



T H E A T E R

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 29, 2010

**The Wilma Theater presents the U.S. Premiere of
Václav Havel's Leaving
translated by Paul Wilson, directed by Jiri Zizka
David Strathairn to star in Havel's first play in 20 years
May 19 – June 20, 2010**

PHILADELPHIA – **The Wilma Theater** concludes its 2009 – 2010 Season with the U.S. Premiere of *Leaving*, by **Václav Havel**. The first play in 20 years from playwright and former Czech President Havel, *Leaving* will receive its U.S. Premiere production under co-Artistic Director **Jiri Zizka's** direction, with Academy Award® nominee **David Strathairn** (*Good Night, and Good Luck*) starring in the role of ex-Chancellor Dr. Vilém Rieger.

Leaving is an inventive story of a recently-retired Chancellor who confronts large questions of truth and power while he struggles to manage his eccentric family and humorous bevy of functionaries. Allusions from Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* and Shakespeare's *King Lear* invade the Chancellor's consciousness in this wry political tragicomedy.

An epic production with a cast of 15, *Leaving* is directed by Jiri Zizka, who previously directed the feature film of Havel's *Largo Desolato* starring Academy Award® winner F. Murray Abraham. Zizka also directed Havel's *Temptation* off-Broadway, with Strathairn in the lead role.

Leaving begins previews on **May 19**, opens on **May 26** (press night), and closes on **June 20, 2010**. President Havel and his wife Dagmar are planning to attend the Opening Night performance of *Leaving* on May 26, 2010. Tickets range from \$36 to \$65, and are available at the Wilma's Box Office by calling (215) 546-7824, visiting www.wilmatheater.org, or coming to the theater, located at 265 South Broad Street in Philadelphia. Student tickets are available for as little as \$10, depending on date and time, made possible through a grant from PNC Arts Alive.

Zizka's roots lie in the same soil as Havel's. Both men are natives of Prague, and both came of age artistically in the underground theaters that sprung up following the fleeting political thaw of 1968's Prague Spring. "I have a special admiration for Mr. Havel's writing," says Zizka. "When I was fifteen I attended a play at the Theater on the Balustrade, entitled *Memorandum*, by a then-unknown writer, Mr. Havel. Later, the work was to become a modern classic, and I decided because of its gentle, insightful humor and refreshing absurdity to become more involved in the theater. Over the years, my admiration for Mr. Havel's work has not waned."

This December, Zizka traveled to Prague to meet with Havel and discuss the script and the Wilma production. Zizka also met with literary agent Jitka Sloupova and Ondřej Hrab, whose Theater Archa produced the World Premiere of *Leaving*. Havel has said he started writing *Leaving* just before the events of the Velvet Revolution and the fall of Czechoslovakia's communist government in 1989, which thrust him into Czechoslovakia's Presidency, and in its themes and its craft *Leaving* sums up Havel's work as a playwright and a statesman.

The Wilma will also host Havel's longtime translator **Paul Wilson**, who will consult during rehearsals for the production. In a letter to Zizka, Wilson writes that "you bring to this play a doubly useful sensibility: your Czech background makes you uniquely qualified to bring out the nuances of the original work, and your long experience in American theatre will make sure that local audiences get the maximum impact of the play's broad appeal."

About the Playwright

Born in Prague in 1936, **Václav Havel** began working in theater as a stagehand at the Theater on the Balustrade and studied drama by correspondence at the Theater Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (DAMU). His first publicly-performed full-length play was 1963's *The Garden Party*. Following the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968 he was banned from the theater. He became more politically active, becoming one of the founding members and architects of Charter 77, and co-founding the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted in 1979. His political activities resulted in government persecution and numerous prison sentences. His leadership during the Velvet Revolution in November of 1989, which accomplished a bloodless overthrow of the Communist government of Czechoslovakia, led to his selection as President of Czechoslovakia, a post which he retained in the free elections of 1990. After the separation of the Czech and Slovak Republics, Havel was elected president of the Czech Republic in 1993, and served in that post for ten years. President Havel has received numerous awards and honors, including the 1994 Philadelphia Liberty Medal, the 2003 International Gandhi Peace Prize, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2003. He has authored over 30 plays, collections of poetry, and books.

About the Director

Jiri Zizka, a native of Prague, joined the Wilma as artist-in-residence in 1979, and quickly became co-Artistic Director. Zizka has directed over 70 productions at the Wilma and across the U.S., including his original adaptation of Orwell's *1984*, which he subsequently directed at the Kennedy Center, Washington D.C. and off-Broadway; Havel's *Temptation* (off-Broadway), *The Ruling Class*, *Indiscretions*, *Love and Anger*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *The Tin Pan Alley Rag*, and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. Zizka has also collaborated with Tom Stoppard and directed his *Arcadia*, *On the Razzle*, *Indian Ink*, *Night and Day* and *Every Good Boy Deserves Favor*, a co-production of The Wilma Theater and The Philadelphia Orchestra at the Kimmel Center.

About the Cast, Production Team, and Translator

David Strathairn will lead the cast of *Leaving* in the role of Vilem Rieger. An Academy® Award nominee for his performance as Edward R. Murrow in the film *Good Night and Good Luck*, Strathairn has appeared in numerous major-studio and independent motion pictures over a 30-year career, including *LA Confidential*, *Sneakers*, and *Cold Souls*. He also reprised the role of Danny Dunkelman in 2007's independent *Steel Toes*, a role he originated in Jiri Zizka's World Premiere production of David Gow's *Cherry Docs* at the Wilma. Strathairn also appeared in Zizka's off-Broadway production of *Temptation* and in the Wilma production of *Every Good Boy Deserves Favor* at the Kimmel Center. He most recently appeared in the Philadelphia area in People's Light & Theatre Company's *Nathan the Wise*, alongside *Leaving* castmates Luigi Sottile and Peter DeLaurier.

Leaving's 15-member cast also includes **Krista Apple** as Monika, **Mark Cairns** as Albin, **Janis Dardaris** as Grandma, **Mike Dees** as Bob, **Peter DeLaurier** as Hanuš, **Victoria Frings** as Zuzana, **Lenny Haas** as Dick, **Trevor Long** as Patrick Klein, **Mary McCool** as Bea Weissenmüttelhofová, **Kathryn Meisle** as Irena, **Jennifer Ruby Morris** as Vlasta, **Geddeth Smith** as Oswald, **Luigi Sottile** as Victor, and **H. Michael Walls** as Knobloch.

Production designers for *Leaving* include Czech-born and London-based set designer **Klara Zieglerova**, who returns to the Wilma stage with a witty and daring design for this play. A Tony Award® nominee for her design for *Jersey Boys*, Zieglerova designed sets for the Wilma's productions of *Raw Boys* and *Red*, and the Wilma-led co-production of *Yellowman* that also appeared at Long Wharf and ACT in Seattle. First-time Wilma designer **Vasilija Zivanic**, originally from Serbia and now based in New York, designed costumes for the large cast. Longtime Wilma collaborator **Jerold R. Forsyth** designed the production's lighting, and **Nick Rye** provides music and sound design; they last worked together on last season's *Hysteria*.

Translator **Paul Wilson** is a freelance journalist, editor, radio producer and translator of Czech literature. Born in Ontario, he spent ten years in Czechoslovakia (1967-1977) where he was eventually expelled by the Communist government for his association with the dissident movement, particularly for his involvement with the underground music scene as a member of the legendary rock band The Plastic People of the Universe. He is currently working on several writing and translating projects, including a book on his ten years in Czechoslovakia. He has translated the work of numerous Czech writers, including many of Václav Havel's plays, and his translation of Havel's most recent memoir, *To the Castle and Back*, was published in 2007.

Symposium Series

Václav Havel: The Art of the Impossible Sunday, May 30, 4:30pm

A distinguished panel will discuss Václav Havel's legacy as playwright, politician, and philosopher. Participants will include Martin Beck Matustik, Lincoln Professor of Ethics and Religion at Arizona State University and a signer of Charter 77; Paul Wilson, translator of *Leaving* and other works by Václav Havel; and Jiri Zizka, co-Artistic Director of The Wilma Theater and director of *Leaving*.

Politics and Hubbubs Sunday, June 13, 4:30pm

Leaving director Jiri Zizka and Wilma Dramaturg Walter Bilderback explore the historical and dramatic background of the play, incorporating selections from Zizka's film of Václav Havel's *Largo Desolato* (with F. Murray Abraham) and *Citizen Havel*, a documentary about Havel's presidency of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic.

Reduced ticket pricing for students is made possible by PNC Arts Alive, a five-year, \$5 million investment from The PNC Foundation with the goal to increase engagement in the arts, develop new audiences and make the arts more accessible to diverse communities in the Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey region. In advance, students can save 50% off full-priced tickets (excludes Opening and Saturday nights) and purchase \$10 tickets for Sunday evening performances. Tickets for same day performances can be purchased for \$10 at the Box Office. Tickets are subject to availability; valid student ID is required; limit one ticket per ID.

The Sporting Club at the Bellevue is the Season Sponsor for The Wilma Theater's 2009 – 2010 season.

Leaving was funded by the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage through the Philadelphia Theatre Initiative. The DoubleTree Hotel is the Artistic Lead Sponsor of Leaving. Daniel Berger is Honorary Producer of Leaving.

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Leaving FACTS

<p>May 19 WED 7:30 May 20 THR 7:30 May 21 FRI 8:00 May 22 SAT 8:00 May 23 SUN 2:00</p> <p>May 25 TUE 6:30 May 26 WED 7:30* May 27 THR 7:30† May 28 FRI 8:00 May 29 SAT 2:00 May 29 SAT 8:00 May 30 SUN 2:00§ May 30 SUN 7:30</p> <p>Jun 1 TUE 6:30 Jun 2 WED 7:30 Jun 3 THR 7:30† Jun 4 FRI 8:00 Jun 5 SAT 2:00 Jun 5 SAT 8:00 Jun 6 SUN 2:00 Jun 6 SUN 7:30</p> <p>Jun 9 WED 7:30 Jun 10 THR 7:30 Jun 11 FRI 8:00 Jun 12 SAT 2:00 Jun 12 SAT 8:00 Jun 13 SUN 2:00§ Jun 13 SUN 7:30</p> <p>Jun 15 TUE 6:30 Jun 16 WED 2:00† Jun 16 WED 7:30 Jun 17 THR 7:30 Jun 18 FRI 8:00‡ Jun 19 SAT 2:00○ Jun 19 SAT 8:00 Jun 20 SUN 2:00</p>	<p>Dates: May 19 – June 20, 2010 Previews run May 19 – May 26 Opening night is Wednesday May 26</p> <p>Theater: The Wilma Theater 265 S. Broad Street (Broad and Spruce) Philadelphia, PA 19107</p> <p>Prices: Tickets range from \$36 - \$65 Rush tickets are \$25 (Sun. – Thu. & Sat. matinees) or \$30 (Fri. & Sat. evenings)</p> <p>Student tickets are available for \$10, depending on date and time, made possible through a grant from PNC Arts Alive.</p> <p>Special discounts are available for seniors, those in their 20s, students, and groups of 10 or more.</p> <p>Tickets: Phone: (215) 546-7824 Fax: (215) 893-0895 Online: www.wilmatheater.org E-mail: tickets@wilmatheater.org In person: 265 South Broad Street</p> <p>The Box Office is open Monday – Friday, 10:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. During production, the box office is open Saturdays and Sundays, noon to curtain.</p>																																						
<p>* Opening Night † Post-show Chat ‡ Pre-show Wine Tasting, courtesy of Tria § Symposium Series discussion ○ Open Captioning</p>	<p>Leaving by Václav Havel translated by Paul Wilson and directed by Jiri Zizka</p> <p style="text-align: center;">with David Strathairn as Vilém Rieger</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">Krista Apple</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Monika</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Trevor Long</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Patrick Klein</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mark Cairns</td> <td>Albin</td> <td>Mary McCool</td> <td>Bea</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Janis Dardaris</td> <td>Grandma</td> <td>Kathryn Meisle</td> <td>Irena</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mike Dees</td> <td>Bob</td> <td>Jennifer Ruby Morris</td> <td>Vlasta</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Peter DeLaurier</td> <td>Hanus</td> <td>Geddeth Smith</td> <td>Oswald</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Victoria Frings</td> <td>Zuzana</td> <td>Luigi Sottile</td> <td>Victor</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lenny Haas</td> <td>Dick</td> <td>H. Michael Walls</td> <td>Knobloch</td> </tr> </table> <p>Production Team</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td>Klara Zieglerova</td> <td>Set Designer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jerold R. Forsyth</td> <td>Lighting Designer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vasilija Zivanic</td> <td>Costume Designer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nick Rye</td> <td>Sound Designer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Patreshettarlini Adams</td> <td>Stage Manager</td> </tr> </table>	Krista Apple	Monika	Trevor Long	Patrick Klein	Mark Cairns	Albin	Mary McCool	Bea	Janis Dardaris	Grandma	Kathryn Meisle	Irena	Mike Dees	Bob	Jennifer Ruby Morris	Vlasta	Peter DeLaurier	Hanus	Geddeth Smith	Oswald	Victoria Frings	Zuzana	Luigi Sottile	Victor	Lenny Haas	Dick	H. Michael Walls	Knobloch	Klara Zieglerova	Set Designer	Jerold R. Forsyth	Lighting Designer	Vasilija Zivanic	Costume Designer	Nick Rye	Sound Designer	Patreshettarlini Adams	Stage Manager
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