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Optimist Theatre Announces Mobile Shakespeare in the Park “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”

Live Performances and the No Holds Bard Web Series Will Complete the 2021 Lineup

MILWAUKEE, WIS. – In 2019, Milwaukee’s Free Shakespeare in the Park (SITP) celebrated 10 seasons of live, summertime performances of the works of the Bard of Avon. In 2020, Optimist Theatre kept their tradition of free Shakespeare alive with a new web series titled No Holds Bard. In 2021, they embrace the best of both experiences as they return to the stage with live performances of Shakespeare’s light-hearted and beloved “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” paired with a serialized webstream of No Holds Bard: The Midsummer Project.

Adding a new twist, “Midsummer” will be a touring production using a mobile set designed for the company. Optimist anticipates 12 live matinee performances over six weekends beginning July 24-25 in multiple outdoor locations in the greater Milwaukee area. Conversations with potential hosts are well underway and, as they are confirmed, a calendar with specifics of when and where will be added to the Optimist Theatre website. “Midsummer” will be co-directed by M.L. Cogar, Optimist Theatre’s Dramaturg, and Tom Reed, Associate Artistic Director, and assistant-directed by Executive Director Susan Fry. Cogar has created a shortened version of the play for a cast of six actors playing multiple roles. The story will focus on the follies of the lovers, and the foibles of the fairies Oberon and Puck, and will run 60 to 75 minutes.

Following the success of Optimist’s 2020 offering No Holds Bard: The Pericles Project — a filmed 16-episode web series of “Pericles, Prince of Tyre” — they will also film this summer’s play under the co-direction of Fry, Cogar, and Reed. Fry is also an independent film producer. These episodes will stream as No Holds Bard: The Midsummer Project and are expected to air in the fall / winter of 2021.

According to Fry: “We’re happy and relieved to be joining the ranks of our fellow companies bringing live theatre back to audiences who are craving love, connection, and laughter. With our mobile set, we’ll be able to help fill that need anywhere there’s a piece of flat grass, an electrical outlet and bathrooms within walking distance.” Fry adds, “This is also our opportunity to take our shows to green spaces all over Milwaukee, including some neighborhoods where there are no local arts organizations. This touches one of the cornerstones of why we Optimists work so hard to keep our performances free. There should be no barrier to how art affects our lives. It’s a right, not a privilege.”

With a smile, she adds, “After all, All the world’s a stage!”

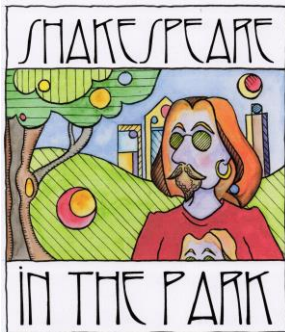
More information on the productions is available on the Optimist Theatre website at www.FreeShakespeareInThePark.org and the No Holds Bard website at www.NoHoldsBard.org. For the very latest developments, follow Shakespeare in the Park on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ShaxParkMKE> or sign up for the e-newsletter on either website. For more information on Optimist Theatre and all its various programs, email Susan Fry at ssfry@optimisttheatre.org.

Shakespeare in the Park and No Holds Bard are productions of Optimist Theatre, a 501(c)3 non-profit theater company whose roots date to 1993. Since 2010, SITP shows have presented free, professional live theater to a cumulative audience of more than 24,000. No Holds Bard began in 2020 to use the virtual sphere as a means of keeping the Optimist mission alive during the pandemic. Together, these productions have employed more than 300 Wisconsin-area actors, crew, suppliers and vendors, primarily from the greater Milwaukee area.

All shows are free to see, yet all cast and crew are paid, thanks to donations from individuals who believe that Shakespeare in the Park is important – to Milwaukee, to the community – and a vital element of a city with a rich theater tradition. They are also supported by grants from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, Bader Philanthropies, the Bradley Foundation, Herzfeld Foundation, the Milwaukee Arts Board, and others.

About “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”

Among its many memorable lines, the warning, “the course of true love never did run smooth” never rang more true than with the amorous confusion in William Shakespeare’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” The story depicts an unseen fairy world existing alongside, interacting with, and often manipulating the human one. When fairy royalty and mischievous minions interfere, reality is suspended and two sets of young lovers are caught up in magical and antic confusion. As is Shakespeare’s wont, all is resolved, the balance of love is restored and all live happily ever after. Believed to have been written in the 1590s, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” is one of Shakespeare’s most popular and frequently produced plays.



Shakespeare in the Park logo



No Holds Bard logo

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