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For Immediate Release

Contact: Jack Marshall
703-548-3754 / 703-548-9408

**American Century Theater 2008-2009 Season Opens September 9
With Ira Levin Thriller *Dr. Cook's Garden* Press Night is Wed., September 10.**

The American Century Theater's 2008-2009 season opens with a seldom-seen 1968 Broadway thriller, *Dr. Cook's Garden*, by Ira Levin. Levin is best known for his later Broadway hit, *Deathtrap*, and such best-selling novels as Rosemary's Baby and The Stepford Wives, both of which also became successful films.

Why *Dr. Cook's Garden*? "First, we try to salute under-appreciated American playwrights who have recently died; Levin passed away earlier this year," says Artistic Director Jack Marshall. "And *Dr. Cook's Garden* holds interest for several reasons. It is about a subject that is more controversial today than when the play was written. It has elements of the horror genre, something The American Century Theater seldom gets to explore. And the play never really had a chance on Broadway. It was miscast, I think, and the director, George C. Scott, essentially abandoned the production at a critical point. Most of all, we think our audiences will enjoy it."

Without spoiling the fun of discovering the dark secret at the center of the plot, it can be noted that the play has common elements with both *Deathtrap* and The Stepford Wives. Like Stepford, it involves an outsider coming into an idyllic New England town that is not quite as perfect as it seems. And like *Deathtrap*, the play involves a complex and betrayal-filled relationship between an older man and his younger protégé. "I think the play may have been a trial run for *Deathtrap*," says **Ellen Dempsey**, who is directing. "There are a lot of structural similarities. But it's a darker, scarier play."

She has assembled an ensemble of actors new to TACT to bring it to disturbing life (and death) on stage. **David Schmidt** plays the title role created by Burl Ives on Broadway and Bing Crosby in the film version. His young protégé is played by **J.B. Bissex**. **Kathryn Cocroft**, **Bob Lavery**, and **Carol McCaffrey** complete the cast of townspeople who may, or may not, be involved in the odd doings going on.

Producer Karen Currie has turned to several TACT regulars for the design and construction of the show, including **Trena Null**, set design; **Rip Claassen**, costumes; **AnnMarie Castrigno**, lighting design; **Steve Lada**, who is choreographing a key fight sequence. **Christopher Baine**, whose work for The Source's recent One Act Play

Festival was extraordinary, makes his TACT debut as sound designer. The Tech Director for *Dr. Cook's Garden* is **Michael Null**, and **Zoia Wiseman** is the stage manager.

The American Century Theater is performing on a different schedule in 2008-2009, with more weekday performances. *Dr. Cook's Garden* will have its opening on **Tuesday, September 9**, with the Press performance the next night, on **Wednesday, September 10**. *Dr. Cook's Garden* will continue its run until Saturday, October 4, 2008.

The American Century Theater performs at Theater II, Gunston Arts Center, 2700 S. Lang Street, Arlington, Virginia 22206. Subscription season packages are available. Friday or Saturday evening ticket subscriptions are \$130 each (\$170 value). Tuesday-Thursday evening, or weekend matinee subscriptions are \$115 each (\$145 value).

For tickets, subscriptions, group sales or information call 703-998-4555, email info@americancentury.org, or visit www.americancentury.org.

The American Century Theater is a 501(c)(3) professional nonprofit theater company dedicated to producing, great, important, and neglected 20th Century American playwrights. TACT is funded in part by the Arlington County Cultural Affairs Division of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, numerous foundations and many generous donors.

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