

ST·LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

EMBARGOED UNTIL 8 AM on MARCH 7, 2024

James Lesch

James@pattan.co

314-616-9310

Allie Magee

allie@stlshakes.org

314-775-7412

St. Louis Shakespeare Festival announces 2024 Season: With “As You Like It,” “The Tempest,” Shakespeare in the Streets in East St. Louis and “Christmas Carol: The Remix,” planners expect widespread appeal

St. Louis, MO (March 6, 2024) – The St. Louis Shakespeare Festival (Tom Ridgely, Producing Artistic Director) announced today its line-up for their 24th season of free Shakespeare with *As You Like It* as the mainstage production in Forest Park directed by Nancy Bell. *As You Like It* will begin public performances in Shakespeare Glen on Wednesday, May 29. Opening night is set for Friday, May 31, at 8:00 p.m., and it will run Tuesday - Sunday nights through June 23.

The full 2024 Season lineup includes the previously announced Confluence New Play Festival (April 12-14), TourCo, a free and outdoor public parks tour of *The Tempest* directed by Tom Ridgely (July 30-August 25), and the return of *Christmas Carol: The Remix* (November 29-December 22). The Festival’s next Shakespeare in the Streets community storytelling event will take place in 2025 in East St. Louis.

Shakespeare in the Park is the Festival’s flagship production and the official start of the summer season. As one of the world’s largest free and outdoor Shakespeare productions (31,000 attended in 2023 – a return to pre-covid attendance numbers), the shows are accessible for everyone, always, and this year’s pastoral romantic comedy, *As You Like It*, will thrill audiences in Forest Park. The brilliant and resourceful heroine, Rosalind, and her friends, exiled from the confines of city life to the Forest of Arden, are free to explore new identities, friendships, and (of course) love. Nancy Bell’s production will weave live music and new songs from St. Louis indie singer-songwriter Beth Bombara, with a lavish gilded age setting. This year’s cast and creative team are composed primarily of some of the finest St. Louis-based artists.

Tom Ridgely, Producing Artistic Director for The St. Louis Shakespeare Festival, sees lots of momentum going into the 2024 season: “The attendance for *Twelfth Night* last year was our greatest since 2018, and the Festival continues to attract the largest Shakespeare audiences in the country.” He added, “*As You Like It* is the quintessential park show, and Nancy Bell is St. Louis’s quintessential theater artist. We’re over the moon that she’s making her directorial debut in the Glen and can’t wait to hear it paired with live original music by St. Louis’s favorite singer-songwriter, Beth Bombara.”

Nancy Bell previously directed the award-winning St. Louis Shakespeare Festival production *Into the Breches!* Co-created and wrote many of the Shakespeare in the Streets productions and was the founding program

ST·LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

manager of the Confluence Regional Writers Project. Under Bell's direction, Shakespeare in the Park favorites **Scott Neale** and **Dottie Marshall Englis** will return as **Scenic and Costume Designers**, respectively; **Beth Bombara** will make her theatrical debut as on-stage performer and **Composer and Musical Director**; and **Denisse Chavez** will provide **Lighting Design**.

"As *You Like It* is my favorite Shakespeare play because it's a grand invitation for us to lighten up, warm up, and embrace each other in the midst of all our differences," says Director Nancy Bell. "Only Shakespeare can pull off this kind of extravagant insistence on love and acceptance, against all the odds and in the face of overwhelming obstacles. It's the ultimate invocation of springtime."

Bell continues, "I'm especially thrilled to be directing a show that is such a proud celebration of St. Louis's distinctive and resilient theatre scene. We're honored to be working this year with so much of our incredible local talent, both on stage and off. Even our guest artists from New York and Los Angeles are natives of STL, and it's a joy to welcome them back to play in the Glen once more."

TourCo, one of the country's largest touring Shakespeare productions, returns for a fourth year with ***The Tempest***, directed by Festival artistic director Tom Ridgely. This larger-than-life presentation of Shakespeare's enchanting romance will transform public parks into a magical island full of mischief, magic and plots of revenge in epic proportions. A cast of six will perform a 90-minute free and outdoor adaptation in 24 parks throughout the metro area. The show will run Tuesday-Sundays August 1-27 at 6:30 p.m. with an opening set for Tuesday, July 30, at Spring Church in Grand Center.

Also announced, the next **Shakespeare in the Streets** world premiere will be in partnership with **East St. Louis**, as part of the Festival's internationally recognized community engagement program. In partnership with the ESTL community, including the Jackie Joyner Kersee Foundation and the House of Miles – journalist DeAsia Paige (*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *Belleville News-Democrat*, *VICE*) will write a new play based on real stories of residents from the City of Champions using Shakespeare's universal language. The Festival has opened up its story collection to members of the public who have or currently live, work or visited East St. Louis. Visit stlshakes.org/estl for more information.

The 2024 season will conclude with the wild holiday spectacular ***Christmas Carol: The Remix*** (previously titled *Q Brothers Christmas Carol*). Created by the Chicago-based Q Brothers Collective (*Dress the Part* at The Ready Room in 2020), this hip-hop musical is a comedic take on Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

Tickets for reserved seating in Shakespeare Glen (\$20-\$300) will go on sale to the public on Wednesday, March 13 at 10 a.m. (Festival member pre-sale begins on Friday, March 8). Visit stlshakes.org for more information.

St. Louis Shakespeare Festival's commitment to radically accessible free theater is made possible through the support of hundreds of Festival members and supporters throughout the year. Lead support of the 2024 Season comes from the Regional Arts Commission, Edward Jones, the Whitaker Foundation, Switch, the Missouri Arts Council, National Endowment for the Arts, The Bellwether Foundation, The Trio Foundation of St. Louis and First Bank.

ST·LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

The 2024 Season Artwork was designed by St. Louis branding firm [CARTEL Strategies](#), led by Chief Creative Officer and Founder Carlos Zamora.

LINK TO MEDIA ASSETS: <https://stlshakes.smugmug.com/2024-SEASON>

FULL SCHEDULE

Confluence New Play Festival

April 12-14, 2024 at 3333 Washington in Grand Center

Shakespeare in the Park

As You Like It by William Shakespeare

Directed by Nancy Bell

May 29 - Jun 23, 2024 • Free in Shakespeare Glen at Forest Park

TourCo

The Tempest by William Shakespeare

Directed by Tom Ridgely

July 30 - August 25, 2024 • Free in 24 Parks across Missouri and Illinois

***More dates coming soon!**

7/30 - Spring Church (STL, MO)

7/31 - Old Post Office Plaza (STL, MO)

8/1 - Metter Park (Columbia, IL)

8/2 - Schroeder Park (Manchester, MO)

8/3 - Carondelet Park (STL, MO)

8/6 - Tower Grove Park (STL, MO)

8/8 - O'Day Park Amphitheater (O'Fallon)

8/9 - Cortex Commons (STL, MO)

8/14 - Chesterfield Amphitheater (Chesterfield, MO)

8/16 - City Park (Edwardsville, IL)

8/18 - Bellevue Park (Bellville, IL)

8/21 - Fairground Park (STL, MO)

8/22 - The Quad at Washington University (STL, MO)

8/23 - Love Bank Park (STL, MO)

8/24 - Hermann Farm (Hermann, MO)

8/25 - January-Wabash Park (Ferguson, MO)

Holiday Show

Christmas Carol: The Remix by Q Brothers Collective

Directed by The Q Brothers Collective

November 29 - December 22, 2024

Shakespeare in the Streets: East St. Louis

Late Summer 2025 in East St. Louis

ST·LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

COMPANY BIOS

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*.

Tom Ridgely is a Drama Desk-nominated director who has developed or presented work at the Public Theater, The Old Globe, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, Red Bull and more, and his productions have won DFW Theater Critics Forum and ECNY Awards and been nominated for St. Louis Theater Circle, Connecticut Critics Circle and BroadwayWorld Connecticut Awards. He came to the Festival from Waterwell in New York City, the company he co-founded and led from 2002-2018. There he helped create and produce more than a dozen world premieres and adaptations of classics nominated for three IT awards, a Drama Desk, a New York Magazine Culture Award and a Village Voice "Best of NYC". Since taking over the Festival, he has won a St. Louis Magazine A-List Award for "New Arts Leader" and oversaw the Festival's shift to developing and producing new work, which also won an A-List Award for "New Programming".

Nancy Bell (Director) is an actor, director, and playwright with a body of work spanning thirty years. Her plays "Blow Winds!", "Remember Me", "The World Begun", "Good in Everything", "Old Hearts Fresh", and "The New World" were produced at the St. Louis Shakespeare Festival, where she served as Playwright-in-Residence. Her other plays have been developed or produced in California, New York and elsewhere. As a performer, she has worked at the Manhattan Theatre Club, New York Theatre Workshop, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Old Globe Theatre, South Coast Repertory, Geffen Playhouse and dozens of others nationally. Among many other TV and film credits, she appeared on *Star Trek Voyager* and as Susan Bates on the long-running soap *Guiding Light*. As a director, she has worked at St. Louis Shakespeare Festival, the New Jewish Theatre, St. Louis Actors Studio, COCA, and many others. Nancy is Associate Professor of Theatre at Saint Louis University. www.NancyEllenBell.com
Instagram: BellGirlSTL

Q Brothers Collective Hailing from Chicago and known worldwide 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 have 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 certain – these brothers are about family. They love what they do, and they love doing it for you! @qbrothers1