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Contact:

Meg Lewis
Director of Marketing & Communications
(334) 271-5326
Email: mlewis@asf.net

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The Alabama Shakespeare Festival Announces 2011-12 Season

*Dracula, Henry VIII, The 39 Steps, and
The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* among the featured productions.

Montgomery, AL -

Anglophiles and Broadway babies alike rejoice at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival's 2011-12 Season. It includes the blood-spilling thriller *Dracula*, the southern premiere of the musical *A Christmas Memory*, *Henry VIII* directed by Robert Richmond, the Broadway comedy thriller *The 39 Steps*, the hilariously nerdy musical *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and five other outstanding offerings, including two more Shakespeare plays and a world premiere. Season memberships are on sale now. Single tickets for all shows will go on sale at a later date. Membership and ticket information is available by calling the ASF box office at **800.841.4273** or by visiting on line at www.asf.net.

The ASF box office is located at 1 Festival Drive in Montgomery's beautiful Blount Cultural Park.

ASF's innovative Membership program costs only \$30 per season to join, and enables members to purchase tickets at 15-20% off the single ticket price depending on the number of shows they select in their membership package. Full season membership packages including tickets to five or more shows start at \$360, including the membership fee. Members also receive benefits such as premiere seating opportunities, ticket exchange privileges, local dining discounts, exclusive meet-the-artist events, and more.

ASF will open its 26th season in Montgomery with William McNulty's adaptation of Bram Stoker's vampire horror classic *Dracula*, October 7 through 30. Lethal fangs wait around every corner and victims lay drained of blood at every turn as Professor Van Helsing continues to chase the evil Count with stake and hammer in hand. This bloody good show has sold out the Actors' Theatre of Louisville for 17 years, earning reviews like "Jump out of your seat, grab the stranger next to you and hang on for dear life fun!" from Loiusville.com.

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From November 25 to December 24 the Southern premiere of *A Christmas Memory*, based on Truman Capote's short story, will bring cheer and charm to the holiday season. This wistful musical memoir of youth in Monroeville, Alabama, during the 1930s follows the fun, friendship, and shenanigans of two cousins who make the most of what will be their last Christmas together. *A Christmas Memory's* book is by Duane Poole with music by Larry Grossman and lyrics by Carol Hall.

The world premiere of *In the Book Of...* by ASF's playwright in residence John Walch will run January 5-22. In this contemporary reimagining of the Biblical tale of Ruth, two women, an Army lieutenant, and her Afghan immigrant friend settle in Mississippi, where they become the targets of a rampaging local conservative talk radio personality. Family, friendship, and the American Way are tested in this often funny, touching, and unforgettable story.

Four actors play 140 roles in the double Tony award-winning Broadway smash *The 39 Steps*, January 27 to May 19. Richard Hannay's dull life becomes anything but when he meets up with a mysterious female spy. When she is murdered in his home, an organization called the 39 Steps goes hot on his trail. This comedy thriller – adapted by Phillip Barlow from the novel by John Buchan and inspired by film legend Alfred Hitchcock – is filled with fever-pitched gasp-a-minute fun. *The 39 Steps* was called “Ingenious! A dizzy delight” by the Daily News and “Riotous and Marvelous” by the New York Post.

Travels with My Aunt, adapted by Giles Havergal from Graham Greene's classic novel, is a delightful global comedy-adventure that will run February 3 to May 19. Henry Pulling's dull life is turned upside down at his mother's funeral when he is reunited with his long lost and eccentric Aunt Augusta. The two begin an around-the-world adventure in which they encounter spies, thieves, smugglers, and a long held family secret. Four actors play 20 roles in this comical tour de force.

In William Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, playing March 15 to May 20, the conniving Cardinal Woolsey maneuvers money and power to himself, and his rivals to the chopping block—all while keeping favor with the king. But when Henry VIII seeks to divorce his queen so that he can marry the beautiful Anne Boleyn, Woolsey finds himself playing on both sides of the executioner's ax. This rarely produced gem will be directed by Robert Richmond, whose 2010 production at the Folger Theatre in Washington D.C. was called “lavish and stirring” by the Washington City Paper.

Women rule and the knight's a fool in Shakespeare's hilarious comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, April 13 to May 18. Sir John Falstaff is down on his luck and out of cash. So, he concocts a scheme to woo two married women in an attempt to get at their husbands' money. But the women get wind of Falstaff's bad intentions and hatch their own plan to thwart the wayward knight.

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The trifecta of Shakespeare continues with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, performed by the ASF professional intern company on April 21 & 29, May 4, 12, and 20 ONLY. Uncertain love is in the air as two couples find themselves lost in a dreamlike forest on one unforgettable midsummer's night. Caught in a tug of war between fairies and foes, the four become engaged in a game of "she/he loves me, she/he loves me not" as only The Bard can describe. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will also be available to tour to schools.

Direct from South Korea, from July 10-15, ASF will present the Broadway and international hit the *NANTA Cooking Show*. Combine one part *Iron Chef* and one part *STOMP!* and you get *NANTA*. This amazing theatrical spectacular features five fabulous Korean chefs that drum (with knives), juggle (with knives), and literally cook their way through a fast-paced evening of music, laughter, and culinary delight.

ASF concludes its season with the Tony Award-winning musical comedy *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* by William Finn and Rachel Sheinkin, August 10-September 2. Six quirky and hilarious bookworms and their adult counterparts journey through the torments of pre-teen life and the spellings of *strabismus*, *capybara*, and *phylactery*. Even the audience has a chance to get into the act by singing, spelling, and laughing. The Washington Post called *Bee* "the funniest thing in seven consonants" and the Wall Street Journal raved "It's spelled W-O-N-D-E-R-F-U-L!"

All ten productions are available in ASF season membership packages. For more information contact the ASF Box Office at 1.800.841.4273.

The Alabama Shakespeare Festival is among the largest Shakespeare theatres in the world. Designated as The State Theatre of Alabama, ASF has been located in Montgomery since 1985 when it moved from Anniston as a result of Mr. and Mrs. Wynton M. Blount's gift of a performing arts complex set in the 250-acre Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park. This program/project has been made possible by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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