

ST·LOUIS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

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St. Louis Shakespeare Festival Appoints New Executive Director

This new appointment comes as the Festival celebrates its record breaking 25th anniversary season

ST. LOUIS (October 16, 2025) - Today, the St. Louis Shakespeare Festival announced the appointment of Kate Tichelkamp as its first Executive Director, joining Producing Artistic Director Tom Ridgely in leading one of the region's most dynamic and fast-growing arts institutions. Tichelkamp previously served as the Festival's Director of Development.

"Kate is a brilliant leader and a deep believer in the power of arts to uplift communities," said Ridgely. "She's bold and innovative, and every day she inspires us to think bigger and do better for St. Louis. She's made a huge impact already, and with her in this new role the Festival's sure to expand its reach dramatically - throughout our region and beyond. I can't wait to get to work with her even more closely in the years ahead."

As director of development, Tichelkamp forged key new partnerships with both local and national funders and **increased contributed revenue by more than 75%** in just two years. In both those years she set **new Festival records for total fundraising**. This past year also saw record-setting earned revenue, and overall the Festival has more than doubled in size since Ridgely's arrival in 2018.

"Stepping into this role at this moment in the Festival's history is incredibly energizing and inspiring. I am so proud of the growth we've achieved in recent years, at a time when many theater companies are scaling back or folding," **said Kate Tichelkamp**. "We know this is only possible because we're here in St. Louis, where the community champions bold ideas and remains steadfastly committed to supporting free, accessible art for all. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to work alongside a visionary leader like Tom to shepherd the Festival into this next era. Keep your eyes peeled - we're just getting started!"

"Kate's appointment marks an exciting next chapter for the Festival. Under Tom and Kate's leadership, we're poised to elevate the Glen into a truly world-class venue while expanding our reach across the bi-state region, said **Henry S. Webber, the Festival's Board Chair**. "Together, they're committed to nurturing new voices, commissioning innovative work that starts here and travels far beyond St. Louis, and deepening the

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sense of community that defines everything the Festival does. It's about more than growth — it's about creating spaces where stories, relationships, and joy can flourish.”

The move to a co-leadership model comes at a moment of remarkable growth for the Festival, which celebrated its 25th anniversary season with expanded programming and new community partnerships.

In its 2025 season, the Festival presented **115 events** across the region - a **more than 50% increase** over previous years. Highlights included the world-premiere of *Romeo & Zooliet*, featuring life-size animal puppets by the designers of *The Lion King* and the subject of a national news story on *NPR*. The Festival's touring production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* added **eight new partner locations** throughout Missouri and Illinois. And its anniversary presentation of *Hamlet* in Forest Park withstood heavy tornado damage to its scenery and lighting to become one of the most acclaimed shows in its history.

Now, the St. Louis Shakespeare Festival enters its next era of growth and innovation — building on 25 years of community partnership to expand its offerings, invest in new artistic voices, and continue its mission to present free, world-class theater that unites and inspires the St. Louis region and beyond.

Media Assets:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1HmkFrLZpBIMAzs66aGnkuyKI_Lu7F-i-?usp=sharing

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 2025 Season comes from Edward Jones, Regional Arts Commission ARPA for the Arts, Whitaker Foundation, PNC ArtsAlive, Switch, Missouri Arts Council, Pershing Charitable Trust, and The Hearst Foundations.

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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*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Bloomberg News*.