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SOUTHERN REP OPENS 2009/2010 SEASON WITH REGIONAL PREMIERE OF O P U S

New Orleans — Southern Rep opens its 2009/2010 season with the regional premiere of Off-Broadway triumph, **OPUS by Michael Hollinger, which runs September 16 – October 11, 2009**. Previews begin Wednesday, September 16th, followed by Opening Night, Saturday, September 19th. Performances continue through October 11th, Thursdays through Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. Tickets are on sale now from \$19 – \$35 and may be purchased at (504) 522-6545 or www.southernrep.com.

In **OPUS**, violinist turned playwright Michael Hollinger creates a witty and telling portrait of a high-caliber yet high-strung string quartet. Distinguished as “a taut, smart, thoroughly entertaining drama about that most rarified of heady glories,” (*Newsday*) **OPUS** explores the inner workings of the fictional Lazara Quartet as they are thrown into chaos when they lose a crucial member just days before their televised concert. Inspired to tackle Beethoven’s artistically intimidating Opus 131, the all-male group’s loyalty is tested when an intriguing young female violinist joins their ranks.

This Off-Broadway hit is described by *TheaterMania* as “unarguably theater at its finest.” Artistic Director Aimée Hayes agrees: “A classical quartet is one of the sexiest, most intimate and invigorating experiences that an audience can share with musicians. **OPUS** daringly explores the truth beyond the music.” Amongst other awards, **OPUS** received the 2006 Barrymore Independence Foundation Award for Outstanding New Play as well as the Harold and Mimi Steinberg/American Theatre Critics Association New Play Citation.

The playwright **Michael Hollinger** was classically trained in the viola at Oberlin Conservatory when he turned to theatre at age 22 and enrolled at Villanova University. Now an assistant professor of theatre, Hollinger is also a resident playwright at New Dramatists in New York City.

OPUS will be helmed by **Mark Routhier**, director of Southern Rep’s 2008 hit **THE SEAFARER**. Routhier was recently the Director of Artistic Development at the much-lauded Magic Theatre in San Francisco. With credits at Orlando Shakespeare and many San Francisco area theatres, Routhier often directs arresting new work and is also a playwright himself, with an MFA in dramatic writing from NYU.

Drew Battles, Bob Edes, Jr., Vatican Lokey, John Neisler, and Shauna Rappold make up the **OPUS** cast. **Drew Battles** most recently starred as Sharkey in 2008’s sold-out



production of THE SEAFARER. Funny man **Bob Edes, Jr.** returns for his fourth role at Southern Rep, having recently achieved a rare feat by earning *Big Easy Award* nominations for roles in a comedy, drama and musical in the same year. **Vatican Lokey** is known for his morning show on local NPR affiliate WWNO and his more than 70 roles in local productions. Hailing from Florida, **John Neisler** has performed throughout the country and in numerous films. Rounding out the cast is rising star **Shauna Rappold**, a recent graduate of LSU.

The OPUS **design team** includes scenic designer **James Faerron**, lighting designer **Diane Baas**, costume designer **Kelly James-Penot**, and sound designer **Mike Singleton**. **Sarah Z. Singleton** is the production stage manager.

Southern Rep is proud to partner with local classical music groups such as the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, Friends of Music and the Greater New Orleans Youth Orchestra to help spread the word that New Orleans boasts such excellent cultural resources. Southern Rep will host post-show talk-backs led by members of the New Orleans classical music community as well as cast members after all Sunday matinees.

OPUS tickets are now on sale. Regular ticket prices range from \$19 – \$35: \$19 for Previews Wednesday through Friday, September 16–18; \$35 for Opening Night, Saturday, September 19 (includes post-performance reception); Individual Tickets are \$26-\$29 with special discounts for students, seniors, K-12 teachers, active military, theatre professionals (with ID) and groups of ten or more. \$10 Student Rush tickets are available 15 minutes before curtain on a cash-only basis, with student ID. On the edge of the French Quarter, Southern Rep Theatre is conveniently located on the 3rd floor of the Shops of Canal Place, where validated parking is available. For more information and to order tickets, call (504) 522-6545, or visit www.southernrep.com.

With this new Season, Southern Rep celebrates 23 years of excellence, developing and producing new plays which provide audiences with professional theatre of the highest artistic quality and achievement and establishing a creative working environment that nurtures theatre professionals. As New Orleans' premiere professional theatre, Southern Rep strives to use the artistry of theatre to enlighten, educate, and entertain audiences, and aims to extend that service through educational and outreach programs.

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