



## Massive Resistance Explored in New Play VSC to premiere new play by Chris Hanna about Norfolk school closings.

Playing at the Wells Theatre February 24 - March 15, 2009

Virginia Stage Company (VSC) is proud to announce the world premiere of Chris Hanna's new play about Massive Resistance, *Line in the Sand*, running February 24 through March 15 at the Wells Theatre. The result of over two years of detailed research and interviews, the play is also the inaugural production of Virginia Stage Company's American Soil Project – a multi-year commitment to creating and producing a series of new plays that tells Hampton Roads' stories, as well as addresses issues that speak to the nation.

One of the most significant battles to be fought on American soil happened here in Hampton Roads just fifty years ago. When Norfolk citizens struggled to reopen public schools that had been shut in defiance to racial integration, Virginia's infamous policy of Massive Resistance made national headlines. To the eyes of many today, our community is still recovering from that fight. VSC Artistic Director Chris Hanna has woven excerpts from original media coverage, court documents, and recorded personal accounts with imagined scenes and characters to examine the legacy Massive Resistance provides our region today.

"My intention for the characters of *Line in the Sand* (both real and imagined) is to inspire our continued progress towards that future," said VSC Artistic Director and *Line in the Sand* author Chris Hanna. "It is a future demanded of us. It is a future once imagined on young faces brave enough to look beyond the blinding flash bulbs of '59 cameras - cameras that once only recorded history in black and white."

*Line in the Sand* is onstage at the Wells Theatre from February 24 to March 15, 2009. Tickets range in price from \$10.00 to \$42.50. The Pay-What-You-Can performance is Sunday, February 21 at 7:00pm and the popular Best Ticket in Town performances are Tuesday, February 24 at 7:00pm, Wednesday, February 25 at 8:00pm, and Thursday, February 26 at 8:00pm. Opening night is Friday, February 27 at 8:00pm. All tickets may be purchased through Ticketmaster by calling (757) 671-8100 or at any Ticketmaster outlet, at the VSC box office, or online at [www.vastage.com](http://www.vastage.com).

*Line in the Sand* received its first workshop in May of 2008. As will be unique to all of the plays in the American Soil project, VSC solicited community involvement and feedback throughout the creation and writing process. Hanna first put community dialogue and response on stage in creating the 2005 VSC production of *King Lear: the Storm at Home*, his successful retelling of Shakespeare's story through the lens of elder care in Hampton Roads. The director of *Line in the Sand* will be the nationally renowned artist, Timothy Douglas. Mr. Douglas was an Associate Artistic Director at Actor's Theatre of Louisville and is a much sought after regional director. Playing the lead role of Vivian Carter Mason is Caroline Clay. Ms. Clay was the recipient of the 2008 Helen Hayes Award for Best Supporting Actress for her portrayal of Mrs. Muller in John Patrick Shanley's Pulitzer Prize winning play, *Doubt*.

There will be a talkback following each performance of *Line in the Sand*. Playwright and Artistic Director Chris Hanna will facilitate a discussion with the actors and the audience about the events of the play immediately following each performance. The discussions are free and open to the public.

The 30th season will close with the regional premiere of the bio-musical *Ella*, book by Jeffrey Hatcher, conceived by Rob Ruggiero and Dyke Garrison, based on an original play by Dyke Garrison, musical arrangements by Danny Holgate, running March 31 – April 19, 2009.

Virginia Stage Company is the region's only fully professional resident theatre company, serving an audience of more than 90,000 yearly. In the years since its founding, Virginia Stage Company has made significant contributions to the quality of life in Hampton Roads: presenting more than 125 plays through more than 2500 performances; revitalizing and renovating the historic Wells Theatre; providing educational programs for students of all ages; and preserving the legacy of live theatre for future generations.

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Media Release

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