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For Immediate Release

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The American Century Theater Opens *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*, Williams' Preferred Version of *Summer and Smoke*, April 4

The American Century Theater, dedicated to great 20th Century American plays, has waited 15 years to do its first Tennessee Williams work, *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*. Why this play, and why so late entering the parlor of Mr. Williams, undeniably one of America's greatest playwrights? Artistic Director Jack Marshall has the answers.

"Williams has more than his share of plays in the standard American theater repertoire," he says. "*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*...these are among plays that caused us to launch our company, because we believe that the same plays get produced too often when there are too many wonderful American plays that seldom get produced at all. We've been looking for a Tennessee Williams play that fits our repertoire, and *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale* is perfect. Because *Summer and Smoke* was already a hit by the time he finished it, this re-worked version of the same story has never received the attention it deserves. The playwright preferred it to *Summer and Smoke*; now D.C. area audiences will have a chance to decide for themselves."

The Eccentricities of a Nightingale (and, of course, the better known *Summer and Smoke*) has one of Williams' most intriguing plots: a prim and spiritual minister's daughter is fascinated by a hedonistic and amoral neighbor, and the two turn their mutual attraction into a virtual contest of who can change the others' values. TACT's resident master of complex relationships, **director Stephen Scott Mazzola**, chose the 1949 play and has cast it with a talented group of newcomers to TACT along with a couple of familiar artists.

Vanessa Bradchulis has been outstanding in local productions by such companies as the Actors Repertory Theatre, and will make her TACT debut as **Alma Winemiller**, the upright woman who makes a remarkable transformation during the course of the evening. Her foil as the roguish John Buchanan is **Michael Sherman**, last seen at TACT in *Moby*

Dick Rehearsed. Supporting them are **Carol Randolph, Brandon Ferraro, Mary Ann Sullivan, Daniel Sternberg, Ann West, Mick Tinder, Scott Ziegler**, and, in a musical role, **Mary Millben**, notable as unlucky opera singer in *Hellzapoppin*.

The production has an ambitious original score by **Mariano Vales**. Producer **Karen Curry** has carefully chosen an outstanding group of designers to make *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale* as memorable as Williams envisioned it: **Beth Baldwin**, who has delivered some of TACT's most memorable sets, has created the setting, and **Ann Fedorcha**, the much-honored lighting designer who has often illuminated TACT shows, is also on board. **Matt Otto** handles the sound design, with **Jennifer Tardiff** creating costumes. **Suzanne Maloney** is the props designer, and making the whole thing work is the task of **Joan Lada**, the production stage manager.

“It took a long time for us to do a Tennessee Williams play, probably too long,” Marshall says. “The great playwrights have excellent plays that get forgotten and are under-produced too. *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale* is certainly proof of that.”

The production opens April 4 at 8 PM in the Gunston Arts Center's Theatre Two, with performances for the press (and the public) on April 5 (also at 8 PM), and April 6, at 2:30 PM.

The American Century Theater performs at Theater II, Gunston Arts Center, 2700 S. Lang Street, Arlington, Virginia 22206. Performances are Thursday through Saturday evenings at 8 pm, with Saturday or Sunday matinees at 2:30 PM. More information is available at 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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