

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For more information contact:**

Allie Magee / [amagee@sfstl.com](mailto:amagee@sfstl.com) / 314-775-7412

**SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS  
ANNOUNCES NEW ONLINE PROGRAMS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19:**

**A Facebook live production of *Cymbeline*,  
“Shakespeare in the Sheets” social media project,  
and more virtual programming plans.**

**St. Louis, MO** (March 18, 2020) -- **Shakespeare Festival St. Louis** (Tom Ridgely, Producing Artistic Director) announced today they will live-stream a performance of *Cymbeline* on Tuesday, March 24 at 8:00 p.m. from its now-canceled bi-state touring production. The Festival has also launched a social media project featuring quarantined and furloughed actor-citizens reading Shakespeare in bed called “Shakespeare in the Sheets” and announces more plans for digital and virtual performances over the coming weeks.

The Festival’s regional touring production (TourCo) has been part of its programming from its very founding. The 2020 production of *Cymbeline* was scheduled to visit 40 schools and community organizations over the next two and a half months including 10 public performances culminating in Shakespeare Glen for the Festival’s 20th Birthday Bash on May 8 & 9.

With all but six performances canceled due to concerns surrounding the spread of COVID-19 the Festival has pivoted with the help of Logic Systems Sounds and Lighting to co-produce this live-stream. The production will be live-streamed on the Festival’s Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/shakesfestSTL/>) on Tuesday, March 24 at 8:00 pm. This will be the first virtual performance from the Festival.

“The theaters in London were shutdown at least three times by the plague during Shakespeare’s writing career,” Artistic Director Tom Ridgely said in a statement. “Each time he showed remarkable agility in adapting to the changed circumstance in a way that protected the livelihood of his artists (he was a part-owner in his company) and led to extraordinary artistic innovation. He took his shows on the road, he composed epic poems that became literary blockbusters, and he went on a playwriting spree that constitutes arguably the greatest hot-streak in world drama. He’s inspired us to move fast and think creatively for ways to keep storytelling and performance alive in these disorienting times.”

One of Shakespeare's final plays - and one of his greatest achievements - *Cymbeline* is a romantic adventure story on an epic scale. It tells the story of Innogen, the princess of Britain, who embarks on a dangerous journey to find her husband and through courage and ingenuity clears her good name. The

production was directed by Tom Ridgely and featured Hannah Geisz (INNOGEN), Britteny Henry (Cymbeline/Cornelius), Mary Heyl (Posthumus/Cloten), Keating (Iachimo/Arviragus), Halli Pattison (Pisano/Guiderius) and Jenni Ryan (Belarius/Queen).

### **Programs being added:**

**Shakespeare in the Sheets** is a new project from the Festival to engage artists and citizens quarantined at home or out of work. The theme for Instagram posts is “Love in the time of Covid-19: Quarantined and furloughed actor-citizens reading Shakespeare. From their bed to yours.” The first two videos feature local actors Courtney Bailey-Parker, Jason J. Little, Mary Heyl and Hannah Geiz, and the hope it to go “viral in a good way” and reach people across the globe. Actors and followers are encouraged to submit their own videos to [info@sfstl.com](mailto:info@sfstl.com) or by tagging @shakesfestl or @shakespeareinthesheets on Instagram.

One of Shakespeare’s first published pieces, *Venus & Adonis*, is a narrative poem written in the 1590’s that helped launch his career. It tells the story of the goddess Venus and the young hunter Adonis in an epic unrequited love story. Featuring the Festival’s TourCo company of actors, a live-streamed reading of *Venus & Adonis* will be broadcast on the video conferencing platform Zoom.com Thursday, March 26 at 8:00 p.m.

Finally, the TourCo company and local actors will perform the entirety of Albert Camus’s 1947 masterpiece *The Plague* in five installments beginning Sunday, March 29 - through Thursday, April 2 nightly at 8:00 p.m. Also using the live-streaming conferencing platform, on Zoom.com.

Please visit [www.sfst.com](http://www.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 Bayer Fund, 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.

**Hannah Geisz (Innogen)** fell in love with Shakespeare when this very education tour came to her elementary school. She is beyond thrilled to be working with a company so close to her heart, and would like to thank the Shakespeare Festival St. Louis for inspiring her and now including her in their mission.

Past Credits include: *My Fair Lady* (Ensemble), *Our Town* (Rebecca Gibbs), and *Mary Poppins* (Ensemble) with Ozark Actors Theatre. *King Lear* (Cordelia) with Shakespeare's Globe Theatre 8-week Performance Intensive in London. *Into the Woods* (Sleeping Beauty/Teen Ensemble) with The MUNY in St. Louis.

**Brittney Henry (Cymbeline/Cornelius)** is very excited to be back on tour with SFSTL! Brittney is an actress and director well known to the STL theatre community. She was most recently seen on stage this past summer at Ozark Actors Theatre in *King Lear* (Goneril), and shortly before that, she was director for the new Independent Theater Company (Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls...*), for which she is also the Artistic Director. Brittney has also toured with Metro Theatre Company as Mom in *New Kid* (2016), and most recently with Delta Dental's *Land of Smiles*, visiting schools all over MO teaching kids the importance of brushing & flossing. Hi Mom!

**Mary Heyl (Posthumus/Cloten)** is a St. Louis native and has fond memories of seeing the SFSTL Education Tour's production of *The Tempest* at her school when she was little. She is so grateful to be passing on her love of theatre with this production. She is a proud cast member of Comedy Sportz STL and production assistant for Theatre Unlimited at the Jewish Community Center. Some favorite roles include Cassio in *Othello* (Festival 56), Marmee in *Little Women* (Festival 56), and Brutus in *Julius Caesar* (Millikin University). Mary would like to thank Tom and Adam for this opportunity and God for the ability.

**Keating (Iachimo/Arviragus)** is a theatre artist in St. Louis. Keating is the Co-Artistic Director of Poor Monsters and the Communications Director at ERA. They are so excited to be back at SFSTL after performing in *Love's Labors Lost* in the park this past summer, and *Into The Breeches* in 2018. Recently, they appeared in *Whammy* (YoungLiars) and *Well* (Mustard Seed Theatre). Keating created and directed *Classic Mystery Game* (SATE) and *Or What You Will, The Third* (Poor Monsters). Much love to Janet and Freddie!

**Halli Pattison (Pisanio/Guiderius)** is thrilled to be performing with Shakespeare Festival St. Louis. A recent graduate from Saint Louis University, some of her favorite roles include Eurydice (*Eurydice*), Célimène (*The Misanthrope*), and Cecily Cardew (*The Importance of Being Earnest*).

**Jenni Ryan\* (Belarius/Queen)** was last seen as Olympe de Gouges in *The Revolutionists*. Other favorite roles include M'Lynn (*Steel Magnolias*); Jen (*John and Jen*); Charlotte (*Moon Over Buffalo*); Sarah Daniels (*Spinning into Butter*); Shelby (*The Spitfire Grill*); Sarah (*Time Stands Still*); Faye (*Chapter Two*); Tessie Tura (*Gypsy*); Rosemary (*How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*); Alex (*On the Verge, or The Geography of Yearning*); Ilona (*She Loves Me*); and Gloria (*Grace & Glorie*), which earned her a Kevin Kline Award. Member, AEA. Jenni is thrilled to be here to share some "Will" power.