



SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

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

***A Mash-Up of Four of the Bard's Plays will Highlight
Shakespeare in the Streets Sept. 16-18 in Maplewood***

Free, one-hour performances to feature local residents performing alongside professional actors

ST. LOUIS (Aug. 22, 2016) -- Local beer, donuts, bowling and the Bard will all come together as Shakespeare in the Streets heads to Maplewood Sept. 16-18. This year's production, "Remember Me," will feature a mash-up of "Hamlet," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and "Macbeth," with a little "Romeo & Juliet" thrown in. All performances will begin at 8 p.m. on Sutton Boulevard, between Hazel and Marietta streets.

Patrons are encouraged to bring lawn chairs to watch the show. Sutton Avenue, between Hazel and Marietta, will be closed to traffic from 6 to 10 p.m. each night. Parking will be available in several lots throughout Maplewood. Details can be found by visiting the city's website at www.cityofmaplewood.com/parking. Shakespeare Festival St. Louis will also host an array of food vendors in the area of Sutton Loop Park, in keeping with Maplewood tradition. Area vendors will be present at all three performances with a special family-focused pre-show on Sun., Sept. 18.

Director Lucy Cashion, playwright Nancy Bell and set designer Mark Wilson have been meeting with residents and community leaders of the neighborhood 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. The script is a reflection of Shakespeare's plays, real conversations with the residents, and Bell's own impressions.

Bell's title, "Remember Me," are the words spoken by the ghost of Hamlet's father. The show deals partly with the importance of remembering the city's history, as residents continue to look to a brighter future. In the play, the mayor of Maplewood is getting married but ghosts that threaten to impede the wedding besiege the city. Hamlet and his friends must find a way to appease the ghosts so that the wedding goes forward. They hope that performing a play in their honor will convince the ghosts that they are indeed sufficiently remembered and can now rest.

"This is a particularly lighthearted show," said Bell who has written the last four Shakespeare in the Streets productions. "There is always, I hope, a lot of fun and laughter in our shows, but we also have sometimes tackled difficult issues. While I hope this play does indeed have an important and truthful message to express about St. Louis, it's a pretty gentle message, which personally I feel a real need for in this difficult year of American history. We are trying to

say: let's remember the difficult realities that brought us here and honor how far we still have to go, but also celebrate a vision of a future time of peace and reconciliation.”

The show will also feature a folk band led by music director Joe Taylor, including Maplewood residents Jason Scroggins and Matt McGaughey. In addition, the Festival has collaborated with artists from Living Arts Studio guided by Executive Director Gina Alvarez to make puppets as a featured part of the production.

For the first time since the inception of Shakespeare in the Streets in 2012, all cast members will have a connection to the community. Professional actress and director Joanna Battles will play Hamlet. Battles' New York credits include performances at the Public Theater and Playwright's Horizons in addition to regional credits across the country. Battles is assistant professor of voice and speech at Webster University, and a parent in the Maplewood Richmond Heights School District. She will be joined by former MRH drama teacher Phyllis Thorpe as Bottom, and MRH high school student Stephen Tronicek as Francisco.

Playwright Nancy Bell has mirrored three characters after the Weird Sisters in Shakespeare's "*Macbeth*." The sisters will be played by performers with ties to the Maplewood business community including Traci Ponticello, co-owner of Mystic Valley, and Anna Grimm of the Maplewood Chamber of Commerce. Emily Baker, educator at MRH high school, will complete the trio.

This year's street event is sponsored by the City of Maplewood with support from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Boeing Company, PNC Arts Alive, and the Strive Fund.

As part of this year's SITS programming, the Festival added a free educational component for the area's students in grades fourth through sixth. Led by cast members Aaron Orion Baker (Duke Theseus) and Emily Baker, the students learned performance skills by studying several of the Bard's plays.

Playwright-in-residence at Shakespeare Festival, Bell is the author of the past four Shakespeare in the Streets adaptations: "*The World Begun*" (Old North; 2015 St. Louis Theatre Circle Award for Outstanding New Play), "*Good in Everything*" (Clayton), "*Old Hearts Fresh*" (The Grove; 2013 St. Louis Theatre Circle Award for Outstanding New Play); and "*The New World*" (Benton Park West neighborhood).

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. In 2012, the Festival 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.

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Shakespeare in the Streets

- 2015 *The World Begun* (based on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*)
North 14th & Montgomery in Old North St. Louis
- 2014 *Good in Everything* (based on *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* (based on *The Tempest*)
Cherokee Street in the Gravois Park/Benton Park West neighborhood