

ST·LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Allie Magee, allie@stlshakes.org

314-775-7412

**ST. LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES
23RD PRODUCTION OF FREE SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK**

T W E L F T H N I G H T

DIRECTED BY LISA PORTES, MAY 31 - JUNE 25 IN FOREST PARK

THE FULL 2023 SEASON INCLUDES:

CONFLUENCE NEW PLAY FESTIVAL

TOURCO *MERRY WIVES*

WORLD PREMIERE **"SHAKESPEARE IN THE STREETS: SOCCER IN STL"**

AND THE HIP-HOP HOLIDAY SHOW *Q BROTHERS CHRISTMAS CAROL*

St. Louis, MO (March 2, 2023) – The St. Louis Shakespeare Festival (Tom Ridgely, Producing Artistic Director) announced its line-up for their 23rd Season of free Shakespeare with *Twelfth Night* as the mainstage production in Forest Park today. Directed by Lisa Portes (Chicago, IL), *Twelfth Night*, will begin public performances in Shakespeare Glen on Wednesday, May 31. Opening night is set for Friday, June 2, at 8:00 p.m.; it will run Tuesday - Sunday nights through June 25.

Often regarded as Shakespeare's greatest comedy, *Twelfth Night* is bursting with romance, music and high times. The tale of Viola and her shipwrecked twin brother - separated and finding their way in a strange new world - this year's Shakespeare in the Park sets them in glamorous, celebrity-filled Miami. In a world of appearances, not everyone is who they seem, but love is love in this glorious Latin-inflected story of longing and reinvention.

"*Twelfth Night* reminds us of the love, laughter and restoration that waits on the other side of our darkest days," said producing artistic director Tom Ridgely in a statement. "And Lisa is one of the most dazzling directors gracing the American theater today. Her vision for it is as joyous and life-affirming as it is revelatory - and every bit as beautiful and welcoming as the great public park where it will play. For a summer of shows about the passions we all share, it's the perfect way to start."

Lisa Portes is a celebrated Chicago-based artist and the current head of the MFA Directing Program at The Theatre School at DePaul University. Her recent credits include Steppenwolf Theatre, Guthrie Theatre, and the Denver Center for Performing Arts. Portes has tapped a predominately Latin creative

team, including Chicago-based Puerto Rican artist **Regina García** for Scenic Design, **Danielle Nieves** (Costume Design) and **David Molina** (Sound Design and Original Music), who previously worked with the Festival on the critically acclaimed and nationally recognized 2021 production of *King Lear*. Webster University and St. Louis-based **John Wylie** will return as Lighting Designer.

Shakespeare in the Park remains free and accessible for all to attend, with no barriers to entry for every one of its 23 productions in June. A limited number of reserved seats and lawn boxes will be available for purchase later this spring.

TourCo brings more free and outdoor Shakespeare productions to public parks throughout Missouri and Illinois. This year's show will be the comedic farce *The Merry Wives of Windsor (Merry Wives)*, directed by **Suki Peters**, a veteran director for many local companies and the current Artistic Director of Cherokee Street Theater. This traveling caravan of six actors will perform a 90-minute *Merry Wives* in a 90's sitcom style where hilarious leading ladies out-wit the men. TourCo will run Tuesday-Sundays from **August 1-27 at 6:30 p.m.** with an opening set for Tuesday, August 1 at Love Bank Park on Cherokee Street – a diverse arts and culture district in South St. Louis.

Shakespeare in the Streets, the internationally recognized community engagement program, will step outside its traditional neighborhood setting to celebrate the uniting force of soccer in the region and across the globe. **Written by Ben Hochman**, award-winning *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* sports columnist, this world premiere play **"Shakespeare in the Streets: Soccer in St. Louis" (w.t)** will take local stories and weave them into a brand new adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Henriad*. The celebration will take place on **Olive Street near the intersection of 22nd in Downtown St. Louis overlooking CITY PARK on September 14, 15 and 16**. The Festival has opened up its story collection to members of the public and seeks memories from all across the region at all levels of play or fans of the sport. Visit stlshakes.org/soccer for more information.

"Shakespeare is the closest thing we have to a global writer, and undeniably, soccer is a global sport," continues Ridgely. "While they might seem worlds apart, the passion, beauty and drama they generate make the stage and the pitch truly kindred spirits. The story of soccer in St. Louis is as deep and rich and revealing as any that could be told, especially as told to - and told by - Ben Hochmann, one of the most talented and exciting writers in St. Louis, in any medium."

The 23rd season will conclude with the wild holiday spectacular **Q Brothers Christmas Carol** in **December 2023** at the **National Blues Museum**—a production the Festival has been planning to mount since 2019. 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* won audiences and critics over at Chicago Shakespeare Theater for ten years, and this will be its second production outside of Chicago.

Please visit www.stlshakes.org for more information about the schedule and full summer of free Shakespeare performances across the region.

The 2023 Season is made possible by Leadership support from Edward Jones and The Whitaker Foundation. Additional sponsorship comes from the Regional Arts Commission, Missouri Arts Council, Switch, The Bellwether Foundation, Inc., National Endowment for the Arts / Art Works, The Trio Foundation of St. Louis, The Gertrude and William A. Bernoudy Foundation, Missouri Department of Tourism, and many more generous individuals.

The 2023 Season Artwork was designed by St. Louis branding firm [Cartel Strategies](#), led by Chief Creative Officer and Founder Carlos Zamora.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Confluence New Play Festival (*previously announced*)
April 14, 15 & 16, 2023 at 7 p.m.
\$12-30 Passes Available Now • Free For Students

Twelfth Night directed by Lisa Portes
May 31 - June 25, 2023
Free in Forest Park, Tuesday-Sundays at 8 p.m.

Merry Wives directed by Suki Peters
August 1 - August 2, 2023
Free in 24 Parks, Tuesday-Sundays at 6:30 p.m.

“Shakespeare in the Streets: Soccer in STL”
Based on William Shakespeare’s plays in The Henriad
Written by Ben Hochman
September 14, 15 & 16, 2023
Free at the Intersection of 22nd and Olive at 8 p.m.

Q Brothers Christmas Carol directed by The Q Brothers Collective
November 21 - December 23, 2023
The Legends Room at the National Blues Museum

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The St. Louis Shakespeare Festival strives to foster community and joy across the St. Louis region through the Shakespearean tradition of art for all. Since 2001, the Festival has grown from producing a single production of Shakespeare in Forest Park to a year-round season of impactful programming in exciting and accessible venues throughout the bi-state area. Artistic and education programs reach over

50,000 patrons and students each season. Their award-winning work has been featured in the *New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Bloomberg News*.

Lisa Portes (Director - Shakespeare in the Park) is a director, educator, advocate and leader whose aim is to define and promote a new American narrative that is driven aesthetically and politically by the world we are becoming, rather than the world we've been. Portes has created work regionally for California Shakespeare Theatre, Guthrie Theatre, the Denver Center, the Cincinnati Playhouse, Children's Theatre Company, Olney Theatre, South Coast Rep, McCarter Theatre LAB, and the Kennedy Center. In Chicago she has directed for Steppenwolf Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Victory Gardens, Timeline Theatre, American Blues, Silk Road Rising, Next Theatre and Teatro Vista. New York credits include productions at Playwrights Horizons and Soho Rep, and developmental work at New York Theatre Workshop, the Flea Theatre and the Public Theatre. Recent projects include *Rightlynd* by Ike Holter (Victory Gardens), *The Thanksgiving Play* by Larissa Fasthorse (Cincinnati Playhouse), *I Come from Arizona* by Carlos Murillo (Children's Theatre Company) *Native Gardens* by Karen Zacarias (Denver Center); *Breach: A Manifesto on Race in American through the Eyes of a Black Girl Recovering from Self Hate* by Antoinette Nwandu (Victory Gardens), *Glass Menagerie* (CalShakes), *Disgraced* by Ayad Akhtar (Cincinnati Playhouse), and *This Is Modern Art* by Idris Goodwin & Kevin Coval (Steppenwolf Theatre). Portes heads the MFA Directing Program at The Theatre School at DePaul University. During her tenure she has revitalized the curriculum, updated the admissions processes, diversified the program by 400%, created one of the strongest production programs for graduate directors in the nation and established a proven pipeline into the profession exemplified by such directors as *Mikael Burke (MFA '18)*: Princess Grace Award, New Generations Fellowship, and Jeff Nominated Director; *Jacob Janssen (MFA '18)*, Artistic Producer, the Coop Theatre; *Lavina Jadhvani (MFA '15)*: Time Out Chicago's 2014 Best Next Generation Stage Director, Drama League Classical Directing Fellowship; *Michael Osinski (MFA '14)*: Drama League Directing Fellowship; *Keira Fromm (MFA '08)* and *Krissy Vanderwarker (MFA '10)* Jeff nominated Chicago directors; and *Marc Pinate (MFA '13)*: Artistic Director of Borderlands Theatre in Tucson.

Suki Peters (Director - TourCo) has directed for numerous professional companies including The Met (in Los Angeles), The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Riverside Shakespeare, St. Louis Shakespeare, West End Players, and Midnight Theatre Company. Previously directed productions include: *It Is Magic* (Midnight Theatre Company), *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, and *The Liar* (St. Louis Shakespeare), *The Hothouse* (West End Players), *The Birthday Party* (Albion Theatre), various parodies of *Gremlins*, *The Thing*, and *Clash of the Titans* (Cherokee Street Theatre), and *Cannibal! The Musical – LIVE!* (for which she received national acclaim and a "Best of" award from the RFT). Winner of the St. Louis Mastermind Award for Outstanding Contributions to Theatre in STL, Suki currently serves as the Artistic Director of Cherokee Street Theatre and the Associate Artistic Director of Albion Theatre. Formerly, she was the Artistic Director of St. Louis Shakespeare and Magic Smoking Monkey Theatre.

Benjamin Hochman (Playwright - Shakespeare in the Streets) a St. Louis native, is an author of four books and sports columnist for The St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Hochman has written numerous columns and profiles about the St. Louis soccer scene, in addition to pieces on the Cardinals, Blues, Mizzou and SLU. He has won sportswriting honors for his work at The Post-Dispatch, The Denver Post and The New Orleans Times-Picayune. A graduate of the Mizzou School of Journalism, Hochman previously attended Clayton High School (to answer everyone's inevitable question!). He is married to Angela LaRocca Hochman and they are parents to a bubbly 2 ½-year-old girl. And while Hochman has accomplished some things professionally over the years, his greatest achievement was getting a sandwich named after him at Protzel's Deli.