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## **NEWS for immediate release December 2013**

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**Press photos** <http://www.americancentury.org/photos/drum> (*available after 2/8/14*)

### **The American Century Theater presents**

#### ***Bang the Drum Slowly***

**By Mark Harris and adapted for the stage by Eric Simonson**

The American Century Theater begins the new year with its production of *Bang the Drum Slowly* by Mark Harris and adapted for the stage by Eric Simonson. Ellen Dempsey directs

A moving look at life, loyalty and America's pastime, this touching drama unfolds during a season of with the Mammoths baseball team, focusing on the friendship between a world-wise star pitcher and a country boy catcher struggling to cope with devastating news.

With themes of teamwork, perseverance and friendship, the play is ultimately about people caring for people, and the strong bond that forms between two men from different walks of life who by sheer coincidence and chance become the best of friends, loyal to each other through thick and thin.

Mark Harris' novel of the boys of summer is a sequel to 1953s *The Southpaw* and was first published in 1956. It was later made into a 1956 *U.S. Steel Hour* television adaptation starring Paul Newman. A later film adaptation in 1973 starred a little known Robert De Niro. Eric Simonson adapted the novel and the play was first produced in 1992.

The play received enthusiastic reviews, as have all adaptations of Harris's unusually unsentimental dramatization of the tragic standard, an athlete dying young. Jack Marshall, TACT's co-founder and artistic director and a lifelong baseball fan, has wanted to see TACT produce this play for a long time.

“I was waiting for D.C. to get a baseball team,” he says. “I’m only half facetious about that. Baseball itself is like a novel that plays out over the whole season, and I think that following a team closely, living with a baseball squad’s daily crises and disappointments, leads to a greater appreciation of what Harris was doing in his perceptive story about an unremarkable man and athlete slowly dying as a season progresses, and how it changes his team mates and their realization that we all have to care about each other.”

“The play is about death, but it’s not so much a sad drama as a thoughtful one. There is a lot of humor, and the characters are finely drawn and fascinating. And its ending, quiet as it is, stays with you. I love the play. I can’t wait to see it.”

Director Ellen Dempsey is a TACT Artistic Associate. Her work has been seen on the stages of American Century Theater, The Keegan Theatre and the Little Theatre of Alexandria. This is her eighth production with TACT.

TACT favorites Evan Crump and Richie Montgomery lead the cast as Author and Bruce, respectively, and are joined by Bru Ajueyitsi, Ric Andersen, Joe Feldman, Kyle Lynch, Brandon Mitchell, Robby Priego, Jorge Silva, Arturo Tolentino and John Tweel as teammates. Craig Miller returns to TACT stages as the team’s longtime manager, Dutch. Lizzie Albert, Heather Benjamin and Mary Beth Luckenbaugh complete the large ensemble cast.

The show is produced by Ed Moser, who is also Sound Designer. The technical team includes Stage Manager Lindsey E. Moore, Lighting Designer Pete Caress, Costume Designer Marilyn Johnson, Set Designer Brandon Guilliams, and Props Designer Kevin Laughon.

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### Performance Information

**EDITORS:** The press is invited to the Saturday, January 11, 8:00 pm performance in Gunston Theatre Two, 2700 South Lang Street, Arlington.

*Bang the Drum Slowly* opens Friday, January 10 and runs through Saturday, February 1, 2014, with a Pay-What-You-Can preview on Thursday, January 9 at 8:00 pm and a Pay-What-You-Can performance on Wednesday, January 15 at 8:00 pm. There is a post-show talk-back on Thursday, January 16.

**Regular show times** are Thursday through Saturday evenings at 8 pm with Saturday/Sunday matinees at 2:30 pm (no matinee Saturday, January 11). Tickets can be ordered online at [americancentury.org](http://americancentury.org) or by calling 703-998-4555.

### Directions

The American Century Theater performs at Theatre Two in the Gunston Arts Center, located at 2700 South Lang Street, Arlington VA 22206. Gunston is roughly ten minutes from downtown Washington DC and minutes from Arlington’s Shirlington Village. Free, ample, well-lit parking is available. For directions, visit [americancentury.org/directions](http://americancentury.org/directions)

### About TACT

The American Century Theater is a 501(c)(3) professional nonprofit theater company dedicated to producing significant 20<sup>th</sup>-century American plays and musicals at risk of being forgotten. TACT is supported in part by Arlington County through the Arlington Commission for the Arts and Arlington Cultural Affairs, a division of Arlington Economic Development; the Virginia Commission for the Arts; the National Endowment for the Arts; and many generous donors.