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Covenant College Theatre Department Presents

Protest and Other Writings

Inspired by the life of political dissident, playwright, and statesman Vaclav Havel

This September, the Covenant College Theatre Department presents political dissident and playwright, Vaclav Havel's *Protest*, revealing what it means to act with integrity versus hypocrisy. In *Protest*, the price of avoiding hypocrisy becomes apparent to two old friends who seek each other's aid in political matters. Vanek is a dissident whom people admire from afar, and Stanek, a fairly successful writer who has lost his former idealism as he works to avoid running afoul of the totalitarian government. Stanek invites his old colleague to the house, seeking help to release his daughter's fiancée, a musician, from prison. Vanek offers Stanek an opportunity to sign the protest on behalf of the musician, yet his old friend is fearful to do so. Mark Makkar Gabriel, an alumnus of Covenant College, plays Vanek; Gabriel grew up in Syria, but left when his parents feared their son being drafted into the war that raged there. He said the character interactions in *Protest* "remind me of a Muslim who wants to convert to Christianity, but is too scared."

Camille Hallstrom, director of *Protest* states, "We really should put Havel in the same category as Martin Luther King or Gandhi.... This man was able to start a revolution without any bloodshed." Although the government denied Havel much education, he quickly rose to the top as a residential playwright in Prague during the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Believing in liberal reforms, Havel joined a human rights movement called Charter 77, essentially sacrificing his playwriting career, as the government, displeased with Havel's participation, made his plays illegal. This playwright then spent four years in prison after he stood up for human rights. In 1989, as the nation began more open anti-government protest, Havel, founded

the Civic Forum, a political movement which waged the Velvet Revolution, overthrowing the Communist government, bloodlessly, in a mere ten days. One month later, Havel was elected president of Czechoslovakia, but stepped down from office as the country's union disbanded. When the Czech Republic was formed however, he was elected president again even though he did not wish for power.

Alumni Jonathan Austin (Stanek) and Mark Gabriel (Vanek) are the leads in *Protest*, with Mary Brook Diamond, Emily Cothran and Cara Smole appearing as the Chorus.

Protest, along with other of Havel's political writings, will be performed in Sanderson Hall Auditorium at Covenant College, 14049 Scenic Highway, Lookout Mountain, Georgia, September 28th, 29th at 8:00 pm and October 5th at 6:30 pm and on October 6th at 2:30 pm. Following the matinee performance on the 6th, a discussion panel will be held including several faculty members, Bill Davis and John Wingard of Philosophy, Bill Tate of English, Richard Follett of History, and the director Camille Hallstrom.

Tickets can be purchased at the door, while seating is available. Tickets are \$10 for adults, and \$7 for seniors, students, and employees. To reserve tickets, visit covenant.edu/theatre or contact the box office at boxoffice@covenant.edu or 706-419-1051.