



VIRGINIA STAGE COMPANY NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release • August 10, 2005 • Contact: Chad Bauman, (757) 627-6988 ext. 343

VSC Opens its *Season of Firsts* with World Premiere

Virginia Stage Company presents the world premiere of *The Taste Test* written by Frank Higgins and directed by Virginia Stage Company's new Artistic Director Chris Hanna. In the mid-1980s, one corporation had more name recognition than "Jesus, Muhammad and Buddha combined": King Cola. After the release of a new formula, sales plummet and three female executives must decide between loyalty or advancement--it's the ultimate taste test. The scene is set for an intriguing look into corporate ethics, if such a thing exists. Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer.

The production runs from September 11 through October 2, 2005. Tickets to *The Taste Test* range in price from \$8.00 to \$42.50, with September 11 serving as a Pay-What-You-Can performance. Virginia Stage Company will continue its popular Best Ticket in Town Program during the 2005-06 Season. Best Ticket in Town performances will be September 13th through the 15th and all tickets will be sold for \$8.00. Tickets may be purchased at the VSC Box Office, by calling (757) 627-1234 or online at www.vastage.com.

Virginia Stage Company's world premiere of *The Taste Test* marks the Company's commitment to the development and presentation of new scripts by some of the world's most talented authors. *The Taste Test* will join other notable Virginia Stage Company world premieres including the Broadway hit *The Secret Garden* as well as the Stephen Schwartz musical *Snapshots*. "Under my leadership, Virginia Stage Company will play an increasing role in preparing new productions for the national stage. Historically, Virginia has fostered the ideas and leaders that inspired our nation into being. Now it's time to make our impact culturally, as well. Getting Frank Higgins to premiere his very clever new play in Norfolk will be a great start," commented Chris Hanna, VSC's Artistic Director.

Frank Higgins is the author of *The Sweet By 'n' By* which was produced with Blythe Danner, Gwyneth Paltrow and Judge Reinhold. His play *Gunplay* has been produced across the country, including having several scenes read on Capitol Hill. His other plays include *Miracles*, *WMKS: Where Music Kills Sorrow*, and *Sacred Hearts*. His plays have been produced at several major regional theaters, including Jack O'Brien's Old Globe Theater in San Diego, the Barter Theatre in Virginia, the Fulton Opera House, the Kansas City Repertory Theater, the American Stage Festival and in New York. *The Taste Test* began as a reading at the Ashland New Plays Festival in Oregon, then received a reading at the Cherry Lane Theatre with Tony-Award winner Judith Ivey.

Chris Hanna's directing credits have taken him from Edinburgh, Scotland, to Juneau, Alaska, and have included productions Off Broadway, at the Royal National Theatre of Great Britain, and the Juilliard School. He served as Associate Artistic Director of Virginia Stage Company from 1984- 1991; favorites among his many previous productions at the Wells Theatre include *The Rainmaker*, *Arms and the Man*, *Ah Wilderness!* and the world premiere of Alan Havis' play *Morocco*. He has served as Resident Director at the Juilliard School, as Artistic Associate for seven seasons with the Chautauqua Theatre Company, and is presently Director of Theatre at Old Dominion University. He holds a MFA in Directing from the University of California, San Diego.

For a complete press kit, please contact Chad Bauman, Director of Communications, at (757) 627-6988 ext. 343.

Virginia Stage Company | 27 Years New

Chris Hanna, Artistic Director **Keith Stava**, Managing Director

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The Taste Test

FACT SHEET

The Taste Test runs from September 11 through October 2, 2005. Tickets to *The Taste Test* range in price from \$8.00 to \$42.50, with September 11 serving as a Pay-What-You-Can performance. Virginia Stage Company will continue its popular Best Ticket in Town Program during the 2005-06 Season. Best Ticket in Town performances will be September 13th through the 15th and all tickets will be sold for \$8.00. Tickets may be purchased at the VSC Box Office, by calling (757) 627-1234 or online at www.vastage.com.

Box Office Information: In Person: At the Wells Theater (corner of Tazewell & Monticello Streets), Phone: 757-627-1234, Fax: 757-628-5958, Online: www.vastage.com.

Cast

Claire.....DORIS BELACK
Frances.....NADINE MOZON
Mary.....SUSAN WANDS

Creative Team

Written by: Frank Higgins
Director: Chris Hanna
Set Designer: Bill Clarke
Costume Designer: Jeni Schaefer
Lighting Designer: Victor En Yu Tan
Sound Designer: Michael Boso
Casting: Stephanie Klapper
Stage Manager: Bradley C. Cooper

Performance Schedule

Pay-What-You-Can Performance: Sunday, September 11 7:00pm

Best Ticket in Town Performances (Previews): Tuesday, Sept. 13 7:00 pm; Wednesday, Sept. 14 8:00 pm; Thursday, Sept. 15 8:00pm

Opening Night/Press Night: Friday, Sept. 16 8:00 pm

Public Performances: Saturday, Sept. 17 4:00 pm & 8:00 pm; Sunday, Sept. 18 2:00 pm & 7:00 pm; Tuesday, Sept. 20 7:00 pm; Wednesday, Sept. 21 8:00pm; Thursday, Sept. 22 8:00 pm; Friday, Sept. 23 8:00 pm; Saturday, Sept. 24 4:00 pm & 8:00 pm; Sunday, Sept. 25 2:00 pm; Tuesday, Sept. 27 7:00 pm; Wednesday, Sept. 28 8:00 pm; Thursday, Sept. 29 8:00 pm; Friday, Sept. 20 8:00pm, Saturday, Oct. 1 4:00pm & 8:00pm; Sunday, Oct. 2 2:00pm

Signed Performance: Saturday, Sept. 24 8:00pm

After Performance Discussion: Sunday, Sept. 18 2:00pm

Closing Performance: Sunday, Oct. 2 2:00pm



The Taste Test

THE CAST



Doris Belack (Claire) has appeared on Broadway in such plays as *The Cemetery Club*, *Social Security*, *The Trip Back Down*, *Bad Habits*, and *Last Of The Red Hot Lovers*. She has starred Off-Broadway at the American Place Theatre as Sylvia Plath's mother in *Letters Home*, at the Ensemble Studio Theatre's One Act Festival in Frank Gilroy's *Real To Reel*, and in a tour of *Lettuce & Lovage*. On television she has guest starred on *Everwood*, *The Cosby Show*, *Golden Girls*, *Sisters*, *Chicago Hope*, *Picket Fences*, *Touched By An Angel*, and *Ellen*. She appeared as a regular on the series *Family Album* and *Laurie Hill*, and has played the recurring Judge Margaret Barry on *Law & Order* and *Law & Order: SVU*. She created the role of Anna Craig on *One Life to Live*. Among her film performances were featured roles in *Tootsie*, *What About Bob?*, *Opportunity Knocks*, *Naked Gun 33 1/3*, *Batteries Not Included*, *She-Devil*, *Krippendorf's Tribe*, and as Walter Mathau's ex-wife in *The Odd Couple II*. Her most recent film, *Prime*, with Meryl Streep opens in October 2005. She is married to Philip Rose, a theatre producer and director, and the author of a fascinating new memoir called *You Can't Do That on Broadway!*



Nadine Mozon (Frances) theater credits include *Fences*, *For Colored Girls...*, *With a Hammer and a Nail*, *Home*, *Lily in Crumbs From The Table Of Joy*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Them That's Got*, *Talking With...* and *Boogie Woogie Landscapes*; Television: *Law and Order (Criminal Intent and Trial by Jury)*, *Reading Rainbow*, *One Life to Live*; and Film: principal roles in *Two Weeks Notice* (with Sandra Bullock) *Shaft* (with Samuel L. Jackson), *Sam the Man*, *Marci X* and *Spider-Man 2*. Ms. Mozon is also a poet and dramatist whose work has been published and produced for the stage. Among her credits as dramatist are her one-woman show that received an AUDELCO nomination in New York and a Drama-Logue Award in Los Angeles; and a commissioned ensemble theatre piece, *ID Please*. A published poet who has been featured in NY venues ranging from Nuyorican Poets Café to Lincoln Center, regionally at festivals, and hosted as guest artist at colleges and universities. Ms. Mozon's book of poetry, *Kiss it Up to God* is currently available in stores and online. She continues to reach a diverse community of all ages via her MozArt workshops in poetry and theatre.



Susan Wands (Mary) is delighted to make her debut with Virginia Stage Company. Broadway: *Coastal Disturbances* at Circle In The Square Theatre. Off-Broadway: *The Belle's Strategem* at Prospect Theater, *Talking Pictures* at the Signature Theatre, *Henry IV, Parts I and II* at Public Theatre, *At the Stillpoint* at Primary Stages, and *They Dance Real Slow in Jackson* at Hudson Guild. Regional: *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Studio Arena Stage, *Knowing Cairo*, *School for Husbands* at the Old Globe Theatre, *Romeo and Juliet* at Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, *An Ideal Husband & Julius Caesar*, with Alabama Shakespeare Festival, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, with Pittsburgh Public Theatre, *The Country Wife* at Syracuse Stage; *Camille* with Actors Theatre of Louisville, *As You Like It* with Merrimack Repertory, *Talley's Folly* at Indiana Repertory and *Troilus & Cressida*, *Dracula*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *Cymbeline* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. TV: *Law & Order*, *Loving*, *One Life To Live*.



The Taste Test

THE COMPANY

Frank Higgins (Playwright) is the author of *The Sweet By 'n' By* which was produced with Blythe Danner, Gwyneth Paltrow and Judge Reinhold. The script is published by Dramatists Play Service. His play *Gunplay* has been produced across the country, including having several scenes read on Capitol Hill. His play *Miracles* has been produced at major regional theaters, including Jack O'Brien's Old Globe Theater in San Diego, the Barter Theatre in Virginia, the Fulton Opera House, and in New York. The play had several scenes included in Smith & Kraus's annual Best Scenes and Best Monologues series. His musical play *WMKS: Where Music Kills Sorrow* has also been produced at several major regional theaters, including the Barter Theater in Virginia, Missouri Repertory Theatre, American Stage Festival, and the Fulton Opera House. The production at the Fulton Opera House in Pennsylvania became the biggest hit in that theater's history. *The Taste Test* began as a reading at the Ashland New Plays Festival in Oregon, then received a reading at the Cherry Lane Theatre in New York with Tony winner Judith Ivey. His latest play, *Sacred Hearts* was a recent national finalist for the Arnold Weissberger Award from the Williamstown Theatre Festival. His adaptation for young people of H.G. Wells's story *The Country of the Blind* will open in 2006 at the Coterie Theatre in Kansas City. Prior to writing plays, Mr Higgins published four books of poetry and haiku.

Chris Hanna (Director) is in his first full season as VSC's Artistic Director. Mr. Hanna's directing credits have taken him from Edinburgh, Scotland, to Juneau, Alaska, and have included productions Off Broadway, at the Royal National Theatre of Great Britain, and the Juilliard School. He served as Associate Artistic Director of Virginia Stage Company from 1984- 1991; favorites among his many previous productions at the Wells include *The Rainmaker*, *Arms and the Man*, *Ah Wilderness!* and the world premiere of Alan Havis' play *Morocco*. He has served as Resident Director at the Juilliard School, as Artistic Associate for seven seasons with the Chautauqua Theatre Company, and is presently Director of Theatre at Old Dominion University. He holds a MFA in Directing from the University of California, San Diego, and is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers.

Bill Clarke (Set Designer) is pleased to return to Virginia Stage Company where he previously designed *Top Girls*, *Fairy Tales of New York* and *Arms and the Man*. He designed *A Walk in the Woods* and *Abby's Song* on Broadway, and his off-Broadway work includes *The Daughter-in-Law* (Mint Theater; *NYTimes* 10 Best List of '03-'04 season), *Junemoon* (Drama Dep't), *Queens Blvd.*, Ann Magnuson's *You Could Be Home Now* (New York Shakespeare Festival), Keith Reddin's *The Innocents' Crusade* (Manhattan Theater Club), Alan Havis' *Morocco* (WPA) and *The Cherry Orchard* (Juilliard), plus the upcoming *Treason* at the Perry Street Theater. Regional credits include Seattle Rep, Old Globe, Milwaukee Rep, Denver Center, American Repertory Theatre., Huntington, McCarter, Alliance, Cincinnati Playhouse, Merrimack Rep, Pioneer Theater, Studio Arena, and Cleveland Playhouse. He is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama and a recipient of the Hollywood Drama-Logue Award and San Diego Theater Critics' Circle Award.



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THE COMPANY

Victor En Yu Tan (Light Designer) most recently designed the American Premiere of *Young Lade from Rwanda*, *Liliom* and *Machinal* for the Kansas City Rep, *5 Course Love* and *Convenience* for Sacramento Theatre, and *Madame Butterfly* and *La Cenerentola* for Sacramento Opera. World premieres includes *Ikebana* for the Pasadena Playhouse, *Claim to Fame* for the Lodestone Theatre, and *Full Bloom* for the Barrington Stage. NYC credits include Shakespeare at the Belasco Theater, *Sheila's Day* at the New Victory Theatre, *Legacy Codes*, *Forbidden City Blues*, *Rashomon* and *Joy Luck Club* for Pan Asian Rep, and Noa Ain's opera *Trio* at Carnegie Hall. Regionally he has also designed for the Alabama Shakespeare, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Cleveland Playhouse, Indiana Rep, Mark Taper Forum, Asolo Theatre, Syracuse Stage, American Repertory Theatre, and many others. He is currently the Associate Professor of Lighting Design at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Jeni Schaefer (Costume Designer) is pleased to be designing again for VSC. She has been with the Company for the past three seasons as Costume Shop Manager where she made her design debut on the mainstage with *Drawer Boy*. Jeni holds a MAC in Costume Design from Wichita State University where her design credits include *Bus Stop*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Five Women Wearing the Same Dress*, *The Perfect Wedding*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Her various other design credits include *Driving Miss Daisy*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Yellowman* (VSC), *Wit* (PlayMakers Repertory Theater), *Carousel* (West Virginia Public Theatre), *Anything Goes* (USD 443 Performing Arts School), and a film entitled *My Day in the Barrel* (Pinwheel Productions). Jeni would like to thank her husband Tony and her daughter Sara.

Michael Boso (Sound Designer) Michael Boso is pleased to join Virginia Stage Company this season as Audio Engineer after completing his first summer season as Designer/Engineer with Kentucky Shakespeare Festival in Louisville. Hailing from Lexington, KY, Michael's other recent credits include tenures as Resident Designer at Actors Guild of Lexington, as well as Audio Engineer of The Troubadour Concert Series and Assistant Audio Engineer of Woodsongs Old-Time Radio Hour.

Bradley C. Cooper (Stage Manager) is delighted to return to Virginia Stage Company for his third season. Bradley received his training from Northern Michigan University. He has also worked professionally at Seaside Music Theatre, in Daytona Beach, Florida, and the Arundel Barn Playhouse, just outside of Kennebunkport, Maine. Bradley was the Stage Manager for three shows at VSC last year including *A Christmas Carol*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, and *Vincent in Brixton*.