



SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Elena Araoz to Direct Shakespeare Festival St. Louis' production of Romeo and Juliet Next Season

Shakespeare in the Streets production of Blow, Winds is rescheduled for June 15-16

ST. LOUIS (Nov. 15, 2017) -- Elena Araoz, a critically-acclaimed New York-based director of opera and theater, will direct Shakespeare Festival St. Louis' production of *Romeo and Juliet*, June 1-24, at Shakespeare Glen in Forest Park. The director originally slated for the production, Taibi Magar, has taken an Off-Broadway project at The Atlantic Theatre Company that will conflict with the St. Louis production dates.

In additional news, the Festival's Shakespeare in the Streets production of *Blow, Winds* will be performed on Friday and Saturday, June 15-16, in front of the St. Louis Public Library's Central Library (1301 Olive St.). The free performances will start at 8:30 p.m. each night. Pre-show activities will kick off at 7 p.m. and will include a half dozen food trucks, live music and a family craft area.

"This is definitely an exciting moment for the festival, our patrons, performers and wonderfully supportive sponsors," said Jennifer Wintzer, interim producing director of Shakespeare Festival St. Louis. "It's just an incredible opportunity to promote both our main stage show in Forest Park, and our wildly popular street production, in a true festival format, rather than a separate production later in September."

Blow, Winds will also coincide with the Theatre Communications Group's (TCG) national conference in downtown St. Louis, June 14-16. Shakespeare Festival St. Louis is one of the many theaters serving on the host committee for this conference.

On the festival front, Araoz will be joined by a St. Louis-based creative team, including Dottie Marshall Englis (Costumes), Margery and Peter Spack (Scenic Designers), John Wylie (Lighting), Rusty Wandall (Sound), Paul Dennhardt (Fight

Choreographer), and Joanna Battles (Voice & Text), all of whom worked on previous Festival productions. Auditions will be held in St. Louis and New York, beginning in early December.

“St. Louis should expect great things from Elena,” Wintzer said. “Her talent is reflected in her work in the theater both nationally and internationally. Our audiences will enjoy the depth of style and interpretation she brings to her productions. Prepare to be awed.”

Araoz comes to the Festival with international and Off-Broadway experience in directing new plays, classics and opera. New York productions this past year included Catherine Filloux’s *Kidnap Road* (La Mama), Maria Irene Fornés *Mud* (Boundless Theatre Company), Octavio Solis’s *Prospect* (Boundless Theatre Company), and Warren Leight’s new play *Union Square Incident* for The 25 Hour Plays on Broadway (American Airlines Theatre), to name a few. *Two Arms and a Noise*, which Araoz wrote and directed as a New York Theatre Workshop fellow was recognized by the Latino Theatre Commons as one of “thirty-six plays and writers that everyone should know.” The show was performed for the Bucharest International Theatre Platform in Romania. Upcoming, she will direct Mac Wellman’s *A Chronicle of the Madness of Small Worlds* at New York Theatre Workshop’s Next Door.

“I’m thrilled to have the opportunity to bring this great love story to life in such a remarkably iconic setting in St. Louis’ beloved Forest Park,” Araoz said. “Working outdoors in the park presents so many opportunities for creativity and spectacular theatricality; it really is an honor to be able to immerse myself in this project in this particular city.”

Araoz is a member of the The Sol Project, a new theater initiative dedicated to producing the work by Latinx playwrights in New York City and beyond. The Drama League recently named her the inaugural Beatrice Terry Artist-In-Resident where she completed her play *Plastic Drastic* (an environmentally-aware music-theatre commedia adaptation of *The Odyssey*, *Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*, and *Hansel and Gretel*), which she also directed. The show is currently being produced at numerous colleges and universities throughout the country.

The New York Times has praised Araoz’s productions as “striking,” “primal,” “wild,” “stirring,” and “refreshingly natural”; The Boston Globe as “riveting,” “dreamy,” and “vivid.” As her productions are renowned for superb acting, she regularly teaches acting at universities and young artist programs. She is a faculty member at Princeton University.

The production of *Blow, Winds* is underwritten by PNC Arts Alive, with leadership support from the Whitaker Foundation. Additional support comes from the William E. Weiss Foundation, the Strive Fund, and Spencer Fane.

About Shakespeare Festival St. Louis

Since its inception in 2001, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis has surpassed the one million mark in attendance through its work In the Schools, In the Streets and In the Park with more than 710,000 people attending the free main stage productions at Shakespeare Glen in Forest Park. The organization has reached an additional 300,000 students In the Schools through its educational programming. In 2010, the Festival launched SHAKE 38, a marathon participatory presentation of Shakespeare's entire 38-play canon community wide. Leadership support for Shakespeare Festival St. Louis is provided by the Whitaker Foundation. The Festival is also funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Missouri Arts Council, the Regional Arts Commission, and the Arts & Education Council of Greater St. Louis. In 2017, the Festival was named Arts Organization of the Year by the Missouri Arts Council. For more information, please visit www.sfstl.com or call 314-531-9800.

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