

**Georgia Ensemble Theatre Co-Founder/Producing Artistic Director  
announces retirement after a 56-year career.**



ROSWELL, GA (April 8, 2024) – Georgia Ensemble Theatre ([GET](#)) Co-Founder and Producing Artistic Director **Anita Allen Farley** has announced that she will retire effective May 1, 2024, ending 32 years of leadership at GET. Anita and her late husband Robert J. “Bob” Farley founded Georgia Ensemble Theatre together in 1992. She looks forward to spending time with family, looking after her health, pursuing hobbies, and getting some much-needed rest & relaxation.

The GET Board of Trustees has named **Laurel Crowe** (previously GET Education Director) as Interim Artistic Director. The Board will conduct a search for an Artistic Director beginning immediately but has not specified a decision-making timeline. Ms. Farley will remain a member of the GET Board of Trustees. Board President Katherine Parvis celebrated Anita’s leadership by saying, “Anita Farley’s career with GET is exemplified by the positive impact she has had on our staff, students, audience and community. GET became a cornerstone of the Atlanta arts community thanks to Anita and Bob making the theater their lives’ opus. For me personally, Anita’s tireless advocacy for the organization amid challenging circumstances has been an inspiration. While Anita is stepping back from the Producing Artistic Director role, we are excited that she will continue to guide the organization’s next chapter through service as a Board member. Anita’s retirement is not the end of an era; it’s a celebration of a legacy that we are striving every day to live up to.”

Anita Allen Farley began her theatrical career in 1968 after studying at The Pasadena Playhouse College of Theatrical Arts where she met co-founder and life partner Bob Farley. She went on to serve a 3 year tenure with the rock musical *Hair*, working with the Los Angeles, Seattle, and Miami companies and culminating with a year-long tour before going on to pursue other endeavors. Bob and Anita were married in 1975, and in the summer of the bi-centennial they packed up their VW van and began the trek to Anchorage, Alaska, where Bob was co-founder and Artistic Director of the Alaska Repertory Theatre (known as "The Rep"). Anita had a number of jobs at the Rep, where she learned the operations of a professional non-profit theatre company and where she was famous for her first-rehearsal dinner parties for incoming cast and crew of each Rep production. In addition, she was an artistic liaison for the Alaska Council for the Arts, traveling the Alaskan bush with visiting performers, and she served as President of the Anchorage Children's Theatre.

In 1977, the Farleys' first daughter Laurel made her debut on the Alaskan landscape, followed in 1982 by Heather. Their arrival sparked Anita's interest in the natural process of childbirth. She became certified by the International Childbirth Education Association and specialized in preparing couples who wanted a natural birth after a previous cesarean delivery. She lobbied for and got the first father into the operating room to view the birth of his child by cesarean. This was so successful that it became a standard practice in Anchorage, and Anita attended hundreds of births over the next 11 years.

Georgia Ensemble Theatre was established by the late Robert J. "Bob" Farley and Anita Allen-Farley in 1992 as the resident professional theatre company at the Roswell Cultural Arts Center, opening with Kaufman and Hart's *You Can't Take It With You*. GET has since produced 31 seasons of plays and musicals – thirty years at the Roswell Cultural Arts Center and one year at the Jennie T Anderson Theatre, plus dozens of shows on tour to schools and community centers throughout Georgia. Even during the pandemic shut-down of 2020-21, GET continued to produce digital content in an effort to serve subscribers and fans. For 25 of those 32 years, Anita served as Managing Director alongside Bob Farley as Artistic Director. After Bob passed away unexpectedly in 2017, Anita was appointed Producing Artistic Director. From its inception in 1992, in a part of metro Atlanta that had never housed a professional theatre, GET grew under the Farleys' leadership to a high mark of 3,000 season subscribers just before the 2020 pandemic. GET produced many notable shows during the Farleys' tenure, including world premiere plays by Topher Payne, Jacob York, and Larry Larson & Eddie Levi Lee, a world premiere musical by Chase Peacock & Jessica De Maria, and a 27-year run of the Holocaust education play *And Then They Came for Me: Remembering the World of Anne Frank* by James Still. One of Anita's personal favorites was the U.S. premiere of *Calendar Girls* by Tim Firth in 2015; she saw the play in London and immediately came home to seek out the performance rights to produce it in Georgia. Anita led the theatre in developing relationships with many corporate funders and foundations including highly successful, long-running partnerships with Macy's, Publix Foundation, Kimberly Clark, The Imlay Foundation, The Abreu Charitable Trust, The Robert W. Hagan Family Foundation, and The Thoresen Foundation, among many others.

More importantly than her administrative leadership at the theatre, Anita became known in the Atlanta theatre community as a caring leader who took artists under her wing and created a familial atmosphere in which to work. Talented in the kitchen, Anita cooked delicious meals for the cast and crew between matinee and evening performances every Saturday for every production. She opened her home to host celebrations and pool parties for the end of each season, and paid attention to details like what drinks and foods each artist and staff member liked best, making sure to have them on hand. She welcomed artists who had nowhere to go for holidays to eat at her table. She provided safe housing for out-of-town artists and made sure that everyone in the room received a "secret Santa" gift during holiday parties. Anita "leads with her heart and has never met a stranger," according to Savannah Rootes, GET Program Outreach & Patron Services Manager.

During the first rehearsal for every production, Anita welcomed cast and crew with the assurance that “My door is always open.” She has become well known for offering a listening ear and a comforting word to anyone who needed it. Even in times of conflict or difficulty, artists could say that despite their disagreement, they knew that Anita was listening to them and would take their words to heart. She is fully invested in one of the Farleys’ favorite proverbs: Best Idea Wins.

Anita has advocated for arts funding and support at the local, state, and national levels and served in many community organizations. She has been a champion of female leadership in the arts community. Her current staff at GET are all female, and Anita serves as a mentor to the young administrators as they step up into arts leadership. Akeria Gant, who began working at GET as a stage manager before joining the staff as Production Manager, and subsequently being promoted to Business Manager, said, “I appreciate Anita because she saw potential in me that I had yet to see. I admire her patience and I’m grateful for her guidance.” Bob and Anita Farley were honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award by Atlanta’s Suzi Bass Awards in 2017, with special attention paid to their long-time support of early-career and emerging artists.

As Georgia Ensemble Theatre prepares to move forward after Anita’s retirement, Interim Artistic Director Laurel Crowe is charting a focused, financially-conservative path to the future. In early 2024, the GET Board of Directors voted to postpone the remainder of the Mainstage 2023-24 season due to financial challenges. Instead, the company has focused on educational programming, smaller Studio productions, and fundraising efforts. Planning is underway now for the 2024-25 season to include a greater emphasis on Travel Team portable shows, educational productions, and Mainstage shows suitable for family audiences, with more details to be announced in late summer. Ms. Crowe says, “This is an exciting and bittersweet moment for our organization and our family. I look forward to continuing the legacy that my parents created, while looking toward a future that bridges our diverse programming in ways we haven’t explored before.” Laurel joined the GET staff in 2009 and became Education Director in 2011. “Anita’s dedication and legacy are unsurpassed, and Laurel Crowe will carry on that tradition.” said GET President Emeritus Robert W. Hagan, adding, “We all support her leadership and capability, and know that GET will continue to thrive.” Ms. Crowe’s immediate vision for the future of the theatre includes strengthening the staff, shoring up the company’s financial stability, and presenting work that will excite audiences about returning to the theatre.

GET will honor Anita Farley’s career with an open house retirement party this fall. Date and details will be announced on the theatre’s website at [get.org](http://get.org). In the meantime, congratulatory messages may be sent online at [get.org/anita](http://get.org/anita).

#### **COMING NEXT AT GET:**

*GET IT (Georgia Ensemble Theatre Improv Troupe)*. Friday, May 10 - 7:00 p.m. Advanced student improvisers present short-form and long-form improvised storytelling. Laughter is guaranteed! Tickets are Pay What You Want, with a \$5 minimum.

*MAYke You Laugh – Monthly Comedy Night*. Saturday, May 18 - 7:00 p.m. Hosted by Michael White, it’s a 90-minute laugh fest with Lanny Farmer and Peachy Tom. RESERVED tickets get a reserved front-row seat; regular seating is general admission. Tickets \$12-25.

#### **ABOUT GEORGIA ENSEMBLE THEATRE:**

The Georgia Ensemble Theatre and Conservatory provides quality theatre productions and arts education to the north metro Atlanta area. Our mission is to create connections between artists & audiences of all ages. For more information, visit us online at [www.get.org](http://www.get.org). Press Contact: Mary Saville, Communications Director, [msaville@get.org](mailto:msaville@get.org)

Georgia Ensemble Theatre Studio and Offices are located at 615 Hembree Pkwy, Suite 200, Roswell, GA 30076. [www.get.org](http://www.get.org)

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