fairfax Campus** and then be transported to Merchant Hall in the **Hylton Performing Arts Center on the Prince William Campus** for three final performances. The production will provide continuing support for Mason's expanding Musical Theater program.

The season will include several innovations of both approach and subject matter. Also in the **Mainstage Series** will be **"An Experiment with an Air Pump"** by **Shelagh Stephenson**, directed by Theater Performance faculty member **Mary Lechter**. Set in Northern England, this contemporary consideration of art and science takes place in the same house but, in time, on the eve of two very different centuries. Furtive romance, farcical commotion and dark secrets infuse this unique examination of women's roles in medical research and the ethical challenges unfolding in anatomy in 1799 and genetics in 1999.

Starting this season, the School of Theater and its student production company, Mason Players, introduce the **Mason Fringe**, which, this year, will feature two plays in repertory. Linked by both theme and structure, these plays will be presented in true fringe style, emphasizing imaginative use of empty

space and minimal design while focusing on text and performance. **John Cariani's "Almost, Maine"** and **David Hare's "The Blue Room"** will be this season's Fringe offerings.

**The Studio Series**, Mason Players' student-directed work, features direction, design and performance by our most innovative emerging artists showcasing their work in an experimental theater environment. **Sarah Ruhl's "In the Next Room or the vibrator play"** and **Christopher Marlowe's "Dido (Queen of Carthage)"** comprise the Studio Series.

The season ends with the **Annual Ten-Minute Play Festival**, a tradition in which student playwrights compete for eight available slots to have their plays dissected, directed, designed and performed entirely by students.

"Mason is where *Innovation is Tradition*," Elston said. "The School of Theater treasures both tradition and innovation as critical to the artistic growth and success of our students. We hope you will come celebrate the important nexus of doing the old while still getting the new."

### ***Season of Innovation Schedule***

#### **"Almost, Maine" by John Cariani (Mason Fringe)**

Directed by Nerissa Hart

Cariani's series of short plays explore the sudden thunderclap of love and the scorched earth that sometimes follows, set in a remote, mythical almost-town called Almost, Maine.

TheaterSpace

Oct. 1, 3 at 8 p.m.; Oct. 4 at 2 p.m.

*Every Fringe Performance is Pay What You Can!*

#### **"The Blue Room" by David Hare (Mason Fringe)**

Directed by Alex Galloway

Based on Arthur Schnitzler's "La Ronde," "The Blue Room" is a played out through 10 intimate circular scenes of love and betrayal, through a succession of characters whose sexual lives enmesh like a daisy chain. A meditation on men and women, sex and social class, and projection and desire.

TheaterSpace

Oct. 2, 4 at 8 p.m.; Oct. 5 at 2 p.m.

*Every Fringe Performance is Pay What You Can!*

#### **"The Mystery of Edwin Drood" (Mainstage Series)**

**A Musical by Rupert Holmes based on the unfinished novel by Charles Dickens**

**Directed by Ken Elston**

**Musical Direction by Dennis M. Layendecker**

During this raucous, time-bending, gender-bending, interactive journey, the players of London's Music Hall Royale put on their flamboyant rendition of an unfinished Dickens murder mystery. The giddy playfulness of this play-within-a-play draws the audience toward one of the work's most talked-about features: an audience vote (by free downloadable app, no less!) on the identity of the murderer in a most unusual and hilarious finale!

George Mason University's Center for the Arts Concert Hall

Oct. 24-25 at 8 p.m.; Oct. 25 at 2 p.m.; Oct. 26 at 4 p.m.

Hylton Performing Arts Center, Merchant Hall

Oct. 31, Nov. 1 at 8 p.m.; Nov. 1 at 2 p.m.

Tickets: \$25 adults; \$15 students, faculty, staff, seniors and groups

**“Dido (Queen of Carthage)” (Studio Series)**

**by Christopher Marlowe**

**Directed by Rebecca Wahls**

Between the destruction of Troy and the founding of Rome, Queen Dido built the magnificent city of Carthage. One of Marlowe’s most fascinating plays, inspired by Virgil’s “Aeneid,” this retelling of the tragic love of Dido for the Trojan hero Aeneas unfolds in verse written by one of the great playwrights of the Elizabethan Age.

TheaterSpace

Nov. 20, 21, 22 at 8 p.m.

Nov. 22, 23 at 2 p.m.

Tickets: \$15 adults; \$10 students, faculty, staff, seniors and groups

**“In the Next Room or the vibrator play” (Studio Series)**

**by Sarah Ruhl**

**Directed by Ruth Rado**

A stimulating, funny and provocative play set in a prim upper class Victorian home at the dawn of electricity, where a gentleman doctor has invented an extraordinary and mysterious device for treating “hysteria.” This smart comedy ponders marriage and intimacy, and what it truly means to find connection.

TheaterSpace

Feb. 26, 27, 28 at 8 p.m.

Feb. 28 and March 1 at 2 p.m.

Tickets: \$15 adults; \$10 students, faculty, staff, seniors and groups

**“An Experiment with an Air Pump” (Mainstage Series)**

**by Shelagh Stephenson**

**Directed by Mary Lechter**

This contemporary consideration of art and science takes place in the same house but, in time, on the eve of two very different centuries. Furtive romance, farcical commotions and dark secrets infuse this unique examination of women’s roles in medical research and the ethical challenges unfolding in anatomy in 1799 and genetics in 1999.

Harris Theatre

March 26, 27, 28, April 2, 3, 4, at 8 p.m.

March 28, 29, April 4 at 2 p.m.

Tickets: \$25 adults; \$15 students, faculty, staff, seniors and groups

**The Annual Ten-Minute Play Festival**

The tradition continues as student directors, dramaturgs and actors present their fellow student writers’ newest works in an intense 10-day process that culminates in a presentation that shines a light on the storytellers of the next generation.

TheaterSpace

April 24 and 25 at 8 p.m.

April 25 at 2 p.m.

\$15 general admission; \$10 students, faculty, staff, seniors and groups

Tickets can be purchased by calling 888-945-2468, by visiting [cfa.gmu.edu](http://cfa.gmu.edu) or by visiting the Center for the Arts box office, open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information about Theater at Mason, please visit [theater.gmu.edu](http://theater.gmu.edu) or call (703) 993-1120. For more information about Mason’s School of Music, please visit [music.gmu.edu](http://music.gmu.edu) or call (703) 993-1380.

**George Mason University's 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 main stage Concert Hall and FREE parking is located in university lot K. For more information, please visit [cfa.gmu.edu](http://cfa.gmu.edu).**

**The Hylton Performing Arts Center is located on George Mason University's Prince William Campus at 10960 George Mason Circle, Manassas, Va., 20110. Free parking is available in the lot next to the Hylton Center. For more information, please visit [HyltonCenter.org](http://HyltonCenter.org).**

#### **About the School of Theater**

Mason's School of Theater provides a rigorous, creative, and nurturing environment where we encourage conceptual and cultural diversity. Students establish a professional work ethic, collaborate with others, and take responsibility for individual as well as group efforts as they prepare for a life and career beyond graduation. We challenge our students to think critically, write clearly and persuasively, and express themselves through a course of study combining a liberal arts education with practical training and production experience. Theater is a universal expression of the human spirit. Our department embraces and ensures this expression through the study of historical, contemporary, and cultural traditions, training in the craft, and the presentation of plays.

#### **About the College of Visual and Performing Arts**

The College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA) provides an academic environment in which the arts are explored as individual disciplines and interdisciplinary forms that strengthen one another. The college prepares students for careers as creators, performers, teachers, scholars, arts leaders and arts entrepreneurs. Understanding that an education in the arts is deepened by regular contact with the work of distinguished visiting artists, the Center for the Arts, the professional presentation and production arm of the college, welcomes a variety of professional and world-renowned artists, musicians and actors to its stage. Students have the opportunity to perform, create and exhibit their work in a wide variety of public venues including a 2,000-seat Concert Hall. CVPA is home to the Schools of Music, Dance and Art, the Department of Theater, as well as the Computer Game Design, Arts Management and Film and Video Studies programs.

#### **About George Mason University**

George Mason University is an innovative, entrepreneurial institution with global distinction in a range of academic fields. Located in Northern Virginia near Washington, D.C., Mason provides students access to diverse cultural experiences and the most sought-after internships and employers in the country. Mason offers strong undergraduate and graduate degree programs in engineering and information technology, organizational psychology, health care and visual and performing arts. With Mason professors conducting groundbreaking research in areas such as climate change, public policy and the biosciences, George Mason University is a leading example of the modern, public university. George Mason University – Where Innovation Is Tradition.

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