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**SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS ANNOUNCES CASTING AND SCHEDULE FOR URBAN/RURAL  
SHAKESPEARE IN THE STREETS COLLABORATION**

***Love at the River's Edge***

**A World Premiere Play on the Urban/Rural Experience**

**Friday, September 13 and Saturday, September 14**

**Starting at 7 p.m. at the intersection of Page & Ferguson in St. Louis, MO 63133**

**Tickets are FREE, but reservations are recommended and will open on August 15.**

**[www.sfstl.com/streets](http://www.sfstl.com/streets)**

**Written by Mariah Richardson and Directed by Kathryn Bentley.**

**Featuring Youth from Normandy, MO and Brussels, IL in Leading Roles**

August 12, 2019 -- ***Love at the River's Edge***, the latest new work from Shakespeare Festival St. Louis' internationally recognized Shakespeare in the Streets initiative, will open on Friday, September 13, 2019. The world premiere play is based on Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and is the culmination of a year's work in Calhoun County, Illinois and north St. Louis County, Missouri. It is part of Shakespeare Festival's ongoing work to bridge the urban-rural divide and elevate the voices of Midwest artists and residents.

***Love at the River's Edge*** opens with one of Shakespeare's most famous lines, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." The players are Midwestern families and their journey of love, community and reconciliation will take audience members from Pagedale, MO to Calhoun County, IL, with the mighty Mississippi in a starring role.

The performances will begin at 7 p.m. outside the 24:1 Coffee House/Cafe at the intersection of Page and Ferguson. After Act 1, the cast and audience will journey together by bus and on the Golden Eagle Ferry from north St. Louis County, across the river to Calhoun County. The second act of the production will take place on the riverbank with the Mississippi River as the backdrop. The entire experience including travel will take approximately three hours and 30 minutes. Tickets will be free and open to the public, but reservations are recommended and will open on August 15.

***Love at the River's Edge*** is written by acclaimed St. Louis playwright **Mariah Richardson**, directed by **Kathryn Bentley**, and shares stories from Normandy, MO and Brussels, IL. The two partner communities and their surrounding counties are the Festival's first-ever urban/rural Shakespeare in the Streets collaboration. Bentley and Richardson will be joined on the creative team by musicians **Syrhea Conaway** and **Colin McLaughlin** who will be composing original music for the production and **Kendrick Lawson-Knight** (Set Designer), **Felia Davenport** (Costumes) and **Jayson M. Lawshee** (Lighting Designer).

The ensemble cast is comprised of professional actors and community members and is led by local students. Included in the cast are Brussels High School graduate **Lindsey Watters** (Rosalind), Normandy High School student **Margaret Mischeaux** (Cee Cee), Brussels High School student **Ellie Nolte** (Phoebe), and Shakespeare Squadron alumnus **Daniel Clear** (Oliver). Other notable cast: Normandy High School teacher **Lisa “Mama Lisa” Gage** (Duchess), acclaimed St. Louis jazz singer and actress **Anita Jackson** (Adam), Shakespeare Festival favorite **Eric Dean White** (Wittmond), Shakespeare in the Streets veteran **Chris Ware** (Jackson) and other natives of the St. Louis, Brussels and Normandy community.

Brussels High School student and cast member Ellie Nolte has been working on the project for the last year, “What I think is so great about this project is how we’ve been given the chance to work with people from Normandy and bridge the gap between our school and theirs. I personally really enjoy having the opportunity to work with kids my age who come from such a different background and connect with them because of our differences rather than in spite of them. It’s truly amazing how quickly I became close to these people I had never met, never even imagined meeting, and now I’m very glad I did.”

“Social division and fragmentation are the most serious challenges facing our generation,” said Executive Producer Tom Ridgely in a statement. “And nowhere is the divide as wide as it often feels between our urban and our rural communities. It’s a rift Shakespeare knew intimately - he spent his entire adult life moving between the country and the city. Shakespeare in the Streets has always been about breaking down the barriers that separate us in St. Louis, and I can’t think of a more powerful way to do that than by breaking bread and sharing the stories of our good neighbors in Normandy and Brussels.”

Richardson, Bentley and the SITS creative team have been working in Calhoun County and north St. Louis County since early 2018: building relationships, leading conversations and collaborating with residents to create the new play. Organizational partners include Beyond Housing, Brussels High School and the Normandy Schools Collaborative.

“We are simply thrilled to be a part of this innovative, one of a kind event that brings Shakespeare in the Streets to the 24:1 footprint,” said Chris Krehmeyer, President & CEO of Beyond Housing. “Linking our community with the folks from Brussels, IL is a great representation of how our region can come together.” 24:1 is a nationally-recognized community development effort created by Beyond Housing to address the fundamental challenges within the 24 municipalities in the Normandy school district in North St. Louis County.

Shakespeare in the Streets is made possible with generous support from the Whitaker Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts: Creativity Connects, the Strive Fund, and Moneta Group. Leadership support for all of Shakespeare Festival St. Louis’ new work initiatives comes from Karen & Mont Levy. It is in partnership with Beyond Housing, the Normandy Schools Collaborative and Brussels High School.

**Shakespeare in the Streets** ([www.sfstl.com/streets](http://www.sfstl.com/streets)) is an internationally-recognized program that celebrates local stories and takes high-quality professional arts directly to those who may not otherwise

experience it. A Festival playwright, designer, and director spend a year conducting conversations and research in a community. The playwright draws directly from the stories shared to write an original play, inspired by the neighborhood, and based on the work of Shakespeare. With Festival resources, the community then comes together to perform the new play in a weekend-long outdoor celebration.

### **About Shakespeare Festival St. Louis**

Shakespeare Festival St. Louis presents Shakespeare and works inspired by his legacy of storytelling. Since 2001, the festival has grown from producing a single production of Shakespeare in the Park to a year-round season of impactful theater in exciting and accessible venues throughout the St. Louis community. The festival's artistic and education programs reached over 50,000 patrons and students during the 2018 season and have reached over one million since 2001. In 2019, the Festival received a "What's Right with the Region" award from Focus St. Louis. Leadership support for Shakespeare Festival St. Louis' 2019 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. For more information, please visit [www.sfstl.com](http://www.sfstl.com), or call 314-531-9800. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/shakesfestSTL> Twitter: @shakesfestSTL Instagram: ShakesfestSTL

### **Artistic Team Bios**

**Mariah L. Richardson (Playwright)** A native of St. Louis, Missouri, Richardson received her BA in Communications from the University of New Mexico and an MFA from Smith College in Playwriting. Recipient of the Regional Arts commission \$20,000 Artist Fellowship 2016, Richardson was named to the Confluence Regional Writers Project with Shakespeare Festival St. Louis for 2019. In 2018 she was their playwright fellow and helped rewrite Shakespeare in the Streets' performance of *Blow Winds*. Mariah is the author of the plays: *all that...*, *Sistahs Indeed!*, *Delilah's Wish*, *iSoy Yo!*, *Idris Elba is James Bond*, and *Chasing the White Rabbit*. Her last play, in partnership with Jazz St. Louis and commissioned by A Call to Conscience Theatre for Social Change, *Next to Normal: The Thelonius Monk Story*, premiered to sold-out crowds.

**Kathryn Bentley (Director)** is an Associate Professor of Theater Performance at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville where she is the Artistic Director of SIUE's Black Theatre Workshop as well as the Director of the Black Studies Program. Some of her directing credits include *Gem of the Ocean*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *The Colored Museum*, *Since Africa*, *Venus*, *Only Just a Minute*, and *Intimate Apparel*. Kathryn is the Artistic Director of Bread and Roses Missouri. She commits herself to community-engaged arts collaborations, striving to create compassionate artistic experiences, using theater to lift social consciousness.