



SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

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Shakespeare Festival St. Louis Announces The Winter's Tale as the Main Stage Production

Bruce Longworth to direct the production set for June 2-25 in Forest Park

ST. LOUIS (Oct. 24, 2016) -- Shakespeare Festival St. Louis announced today that *The Winter's Tale* will be the 2017 season main stage production at Shakespeare Glen in Forest Park. Both tragic and funny, the production is scheduled June 2-25; preview nights are set for May 31 and June 1.

Written in approximately 1610, the play is considered to be one of a group of Shakespeare's plays that are vaguely defined by their tragic undertones and simultaneous use of straightforward comic situations. Other plays that are grouped in this category include *Measure for Measure*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Troilus & Cressida*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Timon of Athens*. While this is the first time the Festival will be featuring this play as its main stage show in Forest Park, *The Winter's Tale* was adapted for the 2013 Shakespeare in the Streets production *Old Hearts Fresh* written by Festival playwright Nancy Bell and performed in The Grove.

The play contains Shakespeare's most famous and challenging stage direction: "Exit, pursued by a bear" in Act 3, Scene 3. Whether the Bard meant to use a real bear or an actor in a costume is a directive that has been debated for centuries. Either way, the pursued (Antigonus) and the bear are not seen again after their exit.

"*The Winter's Tale* has sometimes been classified as a comedy simply because it has a happy ending, but I like to consider it a romance," said Rick Dildine, artistic and executive director of Shakespeare Festival St. Louis. "The first half of the play is very psychological but the last half is uplifting, transformative and hopeful. Moments of magic and redemption give us a story of love and forgiveness. Our audiences have fallen in love with our approach to storytelling in Forest Park, and for the first time, the Saint Louis Zoo won't be the only place you can see a bear next June."

Award-winning director Bruce Longworth will direct the production, marking the first time a director has returned for a fourth production in the history of the festival. He previously directed *Henry V* (2014), *Othello* (2012) and *Hamlet* (2010). Longworth has been the associate artistic director of Shakespeare Festival St. Louis since 2013.

“*The Winter’s Tale* is, hands down, one of my favorite plays, and I’m so happy to have the opportunity to direct it for the Festival,” Longworth said. “By turns frightening and funny, tragic and touching, it is a testimony to the transformative power of redemption, faith and forgiveness. It is human to the core, and thank heaven for that.”

Longworth will be joined by creative team members Scott Neale (Set Designer), John Wylie (Lighting Designer), Rusty Wandall (Sound Designer) and Dorothy Marshall Englis (Costume Designer), all of whom worked on previous productions, including last season’s performance of “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.”

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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