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# **Oscar-Winning Actor Starring in U.S. Premiere of Tom Wood's *Vanya***

**Artists Repertory Theatre (A.R.T.)  
Portland, Oregon**

**VANYA  
By Anton Chekhov  
Adapted by Tom Wood  
Directed by JoAnn Johnson**

**January 16th - February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

**EDMONTON, AB** – **William Hurt**, an Oscar winner for *Kiss of the Spider Women* (1986) and nominated for *Children of a Lesser God* (1987); *Broadcast News* (1988) and *A History of Violence* (2006) is playing Dr. Michael Astrov in the sold-out United States premiere of Edmonton playwright Tom Wood's ***Vanya***, at Artists Repertory Theatre (A.R.T.) in Portland, Oregon. ***Vanya*** runs from January 16 until February 25, 2007, at A.R.T.

***Vanya*** was developed at Edmonton's Citadel Theatre and premiered during the 2004-2005 Season. It traveled to Ottawa's National Arts Centre as part of Alberta Scene in 2005. ***Vanya*** has been taken from Chekov's early 20<sup>th</sup> century pre-Soviet era and beautifully relocated to Northern Alberta in the pre-Depression era.

On an isolated Alberta farm in 1928, life can be an endless struggle for survival. Vanya has struggled all his life for the benefit of Alexander, the academic in-law from the big city in Eastern Canada, and now Alexander has returned home with his beautiful, young wife to enjoy his retirement. As tensions mount on a family trapped in an endless cycle of dependence and rejection, tempers flare, passions intensify and life as everyone knows it is changed forever.

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Mr. Wood, like Chekhov, wrote the part of Doctor Astrov as an environmentalist at a time before such a term had a place in popular media and culture. A proto-ecologist worried about the destruction of the forests and how that would devastate future generations is a topic that fits into every timeframe anywhere on the planet.

**Vanya** features A.R.T. Artistic Director **Allen Nause** as Uncle Vanya, with **William Hurt** as Dr. Astrov. **Krista Vendy**, star of the Australian television show, *Neighbours*, as Ylena; Mt. Hood Repertory Theatre (Gresham, Oregon) Artistic Director **Tobias Andersen** as Alexander; **Valerie Stevens** as Sonya; **Mary Benson** as Vera; **Jim Davis** as Waffles; **Sheila Tousey** as Nana.

The Citadel's **Vanya** featured **Tom Wood** as Vanya; **Pierre Brault** as Waffles; **Catherine Fitch** as Sonya; **David McNally** as Dr. Astroff; **Wilma Pelly** as Nana; **Grant Reddick** as Alexander; **Barbara Reese** as Vera; **Jan Alexandra Smith** as Elena.

The Citadel's *Vanya* was directed by Citadel Theatre Artistic Director **Bob Baker**; Set and Costumes were designed by **Leslie Frankish**; Lighting designed by **John (Jock) Munro**; Sound designed by **Michael Becker**; Stage Managed by **Michelle Chan**

## **Citadel Theatre committed to producing two premieres per season by 2008-2009**

For the last seven years the Citadel has been taking a leadership role in the creation and production of new Canadian work on our Mainstage and Second Stage. Of our eleven premieres, six have gone on to subsequent productions. As part of our new long-range plan, the Citadel is committing to the production of two new works per season by 2008-2009, one of which will be a Mainstage production. Development activities for each project will be determined by the particular needs of the playwright and creative team.

"We are thrilled that a number of plays we have developed and premiered at the Citadel are receiving subsequent productions and international exposure," says Citadel Theatre Artistic Director **Bob Baker**. "**Tom Wood** and **Vern Thiessen** are both talented Albertans whose work is deserving of a wider audience and we are very proud of them."

Other world premiere adaptations by **Tom Wood**, including Carlo Goldini's *Servant of Two Masters* (2002-2003 Season); Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (2000-2001 Season – present) and J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (2005-2006 Season) rank among the most successful productions in Citadel Theatre history. **Vern Thiessen's** world premieres at the Citadel include *Einstein's Gift* (2002-2003 Season) and Shakespeare's *Will* (2004-2005 Season). *Einstein's Gift* has been translated into several languages and received an off-Broadway production at Epic Theatre Center during their 2005-2006 Season and Vern was awarded the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama for this play. *Shakespeare's Will* will be presented as part of Stratford's upcoming season, starring Seanna McKenna, and has been optioned by the legendary New York producer Chase Mishkin for a Broadway production.

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For the Citadel Theatre, **Tom Wood** has appeared as Dr. Dysart in *Equus*; as Big Daddy in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and Vanya in *Vanya*. He has appeared for the past seven seasons as Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* which he also adapted. Other Citadel credits include adapting the hit play *Peter Pan*; writing the Klondike version of *Servant of Two Masters*, directing *Hamlet*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *Romeo and Juliet*; *The Sound of Music* and *Homeward Bound* and appearing in *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You*, "Art", *Into the Woods* and *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*. Among his numerous credits, favourite roles include Roy Cohn in *Angels in America, Part I and II* in Toronto; Alan Turing in *Breaking the Code* and The White Knight in *Alice, Through the Looking Glass* at the Stratford Festival

**Vern Thiessen** is fast becoming one of Canada's most produced playwrights. He has written for stage, radio and television. His stage plays have been seen across Canada, the US and Europe, including *Shakespeare's Will*; *Apple*; *Einstein's Gift*; *Blowfish* and *The Resurrection Of John Frum*. *Apple* has been running at several theatres in Poland for over eighteen months, and recently completed successful runs in Toronto and Winnipeg. *Einstein's Gift*, which premiered at the Citadel during the 2002-2003 Season, has been seen across Canada, had a highly successful off-Broadway run, and has been translated into several languages. *Shakespeare's Will*, which also premiered at the Citadel during the 2004-2005 Season, has had several productions across Canada and the US. Next summer, it will play the Stratford Festival of Canada, and has recently been optioned by legendary New York producer Chase Mishkin for a Broadway production. His new play *Bird Brain* will premiere at the Citadel in March of 2007. As part of his ongoing commitment to develop and produce original, Canadian theatre, Citadel Theatre Artistic Director **Bob Baker** has appointed Canadian playwright, and Governor-General Award winner in Drama **Vern Thiessen**, as *Playwright in Residence* at the Citadel Theatre.

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