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Festival Stage of Winston-Salem Presents 33 Variations Feb. 1-24

Winston-Salem, N.C.- Festival Stage of Winston-Salem continues its third season of professional theatre with a production of Moisés Kaufman’s new drama 33 Variations, presented at Hanesbrands Theatre (209 N. Spruce Street, Winston-Salem) from Feb. 1 to Feb. 24.

The production is part of a new and unprecedented partnership between Festival Stage and Wake Forest University’s Department of Theatre and Dance. In addition to five professional actors from around the country, the cast includes a current Wake Forest University student majoring in theatre and one graduate of the department. The artistic and production staff includes several members of the Wake Forest faculty.

Kaufman (The Laramie Project: Gross Indecency: Three Trials of Oscar Wilde) first produced 33 Variations in 2007. Its 2009 Broadway production earned five Tony Award nominations, including for Best Play and for leading actress Jane Fonda. Festival Stage’s production will be only the second of the play in North Carolina.

The music-filled psychological drama follows Dr. Katherine Brandt, a musicologist obsessed with uncovering a mystery behind Ludwig van Beethoven’s Diabelli Variations. The action shifts in time from present-day Bonn, Germany, to 19th century Vienna where Beethoven is working. As Beethoven copes with the progressive loss of his hearing, Katherine fights a diagnosis of ALS (also known as Lou Gherig’s disease). Paralleling Beethoven’s own journey, Katherine struggles to complete her life’s work and reconcile with her estranged daughter before her illness overtakes her. An onstage pianist plays the Variations live throughout the play, providing elegant counterpoint to the various characters’ experiences. The play is suitable for teens and adults.

Steve Umberger directs the production. Umberger is Festival Stage’s resident director, and previously directed Hatchetman (2012), The Exact Center of the Universe and Lunch at the Piccadilly (2011), and The Foreigner (2010).

All seven members of the cast are performing with Festival Stage for the first time. Alison Edwards and Warren Kelley lead the cast as Dr. Katherine Brandt and Ludwig van Beethoven, respectively. Edwards appeared in the national tour of (author)’s Wit; and in several productions at the New York Shakespeare Festival and Riverside Shakespeare Festival. She has performed regionally in California, Vermont, Missouri, Virginia and Oregon. Kelley has performed regionally in more than 200 productions, most recently Warren played Atticus Finch in To Kill A Mockingbird at Arrow Rock Lyceum. Off-Broadway, he starred as George Bernard Shaw in Engaging Shaw, which was named a New York Times Critics Pick.

Elkin, N.C., native Donna Davis plays Dr. Gertrude Ladenburger, a German musicologist who befriends Katherine and assists with her research. Davis is an award-winning actor whose Broadway credits include Filumena with Laurence Olivier. Daniel Harray plays Beethoven’s friend Anton Schindler. Harray is a company member at Book-It Repertory Theatre in Seattle, and has performed extensively in
Shakespearean and contemporary productions nation-wide. Mark Lazar plays Anton Diabelli, the Beethoven contemporary whose composition inspired Beethoven. Lazar is a former member of the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival company, and has been part of the company at People’s Light & Theatre Co. (Philadelphia) for 14 years.

As part of the theatre’s partnership with Wake Forest University, two theatre students join the cast in key roles. Amy Shackleford, a junior-year theatre major, plays Dr. Brandt's daughter Clara, with whom the ailing woman has a strained relationship. Jim French, a recent graduate, plays Mike, a nurse who pursues a relationship with Clara. Shackleford appeared in Wake Forest productions of *Marisol*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* and *The House of Bernarda Alba*. In addition to Wake Forest productions, French has worked with the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival, Williamstown Theatre Festival and Paper Lantern Theatre Co. Wake Forest University Professor of Music Louis Goldstein, a member of the music faculty since 1979, will perform as the onstage pianist.

Additionally, faculty and staff at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center are consulting with the production on the play's medical aspects, particularly those from the medical school's ALS Center, led by Dr. James Caress. Wake Forest Baptist Heath Center is the sponsor of the production, joining season sponsors Kilpatrick Townsend and Bermuda Village. *33 Variations* is also presented with support from the Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County.

Final dress rehearsal is Friday, Feb. 1, at 8 p.m.; all tickets in sections A, B and C are $12. Preview performances are scheduled Saturday, Feb. 2, at 8 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 3, at 2 p.m., and conclude with the 88.5 WFDD Preview on Wednesday, Feb. 6, at 7:30 p.m. Tickets for preview performances are $18 (sections A and B) and $12 (section C). The play's official opening night is Thursday, Feb. 7, and performances run Wednesdays through Sundays through Feb. 24 with tickets ranging from $12 to $35. Showtimes are 7:30 p.m. on Wednesdays and Thursdays, at 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, with 2 p.m. matinees on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

VIP Balcony seating packages are available for all performances, including final dress rehearsal and previews. The package includes two seats at a private table and a bottle of wine for $60 total.

Tickets may be purchased online at [www.hanesbrandstheatre.org](http://www.hanesbrandstheatre.org), by calling 336-747-1414 or visiting the Hanesbrands Theatre Box Office Monday-Friday, noon to 6 p.m. and one hour before each performance.

In addition to the production, Festival Stage will present special events including a film screening and pre-show talks on issues relating to the play:

- **Sunday, Feb. 3 – 1 p.m.** (Free; Hanesbrands Theatre lobby) Beethoven scholar Dr. William Kinderman shares insights into the composer's life and work. Kinderman, who was a consultant to *33 Variations* playwright Moisés Kaufman, will also give a concert and lecture at Wake Forest on Monday, Jan. 28.
- **Monday, Feb. 4 – 7:30 p.m.** ($10; Hanesbrands Theatre) Screening of *Amadeus*, the Academy Award-winning 1984 film about the rivalry between composers Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Antonio Salieri.
- **Sunday, Feb. 10 – 1 p.m.** (Free, Hanesbrands Theatre) Talk by Dr. Jim Caress, director of the ALS Center at the Wake Forest School of Medicine, about current treatment into the disease and consulting on the Festival Stage production.
- **Post-show talks** with members of the cast follow each Wednesday and Thursday night performance.

The professional theatre's third season opened with *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* in October and closes with David Auburn’s acclaimed drama *Proof* (May 10-26).
Festival Stage is an affiliate theatre of the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival. For further information about Festival Stage of Winston-Salem, call 336-841-2273 or visit www.FestivalStage.org.

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**Director’s Notes (excerpt) – Steve Umberger**

*33 Variations* is about many things: creativity, obsession, mortality, potential, reconciliation. And it's about change. At one point in the play, Katherine considers the idea of "transfiguration" - of becoming "your better self." Some years ago a friend from Johannesburg took me to meet and hear a presentation by Father Michael Lapsley, a South African priest and activist against the then-current atrocities of Apartheid. Because of his work, Father Michael had been the victim of a mail bomb and had lost both of his hands and the sight in one eye, yet his spirit and resolve were as strong as ever. In fact, because of what happened, he had found his life's work, his place in the world, his better self. "I am a better priest with no hands," he said, "than I ever was with two." The characters in *33 Variations* are all looking for their better selves, and they too experience losses and isolation that ultimately help them find their way. They - and the play itself - are reminders that transfiguration may be more a reality than a dream for those who truly seek it.

**About the Collaboration with Wake Forest – John E. R. Friedenberg** (Director of Theatre, Department of Theatre & Dance, Wake Forest University)

The opportunity for our students to participate in an extended project with working professionals and the chance to experience the demands of a professional career while still in school is immensely valuable to any young emerging artist. Similarly, the ability for our faculty in both theatre and music to collaborate professionally with the artists and staff of Festival Stage in circumstances that allow our students to see us working as artists outside of an academic context adds to our teaching, and their education, in a unique and elegant way.

The choice of *33 Variations* in particular creates a fabulous platform to combine the resources of the undergraduate school, the medical school and the community in an intellectual, artistic and practically relevant exploration of the issues in the play. This is a unique opportunity to bring the stage into the classroom in a way that is both intensive and expansive in exposing our students to the application of their education and training in the real world of work and society.

We hope that this joint endeavor will enrich all of our work and can establish a foundation and pattern for future collaborations. Wake Forest University's motto of *pro humanitate* is expressly reflected in every aspect of this exciting and forward looking project.

**About the Cast - *Member, Actors’ Equity Association***


**Alison Edwards** (Dr. Katherine Brandt) National Tour: *Wit* (Standby for Judith Light). New York: *King John, Memory Play (NYSF), Into the Woods (Nightwind Prods), Twelfth Night, Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Riverside Shakespeare Festival). Regional: *Witness for the Prosecution, The Lion in Winter*

**Jim French** (Mike Clark) recently graduated from Wake Forest University. Last September, he played Tybalt in NCShakes' MainStage production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Wake Forest University credits: *Trifles, The Grapes of Wrath, Helter Skelter and Mountain Language*. Williamstown Theatre Festival credits: *The Comedy of Errors, Homesick and A Sudden Fluke of Physics*. Special thanks to Jonathan Brady and Amy da Luz, and a continuous thanks to his parents, Jim and Kathy, and his teachers, Sharon Andrews, Brook Davis and Ted Sluberski for all of their love, support, and advice.

**Louis Goldstein** (Pianist) is a professor of music at Wake Forest University, where he has been a member of the Department of Music faculty since 1979. He has performed widely as a piano soloist in the United States, most notably at the Hollywood Bowl, Orchestra Hall in Chicago and Carnegie Recital Hall in New York City. He has also performed in Canada, Israel, the Netherlands and Czechoslovakia. His faculty recitals at Wake Forest present a blend of past masters such as Haydn, Beethoven and Debussy; 20th-century giants such as Copland and Stockhausen; and the latest innovations of today. His CD recordings include John Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes, Dream* and *One5*, and Morton Feldman's *Triadic Memories*. Louis has music degrees from Oberlin College Conservatory of Music (BM), California Institute of the Arts (MFA) and Eastman School of Music (DMA and Performer’s Certificate).

**Daniel Harray** (Anton Schindler) is delighted to make his Festival Stage debut. Theatre credits include: *Jack in The Importance of Being Earnest* (Perseverance Theatre, Alaska); *Joseph in The School For Scandal* (New Harmony Theatre, Ind.); *Petruchio in The Taming of the Shrew* (Illinois Shakespeare Festival); *Sebastian in Twelfth Night* (Portland Center Stage, Ore.); *Antipholus of Ephesus in The Comedy of Errors* (Orlando Shakespeare Theater); and *Don Juan* (Shakespeare Theatre Company, D.C.). Daniel is a company member of Book-It Repertory Theatre (Wash.) Film credits include: *Tim Lumley in Blindfold* and Bryce in the upcoming feature, *Hold Me*. He received his BS in speech from Northwestern University and his MFA from The Shakespeare Theatre / George Washington University's Academy for Classical Acting. AEA. [www.danielharray.com](http://www.danielharray.com).

**Warren Kelley** (Ludwig Van Beethoven) is making his Festival Stage debut with *33 Variations*. His regional theatre career includes more than 200 productions to date. He has appeared at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Goodspeed Opera House, Walnut Street Theatre, Pioneer Theatre Company, Orlando Shakespeare Theatre, Cape Playhouse and the Fulton Theatre. His diverse credits include starring roles in: *A Comedy Of Errors, A Flea In Her Ear, An Ideal Husband, Blithe Spirit, Dinner With Friends, Art, Sleuth, Sylvia, The Foreigner, Boeing Boeing, Moonlight And Magnolias, A Little Night Music and My Fair Lady*. Most recently Warren played Atticus Finch in *To Kill A Mockingbird* at Arrow Rock Lyceum. Off-Broadway he starred as George Bernard Shaw in *Engaging Shaw* (New York Times Critics Picks), and has played opposite Sally Struthers, Fred Willard, Brian D'Arcy James and Keir Dullea. TV and film: *Law & Order: SVU, Chappelle’s Show, The Other Guys* with Will Ferrell, and the upcoming series *House Of Cards* with Kevin Spacey. Awards/nominations: BroadwayWorld Florida Award, NY Innovative Theatre Award, the Carbonell Award, Cincinnati Acclaim Award and Connecticut Critics Circle.

**Mark Lazar** (Anton Diabelli) is pleased and proud to be making this first appearance with Festival Stage and to be back home in The Old North State! A former resident company member with NCShakes and frequent guest actor with The Charlotte Rep, he has been a member of the resident company at The People’s Light & Theatre Co. for 14 years. Recent favorites include: *King Lear, Of Mice and Men, The Master Builder, One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, The Foreigner, Born Yesterday, Camping with Henry and Tom, Hearts and reprising his role as Dr Watson in *Sherlock Holmes and The Jersey Lily and The Secret of Sherlock Holmes*. He is also a founding member of the acting company at The Madison
Repertory Theatre where he was based for 10 years. Mark and wife Elaine live near Valley Forge with their rescued Doberman, Henry.

**Amy Shackleford** (Clara Brandt) is delighted to appear in her first Festival Stage production. Amy is currently a junior at Wake Forest University, where she most recently appeared as June in the Wake Forest University Theatre’s production of *Marisol*. Other recent credits include: Young Woman in *Mountain Language*; Sherry in *Independence*; Rona in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*; and Adela in *The House of Bernarda Alba*.

Photos available on request.

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