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Announcing The American Century Theater's 2009-2010 Season: Lanford Wilson, Viet Nam Women, *Stalag 17*, Faust in Hollywood, and a World Premiere

The range of 20th Century American theater is remarkable, and for its 15th theatrical season Arlington's American Century Theater (TACT) has selected four rarely seen masterpieces and a World Premiere that span more than 50 years and countless human experiences, dilemmas, and emotions.

The diverse season begins **Sept. 11, 2009** with **Shirley Lauro's *A Piece of My Heart***. The 1991 drama considers the harrowing experiences of women who served in the Viet Nam war in various roles, from nurse to entertainer. Using material from a 1986 oral history by Keith Walker, Lauro's play is genuine and theatrical in its wide range of topics and emotions. Jason Beagle directs. ***A Piece of My Heart* will play through Oct. 10** at Theater II, Gunston Arts Center, Arlington.

Next, TACT presents one of the most riotous 1950's comedies, the 1955 Broadway smash, ***Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?*** The biggest hit ever penned by perennial hit-maker **George Axelrod** (best remembered today for *The Seven Year Itch*), ***Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?*** is a Faustian spoof in which a hack writer becomes a successful Hollywood screenwriter thanks to a deal with old Lucifer himself. Playgoers were especially taken with the play's comic sex-symbol, the role that launched the career of blonde bombshell Jayne Mansfield. (The movie version included Mansfield, but left out the play!) TACT's Ellen Dempsey (*Happy Birthday, Wanda June*) is the director. ***Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?* opens Jan. 15, 2010 and plays through Feb. 6 at Gunston.**

From **March 26 to April 17**, the company will have a very different kind comedy playing in its intimate black box theater: the World War II prison camp play, ***Stalag 17***. A Broadway hit in 1951, ***Stalag 17*** followed another legendary W.W. II play, *Mister Roberts*, by being based on the actual experiences of its authors (Donald Bevan and Edmund Trzcinsky) and by carefully treading the line between comedy and tragedy. The Academy Award-winning film adaptation by Billy Wilder became so famous that everyone forgot there was a great play inside. This is it. William Aitken, who directed TACT's acclaimed *Desire Under the Elms*, will direct at Gunston's Theater II.

Sophie Treadwell ought to be well-known to everyone: she was a trailblazing female journalist, a brilliant playwright (*Machinal*), a novelist, director, actress, and a courageous fighter for the rights of women. That she is almost forgotten today is a tragedy The American Century Theater hopes to

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2. American Century Theater 2009-2010 Season

remedy with its World Premiere of *The Amazing Sophie*, a brand new play exploring Treadwell's many battles, defeats and triumphs, authored by celebrated D.C. playwright Allyson Currin. *The Amazing Sophie* will be on stage **May 27-June 19 at Arlington's Theater-on-the-Run.**

June 24- June 27 will see a new installment of TACT's **Rescues series**, in which the company presents staged readings or concert performances of famous large cast plays and musicals that other theaters deem too old and expensive to risk. This season, "Rescues" presents the joyous **Rodgers and Hart musical *Babes in Arms***, featuring one of the greatest scores of popular music standards ("Where or When," My Funny Valentine," many more) ever to hit Broadway. As always, the **Rescues performances are free to all**, but only TACT subscribers are guaranteed a seat at Theater-on-the-Run.

Director Steven Scott Mazzola has consistently given TACT audiences plays that are moving, thought-provoking and full of visual style. Now the director of *The Second Man*, *Hotel Universe* and *Tea and Sympathy* will be bringing to the stage a seldom produced gem by one of the U.S.'s greatest living playwrights, Lanford Wilson, the author of *Tally's Folly*; *The Fifth of July*; *Burn This!*, and others. *Serenading Louie* (1976) is an engrossing look at marriage—its compromises, stresses, challenges, disappointments and rewards—in the jungles of suburbia. It plays **July 23 through August 21, at Theater II.**

"I'm thrilled with this season," TACT artistic director Jack Marshall says. "We always strive to achieve a mix that expresses, not only the many faces of American drama, but the scope of American experience and culture as well. In the coming year, we'll have large cast shows and small, comedies and dramas, subject matter that ranges from the human impact of war, to one woman's historic battles against a male dominated theater world, to the quiet desperation of suburban marriage, in settings that include a German prisoner of war camp and the Hollywood casting couch. I think our audiences are in for a wonderful experience."

2009-2010 Season Performance Information: THE AMERICAN CENTURY THEATER

The American Century Theater primarily performs at Theater II, Gunston Arts Center, 2700 S. Lang St., Arlington, VA, 22206. The World Premiere and *Babes in Arms* run at Theater-on-the Run, 3700 South Four Mile Run Drive, Arlington VA 22206

Sept. 11-Oct. 10:	<i>A Piece of My Heart</i> by Shirley Lauro	Theater II
Jan. 15-Feb. 6:	<i>Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?</i> by George Axelrod	Theater II
March 26–Apr. 17:	<i>Stalag 17</i> by Donald Bevan and Edmund Trzcinsky	Theater II
May 19-June 19:	<i>The Amazing Sophie</i> * by Allyson Currin	Theater-on-the Run
June 24 -27	<i>Babes in Arms</i> by Rodgers and Hart	Theater-on-the Run
July 23–Aug. 21	<i>Serenading Louie</i> by Lanford Wilson	Theater II

Subscription season packages are available. Friday or Saturday evening ticket subscriptions are \$136 each (\$160 value). Thursday evening and weekend matinee subscriptions are \$125 each (\$145 value). There are other special subscription and group rates as well. *Children under 18 (with a paying adult) are admitted free to all performances.* **WORLD PREMIERE*

Tickets and information are available at www.AmericanCentury.org or by calling the theater at 703-998-4555.