



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* to play Toronto in 2010

*Festival partners with Mirvish Productions*

December 14, 2009... The Stratford Shakespeare Festival's hilarious production of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* is heading to Toronto in 2010, where it will be presented as part of Mirvish Productions' 2010/2011 subscription season.

Directed by Tony and Olivier Award winner **Des McAnuff**, the Festival's Artistic Director, *Forum* received rave reviews when it opened in June 2009 and was ultimately extended for an extra week in November to meet audience demand.

"*A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* is a true musical comedy with equal emphasis on both those words: the brilliant music of Stephen Sondheim is happily married to non-stop comic action," said Mr. McAnuff. "I hope Toronto theatregoers enjoy it every bit as much as our audiences did this past season."

The partnership with Mirvish Productions is in keeping with the Festival's long-term strategy to reach out to new audiences and new markets.

"What better way to reach out to new audiences than to partner with Mirvish Productions and connect with their vibrant subscriber base," explained General Director **Antoni Cimolino**. "These theatregoers are in for a real treat – a treat that should serve to whet their appetite for even more Stratford Shakespeare Festival productions both in Toronto and at our home in Stratford."

**David Mirvish** added: "We are excited to be working once again with one of the world's leading classical theatre companies. Over the years at our theatres, we have presented different productions from the Festival. I especially remember Brian Bedford's production of *Blythe Spirit* and John Neville's *Separate Tables*, both in the eighties.

"More recently, we have revived productions that had originated at the Festival in previous years – *Orpheus Descending* and *Medea*; but these weren't official Festival productions. So it's with great enthusiasm that we launch a new working relationship with the Festival, especially with a production that is so wonderfully realized in every way. I am confident that our audience will thoroughly enjoy *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and after seeing it will look forward to future Festival shows in Toronto."

*Forum* is the story of the Roman slave Pseudolus who yearns for his freedom, while his young master pines for the girl next door. In exchange for his freedom, Pseudolus promises to find a way to unite the two young lovers. Unfortunately, even in musical comedy, the course of true love never does run smooth.

“The show’s roots lie in the comedies of the ancient Roman playwright Plautus, which its creators meticulously researched; but with its multiple interconnected plots, *Forum* trumps anything Plautus ever wrote,” says Mr. McAnuff.

“Though few theatregoers are directly familiar with Plautus today, his influence is evident in Shakespeare’s earliest comedies, which are largely responsible for perpetuating the tradition of farce in Western drama. So this is a show well suited to the classical skills of a Shakespearean company: if you can do *The Comedy of Errors* or *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, you stand a much better chance of being able to tackle *Forum*.”

With book by **Burt Shevelove** and **Larry Gelbart** and music and lyrics by **Stephen Sondheim**, *Forum* was first produced on Broadway in 1962.

The Stratford Shakespeare Festival’s 2010 season, beginning on April 10, features *As You Like It*; *Kiss Me, Kate*; *The Tempest*; *Dangerous Liaisons*; *Evita*; *Peter Pan*; *The Winter’s Tale*; *Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*; *For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again*; *Do Not Go Gentle*; *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; and *King of Thieves*.

Mirvish Productions is Canada’s largest theatrical producer, presenting an average of 20 shows a year and selling more than two million tickets annually. Founded in 1963 when Ed Mirvish bought, saved from demolition and lovingly restored the Royal Alexandra Theatre, the company, now under the directorship of his son David Mirvish, owns and operates four important and distinctive downtown Toronto venues – the Royal Alex, the Princess of Wales, the Canon and the Panasonic. Each year, Mirvish presents a playbill of original productions, Canadian premières of landmark works from New York and London, touring shows from around the world, and mainstage transfers of successful local shows (many originating from smaller subsidized theatres, even from the Fringe). Mirvish presents a popular subscription series, in which *Forum* will be one of the key offerings of the 2010/2011 season. The other shows in the subscription will be announced in the New Year.

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