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**THE ST. LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
ANNOUNCES 2020 SEASON POSTPONEMENT**

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**“A LATE SUMMER NIGHT’S STROLL”
AN INTERACTIVE WALKING EXPERIENCE IN FOREST PARK**

St. Louis, MO (June 23, 2020) -- The **St. Louis Shakespeare Festival** (Tom Ridgely, Producing Artistic Director) officially announced the postponement of *Much Ado About Nothing*, its 20th Anniversary Shakespeare in the Park production, as well as “Shakespeare in the Streets: The Ville” in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Much Ado About Nothing, directed by Bruce Longworth, has been rescheduled for the 2022 summer season, and “Shakespeare in the Streets: The Ville”, written by Mariah Richardson and directed by Thomasina Clarke, will take place in September 2021. Final dates will be announced at a later time.

“In the end, it boiled down to the safety of the artists,” said producing artistic director Tom Ridgely in a statement. “The actors’ union hired a very well-qualified epidemiologist to assess the situation, and their determination was that it just wouldn’t be safe to return to work this summer. We wish it could be otherwise, but we have to trust the experts and not take any chances when it comes to people’s health and wellbeing. We’ll be back though, and we’re already looking forward to how good it will feel when we can all be together again.”

The Festival will spend the additional time investing in The Ville, working closely with 4the Ville and Young Friends of the Ville, its partner organizations on Shakespeare in the Streets.

“I am saddened about the delay but excited about the extra time and opportunity to really learn about the residents of the Ville. Their story is rooted in the earliest history of our city. And a story crying out to be heard,” said playwright Mariah Richardson.

The Festival is continuing to collect stories from current and past residents of the neighborhood and encourage anyone with a connection to submit via mail, email or phone. Details and questions are available at stlshakes.org/theville.

“A Late Summer Night’s Stroll”

In lieu of the original scheduled 20th-anniversary production of Shakespeare in the Park, the Festival is offering a new socially-distant walking experience in Forest Park.

A LATE SUMMER NIGHT’S STROLL, loosely inspired by Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, will take guests on a 90-minute walk through some of the park’s most iconic spots and hidden gems. The STROLL will use music, dance and visual art to offer a new and surprising way of experiencing both the story and the park.

“*Midsummer* is one of the most magical and beloved plays in all of world drama. It follows the flight of four lovers into the woods and the night of lyrical transformations that drive them apart and back together again - capped by the famous and hilarious "play-within-a-play" put on by local tradesmen,” says Ridgely. “This experience will put the walkers at the center of the story.”

A LATE SUMMER NIGHT’S STROLL run evenings, Tuesday-Sunday, August 12 to September 6. Groups will be limited to 10 and under with scheduled start times to maintain social distance.

The walk is free, but registration is required and will open to the public on Monday, July 13. Suggested donations are \$20, and post-walk picnics will be available at an additional charge.

“In this time when safe, fun, out-of-home experiences have been almost impossible to come by, we hope to create an activity that allows the people of St. Louis to reconnect with the city and each other in an act of engagement and shared pleasure,” concludes Ridgely.

More information will be available online at www.stlshakes.org/stroll.

Leadership support for 2020's Shakespeare in the Park programming is provided by The Whitaker Foundation, Emerson, The Bellwether Foundation, Edward Jones, Enterprise Holdings Foundations, The Strive Fund, the Missouri Arts Council, The Trio Foundation of St. Louis, Buckingham Asset Management, and the Regional Arts Commission.

The **St. Louis Shakespeare Festival** 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.