



**Virginia Arts Festival Announces  
Appointment of Award-Winning  
Broadway Music Director and Conductor  
Rob Fisher  
As The Goode Family Artistic Advisor for Musical Theater and  
American Songbook**

Virginia Arts Festival has cast one of Broadway's leading lights in the role of a new, key position at the Festival: The Goode Family Artistic Advisor for Musical Theater and American Songbook.

And Rob Fisher knows his way around a song, for sure. A Norfolk native, this music director, conductor, arranger, and pianist was the founding director of the acclaimed *Encores!* series from 1994 to 2005; *Encores!* gained fame and a passionate fan following for its revivals of lost and classic works of American musical theater and won a Tony Award in 2000. Fisher continued to appear regularly as a guest conductor for the *Encores!* series.

Among Fisher's *Encores!* successes was *Chicago: The Musical*, which went on to become the longest-running revival in Broadway history. This iconic musical celebrated its 25th anniversary in November 2021 with a performance that featured Fisher, Joel Grey, Bebe Neuwirth, and other original cast members. Fisher continues to be music supervisor and arranger for *Chicago* on Broadway and all productions worldwide.

Virginia Arts Festival Perry Artistic Director Robert W. Cross noted "Rob Fisher has long been a frequent collaborator of the Festival, and his fan base here is just as devoted as the tens of thousands of New Yorkers who have loved his Broadway and *Encores!* performances. With his appointment as The Goode Family Artistic Advisor for Musical Theater and American Songbook, we look forward to many happy seasons of inspired concerts and more." Fisher responded: "Performing in the Hampton Roads area is always a welcome homecoming for me. I grew up in Norfolk and went to Norview High School (Go Pilots!). I have so many great ideas for shows with the Festival – collaborations with artists who inspire, explorations of the works of the great Broadway legends, and fun forays into American popular music through the decades. I'm so happy to have a home to develop these new ideas with the support of the Virginia Arts Festival."

As a senior in high school, Fisher performed the solo piano version of *Rhapsody in Blue* in a student recital at the Chrysler Museum. With that, his lifelong love affair with the work of George and Ira Gershwin was launched. In 1978, he was pianist for the Gershwins' *Let 'Em Eat Cake* and performed in a Gershwin gala at Carnegie Hall that featured Ginger Rogers and Cab Calloway. He was chosen to prepare the musical artists for the international Gershwin Celebration at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1987, which featured such performers as Leonard Bernstein, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Bob Dylan. In the 1990s, Fisher served as artistic

advisor of Carnegie Hall's two-year Gershwin Centennial Celebration. His most recent contribution to the Gershwin legend came when he was chosen to supervise the creation of the score for the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical *An American in Paris*.

Fisher has conducted concert versions of musicals with some of the world's great orchestras including the New York Philharmonic (*Carousel, My Fair Lady*), the Orchestra of St. Luke's (*Candide, Guys and Dolls, and The Sound of Music*), and the San Francisco Symphony's Emmy-winning concert production of *Sweeney Todd* starring Patti LuPone and George Hearn. He has appeared with the Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Cleveland Orchestra as well as the Atlanta, Pittsburgh, Baltimore and National Symphony Orchestras. As a pianist, Fisher has performed as soloist in Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue and Concerto in F with orchestras across the United States. On public radio, where he served as Music Director and leader of the "Coffee Club Orchestra" for *A Prairie Home Companion* from 1989 to 1993, Fisher was a fan favorite.

Among the artists he has collaborated with are Renée Fleming, Kelli O'Hara, Idina Menzel, Brian Stokes Mitchell, David Hyde Pierce, and Patti LuPone. Fisher has worked with the Virginia Arts Festival to present many performances over the years including Kristin Chenoweth, Laura Osnes, Brooke Shields, Kelli O'Hara, Jane Krakowski, Patti LuPone, The DiGiAllonardo Sisters, Mikaela Bennett, Ross Lekites, and Meredith Lusting. Among the recognitions Fisher has received are the Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Special Achievement, a Grammy Award for the *Chicago* cast album, a Grammy nomination for the *An American in Paris* cast album, and an Emmy nomination for the PBS broadcast of *Carousel*.

In the 2022 Virginia Arts Festival season, Rob Fisher is working on the Festival's new production of *The Sound of Music* (co-produced with Virginia Opera), conducting the Virginia Symphony Orchestra in the pit; and will serve as music director and conductor of the Festival's 25th Anniversary Celebration, which will be announced later this month.

### **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, masterclasses and demonstrations.

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