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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 474

Offered February 18, 2019

Commending Signature Theatre.

Patrons—Ebbin, Favola and Howell; Delegates: Hope, Levine and Sullivan

WHEREAS, Signature Theatre, an award-winning, nonprofit professional theater company in Arlington with a mission to produce contemporary musicals and plays, reinvent classic musicals, and develop new work, celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2019; and

WHEREAS, at the time of Signature Theatre's inception in 1989, the theater scene in Washington, D.C., was dominated by large venues that presented mostly traditional plays; few theaters dared to take the risk of producing new work, and even fewer produced lesser-known or new musicals; and

WHEREAS, to fill this gap and create Signature Theatre's brand of provocative works, graphic designer and performer Eric Schaeffer founded the organization with actor Donna Migliaccio; with a small startup budget, 126 subscribers, and a space in Arlington's Gunston Middle School auditorium, its first musical in 1991, a gutsy production of *Sweeney Todd*, was a stand-out hit, earning numerous awards; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, Signature Theatre took another risk and converted an old auto garage into a theater where it thrived for the following 13 years, growing into one of the area's leading producers of musical theater, attracting the best and brightest in the field, as well as nurturing new talent; and

WHEREAS, in January 2007, after many successful years in that location, Signature Theatre moved into its current Shirlington location, where it serves as a cultural anchor and an economic engine that generates jobs and tax revenue for Arlington and residents of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, under the leadership of Signature Theatre's cofounder and artistic director, Eric Schaeffer, and managing director, Maggie Boland, the organization is one of the largest in the Commonwealth, attracting more than 100,000 patrons annually and earning recognition as one of the nation's best regional theaters for attracting the highest caliber artists, performers, and musicians and producing large-scale musicals in its intimate space; and

WHEREAS, in 2009, Signature Theatre earned a Tony Award, the regional theater's highest achievement; over the years, it has received 107 Hayes Awards and 452 nominations—all in recognition of its artistic excellence; and

WHEREAS, Signature Theatre trains and mentors artists and arts administrators of the future through new work developmental workshops, performance training programs, and partnerships with select organizations; education and outreach programs engage the area's increasingly diverse population and target those traditionally underserved by the arts in an effort to give back to the community; and

WHEREAS, Signature Theatre's Signature in the Schools program is a multifaceted program meeting curriculum standards in English, social studies, and theater that has enriched the lives of more than 20,000 students since its inception 25 years ago; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Signature Theatre, an award-winning, nonprofit professional theater company in Arlington with a mission to produce contemporary musicals and plays, reinvent classic musicals, and develop new work, on the occasion of its 30th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Signature Theatre as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for its important work upholding quality drama in an inclusive environment.

INTRODUCED

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