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**Geoffrey Sherman, Beloved Former Producing Artistic Director of Alabama Shakespeare Festival**

**MONTGOMERY, Ala.,** (March 12, 2019) It is with great sadness that we share that Geoffrey Sherman, Alabama Shakespeare Festival's producing artistic director from 2005 to 2017, died earlier today in New York after a heroic battle against cancer.

Sherman was born, educated, and trained as a theatre and television director in England at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, The University of Bristol, and the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. He arrived in the United States in 1978 and directed plays around the country before serving as artistic director at Boarshead Theatre in East Lansing, Michigan, Meadow Brook Theatre in Rochester, Michigan, Portland Theatre in Oregon, and the Hudson Guild Theatre in New York. Sherman was the Producing Artistic Director of Alabama Shakespeare Festival from June of 2005 until his retirement in July of 2017.

During his tenure at ASF, Sherman completed the Shakespearean canon for the theatre with a critically acclaimed modern English translation version of *Timon of Athens* (produced as part of Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Play On! initiative). His productions of Shakespeare were praised as visually stunning, highly entertaining, and remarkably accessible. He also produced and directed record-breaking musicals at ASF such as *Peter Pan*, Disney and Cameron Mackintosh's *Mary Poppins*, and Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. Committed to developing new theatrical work, Sherman oversaw the development and world premieres of numerous plays that subsequently were published and licensed for performances across the country, such as *Gee's Bend* by Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder, *The Nacirema Society* by Pearl Cleage, *Way Downriver* by Edward Morgan, *In the Book Of* by Edward Walch, and *Bear Country* by Michael Vigilant.

ASF's former board chair Dr. Laurie Jean Weil said, "From the beginning, Geoffrey impressed all of us with his wit, scholarship, sophistication, and glamour. Geoffrey was committed to producing Shakespeare and the classics in a visually and aurally sumptuous fashion. He made the details matter, so audiences saw magnificent sets, costumes, and acting that made sense. His high standards convinced Disney to entrust him with regional premieres of their big title musicals. He created productions that Broadway would have been proud to claim."

Geoffrey created magic on stage by producing and directing enchanting musicals, invigorating Shakespeare, rich adaptations of classics, and stimulating original works. He leaves behind a lasting legacy of artistic excellence, joy, and remembered comradery. He is survived by his beloved wife, actress and director Diana Van Fossen, and his daughter, actress Alice Sherman.

***EMBRACING OUR COMMUNITY – ONE STORY AT A TIME.***

*Alabama Shakespeare Festival is a not-for-profit organization under the direction of Artistic Director Rick Dildine and Executive Director Todd Schmidt. Designated as The State Theatre of Alabama, ASF is a leader in education and outreach, serving more than 40,000 students annually with artistic programming. ASF is supported by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.*

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