



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Villanova Theatre to Launch 2009-10 Season of “Greats” With Edward Albee’s *The Zoo Story*

Villanova Theatre will open its 51st season with the play that launched playwright Edward Albee’s career half a century ago. *The Zoo Story*, directed by Professor Joanna Rotté, features a cast of two graduate students: Chris Serpentine as Jerry and Will Windsor Erwin as Peter. Parris Bradley’s realistic set lovingly evokes Central Park in the late 1950s, complete with dirt terrain, live foliage, and arching trees. Members of the Villanova community – including a yellow Labrador retriever – will appear as passers-by. *The Zoo Story* will be on stage September 22-October 4, 2009.

Villanova Theatre is located in Vasey Hall on the Villanova University campus. Performances will be held at 8:00pm on Tuesday – Saturday and 2:00pm on Sundays, with an additional 7:00pm performance on Sunday, October 4th. Tickets cost \$20-\$24, with discounts available for seniors, students, and groups, and may be ordered through the Villanova Theatre Box Office at (610) 519-7474 or online at www.theatre.villanova.edu.

An everyday park bench encounter turns into a date with destiny in *The Zoo Story*, the gripping drama that introduced Edward Albee to the world. When Jerry, a “downtown” bohemian seeker comes upon Peter, an “uptown” publishing executive, in Central Park, the two find themselves inextricably linked, as Jerry penetrates Peter’s complacency and each man’s life is forever altered.

Villanova Theatre’s production of *The Zoo Story* heads up a season that includes vibrant classics by Shakespeare, Euripides, and Irving Berlin. “We are highlighting great works by great writers this year; *The Zoo Story* is a masterwork by any standard,” says Rev. Richard G. Cannuli, O.S.A., chairperson of the Villanova University Theatre Department. “Since the inception of the M.A. program in Theatre, our students have been reading and discussing *The Zoo Story*. At last, our students and audiences will get to experience it firsthand.”

Edward Albee was born in 1928 in Washington, D.C. and began his early writing career in novels and poetry. He supplemented his income with odd jobs, including work as a telegram

messenger for Western Union in 1955. It was at this time that Albee developed the idea for *The Zoo Story*, after encountering the real-life counterparts of Jerry and other boarding house residents described in the play. Coincidentally, Villanova Theatre's production of the play marks the 50th anniversary of *The Zoo Story*'s debut in Berlin in 1959. It won Albee the Berlin Festival Award and opened off-Broadway at the Provincetown Playhouse the following year. Edward Albee's other notable works include *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1962), *A Delicate Balance* (1966), *Seascape* (1975), and *Three Tall Women* (1994). A Tony Award and three-time Pulitzer Prize winner, Albee continues to mix Absurdism with acute realism to push the boundaries of American theatre.

Joanna Rotté, Ph.D., is a writer, actor, director, and professor of theatre at Villanova University. Her most recent directing endeavor was *The Chairs* by Eugene Ionesco. Other directing credits include Tennessee Williams' *Summer and Smoke*, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, David Rabe's *In the Boom Boom Room*, Tina Howe's *The Art of Dining*, and Sam Shepard's *True West* and *The Tooth of Crime*, as well as six works by Caryl Churchill. As an actor, Dr. Rotté has appeared at Villanova Theatre as Mary Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Mother Courage in *Mother Courage and Her Children*, Sister Beatrice in *Fred and Jane*, Hannah Hawke in *Prayers of Sherkin*, Claire Zachanassian in *The Visit*, and Catwoman in *By the Bog of Cats*. Her own plays, *Prajna*, *Death of the Father*, and *Art Talk* have been featured presentations of the Philadelphia Fringe Festival. She is the author of *Scene Change (A Theatre Diary: Prague, Moscow, Leningrad)* and *Acting with Adler*. She writes regularly for *The Soul of the American Actor* newspaper.

The Villanova University Theatre Department came into being in 1958 under the leadership of Dr. Dick Duprey. Today, Villanova's Theatre Department offers both a Master of Arts degree and a Graduate Certificate in Practical Theatre. Students enrolled in the theatre program undergo a course of study that combines both scholarly and practical approaches to theatre. Guided by award-winning faculty and staff who are actively involved in the region's professional theatre, students gain knowledge and experience through hands-on production work and in-depth academic study in the areas of dramaturgy, script analysis, dramatic literature, playwriting, acting, and directing.

The Zoo Story will be on stage September 22-October 4, 2009. Show times are 8:00pm Tuesday – Saturday and 2:00pm Sunday, with an additional performance on Sunday Oct. 4th at 7pm. Tickets cost \$20-\$24 (plus handling fees) and may be ordered by calling the Villanova Theatre Box Office at (610) 519-7474 or at theatre.villanova.edu.

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VILLANOVA THEATRE FACT SHEET

WHAT: *The Zoo Story*

WHERE: Villanova Theatre
Vasey Hall
Lancaster & Ithan Avenues
Villanova, Pennsylvania

WHEN: September 22-October 4, 2008
Preview: Tuesday, September 22, at 8:00pm
Opening: Wednesday, September 23, at 8:00pm
Performs Tuesday-Saturday at 8:00pm; Sunday at 2:00pm
Additional Performance: Sunday Oct. 4th at 7:00p.m.

TICKET PRICES: \$20.00 Tuesday Preview
\$22.00 Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday
\$24.00 Friday/Saturday/Sunday
Tickets are subject to a \$1 per ticket handling fee.

CAST: Will Windsor Erwin..... *Peter*
Chris Serpentine..... *Jerry*

WRITTEN BY: Edward Albee
DIRECTED BY: Joanna Rotté
SCENIC DESIGN: Parris Bradley
COSTUME DESIGN: Megan Janczyk
LIGHTING DESIGN: Jerold R. Forsyth
SOUND DESIGN: Parris Bradley
STAGE MANAGER: Nelson Barre
DRAMATURG: Mark Costello
TICKETS: (610) 519-7474
INFORMATION: www.theatre.villanova.edu