

# ASF *NEWS RELEASE*

Contact:  
Cathy Andreen  
Director of Media Relations  
The University of Alabama  
205/348-8322, [candreen@ur.ua.edu](mailto:candreen@ur.ua.edu)  
Or  
Meg Lewis  
Public Relations Manager  
Alabama Shakespeare Festival  
334/271-5326, [mlewis@asf.net](mailto:mlewis@asf.net)

**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 4:30 PM, FRIDAY APRIL 25, 2008**

## **ASF TO BECOME INDEPENDENT, ACCORDING TO AGREEMENT WITH UA**

The Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Inc. (ASF) board of directors and The University of Alabama have reached an agreement that will consolidate decision-making authority for ASF under the ASF board of directors. UA will recommend that ASF's assets, including its land and buildings, be transferred from the ASF Finance Authority to ASF. Under the agreement, ASF will become independent of UA, which has been its sponsor since 1993.

The agreement calls for UA's Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Professional Actor Training in Montgomery, which includes the Actors' Equity Card, to be phased out. The students of the class of 2009 will complete the program in Montgomery. UA will continue to offer all current MFA programs in theatre, including acting, stage management, theatre management and other specialties, on campus.

Students who began the two-year MFA Professional Actor Training program in fall 2007 will complete the program at ASF during the 2008-2009 academic year. The program has not admitted an incoming class for fall 2008 and will be phased out after the current class graduates in August 2009.

The current value of the ASF Endowed Chair, a \$600,000 donation initially provided to UA to support the MFA program in Montgomery, will be returned to the ASF Endowment Trust at the conclusion of the program in 2009.

"We are proud of the vital role The University of Alabama has played in realizing Winton Blount's vision of establishing a thriving and successful professional theatre program in the state of Alabama. We appreciate the commitment and efforts of ASF's board of directors and staff and wish them ongoing success," said UA President Robert E. Witt.

Young J. Boozer, III, chair of the ASF board of directors, said the board is pleased to have reached an agreement with UA. "We are looking forward to finalizing the details and moving forward," he said.

ASF began in Anniston in 1972 as a professional regional theatre company. ASF has been located in Montgomery since 1985 when it moved from Anniston as a result of Mr. and Mrs.

Winton M. Blount's gift of a performing arts complex. ASF has operated through UA since 1993 and hosted the MFA program since 1985.

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