For Immediate Release
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Arts Midwest Announces 2019-2020 Shakespeare in American Communities: Schools Grants
17th Year of the Program to Support Programming for School Audiences

CAPTION: Shakespeare in American Communities grantee Montana Shakespeare in the Parks conducts a post show workshop at Chief Joseph Middle School in Bozeman, MT. Photo by Adrian Sanchez Gonzalez.

LINK TO IMAGE: https://www.artsmidwest.org/sites/default/files/ShakesRelease.jpg

Minneapolis, MN – Arts Midwest today announced the recipients of $1 million in Shakespeare in American Communities: Schools grants to 40 nonprofit, professional theater companies from 25 states and the District of Columbia. Participating theater companies will present plays by William Shakespeare to student audiences along with educational activities including in-school residencies,
workshops, and post-performance discussions. Performances will take place between August 1, 2019, and July 31, 2020.

The awards mark the seventeenth consecutive year of Shakespeare in American Communities, a national program managed by Arts Midwest in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. Since the program’s inception in 2003, Shakespeare in American Communities has introduced over three million middle and high school students to the power of live theater and the masterpieces of William Shakespeare through performances and educational activities.

“Since 2003, the National Endowment for the Arts has brought professional performances of Shakespeare’s plays to millions of middle and high school students in cities and towns across the United States.” said Mary Anne Carter, acting chairman of the Arts Endowment.

One hundred and twelve theater companies across the United States have taken part in Shakespeare in American Communities since 2003. These companies have presented 33 Shakespeare plays through 12,900 performances and 45,800 educational activities at more than 10,400 schools in 4,400 communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

“Shakespeare’s plays come to life on traditional stages and in school gymnasiums across the country because of Arts Midwest’s longtime partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts,” said Christy Dickinson, Arts Midwest’s senior program director. “These theater companies and programs are woven into the fabric of these schools and enhance the study of a Shakespeare play in the classroom through educational activities that get Shakespeare’s words into their bodies and make them come to life. For a moment, these students turn off their cell phones and are enthralled in a story that connects them to Shakespeare’s characters in a way they never imagined. These companies continue to emphasize diversity within their casts and these student audiences see themselves reflected on stage.”

Shakespeare in American Communities: Schools programs will take place between August 1, 2019, and July 31, 2020. Activities include the following:

**African-American Shakespeare Company (San Francisco, CA)** will perform *Othello*, featuring Artistic Director L. Peter Callender in the title role. Veteran Shakespeare director Michael Addison will direct the play. “Our youth today need to see people that reflect them on stage, in a cultural context they can relate to, and in situations that mirror their life existence. As our young people battle with issues of identity; who they are within the community and the world; and handling of personal and professional relationships, this production will challenge the conversations through our workshops and post-performance talkbacks,” said Callender.

**Cincinnati Shakespeare Company (Cincinnati, OH)** will join organizations across the city to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Women’s Suffrage with a spotlight on women, both on and off stage. They will produce student matinees of production of *Hamlet*. They will re-gender the title character as female in an effort to examine the relationships of women to the political power structure, with other key roles examined through the female lens as well. Melissa Pfundstein will direct this production with the title role played by Associate Artistic Director Sara Clark.

**Nashville Shakespeare Festival (Nashville, TN)** provides schools in Middle Tennessee exposure to professional Shakespearean experiences and arts education. Their Winter Shakespeare 2020 will reach Title I schools in and around Nashville with a production of *Macbeth*. This production will
take place both in Nashville and for one week in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, to expand their reach and include rural schools. Denice Hick, executive artistic director, said of the production, “Having a diverse company with gender fluid actors will invite the audience into a world of non-traditional cast roles. We hope to shatter preconceived notions with wonder and open new entry points into the play through unexpected casting choices.”

**Selected Companies**

The following 40 theater companies have been selected to participate in the program for 2019-2020. The list of companies can be found at http://www.artsmidwest.org/programs/shakespeare/upcoming.

- The Acting Company, New York, NY
- Actors’ Shakespeare Project, Somerville, MA
- African-American Shakespeare Company, San Francisco, CA
- Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Montgomery, AL
- Alley Theatre, Houston, TX
- American Players Theatre, Spring Green, WI
- American Shakespeare Center, Staunton, VA
- A Noise Within, Pasadena, CA
- Atlanta Shakespeare Company, Atlanta, GA
- Barter Theatre, Abingdon, VA
- California Shakespeare Theater, Berkeley, CA
- Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Chicago, IL
- Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, Cincinnati, OH
- Denver Center Theatre Company, Denver, CO
- Folger Theatre, Washington, D.C.
- Great Lakes Theater, Cleveland, OH
- Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis, MN
- Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, Cold Spring, NY
- Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Boise, ID
- Kentucky Shakespeare, Louisville, KY
- Lantern Theater Company, Philadelphia, PA
- Marin Shakespeare Company, San Rafael, CA
- Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, Bozeman, MT
- Nashville Shakespeare Festival, Nashville, TN
- Nebraska Shakespeare, Omaha, NE
- Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Ashland, OR
- Orlando Shakes, Orlando, FL
- Park Square Theatre Company, St. Paul, MN
- Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, Center Valley, PA
- PlayMakers Repertory Company, Chapel Hill, NC
- Seattle Shakespeare Company, Seattle, WA
- Shakespeare & Company, Lenox, MA
- Shakespeare Theatre Company, Washington, D.C.
- The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, Florham Park, NJ
- Tennessee Shakespeare Company, Memphis, TN
- Texas Shakespeare Festival, Kilgore, TX
- Theater at Monmouth, Monmouth, ME
About Arts Midwest
Arts Midwest promotes creativity, nurtures cultural leadership, and engages people in meaningful arts experiences, bringing vitality to Midwest communities and enriching people’s lives. Based in Minneapolis, Arts Midwest connects the arts to audiences throughout the nine-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. One of six nonprofit regional arts organizations in the United States, Arts Midwest’s history spans more than 30 years. For more information, visit artsmidwest.org.

About the National Endowment for the Arts
Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America’s rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. For more information, visit arts.gov.