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For more information contact:

Allie Magee / amagee@sfstl.com / 314-775-7412

**SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS
ANNOUNCES
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
AS 20TH SUMMER SHAKESPEARE PRODUCTION
IN FOREST PARK**

**AND EXPANDED SUMMER PROGRAMMING
TO CELEBRATE 20TH ANNIVERSARY**

MAY 8 - JUNE 21, 2020

St. Louis, MO (January 10, 2020) -- **Shakespeare Festival St. Louis** (Tom Ridgely, Producing Artistic Director) announced today that its the 20th anniversary Shakespeare in the Park production will be ***Much Ado About Nothing***. The production will mark 20 years of free Shakespeare in Forest Park, one of the largest outdoor Shakespeare venues in the country. *Much Ado* will be directed by **Bruce Longworth** and begin performances on Wednesday, May 27, with an opening night set for Friday, May 29 at 8:00pm, and will play through June 21.

To celebrate the 20th Anniversary Season, the Festival is expanding the amount and variety of completely free and open to the public programming in Shakespeare Glen leading up to the opening of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

“Twenty years is a lifetime for an arts organization,” said artistic director **Tom Ridgely** in a statement, “and it’s a testament to both the vision of the founding board and the appetite of the people in St. Louis for world-class Shakespeare productions in a world-class public park. It means that an entire generation has grown up with the beloved summer tradition of hearing these timeless stories under the stars. These plays belong to everyone. The Festival exists to make sure everyone can enjoy them.”

On May 8-9 the Festival will kick-off the anniversary celebration with two family-friendly performances of ***Cymbeline***, Shakespeare’s epic adventure about love, loss and reconciliation. The play follows Princess Innogen as she sets out on a journey to find her husband and - with courage and ingenuity - clear her good name. These encore performances will be given by TourCo, the Festival’s regional touring company, and will be directed by Tom Ridgely featuring **Hannah Geisz, Britteny Henry, Mary Heyl, Keating, Halli Pattison** and **Jenni Ryan**.

TourCo's performance of *Cymbeline* will be the first outdoor performance of its kind. TourCo has exclusively performed in schools and community centers for the past 19 years, and this first Park performance will kick off the Festival's 20th Birthday Bash weekend. The Birthday Bash will celebrate the Festival's 20th anniversary, complete with food trucks, live music, family activities, and more

On May 15-17 the Shakespeare Festival is partnering with the St. Louis International Film Festival to present the inaugural **Shakespeare Movie Weekend** in the Glen, with three nights of Shakespeare-inspired films for all ages. On Friday, ***10 Things I Hate About You*** starring Heath Ledger and Julia Stiles based on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* will kick off the weekend. 1994's beloved and acclaimed ***The Lion King***, based loosely on *Hamlet*, will follow on Saturday; and the series will end Sunday with St. Louis-born Vincent Price's ***Theatre of Blood***, a campy horror-comedy in which a slighted Shakespearean actor (Price) seeks poetic and murderous revenge on his critics - killing them in the same ways made infamous by Shakespeare.

Much Ado About Nothing is one of Shakespeare's most popular and enduring comedies. The central characters, Beatrice and Benedick, are thorny, intelligent, witty, and hopelessly bad at love. A battle royale ensues in a hilarious attempt to resist their overpowering mutual attraction that makes *Much Ado* such a timeless story of romance, suspicion and restoration.

This will be Bruce Longworth's fifth Shakespeare in the Park production, following 2010's *Hamlet*, 2012's *Othello*, 2014's *Henry V* and 2017's *The Winter's Tale*. The creative team is rounded out by **Josh Smith** (Scenic Design), **Dorothy Englis** (Costume Design), **John Wylie** (Lighting Design) and **Kathy Ruvuna** (Sound Design) and **Matt Pace & Brien Seyle** (Original Music).

Performances are free and open to the public. Seats and blankets may be reserved or audiences may bring their own. Please visit sfst.com for more information.

Leadership support for Shakespeare Festival St. Louis' 2020 season is provided by the Whitaker Foundation. The Festival is also funded in part by the Hearst Foundations, The Bellwether Foundation, the Missouri Arts Council, the Regional Arts Commission, and the Arts & Education Council of Greater St. Louis.

BIOS

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.

Bruce Longworth (Director)* is a Resident Artist at Shakespeare Festival St. Louis and previously directed *The Winter's Tale* (2017), *Henry V* (2014), *Othello* (2012), and *Hamlet* (2010) for Shakespeare in

the Park. He has been a faculty member in the Conservatory of Theatre Arts at Webster University since 1985 and is the Head of the Performance programs. Local and regional directing credits include Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Repertory Theatre St. Louis, Pulitzer Museum, Saint Louis Symphony, Lyceum Theatre, Mustard Seed Theatre, New Jewish Theatre, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Missouri Thespians, International Thespians and many shows for the Conservatory of Theatre Arts at Webster. Bruce is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Actors Equity Association.