



SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Old North Neighborhood is Featured in Adaptation of *Twelfth Night* Sept. 17-19 Shakespeare Festival's Fourth Annual Shakespeare in the Streets

ST. LOUIS (June 29, 2015) – An artful adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, will be featured in the fourth 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. 17-19, on N. 14th Street in the Old North neighborhood.

Director Jacqueline Thompson, Playwright Nancy Bell and Designer Mark Wilson have been meeting in the Old North neighborhood with residents and community leaders 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. 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.

The hour-long play, the title of which will be announced later this month, will be performed each evening on N. 14th Street near St. Louis Avenue and Montgomery streets. All performances are free.

Bell said the selection of *Twelfth Night* is a natural fit for the area.

“The Old North neighborhood truly reflects the setting of Illyria in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*,” Bell said. “Old North has an incredibly rich history that is still very much present – Head Hunters Barbershop, Marx Hardware, and Crown Candy Kitchen, for example – all which give this neighborhood a storybook feeling, a place where special things happen. It is only ten minutes from downtown, but when you are in Old North, the rest of St. Louis seems to disappear. That's exactly what happens to the shipwrecked characters in *Twelfth Night*.”

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

Shakespeare Festival's SITS program also includes an educational component, including a summer camp both at the North Campus and at Central Print, a non-profit organization located in Old North. Students will learn about performance, film and printmaking by studying *Twelfth Night*.

In February, the Festival hosted a 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.

Shakespeare in the Streets represents 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. This month, Bell and Jennifer Wintzer, Director of Community Engagement & Education for the Festival, participated in a panel on theatre-driven civic engagement, using SITS as their model, at the 25th annual Theatre Communications Group National Conference in Cleveland.

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. Bell has performed in theaters across the country and has numerous TV credits. Her new play for youth, *The Runaway Cupcake*, was commissioned by OnSite Theatre Company in St. Louis, and will be produced in July. Her play with Peter Grandbois, *Mutual Consent*, will be produced at California Repertory in the spring of 2016. Bell is assistant professor of theatre at Saint Louis University, where she directs and teaches acting.

In addition to *Old Hearts Fresh*, Thompson has appeared in a myriad of productions nationwide. Local credits include performances with The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Avalon Theatre, The Black Rep, Mustard Seed and OnSite Theatre, among others. Production Designer Mark Wilson recently designed the scenery for *An Invitation Out* (Mustard Seed Theatre) and the lighting design for *Safe House* (The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis). He also serves as the properties carpenter and special effects designer for the Festival's main stage productions in Forest Park, and devised the water cannon effort for *Antony and Cleopatra*. Wilson is an associate professor of theatre at Saint Louis University where he teaches technical design and production.

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

This summer, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis drew close to 32,000 people to its free production of *Antony and Cleopatra* at Shakespeare Glen in Forest Park.

“We are incredibly lucky to have such enthusiastic, supportive fans. High winds, tornado warnings, and two weather cancellations couldn’t dampen the enthusiasm and spirit of St. Louisans coming out to Shakespeare Glen this year,” Dildine said. “We produce outdoor theatre and Mother Nature is just part of the equation.”

Details regarding the 2016 main stage show in Forest Park will be announced in September.

In the past 14 years, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis has attracted more than 672,000 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 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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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