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INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE

## **The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey Announces Its 2017 Season**

### **STNJ's 55<sup>th</sup> Season Includes New Stage Version of *Shakespeare in Love*!**

MADISON, NJ — **The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey** announces its 2017 lineup after completing an immensely successful 2016 season that was repeatedly featured in “Top Ten Productions of 2016” listings, such as *The Star-Ledger*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *NJ Arts*. The 2017 season promises to be a thrilling one, featuring beloved classics, as well as an epic new work. The Theatre is especially proud to be the first theatre in the Northeast to present *Shakespeare in Love* by Lee Hall, the new play based on the Academy Award-winning film by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard with music by Paddy Cunneen. The new stage adaptation is one of five plays to appear on STNJ's Main Stage in 2017 and will be accompanied with works by Molière, Shakespeare and Joe Orton.

“I have a special feeling about this season. I feel like we've come up with a splendid mix of shows that will appeal to all people of all ages — fun, funny, thought-provoking, moving, comforting, inspiring, and all offer sublime theatrical adventures that will transport and delight our audience,” said **Bonnie J. Monte, the Company's Artistic Director**.

**The 2017 season begins in May and continues through December** with five productions presented at the F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre, and one summer production presented on The

Outdoor Stage – the Greek amphitheater on the campus of The College of Saint Elizabeth in Florham Park. Special events like the “**Lend Us Your Ears**” series and the popular one-night-only events, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* and *Something Merry This Way Comes*, will be returning for the 2017 season. In addition to these events, the Theatre will present *Something Lucky This Way Comes*, a brand-new one-night-only event on St. Patrick’s Day.

**Complete Works subscriptions are now on sale! Smaller and flexible discount packages will go on sale in March.** The Theatre is also excited to announce a new program for those who want the ultimate in flexibility. Beginning in March, patrons can purchase a **Membership** to The Shakespeare Theatre. A **Membership fee** for the season is only \$45; once you purchase a season membership, you can purchase tickets as frequently as you would like for any production of the season and you can sit in any price section for only \$40 per ticket.

Single tickets will go on sale on March 27, and the Theatre is pleased to announce the successful **30 Under 30 program** is returning for the 2017 season, as well as **FREE tickets for kids ages 18 and younger** for the Outdoor Stage production. For more information on these programs and subscription options, visit [www.ShakespeareNJ.org](http://www.ShakespeareNJ.org) or call the friendly Box Office at 973-408-5600. The Theatre is additionally proud to offer schools student matinee performances for *The Merchant of Venice*, *Shakespeare in Love*, and *It’s a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play (full-length version)*. For more information, visit [www.ShakespeareNJ.org/Education](http://www.ShakespeareNJ.org/Education).

The Shakespeare Theatre will launch its 55<sup>th</sup> season in May with Shakespeare’s dark comedic masterwork, *The Merchant of Venice*. The Theatre has not produced this play in 17 years. Ms. Monte said, “Never has there been a better time than now to present this 400 year-old-play. It mirrors our current society so closely in so many ways that one could imagine it was penned just yesterday.” *The Merchant of Venice* will begin performances on May 17.

Following *The Merchant of Venice* is a much lighter Shakespeare comedy, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. One of the Bard’s most popular and beloved plays, STNJ’s **Artistic Director Bonnie J. Monte will both direct and design** this production which will feature a set and costumes made largely with items that would normally end up in a landfill but will instead be

transformed into beautiful and magical creations. The production will also feature a lively music underscore and other surprises that will make this timeless classic feel brand new. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will run on the Outdoor Stage beginning June 14.

Next on the Main Stage will be *The Bungler*, a rarely produced Molière comedy in an English version by Richard Wilbur, the preeminent Molière translator. It tells the tale of a hopelessly inept young man who has fallen in love with a gypsy girl. He employs his wily servant to help him win her hand in marriage. Each clever plan from the servant is inevitably bungled by his clueless master. **Brian B. Crowe will direct** this delightful comedy that will begin previews on July 5.

The third Main Stage show of the season will be Joe Orton's outrageous farce *What The Butler Saw*, opening on September 6. This will be the first Joe Orton play produced at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey during Ms. Monte's tenure. Like *The Merchant of Venice*, this play speaks to the world today, but in a very different way and about very different matters, as the fragile nature of "truth" is explored in a hilarious and provocative manner. Audiences should be warned that this play from 1969 was considered scandalous at the time it was first presented, and it does feature partial nudity. It is not appropriate for children. Long-time company member **Paul Mullins will direct**.

In the fall, *Shakespeare in Love* will take the stage and transform the F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre into an Elizabethan playhouse. Artistic Director **Bonnie J. Monte will direct this first production in the Northeast region**. Based on the Oscar-winning film, the story follows William Shakespeare in his prime as he struggles to find the words to his greatest works and win his true love. The stage version by Lee Hall is adapted from Marc Norman's and Tom Stoppard's screenplay and the production features music by Paddy Cunneen — originally produced on the West End by Disney Theatrical Productions & Sonia Friedman Productions, directed by Declan Donnellan, and designed by Nick Ormerod. *Shakespeare in Love* will begin performances on October 11.

“I am utterly thrilled to be directing this grand, exuberant love-letter to Shakespeare. The film remains one of my all-time favorite movies, and it’s sublime kismet that it’s landed in our hands as next season’s fall centerpiece production,” said Ms. Monte.

To finish the season, the Theatre is thrilled to present *It’s A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play (full-length version)*. The stage adaptation by Joe Landry was an audience favorite when presented as last year’s *Something Merry This Way Comes*. The holiday classic will be **directed by Doug West**, and will feature the beloved characters that have become so familiar from the 1946 film. The production begins just in time for the holiday season on November 30.

### **Special Events**

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey will continue its tradition of presenting special one-night events that have become audience favorites, including a new addition to the “Something Series,” *Something Lucky This Way Comes*. In celebration of St. Patrick’s Day, this holiday special will feature works from famous Irish writers and Irish music. The event will take place on Friday, March 17. In October, the delightfully frightening *Something Wicked This Way Comes* will take place just before the holiday on Monday, October 30. To finish the series, the Theatre will present *Something Merry This Way Comes* on Monday, December 11.

Lastly, The Shakespeare Theatre’s “Lend Us Your Ears” Play Reading Series will feature two or three script-in-hand readings providing patrons with the opportunity to join the Theatre in exploring classic texts and potential production choices for later seasons. Dates and times will be announced shortly.

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The acclaimed Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is an independent, professional theatre company located on the Drew University campus. One of the leading Shakespeare theatres in the nation, serving approximately 100,000 adults and children annually, it is New Jersey’s largest professional theatre company dedicated solely to Shakespeare’s canon and other world classics. Through its distinguished productions and education programs, the company strives to illuminate the universal and lasting relevance of the classics for contemporary audiences.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey’s programs are made possible, in part, by funding from the New Jersey

State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as funds from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional major support is received from The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the F. M. Kirby Foundation, The Edward T. Cone Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, The CTW Foundation, and The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation, as well as contributions from numerous other corporations, foundations, government agencies and individuals.

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**General Information:**

**ARTISTIC DIRECTOR:** Bonnie J. Monte

**MANAGING DIRECTOR:** Todd Rosen

**MAIN STAGE:** F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre

36 Madison Avenue (at Lancaster Road), Madison, NJ

**TICKETS & INFORMATION:** Call the Box Office at 973-408-5600 or visit ShakespeareNJ.org

**The 2017 Season**

**On the Main Stage:**

***The Merchant of Venice***

By William Shakespeare

Previews Begin: May 17

Press Opening: May 20

***The Bunter***

By Molière

Translated by Richard Wilbur

Directed by Brian B. Crowe

Previews Begin: July 5

Press Opening: July 8

***What the Butler Saw***

By Joe Orton

Directed by Paul Mullins

Previews Begin: September 6

Press Opening: September 9

***Shakespeare in Love***

Based on the screenplay by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard

Adapted by Lee Hall

Music by Paddy Cunneen

Directed by Bonnie J. Monte

Previews Begin: October 11

Press Opening: October 14

***It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play (full-length version)***

Adapted by Joe Landry

Directed by Doug West

Previews Begin: November 30

Press Opening: December 9

**On the Outdoor Stage:**

***A Midsummer Night's Dream***

By William Shakespeare

Directed by Bonnie J. Monte

Previews Begin: June 14

Press Opening: June 21