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**UVA DRAMA TO OPEN 2017-18 SEASON WITH BARABARA HAMMOND'S
*WE ARE PUSSY RIOT OR EVERYTHING IS P.R.***

**Interactive Protest Play Chronicles Story of Russian Performance Collective Whose Arrest and
Imprisonment For Protesting Putin Policies Sparked Worldwide Outrage and Activism**

Opens September 28 in the Ruth Caplin Theatre

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – September 15, 2017 –The UVA Department of Drama will open its 2017-2018 with Barbara Hammond's *WE ARE PUSSY RIOT OR EVERYTHING IS P.R.*, an interactive, documentary drama that tells the story of the Russian performance collective whose 2012 protest of Vladimir Putin and the subsequent jailing of three of their members caused an international sensation.

In 2012, the five women of the feminist art collective known as Pussy Riot danced, kicked, and shouted their punk prayer to the Mother of God entitled "Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Chase Putin Away!" on the altar of Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral, a place where women were forbidden to stand. Their performance lasted just 48 seconds before they were dragged away by security. When the performers uploaded the video of the event to YouTube later that evening, they set in motion a series of events that illustrates the benefits and dangers of activism in a connected world. As soon as their post went viral, the young women became enemies of the Church and State. Three of the performers were hunted down, put on trial, and convicted of "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred." The artists' trial earned international attention and inspired acts of solidarity and fervent debate about the place of protests in modern society. It is a story that combined bureaucratic lawyers, political prisoners, and religious orthodoxy while putting Putin and the Russian government under another round of scrutiny.

WE ARE PUSSY RIOT OR EVERYTHING IS P.R. will be presented September 28 & 29 at 8 p.m., September 30 at 2 p.m., and October 4, 5, and 7 at 8 p.m. in the Ruth Caplin Theatre. Tickets are \$14.00 for adults, \$12.00 for UVA faculty, staff and UVA Alumni Association members, and \$8.00 for students. They are currently available online at www.artsboxoffice.virginia.edu, by calling 434-924-3376, or in-person from noon until 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday at the UVA Arts Box Office, located in the lobby of the Drama building. Full-time UVA students may receive one free ticket if reserved at least 24 hours in advance of their desired show date.

According to director Marianne Kubik, the show offers exciting challenges for her as a director, for the students, and for the audience. "I have done a lot of interactive theatre, but this is my first time doing protest theatre," she said. "So you have our students trying to get the audience to respond to things in a totally new way."

Kubik and all involved with the production have been cognizant throughout the process of the environment in which they are presenting the work following recent events in Charlottesville. “I think it is really important for our audiences to understand that this is theatre, and like any theatre piece, it is meant to give the audience an opportunity to have a cathartic experience. With protest theatre, it is almost always interactive, and often about a political or sociopolitical issue, but it is the interaction that gives us a deeper experience, and one that might resonate with what we are feeling inside. It gives us the opportunity to be involved rather than just stand on the sidelines and watch.”

The choice to become involved, she said, rests solely with the audience. “They can certainly sit and watch and there is no required participation. Our goal is just to make this show as evocative for our audiences as we are safely able to do.”

The story is uniquely connecting with her student cast for a number of reasons, Kubik said. “I think the actors, many of whom are close to the same ages of the young women profiled in the play, are relating this subject matter to what is going on in our country, and they are noticing things that are happening that they are wanting to protest against. What they are realizing is that unlike with these young women in this story, protesting is something they are able to do. It is really interesting for them to see the consequences for this behavior in other cultures, and also for them to think about our rights here, and how they might perceive those rights are changing, almost on a daily basis.”

The piece, Kubik said, can inspire all who see it to have a deeper discussion about the issues that led up to the arrest of these young women, and also what the international community, powered by social media, did to impact the ultimate outcome. “I find it very interesting to look at the play’s entire title and to recognize the story is about their imprisonment as well as their early release. I think the story is an important and dynamic one, and one that can be uniquely communicated through interactive theatre.”

Parking for UVA Drama performances is available at the Culbreth Road Parking Garage, conveniently located alongside the theaters.

To access photos of this production, visit .

<https://virginia.box.com/s/fjewkygeil4l0te2o55vi3j8kmcfmq04>.

For more information on the 2017-2018 UVA Drama season, visit <http://drama.virginia.edu/current-season>.