



SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

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

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The Bard Goes to School – 2018-Style

Shakespeare Festival St. Louis' Education Tour introduces students to themes that transcend genres, cultures and centuries

ST. LOUIS (Feb. 28, 2018) – Missouri students will learn a bit more of the Bard's take on identity and difference, issues people have grappled with no matter the genre, culture or century, and all part of the 2018 Shakespeare Festival St. Louis award-winning Education Tour, now through April 15. The tour includes more than 150 performances and workshops conducted at 50 schools throughout the metro area and rural Missouri.

A new, original play by playwright Nancy Bell, "A Most Outrageous Fit of Madness," inspired by Shakespeare's most madcap play, "The Comedy of Errors," is a fast-paced, silly and heartwarming quest for belonging, touching on the themes of resilience, identity and family. Students will also have the opportunity to enjoy a timely retelling of "Romeo & Juliet," which is also the 2018 main stage production in Forest Park set for June 1-24. In addition, student workshops conducted by the festival's touring artists will provide a springboard for constructing understanding around the concepts of identity and difference.

The Festival's touring productions, workshops and study materials have an 18-year legacy of success in bringing to life the Bard's characters and their words to more than 300,000 students, and in the process, have won accolades from educators throughout the region. The artfully adapted 50-minute productions, chock full of Shakespeare's language, are performed by five professional actor/teaching artists. Support for the tour comes from the Monsanto Fund, which has sponsored the Education Tour's visits to rural communities with a \$50,000 grant since 2013.

"Through our educational touring programs and related workshops we are using

the power of theatre and Shakespeare's language to build awareness, teach empathy, and support communication," said Jennifer Wintzer, interim producing director for Shakespeare Festival St. Louis.

The Festival's 2018 tour will spend 10 weeks performing both Bell's production and "Romeo & Juliet." Pairing performances with student workshops, the tour showcases the words and deeds of William Shakespeare's timeless characters and themes written more than 400 years ago that still resonate today.

The Festival will continue to expand an artist's residency program to Sikeston, Callao, and the metro area. Introduced as a pilot program in rural Scott County in 2016, professional teaching actors spent a week in the school community performing and teaching a residency on the literary arts. This year, the opportunity for students to receive the rich impact of repeat visits with guest artists will be showcased in schools in Scott County, Callao, and the metro St. Louis area.

In addition to support from the Monsanto Fund, the Festival's education programs also receives generous support from the Gateway Foundation, Saigh Foundation, the Dana Brown Charitable Trust, First Bank, and UMB Bank.

"Thanks to Shakespeare Festival St. Louis, students have gained a better understanding and appreciation for classical theater that is also relatable to the things they may be experiencing today," said Michelle Insko, Program Officer for the Monsanto Fund. "We are happy to support an initiative that has provided theatrical access for nearly two decades."

The tour's educational student workshops also provide students with the tools to write their own plays, explore language to unlock the stories and characters packed into Shakespeare's plays, and use key principles of character education to guide students through hands-on, experiential activities that build on the moral dilemmas presented by some of the Bard's most infamous characters. Supplemental curriculum guides are available online at www.sfstl.com.

About Shakespeare Festival St. Louis

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. Leadership support for Shakespeare Festival St. Louis' 2018 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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