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NEWS RELEASE

April 23, 2008

Contact: UM Office of the President, 406-243-2311.

DISTINGUISHED ALUM TO RECEIVE UM'S HIGHEST HONOR

MISSOULA—

The University of Montana will award an honorary doctorate to renowned educator Firman H. "Bo" Brown at its 2008 Commencement ceremonies Saturday, May 10, at the Adams Center.

The honorary doctor of fine arts degree recognizes Brown's illustrious record of teaching, scholarship and service to educational theater.

In nominating Brown for UM's highest honor, UM School of Fine Arts Dean Shirley Howell said, "The number of students whose lives have been influenced by the work of Dr. Firman H. (Bo) Brown, the number of theatre programs that have been improved by the high standards set and the number of audiences enriched by his life's work are infinite."

"When one talks or thinks about theater in Montana, one must take account of Bo Brown and all that he has accomplished," said UM President George Dennison. "We Montanans know our history of theater in the state because of Bo. We enjoy the Bigfork Summer Theatre because of Bo, and we have the wonderful benefits of the Montana Rep because of Bo. In many ways, Bo Brown has provided a rich theatrical legacy to all of Montana and provided a wonderful example for young people to emulate."

Brown spent his undergraduate days at UM in theater and journalism, earning a

bachelor's degree in 1949 and a master's degree in 1953. He went on to study speech and theater at the University of Wisconsin, where he received a doctorate in 1963.

Brown then spent his professional career in educational theater. For nearly half a century, he chaired theater departments at UM; Ithaca College in **Ithaca, N.Y.**; Rollins College in **Winter Park, Fla.**; and Ohio State University in **Columbus, Ohio**.

Brown chaired the UM theater department from 1956 to 1969. During that time he established the Masquer Summer Theater and created and implemented both the master of arts and master of fine arts degrees in theatre at the University.

In 1960 Brown and his wife, the late Margery Hunter Brown, then a UM law professor, established the **Bigfork** Summer Playhouse, which they ran for eight years. Today, many UM drama/dance students continue to gain professional experience through the Bigfork theater.

Brown also was an instrumental founding member of the Montana Arts Council, which continues to engender and promote artistic endeavors across the state.

In 1967, Brown launched the inaugural season of the Montana Repertory Theatre, which today is recognized as one of the leading theatrical touring programs in the nation.

He moved to New York in 1969, and during his 10 years there established the Ithaca Repertory Theater company – subsequently known as the Hangar Theater Company. In Florida, Brown served as director of the Annie Russell Theater at Rollins College.

He joined Ohio State University in 1981 as director of theater and chair of the OSU Department of Theater. While there, Brown established the OSU Theater Company, a resident graduate acting ensemble, and campaigned successfully for the expansion of the Lawrence and Lee Theater Research Institute. He also organized the Theater Roundtable of Central Ohio,

now a consortium of some 30 theater companies.

From 1987 to 1990, Brown served as president of the University/Resident Theater Association, a national organization of 40 major theater departments and regional theater companies. He then served from 1990 to 1993 as president of the National Association of Schools of Theater, the national accrediting body for theater programs in American higher education.

Brown retired in 1995 and returned to Missoula in 2006.

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