



WILLIAM & MARY

CHARTERED 1693

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 18, 2017

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Joe Straw
757-220-7287
jstraw@cwf.org

Brian Whitson
757-221-7876
bwwhit@wm.edu

**Colonial Williamsburg signs lease with William & Mary to
operate Kimball Theatre**

*Venue will be used as interim instruction and performance space during
PBK renovations*

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation has signed a three-and-a-half-year lease agreement with William & Mary to operate the Kimball Theatre in Merchants Square.

The agreement, which runs through January 2021 and has options for annual renewals, will provide a venue for William & Mary instruction and programming during the upcoming renovation of the Phi Beta Kappa Hall mainstage theatre and will keep the Kimball open during this period.

“The Kimball Theatre has long had a significant place in our community,” said William & Mary President Taylor Reveley. “We are delighted to work with our neighbors at Colonial Williamsburg to give the Theatre a renewed lease on life.”

Colonial Williamsburg announced plans last month to close the Kimball Theatre July 6 as part of a comprehensive effort to reduce costs, stabilize its financial future and focus resources on its core educational mission.

“Putting the Foundation’s finances in order and focusing on our core mission required tough decisions, among them closing the Kimball Theatre. Like so many in our

community, I love the Kimball and regularly attend events there with my family,” said Colonial Williamsburg President and CEO Mitchell Reiss.

“We’re very pleased that a key local partner and friend, the city’s oldest institution – William & Mary – has stepped forward to operate this important cultural institution,” Reiss added. “It is a win for our two organizations, students of the college and all those in the community who hoped we could find a way to save the Kimball, and I look forward to returning for events in the years to come.”

Sam Jones, senior vice president for finance and administration, said William & Mary’s primary use of the theatre will be for theatre instruction and performances as well as performances by other university groups. To the extent possible when not in use by W&M, the university will make the theatre available for community use.

“This space provides us interim instructional and performance space while PBK renovations are underway,” said Jones, adding the university’s intent is not to determine or limit the long-term use of the Kimball Theatre. “The lease period provides time for the community to develop a long-term plan for the theatre’s viability.”

William & Mary’s multi-phase Arts Quarter project is scheduled to take PBK Hall offline for renovations beginning next year. Planning for the renovation is underway and construction is scheduled to begin in summer 2018. The university looked at various campus alternatives to PBK during the renovation but available options were already in use, not suitable for the needs of departments or cost prohibitive, Jones said.

The Kimball Theatre has proven a useful venue for many of the university’s formal and informal events over the years. It is home to the annual William & Mary Global Film Festival as well as choral, music, dance and theatre productions.

While not in use by academic departments, W&M will manage the theatre’s scheduling through W&M’s Conference and Event Services, similar to the current arrangement for the Lake Matoaka Amphitheatre. For fall 2017 and spring 2018, Jones said, W&M will be reviewing commitments in place with Colonial Williamsburg before the foundation announced the theatre’s closure. Each event will be evaluated on an individual basis, he said, and the university is in the process of developing a firm plan

for the venue. Groups interested in scheduling the theatre can contact the Conference and Events Services at 757-221-4084 or 1-800-249-0179 or via email at wmconf@wm.edu.

“We’re very early in the planning for the theatre but we’re working on specifics on scheduling, pricing for community use and the process to reserve the space,” Jones said. “We believe this agreement will benefit the university, Colonial Williamsburg and the community.”

###