

News Release
For Immediate Release
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Mill Mountain Theater Closes to Reorganize

*Mill Mountain Theater, a regional cultural icon for over 40 years,
will introduce a new season and a new business model*

Roanoke, VA...January 20, 2009...Mill Mountain Theater's Board of Directors announced today that the Theater will close its doors on January 21 in order to focus on a reorganization of the Theater's productions and business operations. Layoffs will begin on that date.

Sharply declining income, reduced state funding, lower than expected donations, changes in consumer entertainment choices, and the effects of today's challenging economy have left the Theater unable to cover its operating costs. Existing debt is compounding the theater's financial difficulties.

This difficult decision has been made after a long and thorough scrutiny of alternatives, reforecasts, and requests for relief made to donors and existing creditors.

"Our traditional business model no longer works. We want to be responsible stewards of our community's long-standing financial support so we are taking a break from business-as-usual to reinvent Mill Mountain Theater. We are taking an intermission", says a theater spokesperson, "and plan to reemerge stronger and better than ever."

Theater Board of Directors and Staff are working closely with local officials and key contributors to create a model for the Theater's future that acknowledges the organization's historical importance to the region's identity and tourism initiatives, while being sensitive to today's economic realities. An aggressive fund-raising campaign based on the new business plan will begin upon the announcement of the plan's details.

Theaters across the United States, including Broadway, are experiencing the effects of the economic downturn with rising costs and decreased attendance. According to the New York Times, "The annual post-holiday doldrums in the theater district are proving particularly doleful in 2009, as more than a dozen plays and musicals — almost half of the current lineup, incredible though it may seem — get ready to close by the end of the month." (*Big Finales, All Together Now: A Month of Broadway Closings*, published January 3, 2009). Regional theaters, all approximately the sizes of Mill Mountain, in Ohio, Florida, Minnesota, and Boston have all closed in recent months.

Theater officials assure Roanoke arts patrons, "Mill Mountain Theater is doing the responsible thing and securing its future by reinventing and reinvigorating how we do business." The first production of the newly reinvented organization is planned for the 2009 holiday season. Season ticket holders will receive vouchers for cancelled plays that can be applied to next season's shows.

Of the plays remaining its current season, Mill Mountain will present *Driving Miss Daisy* (WALDRON STAGE, January 21 - February 8, 2009). The theater box office will also close on January 21 but tickets can be purchased by cash or check at the theater box office in the lobby of the Waldron Stage at the Church Avenue entrance one hour before the show.