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**ST. LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
ANNOUNCES 22ND SUMMER MAINSTAGE PRODUCTION
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
IN FOREST PARK, JUNE 1-26**

**PLUS AN EXPANDED SUMMER SEASON INCLUDING:
A SHAKESPEARE MOVIE WEEKEND
AN AFRO-FUTURIST A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM,
SHAKESPEARE IN THE STREETS: BEVO MILL
& ITS FIRST HOLIDAY SHOW
Q BROTHERS CHRISTMAS CAROL**

St. Louis, MO (March 4, 2022) -- **St. Louis Shakespeare Festival** (Tom Ridgely, Producing Artistic Director) announced today that its 22nd Shakespeare in the Park production will be ***Much Ado About Nothing***. The production, originally slated for summer 2020, will begin performances on Wednesday, June 1, with an opening night set for Friday, June 3 at 8:00pm, and will play through June 26. Festival-favorite Bruce Longworth will return for the fifth time as director.

"Shakespeare in the Park has always been about joyfully gathering as a community. Keeping it free and open means that it truly is for everyone," said producing artistic director **Tom Ridgely** in a statement. "It will have been almost three years since we were able to freely invite all of St. Louis to hear one of these gorgeous stories. Now finally, and fully, it's back."

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 Longworth's fifth time helming a Shakespeare in the Park production, having previously directed *Hamlet* (2010), *Othello* (2012), *Henry V* (2014) and *The Winter's Tale* (2017). The creative team includes New York-based **Josh Smith** (Scenic Design) and Festival veterans **Dorothy Englis** (Costume Design), **John Wylie** (Lighting Design) and **Matt Pace & Brien Seyle** (Original Music).

"*Much Ado* is Shakespeare's reminder that loving relationships are what life is all about," Ridgely continued. "It also happens to be the blueprint for just about every romantic comedy that's come since."

It's a celebration of love, and that's exactly what we'll be throwing every night in the Glen: a great big party for love."

On May 19-21 the Festival is partnering with Cinema St. Louis to present the first **Shakespeare Movie Weekend** in the Glen, with three free nights of Shakespeare-inspired films for all ages. On Thursday, **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 **The Lion King**, based loosely on *Hamlet*, will follow on Friday; and the series will end Saturday with St. Louis-born Vincent Price's **Theatre of Blood**, a camp 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.

The Festival's 20-year-old touring program returns for the second time as the free and outdoor public park tour, TOURCO, throughout Missouri and Illinois with **A Midsummer Night's Dream**. The production will be directed by **Tre'von Griffith**, the St. Louis/NYC based theater artist, composer and founder of WerQfest also known as Tre-G, and featuring costumes by acclaimed local fashion designer **Brandin Vaughn**. This 90-minute highly musical afro-futurist adaptation will play in 24 different locations **August 2-27** starting on opening night at Kiener Plaza in the heart of downtown St. Louis.

Shakespeare in the Streets, the internationally recognized community engagement program will take place in the historic St. Louis immigrant neighborhood of **Bevo Mill**. After months of community listening and partnership with the St. Louis International Institute and Oasis International, there will be three free performances near the landmark intersection of Gravois Ave. and Morgan Ford Rd. on **September 22, 23, and 24**. Bevo's rich history as a port of entry for so many immigrants since the city's founding - from German settlers, to Bosnian refugees, to today's Afghan families - will be explored with a large-scale Shakespeare adaptation featuring stories and performances from community members alongside professional artists.

The 22nd season will conclude with the wild and witty holiday spectacular **Q Brothers Christmas Carol** in **December 2022** at the **National Blues Museum**. Created by the Chicago based **Q Brothers Collective** (*Dress the Part* at The Ready Room in 2020), this hip-hop musical and comedic take on Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* has thrilled audiences and critics at Chicago Shakespeare Theater every holiday season since 2013 and this will be its first production outside of Chicago. The *Chicago Sun Times* called it "unlike anything you might imagine Dickens could be."

In addition to a full season of performances, the Festival's commitment to developing new work and talent is continuing with a fourth **Confluence Regional Writers Project** cohort and **Directing Fellowship**. The three midwest playwrights joining a growing group of emerging playwrights include E.K. Doolin (Edwardsville), Hanna Kime (Chicago) and Novid Parsi (St. Louis). The Festival has awarded Directing Fellowships to Miranda Jagels Félix and Cameron Jamarr Davis both of St. Louis.

Leadership support for the 2022 season is provided by The Whitaker Foundation, Regional Arts Commission, Missouri Arts Council, The Bellwether Foundation, Inc., National Endowment for the Arts / Art Works, The Trio Foundation of St. Louis and The Gertrude and William A. Bernoudy Foundation.

Performances for Shakespeare in the Park, TourCo and Shakespeare in the Streets are free and open to the public. Seats and blankets may be reserved or audiences may bring their own. Please visit www.stlshakes.org for more information.

BIOS

Bruce Longworth directed the Festival's Park productions of *The Winter's Tale* (2017), *Henry V* (2014), *Othello* (2012), and *Hamlet* (2010). Additionally, he's created and directed Festival productions with The Pulitzer Museum and the Saint Louis Symphony. In 2021, his adaptation and direction of *Such Sweet Thunder*, created by the Festival with the Nine Network of Public Media, The Big Muddy Dance Company, and Jazz St. Louis was recognized at the St. Louis Arts Awards for Best Collaboration, having previously received the Theatre Critics Circle Award for Best Musical in 2020. Other local and regional directing credits include Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Lyceum Theatre, Mustard Seed Theatre, New Jewish Theatre, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Missouri Thespians, International Thespians, and many shows for the Sargent Conservatory of Theatre Arts at Webster University where he has been on faculty since 1985. Bruce is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Actors' Equity Association.

Tre'von Griffith (better known by stage name Tre G) is an independent artist, creative and music director. He has been apart of the creative team of productions at The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, COCA, St. Louis Black Rep, Metro Theater Company, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis, TLT Productions and companies in Europe and China. In 2020, Tre G formed [WerQFest](#), an annual arts & culture festival celebrating and highlighting black queerness. GO! Magazine by St. Louis Post-Dispatch named Tre G "2016 Rising Star" and has also landed a spot in DELUX Magazine's Emerging 30 Under 30. Tre G received his master's degree in Global Entertainment and Music Business from Berklee College of Music campus in Valencia, Spain. @treg_music

Deanna Jent is a Professor of Theatre at Fontbonne University. Her play *Falling* won the Kevin Kline award for Best New Play of 2011 and was nominated for a Drama Desk Best Play award following its Off-Broadway run in 2012. *Falling* is published by Dramatists Play Service and continues to be produced nationally and internationally. Her adaptations of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces* have been performed at theatres around the country. Other plays include *Bosnian/American: The Dance For Life*, *Imaginary Jesus* and *Six Sisters*. She was the artistic director of Mustard Seed Theatre company from 2007-2019, and has directed for the Illinois Shakespeare Festival, New Jewish Theatre, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis Touring Company, The Orange Girls and ACT Inc. She was named "Best Director of a Musical by the St. Louis Theatre Circle for Mustard Seed Theatre's productions of *All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914* and *Godspell*. She has a BFA from Illinois Wesleyan University and a PhD from Northwestern University.

Q Brothers - Award-winning and internationally acclaimed theater artists, the Q Brothers generate original work fusing hip hop and theater, adapting classic stories to a wholly original, entertaining and fast-paced style of comedic performance that has been energizing audiences for over two decades. The Q Brothers conceived the term add-RAP-tation in 1999 with their Off-Broadway hit *The Bomb-itty of Errors*. MTV has called the Q Brothers "Nothing short of brilliant."