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3 June 2015

Optimist Theatre to Present 2015 Shakespeare in the Park Production, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”

MILWAUKEE, WIS. – Optimist Theatre announces this July’s production of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” for the 2015 season of Shakespeare in the Park. William Shakespeare’s much-loved comedy will play eight performances on two weekends: July 9-12, 16-19. This will mark the program’s third year at COA Youth and Family Centers’ Selig-Joseph-Folz amphitheater in Alice Bertschy Kadish Park.

Optimist’s staging of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” will be set in 1967 during the Summer of Love and the action of the show will reflect the social phenomenon of Haight-Ashbury. The cast will be headlined by Milwaukee-area favorite and Shakespearean theater regular Todd Denning* as Theseus and Oberon, and In Tandem Theatre Artistic Director Chris Flieller as Bottom.

The full cast for “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”:

Tess Cinpinski as Starveling
Todd Denning* as Oberon and Theseus
Marcee Doherty-Elst as Snug
Chris Flieller as Bottom
Susan Scot Fry as Philostrate
Kristin Hammargren as Hermia
Jeffrey James Ircink as Egeus
Mary B. Kababik as Peter Quince
Robert W.C. Kennedy as Flute
Evan Koepnik as Snug
Brian Miracle as Snout
Emmit Morgans as Demetrius
Tom Reed* as Puck
Tom Sebald as Mustardseed
Samantha Sosatarich as Wandering Fairy
Malkia Stampley* as Titania and Hippolyta
Shayne Steliga as Lysander
Sola Thompson as Bohemian
Kat Wodtke as Helena
Rachel Zientek as Peaseblossom
Original Music Paul Terrien

*Member of Actor’s Equity Association

The production will be directed by Ron Scot Fry, Optimist Theatre’s Founding Artistic Director, who has also directed Optimist’s “The Tempest” and “Macbeth.” Fry has also designed sets for those shows and for “As You Like It” and “The Winter’s Tale” for Optimist Theatre, as well as for Alverno College, First Stage, Wisconsin Hybrid Theatre, Milwaukee Public Theatre and Milwaukee Mask and Puppet Theatre. He has had performing roles in “Twelfth Night” and “The Winter’s Tale.”

“A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” Fry explains, “is a delightful, sensual romp in the woods. The play takes three worlds – the button-down world of the establishment, the rough-hewn world of manual laborers, and the world of the wild, magical beings who inhabit the woods – and sends them careening in a mad chase that leaves each world changed. It is a play about love, so it is ridiculous, complicated and unfair.

It provides excellent opportunities for our local cast to play characters obsessed with love: romantic love, self love, love of mischief, love for art, love for tradition and love for love itself. And it provides all of our artists a chance to create a theatrical world of magic and mischief in the night, where we can ultimately ‘Let the Sun Shine.’”

The cast includes the return of several actors from prior seasons of Shakespeare in the Park, alongside a number of Optimist Theatre debuts. Denning has appeared as Touchstone in “As You Like It” in 2013 and Malvolio in “Twelfth Night” in 2011. This will be Flieller’s first role with Optimist Theatre. Kristin Hammargren will also be featured as Hermia, last seen with Optimist Theatre as Rosalind in 2013’s production of “As You Like It.”

With a professional cast based in the Milwaukee area, Shakespeare in the Park offers a top quality theatrical experience free to its audience. In its first five years, Shakespeare in the Park has played to a cumulative audience of more than 10,000 and employed 200-plus Wisconsin actors, crew, suppliers and vendors at an average production cost of approximately \$40 per person coming to or involved with the play.

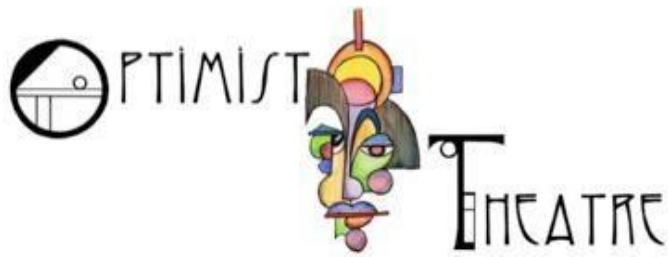
About “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”

Believed to have been written later in the early 1590s, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” has proven to be one of Shakespeare’s most popular plays and is frequently produced. The story is one that depicts an unseen fantasy world existing alongside, interacting with, and often manipulating the human one. As such, reality – and the rules of authority figures – are suspended, such that the young people who are caught up in antic confusion and various taboo scenarios are ultimately absolved.

Given that the premise of the action is a gathering to celebrate the marriage of Theseus, Duke of Athens and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons – at which a play is performed to entertain the guests, by the so- called “Rude Mechanicals – it is believed that the play itself could also have been written in honor of a wedding. Its many memorable quotes include a line that warns, “the course of true love never did run smooth.”

About Optimist Theatre

Optimist Theatre is a 501(c)3 non-profit theatre company and an affiliate member of UPAF, the United Performing Arts Fund. Free Shakespeare in the Park is supported in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board and the Milwaukee Arts Board. In addition to Free Shakespeare in the Park, Optimist Theatre offers interactive educational outreach performances such as “To Be! Shakespeare Here and Now.” The organization’s goals include reaching artists and audiences across the economic, ethnic, and experiential landscape by creating art that is accessible to all people. They aspire to educate, entertain, and inspire through creative works of artistic integrity and, in doing so, to serve as a “gateway” theatre experience, bringing new audiences to the arts. To learn more, visit OptimistTheatre.org, or contact Managing Director Susan Scot Fry at SSFry@OptimistTheatre.org or 262/498-5777 or Artistic Director, Ron Scot Fry at RSFry@OptimistTheatre.org or 262/498-9788.



The Optimist Theatre logo



Shakespeare in the Park logo

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