



SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shakespeare Festival St. Louis Announces Playwright-in-Residence: Nancy Bell

ST. LOUIS (Feb. 10, 2014) – Nancy Bell will join Shakespeare Festival St. Louis as its resident playwright through 2016, it was announced today by Rick Dildine, artistic and executive director of the Festival.

Bell has written the organization's two previous Shakespeare in the Streets plays: *The New World* (2011) and *Old Hearts Fresh* (2012). Both plays were nominated for a St. Louis Theatre Circle Award for Outstanding New Play. The largest programming expansion since the Festival's founding in 2001, SITS debuted in 2012 on Cherokee Street in the Gravois Park/Benton Park West neighborhood to enthusiastic reviews. Last year, the event was held on Manchester Road in The Grove/Forest Park Southeast neighborhood. Bell is currently working with residents and community leaders in Clayton, site of the 2014 SITS event (Sept. 18-20). The resulting script will be a reflection of one of Shakespeare's play, real conversations and Bell's own impressions.

Bell is the Festival's first playwright-in-residence.

"Nancy has an incredible gift for creating plays that have a powerful and profound impact on her audiences," Dildine said. "She has the innate ability to create a dialogue between characters that resonates with her audience, and that is a very special talent. She will be an incredible link to our work In the Schools, In the Streets, and In the Park over the next three years."

Bell has won accolades both as a writer and a performer. Her performance in *Clybourne Park* at The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis garnered her a St. Louis Theatre Circle Award for Best Actress. Bell has appeared in productions at the New Jewish Theatre and at the St. Louis Actors' Studio. In the Spring she will appear in the new Rebecca Gilman play, *Soups, Stews and Casseroles: 1976*, also at the Rep.

On TV, she portrayed the role of Susan Bates on the long-running soap opera, *Guiding Light*. Other television credits include: *Numbers*, *The Bold and the Beautiful*, *Law and Order*, *Star Trek Voyager*, *Mad About You*, among others. As a playwright, two of her one acts, *Venus* and *Never Wake a Sleeping Marine*, both based on original research and interviews of Iraq veterans and their families, were produced at California Repertory Theatre in Long Beach, California. Her full-length play, *Venus* was a finalist for the Next Generation Playwriting Prize 2012. Her one act with Peter Grandbois, *Present Tense*, was one of the winners of the 2013 year's LaBute New Play Festival.

In Forest Park, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis will be producing three plays in two alternating main stage shows -- *Henry IV, Parts 1 & 2* and *Henry V* (May 17 - June 15). This will mark the first time audiences will be invited to experience more than one of Shakespeare's works in a rotating repertory; each show will play on alternate nights, with two double-feature Saturdays built into the schedule.

In the past 13 years, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis has attracted more than 600,000 people to its annual free performances in Forest Park. The organization has reached 250,000 students through its educational programming and, in 2010, launched Shake 38, a marathon city-wide presentation of Shakespeare's entire 38-play canon. Since 2011, Shakespeare in the Streets has invited St. Louis' neighborhoods to tell their unique community stories, shutting down a street for performances that present the combined talents of professional actors alongside local residents. With support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Regional Arts Commission, SHAKE38.com, will launch 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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