

For Release: Immediate

Contact: Bertie Selvey, 804 358-9901  
Lynda J. South 804 644-0117

Dec. 5, 2007  
No. 1

### ***Byrd Foundation Holds Raising the Roof Party***

The first of many Byrd Theatre restoration projects

Richmond, VA – Members of the Byrd Foundation are holding a “raising the roof” party at Richmond’s historic Byrd Theatre Wednesday, Dec. 5. They’re celebrating a long-awaited event that marks the beginning of an extensive renovation project to return the Grand Movie Palace to its original grandeur.

Earlier this year the movie theatre was purchased from the Samuel Warren family by the Byrd Theatre Foundation, a non-profit group formed for the purpose of restoring the Byrd. It is expected that the total restoration will cost between \$4 and \$5 million dollars.

Besides a new roof, future restoration includes new seats and carpeting, upgrading of the electrical and plumbing systems, additional bathrooms, and a thorough cleaning of the decorative plaster and art. Restoring the Mighty Wurlitzer, the musical centerpiece of the Byrd also is slated for repair. Although Bob Gulledge entertains Saturday movie fans with it, about half of its pieces do not work. Tony Pelling, president of the Foundation’s Board of Directors said replacing the roof was critical and other projects will be done as funds become available. Currently, the Foundation is beginning a fundraising campaign.

“We are delighted to begin restoration on this cinema treasure,” said Pelling. “The Byrd Theatre is representative of a bygone era of American culture and deserves to be restored and preserved.”

The Byrd Theatre was first opened to the public in 1928 and has continuously operated -- 7 days of the week, 365 days of the year -- as a movie palace ever since. Well-known for its opulent décor and Czechoslovakian chandelier, the theatre is also home to the “Mighty Wurlitzer”, the theatre’s organ that is played every Saturday evening by Bob Gulledge.

Byrd Foundation Board Member Bertie Selvey said it is the Foundation’s goal to continue operating the Byrd primarily as a movie theatre keeping prices low. “At the same time, we want to partner with civic, educational and cultural arts organizations to support and design programming for a multi-cultural community,” she said. “This is one of Richmond’s finest architectural gems, and we should maximize the use of the Byrd to serve a wider audience.”

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