



SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

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Old North St. Louis Residents Begin Rehearsals for Shakespeare in the Streets Event Set for Sept. 17-19

ST. LOUIS (Aug. 25, 2015) -- Local Old North St. Louis residents, including a police officer, will be learning staging tips from professional actors when rehearsals begin this week for *The World Begun*, a play artfully adapted from William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. The show, part of the wildly successful Shakespeare in the Streets event, will be performed Thursday through Saturday, Sept. 17-19, on N. 14th Street, between Montgomery and St. Louis Avenue.

The hour-long free play will be performed nightly at 8 p.m. The intersection at Montgomery and St. Louis Avenue will be closed to traffic from 6 to 10 p.m. each night. Patrons are encouraged to bring lawn chairs to watch the show. Parking will be available in lots located one block east of the performance intersection, at 1316 St. Louis Avenue and 1310 Montgomery.

Director Jacqueline Thompson, Playwright Nancy Bell and Designer Mark Wilson have been meeting with residents and community leaders of the neighborhood for the past year inviting them to share their community stories. The resulting production will feature the combined talents of professional actors performing alongside local residents and students. The script is a reflection of Shakespeare's play, real conversations with the residents, and Bell's own impressions.

Thompson, a theater professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, performed the role of Hermione in the 2013 SITS event in the Grove; her portrait was featured in the mural that was unveiled nightly as part of that production, and which still remains on the building at 4226 Manchester Rd.

Twelfth Night, written in 1602, is considered to be one of Shakespeare's most beloved comedies. The romantic comedy is set in Illyria and celebrates the Twelfth Night traditions of inverting the social order by letting commoners and fools switch places with kings and nobles for a day.

Bell's title, *The World Begun*, comes from the final lines in *Twelfth Night*, a song

sung by the character Feste:

*A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the winde and the rain!
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day.*

“Twelfth Night takes place in a wonderfully unusual place where everything is just a little different, a little unexpected,” Bell said. “Old North feels like this, a world apart with its own unique culture and traditions, full of captivating characters dreaming and scheming about how to make their neighborhood a better place, day by day.”

The World Begun begins with a shipwreck. In Bell’s version, the character of Viola, in corset and ruff, is shipwrecked magically in the present-day world of Old North, and the audience will be able to experience the neighborhood partly through her astonished eyes.

Marlene René Coveyou who currently teaches drama at Providence Classical Christian Academy will play the role of Viola. Coveyou studied theater at the British American Drama Academy in Oxford, England; local credits include *Henry V* (Alice) with St. Louis Shakespeare, and *Black Coffee* (Barbara Armory) with Clayton Community Theater.

John Bratkowski, a resident of Old North and professional actor who is familiar to local audiences for his many roles in Upstream Theater productions, as well as several featured film roles and commercials, will be playing the part of Malvolio. Bratkowski was also the first and long-time president of the Old North Saint Louis Restoration Group. Bratkowski will be joined by fellow resident Richard Schicker, a neighborhood police officer.

Seasoned professional Lisa Tejero, primarily a Chicago actress where she is also an artistic associate with Lookingglass Theatre, will be playing the role of Maria. She most recently performed in Regina Taylor’s *Stop/Reset* at the Goodman Theatre, which just closed in June. She will be joined by Erin Reneé Roberts (Olivia) whose one-woman show, *Love Lessons Learned*, toured the Seattle Fringe Festival, the St. Louis Fringe and WOW Café Theater in New York. She is currently building new work with Salt House Collective. Patrick Blindauer (Mike) performed in numerous roles in his decade of living in New York following graduation from Webster University. Blindauer was featured on “Strangers with Candy” and had a line in “A Beautiful Mind”; he also constructs crossword puzzles for *The New York Times*.

Other performers include Michael Cassidy Flynn (Sebastian), a recent graduate of the theatre program at Missouri State University; Lawd Gabriel (Duke Orsino) a writer, actor, photographer and music video director; Carl Overly, Jr. (Sir Andrew Aguecheek), who appeared in the inaugural Shakespeare in the Streets production, *The New World* (2012); Robert Green (Robert); and Christoffer Ware (Feste), the 2014 UrbSlam Poetry

St. Louis grand champion and 2015 Raven House Pretty Poetry (Lexington, KY) champion.

This year's street event is underwritten by Boeing, PNC Arts Alive, Equifax, the Incarnate Word Foundation, the Missouri Humanities Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

As part of this year's SITS programming, the Festival added an educational component for the area's residents. Students recently participated in a free summer camp both at the North Campus and at Central Print, a non-profit organization located in Old North, where they learned about performance, film and printmaking by studying *Twelfth Night*. Artwork generated by the camp participants will be featured on playbill cover for *The World Begun*, as well as an event poster.

In addition, the Festival hosted a February workshop for local artists and students lead by a guest artist from Theatre of the Oppressed NYC. Participants learned techniques for creating theatre for social change. The event was underwritten by the Missouri Humanities Council and the University of Missouri - St. Louis.

Playwright-in-residence at Shakespeare Festival, Bell is the author of the past three Shakespeare in the Streets adaptations: *Good in Everything*, *The New World*, and *Old Hearts Fresh*, which received a St. Louis Theatre Circle Award for Outstanding New Play in 2013.

In the past 14 years, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis has attracted more than 662,000 people to its annual free performances in Forest Park. The organization has reached 288,000 students through its educational programming and, in 2010, launched SHAKE 38, a marathon citywide presentation of Shakespeare's entire 38-play canon. With support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Regional Arts Commission, SHAKE38.com launched on April 23, 2014, Shakespeare's 450th birthday. For more information, please visit www.sfstl.com or call 314/531-9800.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: If you are interested in confirming an interview with members of the cast or creative team, please contact Mary McHugh (marymchugh1@mac.com/314-910-1528).

Shakespeare in the Streets

2014 *Good in Everything* (based on Shakespeare's *As You Like It*)
Central Avenue in Clayton;

2013 *Old Hearts Fresh* (based on *The Winter's Tale*)

Manchester Road in the Grove

2012 *The New World* (an adaptation of the *The Tempest*)
Cherokee Street in the Gravois Park/Benton Park West neighborhood