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**THE ST. LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
PRESENTS**

STATE OF DENMARK v. HAMLET

A LIVE-STREAMED MOCK TRIAL OF HAMLET

JUNE 21, 2020 AT 8 PM

St. Louis, MO (June 5, 2020) -- The **St. Louis Shakespeare Festival** (Tom Ridgely, Producing Artistic Director) will conduct a fictional trial for Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, for his alleged killing of Polonius in the royal castle of Elsinore. The *State of Denmark v. Hamlet* will be streamed live on the Festival's Facebook page at 8:00 p.m. on June 21, 2020.

This trial is the first held at the Festival's request but is part of a long tradition of Shakespeare characters facing judgment by the modern United States court system. Mock trials have occurred for decades, held by courts as high as the U.S. Supreme Court. Notable cases include a trial of the Weird Sisters from *Macbeth* presided over by Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a 2017 case of *Olivia v. Sebastian* from 'Twelfth Night' presided over by Judge Merrick Garland and a 2019 trial over land ownership in *Richard III v. King Henry VII*.

"The question of Hamlet's state of mind when he kills Polonius is one of the greatest and most hotly debated in Western literature," said producing artistic director Tom Ridgely in a statement. "What a privilege it will be to settle it once and for all right here in St. Louis. If Polonius had any survivors we would certainly owe it to them. As it is, we hope that scholars and amateur aficionados will at long last get some closure. The rest will be silence."

"Guilty or not guilty - that is the question?"

The Honorable Judge Michael P. David, formerly of the 22nd Judicial Circuit in Missouri, will hear the case. The defense, led by Joel J. Schwartz, will present a plea of not guilty by reason of insanity and the prosecution team will be led by Thompson Coburn LLC partner James E. Dillon.

“My wife and I are huge fans of the Shakespeare Festival. I don’t think we’ve missed a production since moving to St. Louis in 2004. So I’m happy to be a part of the trial of Hamlet.” says James E. Dillion, the Prosecuting Attorney for the case.

The setting for the trial is the St. Louis Court of Appeals, chosen to try the case by the State of Denmark shortly after Prince Hamlet’s arrest by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for the alleged murder of his Polonius. After Hamlet’s Uncle Claudius kills his father and marries his mother Gertrude, Hamlet—first visited by the ghost of his late father, the King—vows to take revenge resulting in the accused death. Portraying the defendant Hamlet is St. Louis actor and improviser Andy Sloey.

Colin O’Brien, the Festival Associate Producer, will direct the live stream. Washington University and Festival Scholar in Residence Rob Henke will act as an advisor for the defense on any Shakespeare historical accuracies and Bruce Longworth, Director for five Shakespeare in the Park productions, will assist the prosecution.

There will be multiple key witnesses called to testify in front of a pre-selected six-member public jury.

The witness list cleared by the Judge includes Claudius (played by Reginald Pierre), Gertrude (Michelle Hand), his girlfriend Ophelia (Leslie Symonds), Rosencrantz (Jesse Munoz) and Horatio (Justin Blanchard—an original cast member of the 2010 Festival production of ‘Hamlet’).

The case will take approximately two hours from start to finish. Viewers can expect to watch jury selections, opening arguments, witness cross-examinations, expert opinions, closing arguments and learn the final verdict.

The trial is appropriate for all ages and will be archived on the Festival’s Facebook page indefinitely for repeat or later viewing (<https://www.facebook.com/STLShakesFest>). Visit <https://stlshakes.org/trial> 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

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.

Michale P. David (JUDGE) The Honorable Michael David is a former Circuit Judge of the 22nd Judicial Circuit in Missouri with more than forty years of experience. Judge David offers mediation services spanning all areas of dispute. Prior to his appointment to the bench, Judge David tried numerous jury trials during his time as an assistant public defender and, later, while in private practice. At the same time he was practicing with his firm, he also served as a member of the Missouri House of Representatives. While in the House, Judge David served on various committees and chaired the House Committee on Municipal Corporations. In 1989, during his fourth term in office, he was appointed by the Governor to be an Associate Circuit Judge, and then a Circuit Judge less than four years later. Judge David presided over many of the Circuit's lengthy and more complex cases and served as the Circuit's Presiding Judge from 2003-2004 after serving as the President of Missouri's Circuit Judge's Association (2000-2001). Since re-entering private practice, the breadth and depth of Judge David's experience has given him a unique perspective in his current work as a mediator, arbitrator, special master and trial consultant.

Jim E. Dillon (PROSECUTING ATTORNEY) is a partner at Thompson Coburn LLP where he practices real estate law. He studied Shakespeare in college, where he played Bertram in a 1989 college production of Shakespeare's "All's Well That Ends Well." That's the last time he acted in any capacity . . . until now.

Joel J. Schwartz (DEFENSE ATTORNEY) Mr. Schwartz received a B.A. in 1984 and his J.D. in 1987 from the University of Texas at Austin. He was admitted to the Missouri Bar in 1989 and has been practicing in the area of criminal defense for 20 years. He is a member of the Missouri Bar, the Eastern and Western Districts of Missouri, the Central and Southern Districts of Illinois, the Southern District of Iowa and the Eastern and Western Districts of Michigan. Mr. Schwartz has represented individuals in Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Michigan, Kansas, Arizona, Texas, Colorado and California. Mr. Schwartz is AV Rated by Martindale Hubbell. He is a life member of National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and a member of the Missouri Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. Joel has been a lecturer for several legal educational institutions and has appeared as a legal commentator for several news outlets. Mr. Schwartz's practice concentrates exclusively in the area of Federal and State criminal defense.

Andy Sloey (HAMLET), a St. Louis native, has been studying and performing improv since 1996. He holds a BFA in performance from the Conservatory of Theatre Arts at Webster University and is a graduate of both the iO Training Center and Second City Conservatory in Chicago. While in Chicago, he performed at the iO Theater with multiple Harold teams, and has also performed at Chicago, Seattle, St. Louis, New York and Los Angeles improv festivals. Andy is currently an adjunct professor at Webster

University's Conservatory of Theatre Arts. He serves as General Manager of The Improv Shop and Artistic Director of its Harold Program.