

# Auditions for 2008 Summer Season

Newport News is in the heart of Virginia's most celebrated historic region known as [The Historic Triangle](#) (Williamsburg, Yorktown and Jamestown). It is the cradle of America—recently celebrating America's roots with the [400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Jamestown](#). No area of the country is more integral to the creation of America or prouder of its roots than the [Tidewater region](#).

It seems fitting and appropriate that in [this region](#), housed in a historic barn (a quintessential icon of America) that Tidewater Regional Repertory—a vibrant American theater is emerging that is dedicated to producing plays and musicals that reflect the diverse American landscape.

## **TRR HISTORY**

Tidewater Regional Repertory Theatre (TRR) is the inevitable outgrowth of [Christopher Newport University's](#) (CNU) commitment to developing a high-quality artistic identity. Although this is TRR's first year of existence, the university has been recognized for many years as one of the region's finest Theatre-producing entities, garnering many citations locally and regionally. Moreover, the university has undergone a radical re-invention over the past decade and the stage is now set for this pivotal moment. In order to better understand how TRR came into being, some explanation of the convergence of its component parts is necessary.

## **An Overview of the University and Creation of CNU's Ferguson Center for the Arts**

*Christopher Newport University is a state-supported institution of higher education. The University began in 1962 as Christopher Newport College, a two-year branch of The College of William and Mary, America's second oldest college. In 1974, it separated from The College of William and Mary to become a four-year, state-supported college, and in 1992, it became a university. In January of 1996, Paul Trible, former United States Senator, was appointed President of CNU. Under his leadership, the University began the process of constructing over a quarter of a billion dollars in new buildings. This rapid expansion (still in progress), included: the **\$54 million Ferguson Center for the Arts** designed by the world-renowned architectural firm of I.M. Pei, Cobb, Freed, and Partners. The University is now the third most selective university in Virginia.*

This is the foundation on which TRR is built. CNU's [Ferguson Center for the Arts](#) is a world class venue and in just three years it has become an international force, presenting the finest cultural attractions in the world. More than 300,000 people from throughout Hampton Roads and beyond have experienced over 150 attractions in two superb theatres. The Ferguson's 2007-2008 season features sixty attractions from thirteen countries, representing sixteen genres. From Broadway to Ballet, rock to Bach, the Ferguson has raised the 'cultural bar' in the Tidewater Region of Virginia.

Developing in concert with the Ferguson is the university's commitment to its artistic programs; specifically, the Department of Theater & Dance which operates under the production banner of TheaterCNU.

## **TheaterCNU Overview**

*A theater education at CNU combines hands-on experience in all aspects of stagecraft—acting, directing, playwriting, music-theater/dance, design/technical theater, stage management and theater management with a critical appreciation of dramatic literature. TheaterCNU's production season includes 4 main stage offerings and 5-8 second-stage and experimental productions. TheaterCNU prepares its graduates for a variety of professional opportunities, graduate study and/or careers in theater education. With 160 majors and 8 full-time faculty members, TheaterCNU is active and productive. The department 'practices professionalism' in a program run by collaborative and cooperative professionals (AEA, USA, SSD&C). The production processes and values reflect the best of professional regional theater quality and, indeed, the processes of production intentionally emulate the traditional LORT theater models. In short, the teachers employed by TheaterCNU come from the professional marketplace and continue active artistic careers in theaters regionally and across the country.*

Finally, the addition of a new venue—the historic Yoder Barn—in the spring of 2007 is the most recent and immediate piece of this unique convergence of resources, expertise and energy.

## Brief History of the Yoder Barn

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*The Yoder Barn Theatre is a well-known landmark on the Peninsula of Virginia. The Yoder Barn was built in 1935 by the Yoder family following a fire that destroyed their original barn built in 1899. The Yoders ran a dairy farm until 1969 when they closed their processing plant operation to raise beef cattle and farm crops. Upon the sale of the main farm land in 1995, the family donated property they owned a quarter of a mile away to a community theatre project on which the current Yoder barn was moved to serve as the Theatre's structure.*

*In the spring of 2007, this landmark was given to Christopher Newport University by the Yoder family and the Yoder Preservation Trust, Inc. The official donation was presented to CNU President Paul Tribble, marking the third chapter for the barn that housed dairy cows from 1935 to 1969 and, later, a vibrant community theatre.*



*The Yoder Barn in Newport News, VA.*

*In thinking about the future of the Yoder Barn Theatre, John David Yoder, Esther Mable and the Yoder sisters considered who could best preserve and treasure their family legacy. **“We wanted it to have a secure future,”** said John David, who is now 80. **“We needed to plan for this lovely structure...”***

*The Yoder Barn Theatre already enriches the academic and extracurricular life of students, faculty and the university community. It is the site for theatre and musical presentations (presented through the Ferguson Center), and services student organization activities.*

*“We will bring back popular Yoder programs such as Tommy Emanuel and Hunt Family Fiddlers and add many other programs ranging from groups like the Dukes of Dixieland to Second City Comedy to Latin Dance Bands,”* said Tribble. ***“Moreover, we envision producing a highly professional summer theatre program beginning in 2008.”***

*The property has been appraised at \$4.1 million making it the second most generous gift ever received by CNU. In addition, a group of business and community leaders have committed additional funds to enhance the operation of the theatre going forward. These funds are currently be used to improve the sound systems and seating for guests and to expand and diversify programming.*

These three unique and converging entities—CNU’s Ferguson Center, TheaterCNU and the Yoder Barn—offered us the opportunity to create Tidewater Regional Repertory Theatre.