



SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

For additional information, contact
Mary McHugh, 314 -910-1528
or marymchugh1@mac.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shakespeare Festival St. Louis Awarded \$50,000 by Monsanto Fund

Grant to support education tour visits to rural Missouri schools

ST. LOUIS (Feb. 8, 2016) -- Shakespeare Festival St. Louis's award-winning Education Tour brings to life the timeless characters and themes of the Bard's work for students each year throughout the St. Louis region, pairing performances with student workshops. Since 2013, the Monsanto Fund has sponsored the Education Tour's visits to rural communities throughout Missouri, and it is continuing that support with a \$50,000 grant this season.

"This continued support enables us to present live theater and Shakespeare to students from elementary through high school, a first for many of them," said Jennifer Wintzer, Director of Community Engagement and Education for the Festival. "It's an incredible opportunity for not only these students but for our Festival performers who get to work with these students in presenting topics and issues from 400 years ago that still resonate throughout society today."

The 2016 tour will spend 10 weeks – Feb. 8-April 17 – performing 50-minute versions of *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for students throughout Missouri. The five-member touring ensemble performs both shows in repertory, including a one-week workshop for the Scott County School District in Sikeston, Missouri. The performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will complement the Festival's mainstage show June 3-26 at Shakespeare Glen in Forest Park.

The educational student workshops provide students with the tools to write their own plays, explore language to unlock the stories and characters packed into Shakespeare's plays, and use key principles of character education to guide students through hands-on, experiential activities that build on the moral dilemmas presented by some of the Bard's most infamous characters. Supplemental curriculum guides are also available online at www.sfstl.com. All materials support the Common Core state standards.

“The Shakespeare Festival St. Louis Rural Education Tour introduces new audiences to Shakespeare’s timeless masterpieces, and its interactive format further enriches the lives of these students,” said Michelle Insko, Monsanto Fund program officer. “Academic achievement and access to the arts go hand-in-hand, and the Monsanto Fund is proud to support this program.”

In addition to the Education Tour, a version of a new play titled, *Tales of Shakespeare: Found at Sea*, will be performed with the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra as part of the Family Concert Series and Education Concerts. The play, created by Festival playwright Nancy Bell, was previewed this past fall in the Ferguson-Florissant School District.

As part of SHAKE 38, the Festival will also host a writing workshop from 10 a.m. to noon on April 23 at the St. Louis Public Library Central Branch. The event is a precursor to the featured/headlining event for SHAKE 38, *Cry Havoc*, which will be performed at 2 p.m. at the Central Library’s auditorium. The performance features actor/veteran Stephan Wolfert, who leads audiences on an interactive journey to meet Shakespeare’s veterans, and confronts the difficulties today’s soldiers face in leaving military service to rejoin the civilian world. The powerful one-person play speaks to the impact of theater as a tool for social change and the way the themes of Shakespeare’s 400-year-old works resonate meaningfully in modern life. Both the workshop and the performance are free and open to the public. *Cry Havoc* is supported by the Missouri Humanities Council.

Shakespeare Festival St. Louis

Celebrating its 16th season presenting free Shakespeare in Forest Park, and recognized with the 2015 Excellence in the Arts Award from the Arts and Education Council of St. Louis, the Festival has attracted more than 662,000 people to its annual free performances in Forest Park and has reached 288,000 students through its educational programs. In 2010, the Festival 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*. Shakespeare Festival St. Louis receives generous support from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Missouri Arts Council, the Regional Arts Commission, and the Arts & Education Council of Greater St. Louis. For more information, please visit www.sfstl.com or call 314-531-9800.

The Monsanto Fund

The Monsanto Fund is the philanthropic arm of the Monsanto Company. It is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the communities where farm families and Monsanto Company employees live and work. Visit the Monsanto Fund at www.monsantofund.org to learn more.