



SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rick Dildine Accepts Position at Alabama Shakespeare Festival in Montgomery, Alabama

ST. LOUIS (June 29, 2017) -- Rick Dildine, artistic and executive director of Shakespeare Festival St. Louis, will join Alabama Shakespeare Festival as Artistic Director. In his new role, Dildine will oversee an operation that produces 10 productions in two venues set in a 250-acre park with an annual budget of \$8.1 million and more than 230 employees. He will assume his new responsibilities Aug. 1.

Dildine, ASF's fourth artistic director in 40 years, will be replacing Producing Artistic Director, Geoffrey Sherman, who retires this month after 12 years in that position. Once on board, Dildine will also help in the national search for the ASF's newly created position of Executive Director. The ASF is located in Montgomery, Alabama.

"St. Louis has been an incredibly wonderful home to me and a phenomenal place to make art, making this decision to depart even more difficult for me both on a professional and personal level," Dildine said. "The generous support and loyalty achieved on behalf of the Festival through the years is a testament to the passion this city has for theater and its effect on our lives, and I am honored to have been able to play a part in it."

A search committee appointed by the board will begin meeting immediately to identify Dildine's replacement. The committee's plan is to finalize the search by fall.

Since his arrival in 2009, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis has more than doubled its programming, increased attendance more than 55 percent, and garnered national exposure for its innovative programs and approach to theater making. Dildine directed two productions including *Twelfth Night* (2013) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2016), and created the highly successful SHAKE38 and Shakespeare in the

Streets programs. Under his tenure, the organization has received numerous awards including recognition as Arts Organization of the Year (2017) by the Missouri Arts Council, Excellence in the Arts Award (2015) from the Arts & Education Council of Greater St. Louis and the Exemplary Community Achievement Award (2012) by the Missouri Humanities Council. For six months in late 2014 through March of 2015, Dildine served as chief executive officer of Shakespeare & Co. in Lenox, MA, before returning to the Festival in St. Louis.

“Rick’s innovative programming, leadership and financial acumen has catapulted the Festival into the top tier ranking of theater companies nationwide,” said Penny Pennington, Board President of Shakespeare Festival St. Louis. “His ability to create art in the schools, in the streets and in the park reflects his devotion to our city and his need to continue to challenge us through Shakespeare’s works. His work has provided us with a wonderful opportunity to attract the best of the best and find a candidate who can continue to build on this incredible foundation.”

Recognized as a leader in civic engagement, Dildine was named 2014 “Theatre Artist of the Year” by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, “40 Under 40” by the St. Louis Business Journal and recognized on the city’s Power List of “100 People Who Are Reshaping the City.” He has held leadership positions at About Face Theatre, Stephen Foster Theatre, and Brown University/Trinity Rep New Plays Festival under the direction of Pulitzer Prize winner Paula Vogel. Dildine has traveled on TCG delegations to Cuba and China and served on numerous grant panels including the National Endowment for the Arts. He has taught or served on staff for Brown University, Clark University, and Webster University, where he served as Director of the MFA Arts Management & Leadership program and currently teaches within its BFA Acting program. He is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Brown University/Trinity Rep with an MFA in Acting and is a proud member of Actors’ Equity Association and the Society of Directors and Choreographers.

Alabama Shakespeare Festival is the largest professional, producing theater in Alabama and one of the largest Shakespeare festivals in the world. Productions of Shakespeare are at the artistic core of the company, which also mounts Broadway musicals, children’s productions, American classics and world premiers to round out its annual offerings. The ASF’s \$21.5 million Carolyn Blount Theatre complex houses the two theater venues (seating capacity of 792 and 262, respectively), production shops, rehearsal halls and administrative offices situated on an English-style grounds and lake that surround the building and make up the stunning core of the Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park. Founded in 1972, ASF is a member of the prestigious League of Resident Theatres (LORT), the largest professional theater association of its kind in the United States, with its 72 members located in every major market in the country, including 29 states and the District of Columbia. LORT theatres collectively issue more Equity contracts to actors than Broadway and commercial tours combined.

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