



## SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

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Clayton is Featured in Adaptation of 'As You Like It' Sept. 18-20  
Shakespeare Festival's Third Annual Shakespeare in the Streets

ST. LOUIS (July 7, 2014) – An artful adaptation of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, will be featured in the third annual, wildly popular, Shakespeare in the Streets, it was announced today by Rick Dildine, Artistic and Executive Director for Shakespeare Festival St. Louis. The event is scheduled Thursday through Saturday, Sept. 18-20 in downtown Clayton.

Director Alec Wild, Playwright Nancy Bell and Designer Sean Savoie have been meeting in Clayton with residents and community leaders for the past several months 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 hour-long play will be performed each evening on Central Avenue between Forsyth Boulevard and Maryland Avenue. Bell said the selection of *As You Like It* is a natural fit for the area.

"A youthful adventure of going into the forest, away from the safe world you've known, and finding love and inspiration elsewhere, is the central story of *As You Like It*, and it seemed appropriate for our story here," Bell said.

According to Bell, the play is inspired in part by the Clayton School District's historic Voluntary Desegregation program which began in 1983 and thereby served as a model for all the suburban St. Louis school districts in subsequent years.

The performers will begin their month-long rehearsals in late August; details on the cast members will be announced later this summer. All three performances on Central are free.

Shakespeare Festival's SITS program also includes an educational component, including a summer camp with Clayton School District. Class activities will focus on creative approaches to acting and discovering

Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

The neighborhood-inspired shows represent the largest programming expansion since the founding of Shakespeare Festival St. Louis in 2001. As a result of the program's impact throughout the city, the Festival was awarded the 2012 Exemplary Community Achievement Award from the Missouri Humanities Council. The Festival recently announced that the Old North Neighborhood will host SITS in 2015.

Playwright-in-residence at Shakespeare Festival, Bell also wrote the previous two SITS productions – *Old Hearts Fresh* (based on *The Winter's Tale*) in the Grove, and *The New World* (an adaptation of the *The Tempest*) performed on Cherokee Street in the Gravois Park/Benton Park West neighborhood. She was awarded a St. Louis Theatre Circle Award for Outstanding New Play for last year's *Old Hearts Fresh*. Bell has acted in theaters across the country and has numerous TV credits and was most recently seen in *Soups, Stews, and Casseroles: 1976* at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis.

In addition to his work with Shakespeare Festival, as a recipient a 1997 Fox Fellowship, Director Alec Wild traveled to Saint Petersburg, Russia, to work as the Assistant Director of The Revizor Project, an international, cross-cultural effort to examine the work of Vsevolod Meyerhold. While in Russia, he studied at the Saint Petersburg Academy of Theater. Most recently, he directed at the Orpheum Theater in Los Angeles and at The Great River Shakespeare Festival, which he founded and where he served as Producing and Associate Director for eight years.

Support for SITS programming is being provided by the National Endowment for the Arts. SITS 2014 is being made possible by generous contributions from the City of Clayton and the Clayton Century Foundation.

This summer, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis drew close to 40,000 people to its free productions of *Henry IV* and *Henry V* at Shakespeare Glen in Forest Park, with over 6,000 coming to the back-to-back presentation of both plays on the final Saturday. This season marked the first time audiences experienced more than one of Shakespeare's works in a rotating repertory, with each show playing on alternate nights and only the second time in its history experimenting with a matinee presentation.

"We are incredibly lucky to have such enthusiastic, supportive audiences," Dildine said. "This season, we gave the community a unique experience. It was an epic undertaking and speaks to the spirit of the company and our Board of Directors: ambitious and creative!"

Details regarding the 2015 main stage show in Forest Park will be

announced later this year.

In the past 14 years, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis has attracted more than 640,000 people to its annual free performances in Forest Park. The organization has reached 270,000 students through its educational programming and, in 2010, launched SHAKE 38, a marathon city-wide 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](http://www.sfstl.com) or call 314/531-9800.

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