

# Team Shakespeare

THE 2019/20 REPORT



chicago  
shakespeare  
on navy pier theater



## A LETTER FROM MARILYN J. HALPERIN

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATIONS  
RAY AND JUDY McCASKEY CHAIR

In our schools and in our theaters, this past year will be long remembered: launched by the longest Chicago Public School teachers' strike in decades; ending in a torrent of closings and a country expressing the unbearable pain of centuries of racism. As a pandemic and the struggle to remake ourselves into a just society rage on, it is difficult to demarcate the one year that has “ended” from the one that now “begins.”

Looking back, the unexpected school year of 2019/20 launched auspiciously with our third annual Chicago Shakespeare Slam and Bard Core teaching training program. For our fall Student Matinee series, Barbara Gaines' color-conscious production of *Romeo and Juliet* situated a “timeless” story, immediately recognizable and deeply resonant with the thousands of high school students who watched it in our Courtyard Theater.

Then, like the rest of the country, our year became defined by a watershed that divided it in two. On Thursday, March 12, 2020, our actors took their final curtain call to an exuberant audience at Eric Solorio Academy. It was the scheduled closing day of our school tour. Having shared *The Comedy of Errors* with 28,000 students at our Theater and in schools across Chicago, the lasting imprint of Shakespeare comedy in live performance followed each student into the rest of that school year.

Just days later as thousands of school doors closed, we strained to find our sea legs in this undiscovered territory. Our art-making was silenced, but our most critical work with teachers had just begun. Through a series of structured focus groups and the swift implementation of digital resources, we worked to support them, their practice upended literally overnight.

It was a year of strife—and immense learning. More work remains; it is imperative that we do this now. And so we forge ahead, reshaping our work in the most vital of ways, with your support and in partnership.

With gratitude,

# TEAM SHAKESPEARE

On behalf of all of us at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, thank you for your leadership support of Team Shakespeare! Our education programs are nationally recognized with a model that supports the English curriculum using arts-based techniques. With your incredible partnership, Chicago Shakespeare has continued our commitment to Chicago's students and teachers through a year of many ups and downs. We are pleased to present the following report of achievements from the 2019/20 academic year.

## THE CORE TENETS



Plays by Shakespeare and other iconic writers **come alive in performance.**



The skills of theater practitioners—**fluency, imagination, visualization**—are the same skills that strong readers must utilize.

IN TOTAL, TEAM SHAKESPEARE PARTNERED WITH



# 577 SCHOOLS

INCLUDING 130 CPS SCHOOLS  
AND 128 SCHOOLS OUTSIDE ILLINOIS



# 35K+

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

With you by our side as a Team Shakespeare partner, our service to students and teachers grows each year, impacting thousands of students and enriching teachers' practice in classrooms across the city. Providing these programs at little-to-no cost to participants ensures accessibility for students and teachers throughout Chicago and beyond.

SHELDON AND BOBBI ZABEL

# BARD CORE PROGRAM

Chicago Shakespeare Theater's professional development program for CPS high school English, Special Education, and ESL teachers wrapped up its 16th year in 2019/20. Bard Core focuses on equipping teachers with arts and drama-integrated strategies to better engage students with Shakespeare and other complex texts.



**367 teachers** from **132 high schools** and **6 middle schools** have completed Bard Core since 2004.

- ✓ Curriculum aligns to Common Core and CPS Framework for Teaching.
- ✓ Professional development credits available to participating teachers..
- ✓ Exclusive continued learning opportunities available to alumni.

**“When my teacher took Bard Core and then shared her experience with me, I remember thinking to myself: I’m going to do that same program when I’m a teacher. And here I am, doing exactly that!”**

- Teacher, Collins Academy High School

**“This changed the way I will develop professionally—I am so glad I took this class in my first year.”**

- Teacher, Chicago Vocational High School



**“I’ve done certain things in my classroom that I never thought I would do. Turns out if students join in, these strategies can absolutely work!”**

- Teacher, Lakeview High School



## ALUMNI GATHERINGS

Due to state and city health guidances during the COVID-19 pandemic, all Illinois schools moved to online learning in mid-March 2020. Between April 22 and May 14, 2020, Chicago Shakespeare’s Education team hosted three online gatherings for Bard Core alumni via Zoom.

These conversations brought together a wide range of Bard Core graduates—from the recently graduated 2019/20 cohort to our very first class from 2005/06. These small group discussions created a space where CPS high school teachers—suddenly thrust into virtual teaching for the first time in their careers—could share resources and ideas about how to best serve the city’s students. These gatherings also served as a network of support for teachers navigating the new environment of the virtual classroom.

# TEACHER WORKSHOPS

In addition to the Sheldon and Bobbi Zabel Bard Core Program, Chicago Shakespeare also offers accredited training sessions, free of charge, to Chicago's teachers and teachers-in-training. The strategies learned are applicable to any Shakespeare or other challenging texts.

## Setting the Stage

- 1 Chicago Shakespeare's Education Team creates a learning "laboratory" where teachers can roll up their sleeves, take in new ideas, and try out some drama-based, Common Core-aligned teaching strategies.
- 2 Next, one of Chicago Shakespeare's esteemed scholars-in-residence is added to the mix, giving teachers the necessary historical and contemporary perspectives.
- 3 Lastly, the production's director is invited to join the workshop and explore the art of interpretation, from page to stage.

**"This reminds me why I teach."**  
- Teacher, Williams Prep School



**189 educators** attended workshops in 2019/20:

- ✓ Teaching *Romeo and Juliet*
- ✓ Page to Stage: *The Comedy of Errors*



**"This is, by far, the best professional development I have ever had. I tell everyone that all the time."**

- Teacher, Pritzker College Prep

# CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE SLAM

In September, our third annual Chicago Shakespeare Slam program invited high school teams from across the Chicago region to mash-up Shakespearean text in original, student-devised performance pieces. This creative ensemble program enables participants to successfully master some of the most difficult text of Shakespeare and build self-confidence, communication skills, and academic engagement.

TOTAL REACH IN 2019

**336 STUDENTS • 68 TEACHERS • 37 SCHOOLS**



## WORKSHOPS

Held at regional host schools and Chicago Shakespeare, students and teachers engaged in a series of active learning sessions that built community across the program's teams. The workshops equipped participants with the literacy and theatrical tools needed to begin their work back at school.



## REHEARSALS + BOUTS

Teams returned to their respective schools to develop and rehearse two performance pieces: first, a scene from any play in Shakespeare's canon; second, a "re-mixed" performance from *The Comedy of Errors*. All teams presented their performance pieces at the Saturday regional bouts.

## THE FINAL BOUT



Nine teams advanced to the Final Bout to perform on stage in The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare in December. With a live DJ and an audience of over 450 in attendance, finalists performed in a rock concert atmosphere—cheered on by family, teachers, guest judges, and a community of peers formed through weeks of workshops and regional bouts.

## CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE SLAM GOALS



**“The Shakespeare Slam inspires me to imagine what’s possible—to take more risks, to build more community, and to have more voice and choice in the classroom.”**

*- Student, South Shore High School*



**“Slam is inclusive, supportive, and allows me to be myself without judgment.”**

*- Student,  
Carl Sandburg High School*

**“Of the many activities I have been involved in while a teacher, Slam remains the one activity that I can truly say changed students.”**

*- Teacher,  
Elk Grove High School*



# STUDENT MATINEES

Our service to students continued in 2019/20 with our dedicated student matinee performances. Chicago Shakespeare provides access to professional productions for educators and young learners throughout Chicago, bringing to life the immortal words of Shakespeare.

**“Seeing the play live made Shakespeare a lot more approachable and accessible. I’ve read *Romeo and Juliet* before, but the play made me feel closer to it.”**

*- Student, Highland Park High School*

**“I understood Shakespeare’s language better than I thought because of the actors’ facial expressions and body language. Shakespeare was meant to be performed.”**

*- Student, Northview High School*



***Romeo and Juliet***

**October 31 - December 22, 2019**



***Short Shakespeare!  
The Comedy of Errors***

**January 25 - March 12, 2020**



## 61 PERFORMANCES FOR 26,870 STUDENTS

52 AT NAVY PIER, 9 ON TOUR TO SCHOOLS ACROSS THE CHICAGO REGION

SCHOOLS	ATTENDANCE
<b>85</b> Chicago Public Schools .....	<b>9,571</b>
<b>153</b> Suburban/Regional Public Schools .....	<b>12,652</b>
<b>106</b> Private, Parochial, and Other School Groups .....	<b>4,647</b>

# SHORT SHAKESPEARE! THE COMEDY OF ERRORS



## HIJINKS & HILARITY

Shakespeare's classic tale of mistaken identities delighted student audiences in early 2020. Directed by Eli Newell, David H. Bell's 75-minute abridged production of *The Comedy of Errors* was the perfect mix of physical comedy and fast-paced storytelling, and had students and teachers reeling with laughter as one thing after another went wrong in Ephesus.

## OF FARCE & FAMILY

Students from across the Chicago region related to the play's subject of feeling like a stranger. The comedy, first performed circa 1594, explores themes of family, identity, loss, and reunion—topics that are deeply relevant to our city's youth in the modern era. After each performance, audiences were invited to join in conversation with the cast to hear their thoughts on Shakespeare's famous farce.



# TRANSITIONING TO THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

In mid-March of 2020, production at Chicago Shakespeare Theater halted due to local and state guidelines for safety during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, Governor Pritzker also announced that all schools in Illinois would be taught virtually for the rest of the 2019/20 academic year. In addition to cancelling and postponing the remainder of our theatrical season, the pandemic also presented challenges that directly impacted our service to teachers and students. Our Education team quickly shifted gears to create new resources for the virtual classroom. Through this, we were able to focus on supporting the e-learning environment. Our new resources for education included:

- Take-home activities for students distributed by Chicago Public Schools' High School Literacy Manager
- Extended Bard Core meet-ups on Zoom
- Online focus groups with Bard Core and Slam teachers
- Teacher Talks—a virtual space for educators across the country to come together, find support, and be inspired.
- Stream & Study—in April, we made our abridged production of *Romeo and Juliet* available to stream online for use in the remote learning environment.
- Team Shakespeare Digital—a virtual hub of classroom activities and other resources for educators (continuing in 2020/21).





**THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

MAJOR SUPPORTERS OF TEAM SHAKESPEARE



Ethel and Bill Gofen

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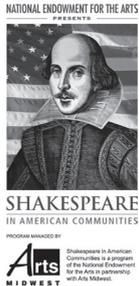


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