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For more information contact:
Allie Magee / amagee@sfstl.com / 314-775-7412

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St. Louis, MO (April 1, 2020) -- Shakespeare Festival St. Louis (Tom Ridgely, Producing Artistic Director) announced today that it was officially postponing its 2020 Shakespeare in the Park production, Much Ado About Nothing directed by Bruce Longworth, to August 12-September 6 in order to provide the best possible chance of safely gathering artists and audiences for its 20th anniversary season.

“For the past 20 years in St. Louis, the opening of Shakespeare in the Park has helped to mark the unofficial start of summer,” said Tom Ridgely in a statement. “This year it’s clear that the only way to care for our actors, crew, volunteers and community is to give as much time as possible for social distancing measures to take effect and hope to be one of the ways we all bring our summer 2020 to a much happier close.”

The previously announced creative team of Matt Pace & Brien Seyle (Original Music), Josh Smith (Scenic Design), Dorothy Englis (Costume Design), John Wylie (Lighting Design) and Kathy Ruvuna (Sound Design) remains the same.

In response to the widespread cancellation of live events, the Festival has already shifted to generating a full schedule of new and original content for the online and social media platforms under the umbrella of “ShakespeareTV”. These include the previously aired “watch party” of its canceled regional tour of Cymbeline, a live reading of “Venus and Adonis” (which Shakespeare wrote during a plague-induced theater closure) and a five-night reading of Albert Camus’ postwar masterpiece The Plague. Together they’ve already been viewed 10,000 times.

The all-new programming will run four to six nights a week between now and when the original park season would have closed on Sunday, June 21. It will feature:

● SHAKE20: a 20th anniversary reboot of the beloved engagement program SHAKE 38 featuring community responses to 20 of Shakespeare’s plays streaming on Facebook and Instagram Tue-Sun at 8p during the Festival’s originally scheduled run, May 29-June 21. Like the original, SHAKE20 will be a region-wide collaboration involving artists and organizations including
SHAKE38 alumni: Slightly Askew Theater, Prison Performing Arts: The Alumni Group, R.S. Theatrictics, Poor Monsters and Theater Nuevo.

- **THE ZOOM PLAYS**: a weekly series of 20- to 30-minute original plays written especially to performed live over the online videoconferencing app Zoom, created and performed by local playwrights, directors and actors.
- **GREEN SHOW MONDAYS**: an eclectic lineup variety programming, featuring music, comedy and performance from Festival favorites.
- **SHAKESPEARE AND CHILL**: a special selection of Shakespeare-inspired movies featuring live commentary from artists and scholars, co-curated by Cinema St. Louis.
- **OTHER ONE-NIGHT-ONLY EVENTS**: to be announced.

“When the plague closed Shakespeare’s theater he wrote the epic poem ‘Venus and Adonis’ and did something he’d never even contemplated doing with his plays: he had it printed and published,” Ridgely added. “In other words, he completely reinvented himself as an artist and transformed the way in which he connected with his audience. We draw our inspiration from him, and so rather than just put our past work online, the Festival is taking this opportunity to develop not only new content but new forms and new ways of building community through plays and poetry - and offering it up to St. Louis absolutely free of charge. We need the power of sharing a space and a story now more than ever, even if the space is a virtual one.”

Please visit [www.sfstl.com](http://www.sfstl.com) for more information.

Leadership support for Shakespeare Festival St. Louis’ 2020 season is provided by the Whitaker Foundation. The Festival is also funded in part by the Hearst Foundations, The Bellwether Foundation, The Bayer Fund, the Missouri Arts Council, the Regional Arts Commission, and the Arts & Education Council of Greater St. Louis.

**Shakespeare Festival St. Louis** presents Shakespeare and works inspired by his legacy of storytelling. Since 2001, the festival has grown from producing a single production of Shakespeare in the Park to a year-round season of impactful theater in exciting and accessible venues throughout the St. Louis community. The festival’s artistic and education programs reached over 50,000 patrons and students during the 2018 season and have reached over one million since 2001. In 2019, the Festival received a “What’s Right with the Region” award from Focus St. Louis.