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Contact: Katie Perkowski

kperkowski@asf.net

334.271.5326 (work)

334.202.0366 (cell)

**Alabama Shakespeare Festival
The State Theatre of Alabama**

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Montgomery, Alabama — BEAR COUNTRY, by Michael Vigilant, a play celebrating the life and legacy of Alabama football coach Paul “Bear” Bryant, will appear on the Octagon Stage at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival for a limited run **March 9-25, 2018**

Tickets for **BEAR COUNTRY** are available online at www.asf.net, by phone at **800.841.4273** and at the ASF Box Office located at 1 Festival Drive in the heart of Montgomery’s beautiful Blount Cultural Park.

During his life, Bryant wrestled a bear as a teen, single-handedly beat the arch-rival Tennessee Volunteers while playing on a broken leg, and won a landmark federal court case in which he was accused of illegal wagering. Bryant was also a national celebrity during his coaching years. His friends included Hollywood stars, captains of industry and American presidents.

The play **BEAR COUNTRY** offers the opportunity to meet the legendary Bryant as he reminisces about the career that turned him into an icon and dispenses his particular brand of life coaching, which made him a champion to his players on and off the field. At the time of his retirement in 1982, Bryant had won more games than any coach in college football history.

BEAR COUNTRY was developed through the Southern Writers’ Project and premiered at ASF in 2009 to critical acclaim. The Birmingham News raved that Rodney Clark’s performance as Bryant is “remarkable.” Montgomery Living declared that “Bear Country” is “amazing entertainment.” BamaMag.com called the show “outstanding entertainment.”

Rodney Clark, a long-time artist at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, appears in the title role and directs the production. Clark is a long-time artistic associate of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, best-known for roles such as Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, Lear in *King Lear* and Captain Hook in *Peter Pan*. “The audiences really do eat the play up,” Clark says, who originated the title role in the 2009 world premiere production. “And one of the great things is a lot of people have never set foot in a theatre, never watched a play, will come out for this one just because it’s him.”

Matt Clevy, making his ASF debut, appears as Young Bryant. Clevy, an actor and comedian from Nashville, TN with an MFA in Acting from the Brown University/Trinity Rep, has been featured in webisodes and commercials for Funny or Die, Netflix and Disney Jr.

Seth Andrew Bridges and **Clinton C. Lowe** appear in multiple roles. Bridges most recently appeared in ASF's *Sherlock Holmes*, *The Tempest* and *A Christmas Carol*, and has recently worked on *Marvel's The Defenders* (Netflix); *Elementary* (CBS), *Gotham* (Fox) and *The Blacklist* (NBC). Clinton C. Rowe, making his ASF debut, has appeared with The National Black Theatre in Harlem, the National Tour of *Romeo & Juliet*, on Broadway in *Holler If Ya' Hear Me* and in TV/Film *Law & Order: SVU*, *Blue Bloods*, *The Hustle*, *American Gangster* and more.

As a playwright and lyricist, **Michael Vigilant** has more than a dozen works published with Samuel French, Contemporary Drama Service and Pioneer Drama Service. Five of his plays have been picked as catalog covers. Award-winning works include *Cindy Cinderella* (Page Award for Best Musical) and *The Wedding Ring* (MAPT Award for New Work). For his lyric writing, he has received five ASCAP project grants.

The creative team includes scenic designer **Peter Hicks**, costume designer **Beth Novak**, Lighting Designer **Tom Rodman**, Sound Designer **William Burns**, Dramaturg **Susan Willis**, Stage Manager **Hannah-Jean Farris** and Production Assistant **Madison Rutledge**.

BEAR COUNTRY is presented as part of **ALABAMA 200**, the state's bicentennial which encompasses a three-year celebration of the people, places and events that make up the state's rich history. 2018 is the designated year to **Honor Our People**. 2018 also marks the 35th anniversary of Coach Bryant's passing.

Tickets are available at asf.net or by calling the Box Office at 334.271.5353.

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The Alabama Shakespeare Festival is among the largest Shakespeare Theatres in the world. Designated as the State Theatre of Alabama, ASF has been located in Montgomery since 1985 when it moved from Anniston as a result of Mr. and Mrs. Wynton Blount's gift of a performing arts complex in the 250-acre Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park.