



## SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Antony and Cleopatra Cast Announced**

*2015 Shakespeare Festival St. Louis Festival Set for May 22 – June 14  
Free in Shakespeare Glen, Forest Park*

ST. LOUIS (Feb. 3, 2015) – New York performers Jay Stratton and Shirine Babb will play the roles of Antony and Cleopatra, respectively, in Shakespeare Festival St. Louis' production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, May 22 through June 14, at Shakespeare Glen in Forest Park. This marks the company's 15-year anniversary of free, live, outdoor, professional theatre in the park.

Stratton and Babb will both be making their Shakespeare Festival St. Louis debut. Stratton most recently appeared in *The Winslow Boy* at the St. Louis Repertory Theatre. A professor of acting and voice at Nassau College on Long Island, some of Stratton's favorite New York credits include *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, *Twelfth Night*, *Duchess of Malfi* and *The Oedipus Cycle*. Television credits include *As the World Turns* and *Redrum*. Babb has appeared on Off-Broadway in *Around the World in 80 Days*, *Single Black Female* and *Aliens with Extraordinary Skills*, among others, as well as on stage throughout London. TV credits include *All My Children* and *We are NY*. Babb appeared in the 2010-11 seasons at The Old Globe Shakespeare Festival in San Diego. She received her MA from the East 15 Acting Conservatory in London and an MFA from the University of San Diego's Old Globe PTAP.

"The high caliber of talent in this year's production is something we are most thrilled about," said Mike Donohue, a New York-based freelancer and St. Louis native, who will direct the production. "Jay Stratton and Shirine Babb are incredibly talented performers who are capable of immersing themselves into a role and taking it to the next level. Our audiences are in for a special treat in the park."

First performed at the Globe Theatre around 1607, *Antony and Cleopatra* tells the epic, intriguing, and enchanting tale of a Roman general caught under the spell of history's most stunning and powerful queen. Passionate conflicts are at the heart of the

play and many consider Cleopatra to be one of Shakespeare's most complicated characters.

"We wanted to do a big play for our 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary; *Antony and Cleopatra* certainly fits the bill," said Bruce Longworth, Interim Artistic Director for Shakespeare Festival St. Louis.

Joining Stratton and Babb will be Broadway performer Conan McCarty (Enobarbus) and Moses Villarama (Eros). Festival veterans include Kari Ely (Charmian); Gary Glasgow (Lepidus); Michael James Reed (Agrippa); Charles Pasternak (Octavius), who played Hotspur in *Henry IV* and the Dauphin in *Henry V*; Reginald Pierre (Maecenas), who played Westmoreland (*Henry IV/Henry V*). Alan Knoll an actor and director for the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis' Imaginary Theatre Company, will play the role of Mardian. Matt Lytle who studied classical performance in London and has appeared in productions across the country will play multiple parts (Pompey/Proculeius/Canidius).

Making their debut with Shakespeare Festival St. Louis are Webster Conservatory students Raina Houston, Ryan Alexander Jacobs, Bernell Lassai, Jesse Emanuel Munoz and Robert Riordan.

The creative team includes Festival veterans Scott Neale (Set Design), Dottie Marshall Englis (Costume Design), John Wylie (Lighting Designer), and Rusty Wandall (Sound Designer). Suzanne Mills (Voice & Text Coach) and Paul Dennhardt (Fight Choreographer) are also returning this year. Greg Mackender, founding member of the Kansas City Actors Theatre, will serve as composer for the production.

Butler's Pantry and the Festival will continue its intimate and elegant communal dining experience on select evenings during the run of the production, in addition to nightly food and beverage offerings provided by the Saint Louis Zoo. As in previous years, the Festival will include a nightly pre-performance Green Show at 6:30 p.m., following by the Main Stage production at 8 p.m. Admission is free; ticketed, reserved seating is also available online and in the park.

In the past 14 years, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis has attracted more than 640,000 people to its annual free performances In the Park. The organization has reached 270,000 students In the Schools through its educational programming and, in 2010, launched SHAKE 38, a marathon participatory presentation of Shakespeare's entire 38-play canon community wide, and in 2012, shut down its first street, Cherokee, to present a community-based play In the Streets. With support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Regional Arts Commission, SHAKE38.com launched on April 23, 2014, Shakespeare's 450<sup>th</sup> birthday. For more information, please visit [www.sfstl.com](http://www.sfstl.com) or call 314-531-9800.

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