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SHAKESPEARE
FESTIVAL

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ST·LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Tom Ridgely, Producing Artistic Director

p r e s e n t s

Q BROTHERS CHRISTMAS CAROL

Based on the novella by Charles Dickens

WRITTEN BY **Q BROTHERS COLLECTIVE (GQ, JQ, JAX, POS)**

DEVELOPED WITH **RICK BOYTON**

MUSIC COMPOSITION BY **JQ**

STARRING

VICTOR MUSONI* as JACOB MARLEY/LIL' TIM/OTHERS
MAYA VINICE PRENTISS as BOB CRATCHIT/PAST/PRESENT/
OTHER

MO SHIPLEY* as OLIVER/FRED/OTHERS

GARRETT YOUNG* as SCROOGE

with

MEL BADY as DJ STANK

CHOREOGRAPHY BY STEPH PAUL

SCENIC DESIGN
WILLIAM ATTAWAY

COSTUME DESIGN
ERIKA MCCLELLAN

LIGHTING DESIGN
JESSE KLUG

PRODUCER
COLIN O'BRIEN

SOUND DESIGN
STEPHEN PTACEK

STAGE MANAGER
KATHRYN BALLARD*

ORIGINAL CASTING
CLAIRE SIMON

ASST. STAGE MNGR
PATRICK SILER*

DIRECTED BY
Q BROTHERS COLLECTIVE
(GQ, JQ & JAX)

*denotes member, Actors' Equity Association

St. Louis Shakespeare Festival operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. STL Shakes Fest employs members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Local #6 and United Scenic Artists, Local 829 AFL-CIO, Stage, Directors and Choreographers Society and is a member of Theatre Communications Group, Inc.

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SHAKESPEARE'S CHRISTMAS STORY

BY MARIA DEVLIN McNAIR

Why should a Shakespeare festival produce Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*? Because *Carol* is Dickens' answer to one of Shakespeare's most haunting questions.

Dickens opens his story by alluding to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*:

"Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood ... If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's Father died before the play began, there would be nothing ... remarkable in his taking a stroll at night ..."

Hamlet opens, like *Carol*, in the dark and cold, in an atmosphere of expectation and dread, as soldiers await the ghost of Hamlet's father. Scholar Peter McCullough argues that Shakespeare created this scene by drawing on his culture's associations with Advent – the four-week season preceding Christmas. Christians in Advent "both looked forward in hope" to the Christmas arrival of Christ the advocate and "recalled 'with fear and trembling' ... Christ's second coming at the Apocalypse."

The ghost in *Hamlet*, who gives Hamlet his unbearable duty of revenge, provokes apocalyptic fear of final judgment. Marley, the ghost in *Carol*, seems to resemble this ghost at first; Dickens even describes him with similar terms. But he's ulti-

mately an advocate. He comes to help Scrooge escape the purgatorial torment in which he, like Hamlet's ghost, is trapped.

Hamlet is known for the philosophical questions posed by its protagonist. But Hamlet's uncle Claudius, who killed Hamlet's father, poses his own vital question: after you commit a great sin, how can there be restoration? Claudius believes that divine mercy is given to anyone who repents for their crimes. But, he asks, "what can [repentance do], when one cannot repent?" Claudius finds he cannot repent and ask forgiveness for the murder "since I am still possessed / Of those effects for which I did the murder." He holds too tightly to those things he wanted to gain by killing his brother – the





crown and the queen. Scrooge, too, clings tightly to his “effects,” to his property: “Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand ... Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!”

So what can help these characters loosen their grasp? In *Hamlet*, one character tells another, “Purpose is but the slave to memory.” The line functions as a warning. But Dickens transforms it into an answer. How can we repent? By remembering. Claudius calls for angels to help him. For Scrooge, this prayer is actually answered. Scrooge is visited by three spirits who, says scholar Joseph Pearce, are “best described as angels.” And what they do is awaken his memory.

Pearce writes that “In Shakespeare’s play as in Dickens’ story the ghosts serve ... to open us to the spiritual realities that we are prone to forget.” Claudius doesn’t doesn’t

seem to have anything in his consciousness with enough substantial counteracting force to overcome his worldly attachments and motivate him to change his life. That’s the problem Dickens’ spirits strive to solve. They resurrect before Scrooge his schoolmates, his sister, his colleagues, his impoverished clerk, and his nephew. The spiritual realities of their love for him and their claims on him are things he has forgotten. The spirits help him remember – and these memories prove strong enough to release his “tight-fisted” attachments and re-commit his mind and heart to those realities:

“During the whole of this time [at his old employer’s Christmas party], Scrooge[’s] ... heart and soul were in the scene ... He corroborated everything, remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the strangest agitation.”



The third spirit arrives like the apocalyptic judge, showing Scrooge his own tomb much as Hamlet looks in the skull and sees his own face. But in the end, Scrooge's final doom is forestalled. The "agitation" first provoked by memory becomes a transformation of character, and he is given the chance to transform his life accordingly: "Best and happiest of all, the Time before him was his own, to make amends in!"

Carol suggests that we can face Claudius' problem of how to repent and repair by summoning the graces of memory. Hamlet is obsessed with proper remembrance of the dead. *Carol* insists just as strongly on remembrance, of the dead and the living. People who love or have loved us; people we know to be in need; even Dickens' story itself – if our purposes are directed by these memories, we're less likely to shut up our hearts to all those who are, as Fred says in a

Hamlet-esque image, "fellow-passengers to the grave."

Shakespeare resurrected several old stories to create his *Hamlet*. Dickens did the same to write *A Christmas Carol*. Now both stories are given new life in the wonderfully innovative *Q Brothers Christmas Carol*. We hope you enjoy this production and that you'll join us again next summer for more adventures with Shakespeare.

¹Peter McCullough, "Christmas at Elsinore"

²Joseph Pearce, "Holy Ghosts & the Spirit of Christmas: "A Christmas Carol"

Photos by Joe Mazza / Brave Lux Chicago



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LET'S PARTY

Enjoy festive drinks from CLUB FEZZY and explore the National Blues Museum exhibits before the performance. The exhibits remain open through 8 p.m. (3 p.m. on matinees), and the bar is open through the end of the performance.

**Run time is approximately 80 minutes,
no intermission.**

Restrooms are located across the hall from the performance space.

Parking Vouchers: If you purchased a parking add-on for the 7th Street Parking Garage, pick up your voucher at the Box Office and take it with to give to the attendant or use at the parking kiosk upon exiting the garage.

GET INVOLVED

Volunteers support the Festival year-round. Because the Festival is almost entirely funded by donations, volunteers are critical to its success – especially at Shakespeare in the Park. Friends assist staff with audience and hospitality services and in the Festival office.

To all of our volunteers, thank you for supporting the Festival with your precious gift: your time! Get involved at stlshakes.org/volunteer



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THE CAST



Mel Bady (DJ STANK) is passionate about bringing love into whatever she does. She uses theater and dance as a tool to empathize with others and to share real human experiences. She has performed and worked closely with many local companies like St. Louis Black Rep Company, Consuming Kinetics Dance Company, and TLT Productions. Her latest Shakespeare performance was as Hortensio in *Taming of The Shrew* with Chicago based Stonesoup Shakespeare Company, and Lysander in St. Louis Festival's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Film credits: *The Company You Keep* (Fruit Barring Studios). Currently, Mel enjoys teaching Drama and Dance at Kipp Inspire Middle School, serving her community as a doula, and most of all, being a Wife and Mother. She is thrilled to have the opportunity to work with St. Louis Shakespeare Festival again.

Victor Musoni* (Jacob Marley/Lil'Tim/ Others and Dance Captain)



is an actor, writer and dancer excited to make his St. Louis Debut. Select theater credits include:

Toni Stone (Goodman); *The Most Spectacularly Lamentable Trial of Miz Martha Washington*; *What*

to Send Up When it Goes Down (Congo Square); *Queen of the Night* (Victory Gardens); *America V2.1, are you ready to smash white things?*, *No Child* (Definition Theatre Company); *La Havana Madrid* (The Den Theater); Television and film: *Me, We*; *The Tensile Strength of Air*; *61st Street*; *WHOLE*; *Chicago Med* and *6x9*. Choreography: *Alai-yo* (Definition); *Long Way Down* (TWUSA/Apollo). Musoni is an ensemble member of Definition Theatre and is represented by Paonessa Talent Agency.

Maya Vinice Prentiss (Bob



Cratchit/Past/ Present/Others) is an SAFD Certified Actor-Combatant, fight choreographer, and Dialect Coach. Her Chicago acting credits include *Clyde's*;

School Girls; or, the African Mean Girls Play the world premiere of *How to Catch Creation* (Goodman Theatre), *An Octoroon* (Definition Theatre Company); *Eclipsed* (Jeff Awards Nominee- Pegasus Theatre Company); and *Romeo and Juliet* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre). Regional credits include *School Girls; or, the African Mean Girls Play* (TheatreSquared); *As You Like It, Pride and Prejudice*, and *Caesar* (Illinois Shakespeare Festival); and *Origin Story* (Illinois Theatre). TV credits include *The Chi* (Showtime). Her fight direction credits include

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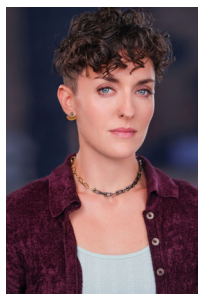
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THE CAST

EthiopianAmerica (Jeff Award Recipient, Definition Theatre), *The Most Lamentable Trial of Miz Martha Washington* (Steppenwolf Theatre); *Measure for Measure* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre); *Marie Antoinette and the Magical Negroes* (The Story Theatre), *Windwalkers*, *The House of Baba Yaga* (The Impostors Theatre) and *August: Osage County* (The Station Theatre). Dialect Coaching credits include *The Tragedy of King Christophe* (The House Theatre) and *School Girls; or, the African Mean Girls Play* (Goodman Theatre). She holds a BA in Drama from Spelman College and an MFA in Acting from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



Mo Shipley* (Oliver/Fred/Others)

(They/Them) is a multidisciplinary artist from Chicago, IL. Theater credits include Ginevra Fanshawe in Lookingglass The-

atre's world premiere of *Villette*, *Corduroy* (Emerald City Theatre), *Southern Gothic* (Windy City Playhouse), a puppeteer in *Rough House/Adventure Stages' Stranger and The Shadow*, and a collaborator/deviser with-in Free Street Theatre's *50 in 50!* A City Wide Celebration. Mo has also worked with Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Forks & Hope, Red Tape Theatre, Trap Door Theatre, Haven, and Strawdog

Theatre. You can view some of Mo's most recent work in *I Didn't Mean to go Mental*, a new comedy series from Carly Glenn and Almost Pi Productions. Mo is immeasurably grateful to their partner and chosen family for the boundless support and love. <http://www.moshipleyp.com>

Garrett Young* (Scrooge)



to St. Louis Shakespeare Festival for the first time since Q Brothers' *Dress the Part* in early 2020 (St. Louis Theatre Circle Nomination for Outstanding

Leading Performer in a Comedy). Other theatre credits include: Lynn Nottage's *Clyde's* (Goodman Theatre/Mark Taper Forum), *Trayf* (Geffen Playhouse- LA Drama Critics Nomination), and *My Father's War* (TheatreSquared). TV credits include J.J. Abrams' *Duster* & NBC's *Chicago Fire*, *New Amsterdam*, *Chicago Med*, & *Chicago Justice*. Garrett is a founding member of the Santa Fe-based immersive collective the Exodus Ensemble. Training: The Theatre School at DePaul university & the British American Drama Academy. @garrettryoung



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CREATIVE TEAM



Q Brothers (Creators/Directors)

Hailing from Chicago and known around the world for their hip hop add-rap-tations of Shakespeare plays and other classic works, the Q

Brothers are a collective of humans who make art that rhymes. You might recognize GQ from the movie *Drumline*, or maybe you heard JQ's work as composer for Hulu's new hit TV show *The Bear*. From their recent family-friendly album *Buggin*, to their freestyle-inspired sets at Lollapalooza and Austin City Limits, to DJ'ing dance parties for people of all ages and backgrounds, one thing is for certain – these brothers are about family. They love what they do, and they love doing it for you! @qbrothers1



Jackson Doran (Creator/Director)

is an actor, writer, and arts educator. He is the Education Director and one of the four core members of The Q Brothers Col-

lective. Highlights include "ms. estrada" with The Flea in New York, "Long Way Home". With the Chicago Children's Choir, a nine year sit down run at the Tony Award winning Chicago Shakespeare Theater with, *Q Brothers Christmas Carol*. He has also toured the world performing in The Q Brothers' *Othello: The Remix*. Originally

commissioned and premiering at The Globe Theatre in 2012, *Othello: The Remix* has travelled to Poland, Germany, UAE, New Zealand, Romania, and Australia with sit down runs at The Edinburgh Fringe, London's Unicorn Theater and Off-Broadway presented by John Leguizamo. Other theater credits include the Kristoffer Diaz world premiere of *Welcome to Arroyo's* at American Theater Company, a year-long internship at The Milwaukee Repertory Theater, *Funk it Up About Nothin'* (World Tour), playwriting commissions at Steppenwolf, Writer's Theater, The City of Chicago, and adjunct professorships at Northwestern University, The University of Iowa, UIC, and Connecticut College. He is a member of the Chicago comedy and rap group, The Rap Pack.



Steph Paul (Choreography)

is a first-gen Haitian-American director/choreographer who clears space for uninhibited physical truth. What comes up must

come out. Her work includes *Sanctuary City* (Steppenwolf Theatre), *How to Defend Yourself* (New York Theatre Workshop, Victory Gardens, Humana Festival), *Where the Mountain Meets the Sea* (Manhattan Theatre Club, Humana Festival), *The Royale* (Kansas City Repertory Theatre, City Theatre, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis), *The Wolves* (Studio Theatre). Additional credits include Lincoln

CREATIVE TEAM

Center, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Goodman Theatre, Definition Theatre. International credits include NYU Abu Dhabi, Royal Opera House Muscat, National Theatre of Scotland. Steph is a Princess Grace Award-winner in Theatre, Helen Hayes Award-winner and a St. Louis Theatre Circle and Jeff Award nominee. She is a proud NYTW Usual Suspect, Chicago Dance Crash Artistic Associate, and SDC member. Steph is also a big fan of curating playlists and watching all of the sports. www.stephpaul.com



William Attaway (Scenic Design)

was born in New York City and raised in Barbados. Over 40 years ago, at the age of 16, he started his studio in Venice Beach, excelling

across multiple artistic mediums, including ceramics, painting, sculpture and mosaic murals. Solo and group exhibits include 3.I. Art Residency and Show in Sais Sac, France and an Art Residency Grant with Taipei Artist's Village in Taipei, Taiwan. His work is in private and public collections across the Greater Los Angeles area: Oracle Industries/Larry Ellison, Wynn Hotels, Beverly Hills Hotel, National History Museum of Los Angeles, and Gallery Lakai. Patrons of his art include Will.I.Am, Jill Scott, Jamie Foxx, CCH Pounder, Whoopi Goldberg, Dave Chapelle, and John and Angela

Witherspoon. Internationally his work has been featured at the Harry Belafonte Foundation (NY), the Annual Mino Ceramic Exhibition (Mino, Japan), and the United Nations Global Conference Meeting (Bridgetown, Barbados). @attawayfineart



Erika McClellan (Costume Design)

I am a St. Louis native with a background in mental health and personal styling. I enjoy expressing myself and helping others

to express themselves through art and fashion. I connected with St. Louis Shakespeare Festival in 2020 during the pandemic for the socially distant installment of *A Christmas Carol*. I'm excited and honored to bring this production to life on a St. Louis stage in 2023.



Jesse Klug (Lighting Design)

Off Broadway: *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* (Lortel, Hewes Nomination), *The Screwtape Letters* (Off Broad-

way and National Tour), *The Hunchback Variations*, *Romulus*, and *The Hourglass*. Regional: Goodman Theatre, Drury Lane, Broadway in Chicago, Chicago Shakespeare, Marriott Theatre, Victory Gardens, Lookingglass Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Asolo Rep,

CREATIVE TEAM

Court Theatre, Writers Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory, Geffen Playhouse, Fulton Theatre, Portland Center Stage, Indiana Repertory, American Theatre Company, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Northlight Theatre, First Stage Milwaukee, Timeline Theatre Company. He is a Jeff and After Dark Award recipient. www.jessekluglightingdesign.com

Stephen Ptacek (Sound Design) is a Chicago-based Sound Designer, Composer, Musician and Audio Engineer. This production marks 10 years of sounds with the Q Brothers, going back to 2013 when he subbed into the Mix For *Othello: The Remix*. A Small Sample Of Other Sound Design Credits Over The Past 20 Years Include *Nell Gwynn* And *Q Brothers Christmas Carol* At Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, *Ever In The Glades* At The Kennedy Center, *Mies Julie* At Victory Gardens, *The Skin Of Our Teeth* With Remy Bumpo, *Killer Angels* At Lifeline, *The Twins Would Like To Say* With Dog & Pony At Steppenwolf, And *Faster* At The Side Project. When He's Not Designing He Engineers Live Sound At The Lyric Opera, The Harris Theatre for Music & Dance, The Goodman Theatre, and abroad.

Kathryn Ballard* (Stage Manager) is thrilled to be working with the Q Brothers again having stage managed the award-winning *Dress the Part* and delighted to be back with the Festival having also stage managed the award-winning *Into the Breeches* and more recently the Shakespeare in the Streets production, Bevo Mill: "Winds of

Change". Kathryn has worked in theatre locally with STAGES St. Louis, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, St. Louis Black Repertory Theatre, New Jewish Theatre, Tennessee Williams Festival, The New Theatre, Imaginary Theatre Co., Historyonics, off the cuff theatre, Muny Student Theatre Project and Muny 1st Stage. Her regional credits include Kansas City Rep, Barter Theatre, Horse Cave Theatre and Nebraska Theatre Caravan.



Colin O'Brien (Producer) is in his ninth season with the Festival. Colin produces the Dogtown St. Patrick's Day Parade and O'Fallon Her-

itage and Freedom Festival through his event company, Blank Slate and has booked hundreds of concerts including Styx, Pat Benatar, and Hannibal Buress. He is on the board of Cinema St. Louis and is involved with dozens of other events and venues around St. Louis. He and his friend AJ have collaborated for ten years running to throw a much-beloved annual Christmas party. IG: @thecolnobrien

Patrick Siler* (Assistant Stage Manager) is very pleased to be working for the Festival for the first time. He is a local stage manager, actor, musician, and director. Patrick's professional stage and opera credits include work in Dallas, St. Louis, Kansas City and Chicago.

*AEA Member

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Patrick Siler.....Assistant Stage Manager
CJ Langdon.....Front of House Manager

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ABOUT US

ST·LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

In 2001, after years of planning and preparation from community leaders, the Festival first began the annual tradition of free Shakespeare under the stars in Forest Park with a production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Since the initial two-week run that attracted 33,000 people, the Festival has grown into a year-round institution producing more than 50 public performances for nearly 50,000 patrons and students annually. Shakespeare in the Park remains an unofficial start of summer for many St. Louisans.

Other standout programs include the Festival's long-running touring production in the schools and public spaces. TourCo is now one of the largest outdoor free Shakespeare tours in the world, visiting 24 different communities each summer. The internationally recognized Shakespeare in the Streets is a model for its deep community-building celebrations each fall. There have been 10 productions in 11 communities, including Cherokee Street, The Grove, Maplewood, Clayton, Old North, Downtown, 24:1, Brussels, The Ville, Bevo Mill, and in 2023, it featured its first non-geographic cross-sector collaboration with the St. Louis soccer community.

Combined with its new works programs and educational workshops - the Festival is recognized as an arts and culture leader of the region and has received numerous awards, including "Best Theatre Company", "Most Innovative Arts Organization", "Exemplary Community Achievement", and "What's Right With the Region". As featured in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Bloomberg* and *American Theatre Magazine*.

MISSION: Foster community and joy across the St. Louis region through the Shakespearean tradition of art for all.





CONFLUENCE NEW PLAY FESTIVAL

The Festival launched the Confluence Regional Writers Project in 2018 to invest in promising and underrepresented writers in the bi-state area – and to help elevate their unique voices into the national conversation.

The yearlong program offers playwrights a safe space to take risks on new work via a generous stipend, guided mentorship and a supportive cohort of fellow playwrights. The year concludes with a staged reading at the Confluence New Play Festival.

Thirteen new plays have been commissioned for the program, five of which have gone on to receive full productions, most recently *Brontë Sister House Party* (SATE) by Courtney Bailey, which received five St. Louis Theater Circle Awards, including "Best New Play" and *Feminine Energy* by Myah Gary (Mustard Seed Theatre).

PAST FELLOWS

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Elizabeth Archer (Chicago) | Hanna Kime (Chicago) |
| Courtney Bailey (St. Louis) | Carter Lewis, (St. Louis) |
| Melda Beaty (Chicago) | <i>Master Playwright</i> |
| Shualee Cook (St. Louis) | Rob Maesaka (St. Louis) |
| e.k. Doolin (Edwardsville) | Novid Parsi (St. Louis) |
| Myah Gary (Carbondale) | Delaney Piggins (St. Louis) |
| Kristin Idaszak (Chicago) | Mariah Richardson (St. Louis) |

THE 2023 FELLOWS

Their newly commissioned works will premiere in a three-day reading festival in the spring of next 2024.



Maiya A. Corral
Chicago, IL



Charlie Meyers
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Cameron Noel
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