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**Virginia Arts Festival and Sandler Center Foundation announce star lineup for
Bernstein on Broadway concert!**

Brooke Shields
joins Broadway singers Ross Lekites and Mikaela Bennett
with Virginia Symphony Orchestra
for a performance of Broadway classics by Leonard Bernstein

**Curated, arranged, and conducted by acclaimed Broadway music director
Rob Fisher**

May 12, 8:00 pm at the Sandler Center for the Performing Arts, Virginia Beach, VA

(Norfolk, VA) The Virginia Arts Festival joins the worldwide celebration of Leonard Bernstein at 100, honoring the life and legacy of the legendary composer and conductor. On May 12 at the Sandler Center in Virginia Beach, Virginia Symphony Orchestra performs a special presentation of *Bernstein on Broadway*, led by award-winning Broadway music director **Rob Fisher**. **Brooke Shields** will headline the starry cast of Broadway singers, including Ross Lekites and Mikaela Bennett, performing beloved Leonard Bernstein Broadway classics including *West Side Story*, *On the Town*, *Candide*, *Wonderful Town*, and *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, as well as songs from his soaring *Mass* and his long-lost version of *Peter Pan*. In addition to Fisher, the soloists, and the Virginia Symphony Orchestra, the Virginia Symphony Orchestra Chorus and Robert Shoup, Chorusmaster, will also perform.

About the Performers

Brooke Shields, the famed model and actress has had a major second career on Broadway. As the *Los Angeles Times* noted, "she's become a musical theater star Broadway producers go to when they need...box-office juice." She won rave reviews for her work in Bernstein's *Wonderful Town*, as well as Broadway hits *Grease*, *Cabaret* and *Chicago*. Famous for her modeling career, Brooke Shields made her film debut at the age of 12 in *Pretty Baby* and began posing for Calvin Klein ads when she was 16. Her stage credits also include *Chicago*, *Cabaret* and *Grease* on Broadway and *Leap of Faith* in Los Angeles. Film and TV credits include *Suddenly Susan*, *Lipstick Jungle*, *That '70s Show*, *Nip/Tuck*, *The Blue Lagoon* and *Endless Love*.

In a review of her performance in *Wonderful Town*, *The New York Times* called her "an unpretentious delight" whose "attitude lends a fresh glow to Leonard Bernstein's happiest score," adding "Unquestionably the show's star...the Calvin Klein-jeans girl of yesteryear gets to prove she's more than just another pair of perfect cheekbones." And the United Kingdom's *Independent* newspaper said "The more you learn about Brooke Shields, the more you marvel.... Ever since she stunned Broadway

audiences with her gloriously against-type turn as bad girl Rizzo in *Grease* in 1994, it has become apparent on the other side of the Atlantic that this woman can both sing and act. Better still, she can be drop-dead funny when the mood takes her.”

Rob Fisher is an internationally recognized music director and conductor, and a leading figure in American music and musical theater. Fisher served as the conductor of the *Encores!* series in New York from its beginning in 1994 through 2005, and is a welcome return conductor at the popular series. He has been a guest of virtually every major orchestra in the U.S. including the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics. His Broadway resume includes some of the biggest hits of the past three decades, including *Chicago*, *Anything Goes*, *Hair*, *An American in Paris*, and the 2003 Broadway revival of *Wonderful Town*. With his long association with Bernstein’s Broadway works, Rob Fisher is a key player in the worldwide celebration of the composer’s 100th birthday; he led the celebration’s kick-off concert at the Kennedy Center in fall 2017 and was chosen to lead the New York Philharmonic celebration at Carnegie Hall in spring 2018. After the Kennedy Center performance, a critic wrote: “With the choice, pacing, and sequencing of the numbers ...this was a golden opportunity to listen to human voices expertly matched to particular songs. All of that, propelled by an orchestra at its prime, was a joy. This was *not* a stand-and-deliver, hurriedly staged concert” (dcmetrotheaterarts.com). A Norfolk native, Fisher grew up in the Bayview neighborhood, attending Norview High School.

Ross Lekites is currently in the original company of Disney’s *Frozen* on Broadway. He starred in New York City Center’s production of *Brigadoon* as Charlie Dalrymple, alongside Kelli O’Hara and Patrick Wilson. Other Broadway and National tour credits include *Kinky Boots*, *West Side Story* 1st National (Tony), and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Joseph).

A recent Juilliard graduate, **Mikaela Bennett** made her solo debut with the New York Philharmonic singing excerpts from *West Side Story* for their Young Peoples Concert series, conducted by Leonard Slatkin, and debuted with the Philadelphia Orchestra with conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin in a concert version of *West Side Story*. Ms. Bennett was a featured soloist at the Kennedy Center’s *Bernstein on Broadway*, directed by Kathleen Marshall and conducted by Rob Fisher.

Tickets for *Bernstein on Broadway*, May 12 at the Sandler Center for the Performing Arts are on sale now and are available online at www.vafest.org, by calling 757-282-2822, or in person at the Virginia Arts Festival box office, 440 Bank St. in Norfolk, Monday-Friday, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm.

This production is made possible through a generous gift from the Susan Goode Performance Fund. This program is funded in part by the Sandler Center Foundation and the citizens of Virginia Beach through a grant from the Virginia Beach Arts and Humanities Commission.

About the Virginia Arts Festival

Since 1997, the **Virginia Arts Festival** has transformed the cultural scene in southeastern Virginia, presenting great performers from around the world to local audiences and making this historic, recreation-rich region a cultural destination for visitors from across the United States and around the world. The Festival has presented numerous U.S. and regional premieres, and regularly commissions new works of music, dance, and theater from some of today’s most influential composers, choreographers, and playwrights. The Festival’s arts education programs reach tens of thousands of area schoolchildren each year through student matinees, in-school performances, artists’ residencies, master classes and demonstrations.



About Leonard Bernstein at 100

On May 9, 2017, The Leonard Bernstein Office announced “Leonard Bernstein at 100,” a two-year global celebration of the life and career of the 20th-century cultural giant, featuring more than 2,500 events on six continents. The celebration will continue worldwide through the end of August 2019.

Leonard Bernstein (August 25, 1918- October 14, 1990) was a world-renowned conductor and composer, and one of classical music's icons of the 20th century. He was Music Director of the New York Philharmonic and conducted the world's major orchestras, leaving behind an enormous legacy of audio and video recordings. His books, as well as the much-beloved televised *Young People's Concerts* with the New York Philharmonic, established him as a leading educator. His orchestral and choral works include three symphonies (No. 1 "Jeremiah", No. 2 "Age of Anxiety", and No. 3 "Kaddish"), *Serenade, Mass, Chichester Psalms, Songfest, Divertimento for Orchestra, Arias and Barcarolles, and Concerto for Orchestra*. Bernstein's works for the Broadway stage include *On the Town, Wonderful Town, Candide* and the immensely popular *West Side Story*. In addition to the *West Side Story* collaboration, Mr. Bernstein worked with choreographer Jerome Robbins on three major ballets, *Fancy Free, Facsimile* and *Dybbuk*. Mr. Bernstein was the recipient of many honors, including eleven Emmy Awards, one Tony Award, the Lifetime Achievement Grammy Award, and the Kennedy Center Honors. © *The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc. Used with permission.*

About Virginia Symphony Orchestra

Under the leadership of GRAMMY-winning music director JoAnn Falletta, the Virginia Symphony Orchestra is Virginia's pre-eminent professional symphony orchestra with a mission of inspiring, educating and connecting audiences of all ages.

Founded in 1921, it is ranked in the top ten percent of professional orchestras nationwide and serves the entire Southeastern Virginia region with Classics, Pops and Family concert series in Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Newport News and Williamsburg as well as performances in outlying Virginia and North Carolina communities, reaching more than 160,000 concert-goers every year. Additionally, the orchestra annually reaches 45,000 children, students and lifelong learners with its education and community programs. The Virginia Symphony has performed at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center and is the cornerstone of the performing arts in Hampton Roads.

About Sandler Center Foundation

Founded in 2005, the Sandler Center Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization with a mission to educate, inspire creativity, broaden horizons, build community, enrich lives, increase understanding and acceptance through intercultural exchange, improve our local economy, strengthen our local arts organizations and instill appreciation of the arts to future generations through the underwriting of world-class performing arts programming and performances, including Bernstein on Broadway with the Virginia Arts Festival.

Among its initiatives are Education Programs, which serve 15,000 students annually. Eighty percent of

these students are Title 1 qualified and received attendance funding from the Foundation. The Foundation also hosts the local military, Virginia Beach teachers, first responders and their families to a free Sandler Center resident company performance through their Local Heroes Program. ###