



SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joneal Joplin will Headline Adaptation of King Lear at Shakespeare in the Streets' Production of Blow, Winds

The cast will also feature numerous city residents

ST. LOUIS (Aug. 22, 2017) – Local step company, The Gentlemen of Vision, and a 60-person choir whose members represent area churches and high schools, will take to the stage with professional actors and St. Louis residents when rehearsals begin this week for the sixth annual Shakespeare in the Streets' production titled, *Blow, Winds*, a play artfully adapted from William Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The show, presented by Shakespeare Festival St. Louis, will be performed at 8 p.m. Fri. through Sun., Sept. 15-17, in front of the St. Louis Public Library's Central Library (1301 Olive St.).

Olive Street between 13th and 14th will be closed to traffic from 6 to 10 p.m. each night. Patrons are encouraged to bring lawn chairs to watch the show. Pre-show activities will include food trucks, live music and a family craft area. For event details and parking information, visit sfstl.com.

Creative team members Nancy Bell (playwright), Tom Martin (director), and Lamar Harris (composer/music director) have been meeting with residents and community leaders from each of the previous five Shakespeare in the Streets neighborhoods, among others. The resulting production will feature the combined talents of professional actors performing alongside residents and students. The script is a reflection of Shakespeare's play, real conversations with the residents, and Bell's own impressions. The Festival's street initiative has gained international recognition for engaging communities through storytelling and creating vibrant new plays; *Blow, Winds* will be the first citywide Shakespeare in the Streets event.

Downtown residents and designers, Peter and Margery Spack, have created a set that includes projections, which highlight the historical architecture of the library and Bell's adaptation. Rounding out the creative team is John Wylie (lights), Jennifer 'JC' Krajicek (costumes), Meg Brinkley (props) and Audrey Simes (choreographer). Collaborating with Krajicek on costumes are visual artists from Room 13Delmar.

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Including Joplin, the cast includes 17 performers, eight of them representing the previous five Shakespeare in the Streets productions. These include Adam Flores and Minerva Lopez (2012, Cherokee Street); Karla Boresi and Kevin Williams (2013, The Grove); Wendy Greenwood (The Grove; 2014, Clayton); Maalik Shakoor (Clayton); Erin Renee Roberts (2015, Old North); Reginald Pierre (2016, Maplewood).

Rounding out the cast are Katy Keating (Regan) artistic director and co-founder of Poor Monsters, Elvedin Arnautovic (Kansas); Michelle Hand (Kent), most recently seen in Dancing at Lughnasa (Mustard Seed Theatre); chorus members Isaiah Di Lorenzo, who works with the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis; Stephanie VotEAU; Emily Korte; Elias Dernlan; and Erika Flowers, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis' Education Tour veteran.

Originating at Riverview Gardens High School in 2009, The Gentlemen of Vision, will play the role of the army. Harris, the music director, has created original music for a live band and the choir. Chris Watkins, director of the Central Baptist Church, will direct the choir. Additional community partners include the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, and the Shakespeare in the Streets: ONE CITY Task Force led by former City of Clayton Mayor Linda Goldstein.

King Lear, believed to have been written by William Shakespeare sometime between 1603 and 1606, is a tragedy about a king who bequeaths his land to his daughters to prevent problems after his death. Bell's version will feature King Louis, a cruel and foolish old king, who forces his righteous daughter Cordelia out of the kingdom and divides his lands between his two ungrateful daughters. He intends to live out his days shuttling back and forth between the two, but becomes homeless when they shut their doors to him. His exiled daughter returns with an army to unite the kingdom under her rule, but it's too late for him to save himself. The young and the poor and the oppressed of the kingdom must pick up the pieces and build a new world.

"Shakespeare's tragedies ask us to do more than hope for a better world," Bell said. "They ask us to heroically act on our convictions in order to restore wholeness to a broken world, and that's a message for our times today – there is a lot of chaos, violence and uncertainty in the world right now. Lots of people we interviewed in the past year expressed anxiety about these things, and we want to reflect that in this production. And, of course, Shakespeare always included humor in every play, and we do, too, in *Blow, Winds*."

This year's street event is underwritten by PNC Arts Alive, part of the company's multi-year initiative to support visual and performing arts groups with the goal of increasing arts access and engagement in new and innovative ways. Additional support for ONE CITY comes from Switch, Kiku Obata and Company, the Whitaker Foundation, the William E. Weiss Foundation, the Strive Fund, Spire, and Spencer Fane.

Shakespeare in the Streets is produced in partnership with the St. Louis Public Library. Inspired by the citywide collaboration, SLPL, with support of U.S. Bank, will present, "We are Shakespeare," in Central Library's Great Hall, Sept. 5 through Nov. 4, an exhibit celebrating the work of William Shakespeare. The interactive installation consists of hands-on displays and activities, as well as stunning visual and print materials from the SLPL's collection, grand scale wall murals and a professional Shakespearean actor to engage patrons. The exhibit is free and open to the public Monday-Saturday during library hours.

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In support of the exhibit, SLPL will also present Baby Bard: A Shakespeare-themed storytelling and craft activity program for preschool aged children offered in SLPL neighborhood locations. To explore SLPL programs and featured artists visit our website at spl.org.

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' 2017 season 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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Shakespeare in the Streets

- 2016 *Remember Me* (a mash-up of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, and *Romeo & Juliet*)
Sutton Boulevard, Maplewood
- 2015 *The World Begun* (based on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*)
N. 14th Street, Old North
- 2014 *Good in Everything* (based on *As You Like It*)
Central Avenue, Clayton
- 2013 *Old Hearts Fresh* (based on *The Winter's Tale*)
Manchester Road, The Grove
- 2012 *The New World* (based on an adaptation of *The Tempest*)
Cherokee Street/Benton Park West