



SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS

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SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS CLOSES 2019 FISCAL YEAR WITH NEW RECORD FOR FUNDRAISING

Festival announces three-year, \$250,000 leadership gift.

Festival among 2019 grant recipients of the San Francisco-based Hearst Foundations.

October 16, 2019 -- Shakespeare Festival St. Louis achieved record levels of contributed and ticketed revenue in the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019. The first full year under the leadership of Producing Artistic Director Tom Ridgely included the Festival's first ticketed season of new plays at the Grandel Theatre, the highest grossing Gala in Festival history, a new production of *Love's Labors Lost* in Forest Park, an acclaimed urban/rural Shakespeare in the Streets collaboration, and the inaugural year of the Confluence Regional Writers Project to support emerging playwrights throughout the region.

Shakespeare Festival St. Louis recorded a preliminary total of \$1.55 million in contributed revenue in FY2019, a 10% increase over the previous record raised in 2014 for the two-production season of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*. Results in 2019 were boosted by competitive grants from national funders including the San Francisco-based Hearst Foundations and the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as the introduction of new ticketed programming. Audited final totals for FY2019 will be available following the Festival's annual audit in February 2020.

The Festival also announced a three-year, \$250,000 leadership gift from Mont & Karen Levy includes support for the development of new work as outlined in the organization's strategic plan. The 2020-2022 strategic plan outlines an ambitious timeline for growth including the introduction of new year-round ticketed events, expanded regional engagement, and commissions of new work by Midwest artists. Leadership support from Mont & Karen Levy will help fund the introduction of these new programs for the next three years.

"This gift from Karen and Mont demonstrates their enormous passion for ensuring that St. Louis remains one of the culturally richest cities in America, said Tom Ridgely in a statement. "The Festival is extremely grateful to them, not just for their investment in the work we're doing, but for their belief that the stories and artists in our region belong at the very center of the national conversation."

"Karen and I are very excited by the role Shakespeare Festival St. Louis plays in our community," said Mont Levy. "For twenty years we've enjoyed seeing thousands gather in Shakespeare Glen to enjoy one of St. Louis' great traditions. Under Tom Ridgely's leadership, we are equally thrilled with the new work he is bringing to St. Louis and the collaborations he is creating."

Shakespeare Festival St. Louis will mark its 20th anniversary season in 2020. In addition to an all-star production in Forest Park (announcement coming in January 2020) and a regional Education Tour reaching 10,000 across the region, the Festival's 2020 season includes:

- Free, outdoor performances of Duke Ellington's Shakespeare-inspired masterpiece, **Such Sweet Thunder** (October 2019);
- A public reading of four new Festival commissioned plays developed through the **Confluence Regional Writers Project** (November 2019);
- A hip-hop adaptation of **The Two Gentlemen of Verona** by the Off-Broadway duo Q Brothers (January-February 2020);
- The 20th Anniversary Gala Celebration on Thursday, May 7, 2020; and
- A new **Shakespeare in the Streets for the Ville**, a historic African-American neighborhood in the City of St. Louis (Fall 2020).

More information and tickets for upcoming productions can be found at www.sfstl.com.

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' 2020 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, or call 314-531-9800.

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