SCHILLER'S
MARY STUART

chicago shakespeare theater on navy pier
A global theatrical force, Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST) is known for vibrant productions that reflect Shakespeare’s genius for storytelling, musicality of language, and empathy for the human condition. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Barbara Gaines and Executive Director Criss Henderson, Chicago Shakespeare has redefined what a great American Shakespeare theater can be—a company that, delighting in the unexpected, defies theatrical category. A Regional Tony Award-winning theater, CST produces acclaimed plays at its home on Navy Pier, throughout Chicago’s schools and neighborhoods, and on stages around the world. In 2017, the Theater unveiled its third year-round venue, The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare, with an innovative design that has changed the shape of theater-making. Together with the Jentes Family Courtyard Theater and the Thoma Theater Upstairs at Chicago Shakespeare, The Yard positions CST as the city’s most versatile performing arts venue.

Chicago Shakespeare’s year-round season features as many as twenty productions and 650 performances—including plays, musicals, world premieres, and visiting international presentations—to engage a broad, multigenerational audience of 225,000 community members. Recognized in 2014 in a White House ceremony hosted by First Lady Michelle Obama, CST’s education programs support literacy and creativity for 40,000 students each year. Each summer, 30,000 family audiences welcome the free Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks tour into their neighborhoods across the far north, west, and south sides of the city. The Theater is the leading producer of international work in Chicago and, touring its own plays across North America and abroad to Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and the Middle East, CST has garnered multiple accolades, including the prestigious Laurence Olivier Award. Emblematic of its role as a global theater, CST spearheaded Shakespeare 400 Chicago, a yearlong international arts and culture festival, which engaged an estimated 1.1 million people through 863 events at 231 locations across the city in 2016—all in celebration of Shakespeare’s 400-year legacy.
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Part of the John W. and Jeanne M. Rowe Inquiry and Exploration Series

“O earth, I will befriend thee.”
-W.S.
For centuries, palace intrigue has captivated our imaginations. The juxtaposition of the monarchy’s absolute power and reputed omniscience set against the reality of their human frailty and emotional complexity makes for good drama. Today’s production of Schiller’s Mary Stuart explores a royal relationship that caused endless rumor and speculation during Shakespeare’s own time involving Queen Elizabeth I and her ill-fated cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots.

This new version of the play by Peter Oswald offers audiences access to a fictitious meeting of these two rulers. United by their lineage and roles in a male-dominated world, yet divided by the political motivations of those surrounding them, theirs is a complex relationship that is fascinating to explore through a theatrical lens. Jenn Thompson’s fearless direction and the dynamic ensemble of actors that inhabit the world she has created make for a spellbinding drama.

During the run of Schiller’s Mary Stuart, student audiences will be treated to Shakespeare’s romantic comedy, A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Presented as a 75-minute abridgment in our new, flexible third theater, The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare, the play will welcome 1,200 audience members each day during its run on Navy Pier, followed by a two-week tour to Chicago Public Schools. Our student productions and extensive offering of professional training programs and workshops for English teachers make us a leading partner in literacy for Chicago’s schools. Your patronage helps to make this aspect of our work possible, and for that we are truly grateful!

We hope you enjoy today’s show and look forward to welcoming you back again soon.

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Since cutting the ribbon for The Yard last September, audience members have already experienced this innovative, new venue in a multitude of ways—from its large and small proscenium configurations to a unique cabaret-like environment, and a courtyard-style thrust stage with runway aisles.

The season culminates this spring as The Yard transforms once again for a one-of-a-kind production of Shakespeare’s classic thriller, MACBETH.

Tickets on sale now
312.595.5600 • chicagoshakes.com

“Aaron Posner and Teller (of Penn & Teller), creators of the sold-out, award-winning *The Tempest*, reunite to spin a tale of dark magic and ambition.

Tell: “We’re trying to put you in the same off-kilter position as Macbeth is to his world. When something happens on stage that seems to defy the rules of physics—what’s happening to you is echoing that moment in the story.”

Aaron Posner: “Shakespeare wants people to sit forward and engage deeply with this haunting and rich play. Teller and I are both populists in that we genuinely care that this production—with the magic, and music, and movement—is available to as many people as possible.”

“Ir the greatest new theater in the world”
-Chicago Tribune

The Yard
At Chicago Shakespeare

MACBETH

Chicago Shakespeare on Navy Pier Theater

AARON POSNER and TELLER (of Penn & Teller), creators of the sold-out, award-winning *The Tempest*, reunite to spin a tale of dark magic and ambition.
On January 24, CST opened the doors of The Yard to students for its latest abridged production, *Short Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The show is helmed by Jess McLeod, who returns to CST after serving as assistant director for Gary Griffin’s production of *Gypsy* in 2014. In past years, Chicago Shakespeare has been proud to serve 40,000 students and educators annually; now, with an extended seven-week run in The Yard, this annual program will engage thousands more than ever before. Following its performances on Navy Pier, *Midsummer* will go on the road, touring to Chicago Public Schools across the city. Since CST launched its first student matinees more than twenty-five years ago, the Theater’s education programming has impacted the lives of more than two million young people.

In December, *Macbeth* directors Aaron Posner and Teller, composer Andre Pluess, and instrument designer/consultant Kenny Wollesen met up in Chicago for a music and magic developmental residency. Together with CST’s artisans and technicians, the team began shaping a haunting soundscape that will underscore the world of this supernatural thriller using found items, like Sardinian bells played with a violin bow and an exercise ball fashioned into a mallet instrument. Over the past year, CST Creative Producer Rick Boynton and the production’s artistic team have been collaborating on this extraordinary interpretation, which marks the return of Posner and Teller to CST after their blockbuster 2015 production of *The Tempest*. This highly anticipated culmination to the season begins performances in The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare on April 25. Tickets are available at www.chicagoshakes.com.

Over the years, the work of acclaimed international artists Peter Brook and Marié-Hélène Estienne has been presented as part of Chicago Shakespeare’s World’s Stage series. The Theater’s international partnerships like these provide opportunities for Chicago artists to be exposed and introduced to the greatest theater makers of our time. Touring here with their 2002 production of *Le Costume*, Brook and Estienne were introduced to Karen Aldridge; during their 2017 tour of *Battlefield*, which CST co-presented with the Museum of Contemporary Art, they met Larry Yando. Both Aldridge and Yando now join the cast of the upcoming tour of *Battlefield*, the thrilling 70-minute adaptation of the Sanskrit epic *The Mahabharata*. Audiences across five European countries will be introduced to two of Chicago’s most accomplished actors.

The Artists Breaking Limits and Expectations (A.B.L.E.) ensemble continues its partnership with Chicago Shakespeare this May with their production of Edmond Rostand’s *Cyrano de Bergerac*. First performing *Twelfth Night* at CST in 2016 as a partner in Shakespeare 400 Chicago, this talented group of young adult actors with cognitive and developmental differences will perform in The Yard on May 17. Together with A.B.L.E. teaching artists and facilitators, performers immerse themselves in the play, each portraying two characters. With music, humor, and sword fighting, ensemble members bring this classic story of love and heartbreak to life. The creative process empowers these young actors to develop the confidence to share who they are as they discover their own unique voices and celebrate their ever-expanding abilities.
A Conversation with the Director

Jenn Thompson met with the CST staff on the first day of the rehearsal process to share her thoughts on directing *Mary Stuart*.

When Barbara Gaines and Rick Boynton first reached out to you to talk about this play, what drew you to it?

I have many friends who have worked here and speak so highly of the institution, and so I was thrilled to get their phone call. I’d seen the Donmar [Warehouse] production in New York in 2009. It was gripping then—and it’s even more relevant now. This play is a pot-boiler political thriller, laced with romantic and sexual intrigues, which have real potential for depth and complexity. There’s so much room in this story to talk about women in power, and women being manipulated by men. I’m interested in our production exploring how can you be a woman, be feminine, and have power. But I think the most important thing is to honor these two women as full, complex, flawed people.

Returning to this play now, has the story become a different one from when you saw it first several years ago?

How each one of us views a production at the same time is always going to be different, and in fact how I see a matinee and how I see the evening performance could be different based on the news story I just read or a phone call I just had. If there’s an upside to the climate we’re living in now, I do think there’s a pressure—and a great opportunity—for storytelling. As artists we feel that charge more than ever. It’s certainly the most important moment in my lifetime. I believe that our audiences feel that, too. People are listening differently now, and I think that makes this an extraordinary and important time to tell any story, but particularly this story.

As a director, what’s your way into the story?

Initially, it certainly felt like it was Mary’s story—after all, it’s called ‘Mary Stuart.’ But the more I’ve worked on it, I have come to feel that the play is exceptionally even-handed about these two women. A good play will do that: you think it’s one thing and then you peel and then you get to know the story and the characters. All the conversations with our design team and actors involve us finding ways to present these women in all their complexities, how to humanize these two iconic figures. They are lots of things, as all of us are. They are not victims. They are not monsters. They are human beings.

And they have never met one another—except in Schiller’s imagination.

Yes, it’s two women who don’t know each other. And when they finally meet in the scene that Schiller creates, they’ve never laid eyes on each other before—but they have been primed their entire lives to fear and hate the other. We never see them alone together without men whispering in their ear, pushing them down this path. I find myself thinking about what that conversation between them might have been if they had been alone.

What kind of world did you want to create for this production?

I imagined these two women against a massive, masculine landscape in its size and scope, but also wanted to explore how both women use their femininity set against this backdrop. [Set Designer] Andromache Chalfant and I have been friends for years and admirers of each other’s work, but hadn’t found a project of our own; with Mary Stuart, I knew it was our chance. Influenced by the style of Brutalist Architecture, Andromache describes the set as ‘monumental and unforgiving, but with a beauty in its surfaces; a simplicity of form, and an awesomeness in its strength and scale.’ We looked for ways to emphasize what was similar about Mary’s and Elizabeth’s circumstances. Obviously, one was in prison and one was sitting on the throne, but in many ways they were both imprisoned by their world.
You're also working with Costume Designer Linda Cho.

I have always wanted to work with Linda, but what drew me to her for this project in particular is how she dresses women. I love how she celebrates women’s bodies in all of their femininity, and power, and strength. We wanted to create a world of the 1580s, but didn’t want it to feel like a museum piece. The costumes are inspired by the time period but have a modern sensibility. We’re interested in how constricted these women were and how manipulated their bodies were. We know that Elizabeth liked to wear extremely elaborate clothing and was all about accessorizing. Those eighteen thousand pearls became her armor, a need to exert your authority as a woman—is a forever and timeless struggle; it has always been, it is now, and perhaps it will always be.

I want to emphasize that this struggle—of being a woman in power, of exercising your authority as a woman—is a forever and timeless struggle.

What do you hope to create with Co-Sound Designer Mikhail Fiksel for this production?

Schiller took a lot of liberties with the history, which I’m grateful for because it frees us up to tell the story we want to tell in the way we feel that people will respond to it now. The aim is to be as fluid and cinematic as we can. We want the soundscape to have a percussive quality and a drive that reflects these two women lunging toward the edge of a cliff together.

You’ve chosen Peter Oswald’s version, which he wrote in verse, as Schiller did. Can you tell us more about your choice?

The Oswald text is beautifully written. There is musicality and poetry in it, but it is very accessible and we don’t have to do extra work to hear it. It feels modern—which has influenced all the other things that we’ve been talking about. It’s a very muscular, visceral type of read. It jumps off the page and leaps out of peoples’ mouths in a very immediate way. Oswald succeeds in dropping in the necessary exposition artfully. And I think that this translation is very successful in its clarity, its comedy, and its bite—and those qualities will influence how the play moves.

Last question...how much of this history does the audience need to know?

I don’t think they need any. I would not dissuade anybody from reviewing the historical context, but one of the strengths of this play is that its story stands on its own. It’s like a political thriller and should feel like one in the way it moves. We already know what ends up happening, and so it becomes our collective job to make the story so compelling that everybody forgets that they know how it ends! We come to the theater to have that experience. Human beings in conflict—that’s the event. The framework is the history, but we’re there to see the struggle.
Welcome. If we can help accommodate you during your visit, please speak with our House Manager. Please note that flashing lights and haze may be used during this performance. Also, actors will make entrances and exits throughout the theater. For your safety, we ask that you keep aisles and doorways clear. We request that you refrain from taking any photography and other video or audio recordings of the production.

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

Schiller's Mary Stuart, in this new version by Peter Oswald, was first performed at the Donmar Warehouse, London on July 14, 2005. The play has been licensed by arrangement with The Agency (London) Ltd, 24 Pottery Lane, London W11 4LZ e-mail: info@theagency.co.uk

Schiller's Mary Stuart

in a new version by PETER OSWALD

directed by JENN THOMPSON

Scenic Design ANDROMACHE CHALFANT
Costume Design LINDA CHO
Lighting Design GREG HOFMANN PHILIP ROSENBERG
Sound Design MIKHAIL FIKSEL MILES POLASKI
Wig & Make-up Design RICHARD JARVIE
Fight Choreographer DAVID WOOLLEY
Verse Coach KATHRYN WALSH
Dialect Coach EVA BRENEMAN
Casting BOB MASON
New York Casting NANCY PICCIONE
Production Stage Manager DEBORAH ACKER

Raymond and Judy McCaskey
Carl and Marilyn Thoma

ComEd is the official lighting design sponsor of Chicago Shakespeare Theater.

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There will be one 15-minute intermission.
Whether sitting in the Theater, traveling on the Metra, or relaxing at home, share Mary Stuart with friends!

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Cast (in order of appearance)

Amias Paulet, Knight, guardian of Mary
Kevin Gudahl*

Druegon Drury, second guardian of Mary
Kai Alexander Ealy

Hanna Kennedy, Mary’s nurse
Barbara Robertson*

Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland
K.K. Moggie*

Mortimer, Paulet’s nephew
Andrew Chown*

Lord Burleigh, High Treasurer
David Studwell*

Elizabeth, Queen of England
Kellie Overbey*

Count Aubespine, French Ambassador
Patrick Clear*

Count Bellievre, Envoy Extraordinary of France
Michael Joseph Mitchell*

George Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury
Robert Jason Jackson*

Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester
Tim Decker*

O’Kelly, Mortimer’s friend
Kai Alexander Ealy

William Davison, Secretary of State
Michael Joseph Mitchell*

Melvil, Mary’s house steward
Patrick Clear*

Sheriff
Kai Alexander Ealy

Guards/Pages
Nathan Calaranan†

Understudies never substitute for listed players unless a specific announcement is made at the time of the performance: Alan Ball* for George Talbot, Count Aubespine/Melvil, Count Bellievre/William Davison; Patrick Clear* for Amias Paulet; Shanesia Davis* for Mary Stuart; Kai Alexander Ealy for Mortimer; Martin Hanna for Druegon Drury/O’Kelly, Guards/Pages; Isabel Liss* for Elizabeth, Hanna Kennedy; and Jeff Parker* for Robert Dudley Earl of Leicester, Lord Burleigh.

Production Stage Manager
Deborah Acker*

Assistant Stage Manager (through March 25)
Jinni Pike*

Assistant Stage Manager (beginning March 27)
Elise Hausken*

*denotes member of Actors’ Equity Association.

†Chicago Shakespeare Theater gratefully acknowledges Carin Silkaitis along with the faculty of North Central College for their participation in this production’s intern program.

Chicago Shakespeare productions are made possible in part by the Illinois Arts Council Agency and an IncentOvate Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.

Chicago Shakespeare is a constituent of the Theatre Communications Group, Inc., the national service organization of non-profit theaters; National Alliance for Musical Theatre; Shakespeare Theatre Association; Arts Alliance Illinois; the League of Chicago Theatres; and Ingenuity, Inc.
Playgoer’s Guide

THE STORY

Charged with conspiracy to commit regicide against England’s queen, her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots, is held captive in Fotheringhay Castle, where she awaits her verdict. The nephew to her guardian in this castle, Mortimer brings news to Mary that the court’s decision is concluded: she is guilty of treason. He reveals to Mary his secret conversion to Catholicism and his allegiance to her. Mary entrusts the young man with two letters: one, addressed to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester—Elizabeth’s beloved favorite and lifelong friend; the second, to her cousin Elizabeth, Queen of England, requesting an audience with her.

Upon reading the letter, Elizabeth asks Mortimer to assume responsibility for the queen’s death, and he gives his consent. Receiving Mary’s letter, Leicester privately confesses that he too supports the Scottish queen, then urges Elizabeth to accept her cousin’s request for a meeting between them. Upon Leicester’s advice, the next day Elizabeth with her retinue sets out to Fotheringhay for the fateful meeting of two queens, both determined to live and to rule.

A NOTE ON PETER OSWALD’S TEXT

English translations of Friedrich Schiller’s Mary Stuart are numerous and variant. English playwright Peter Oswald’s 2005 version, commissioned by the Donmar Warehouse in London and published by Oberon Books, is intended as a script for production. It is, in fact, the second of two versions written by Oswald; in 1996, Oxford University Press published his translation of Schiller’s Don Carlos and Mary Stuart in a single edition, intended primarily for an academic audience. Oswald’s 2005 version remains as faithful as possible to the original text, though not at the expense of the play’s poetry. Extensive cutting and the use of a more modern vernacular allowed Oswald to make the script more relevant and accessible to contemporary theatergoers. His changes were strategic: this version, unlike his earlier one, was meant to be performed.

THE HISTORY

The imagined events of Schiller’s Mary Stuart transpire over the course of a few days, but its story’s roots—and its consequences—begin two centuries earlier in 1377, and “end” in 1603, fifteen years after the play concludes.

The legacy of the Plantagenet king, Edward III (1312–1377) looms over its story. Founder of the dynasty from which both Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots, descend, Edward III is the indirect cause of the struggle for power between these two queens who, through Edward, each asserts her claim to the English throne.

Edward III was a strong, stable, and remarkably fertile English king. He fathered thirteen children—of whom eight were male. But the king’s eldest son and heir apparent, Edward, the Black Prince, died one year prior to his father’s own death when the succession fell to the Black Prince’s oldest living son, crowned Richard II of the House of York.

That might have been the end of the story had it not been for Richard’s Lancastrian cousin, Henry Bolingbroke. In 1399 Henry deposed his Yorkist cousin and assumed the throne as Henry IV. Henry IV managed a successful reign, and the crown passed peacefully to his son, Henry V. But less than a decade into his reign, Henry contracted dysentery and died.

Henry V’s infant son ascended to the throne. Dominated by his courtiers and later by his French wife, Margaret of Anjou, Henry VI proved a weak, ineffective king. Under his reign, England’s claim to France was lost and the crown ran up massive debts. The Yorkists—claiming their right to the throne through two sons of Edward III—grew evermore exasperated with Lancastrian rule.

The Wars of the Roses (1455–1485) commenced—thirty years of civil war in which the crown was passed between the Houses of Lancaster and York. Among this succession of kings was Richard III, who reigned from 1483 to 1485, after declaring his late brother’s marriage invalid and heirs illegitimate.

In 1485 Henry Tudor returned to England from France, where he had been preparing for a rebellion against the Yorkist kings. Henry triumphed, and with Richard III’s death, Henry VII became the first of the Tudor dynasty. A pragmatic ruler, Henry married Elizabeth of York, strategically uniting the houses of Lancaster and York at last (see line of succession, pg. 22). His intentions for the country’s future were symbolized by the name of their first born son: Arthur, England’s king of ancient legend. To protect England against its historic French enemy, Henry allied with Spain and a marriage between Prince Arthur and the Spanish princess, Catherine of Aragon, was arranged.

Five months into their marriage, Arthur died. When Henry VII, too, died in 1509, his surviving son ascended to the throne, as Henry VIII. Only with a papal dispensation did Henry marry his brother’s widow and father one living child, named Mary (not the same as Mary, Queen of Scots). Desperate to produce a male heir, Henry broke with the Roman Catholic Church and divorced Catherine in 1533. He quickly remarried the pregnant Anne Boleyn and declared Mary illegitimate. Anne too gave Henry one living heir, the princess Elizabeth, before the queen was charged with a litany of crimes and executed. Elizabeth, too, was subsequently declared illegitimate. His third wife, Jane Seymour, bore the king a son, Edward, before she died of postnatal complications.

Henry’s subsequent three marriages produced no more children. In 1543 his parliament passed the Third Succession Act, which returned both Mary and Elizabeth to the line of succession following Edward. When Henry died in 1547, his nine-year-old son became Edward VII, reigning for just eight years. Not wanting...
to leave England to the Catholic Mary, Edward and his Protestant advisors tried to divert the succession to **Lady Jane Grey**, great-granddaughter to Henry VII. The plan failed, and Edward's eldest half-sister succeeded him as **Mary I** ("Bloody Mary"), who died a few years later, without issue.

In 1558, **Elizabeth I**, the last of Henry VIII's heirs, ascended to the throne, where she would remain until her death in 1603, despite competing claims for the crown: **Mary, Queen of Scots**, another great-granddaughter to Henry VII, was one of those claimants. Mary's son, **James VI of Scotland**, would inherit the English throne, as England's **James I**. James—raised away from his Catholic mother in a largely Protestant Scotland—was meant to ensure that England remained beyond the reach of the papacy. The English throne secured James's silence following his mother's execution. 1603 marked the end of the Tudor dynasty and the rise of the Stuarts under James I.
Profiles

ANDREW CHOWN (Mortimer) makes his Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Canadian credits include: Shakespeare in Love (Catalde Theatre/Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre); Vimy (Soulpepper Theatre Company); Romeo and Juliet, The Merry Wives of Windsor (Bard on the Beach); Taking Shakespeare (New Stages Theatre); The Circle, The Seagull (National Theatre School of Canada); and Harry the King: The Famous Victories of Henry V (Repercussion Theatre). Film and television credits include: Her Friend Adam (Sundance), Reign, and Beauty and the Beast (The CW). Mr. Chown graduated in 2014 from the acting program at the National Theatre School of Canada.

TIM DECKER (Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where he has appeared in eighteen productions, including: Henry V, The Madness of George III, As You Like It, Troilus and Cressida, Measure for Measure, King Lear, All’s Well That Ends Well, Timon of Athens, and The Merry Wives. Other recent Chicago credits include: Native Gardens (Victory Gardens Theater); By the Water, The Mousetrap (Northlight Theatre); Carlyle, By the Way, Meet Vera Stark, Teddy Ferrara, Race (Goodman Theatre); Port Authority (Writers Theatre); and The March (Stephen Fournslow Theatre Company). Broadway credits include: Hollywood Arms and The Cotton Club Off. Regional credits include productions with: Hartford Stage, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Maltz Jupiter Theatre, Cleveland Play House, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Arena Stage, Guthrie Theater, American Shakespeare Theatre, Center Stage, Folger Shakespeare Library, Huntington Theatre Company, and the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. Film credits include: The Dark Knight, Losing Isaiah, and The Babe. Television credits include: Empire (FOX); Chicago P.D. (NBC); and Boss (STARZ).

PATRICK CLEAR (Count Aubespine/ Melvil) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where he has appeared in eighteen productions, including: Henry V, The Madness of George III, As You Like It, Troilus and Cressida, Measure for Measure, King Lear, All’s Well That Ends Well, Timon of Athens, and The Merry Wives. Other recent Chicago credits include: Native Gardens (Victory Gardens Theater); By the Water, The Mousetrap (Northlight Theatre); Carlyle, By the Way, Meet Vera Stark, Teddy Ferrara, Race (Goodman Theatre); Port Authority (Writers Theatre); and The March (Stephen Fournslow Theatre Company). Broadway credits include: Hollywood Arms and The Cotton Club Off. Regional credits include productions with: Hartford Stage, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Maltz Jupiter Theatre, Cleveland Play House, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Arena Stage, Guthrie Theater, American Shakespeare Theatre, Center Stage, Folger Shakespeare Library, Huntington Theatre Company, and the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. Film credits include: The Dark Knight, Losing Isaiah, and The Babe. Television credits include: Empire (FOX); Chicago P.D. (NBC); and Boss (STARZ).

KAI ALEXANDER EALY (Drugeon Drury/O’Kelly/Sheriff) makes his Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Other Chicago credits include: Franklinland (Jackalope Theatre Company); Two Mile Hollow (First Floor Theater); 30th Young Playwrights Festival (Pegasus Theatre Chicago); Migration, In De’ Beginnin’, and Among All This You Stand Like a Fine Brownstone (eta Creative Arts Foundation). Film credits include Fallen. Television credits include Chicago Fire (NBC).

KEVIN GUDAHL (Amias Paulet/Fight Captain) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: Tug of War: Foreign Fire and Civil Strife, Pericles, King Lear, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Henry VIII, The School for Lies, Elizabeth Rex, Macbeth (title role), Antony and Cleopatra (title role), Troilus and Cressida (title role), Brutus in Julius Caesar, Fredrik in A Little Night Music, Hal in Henry IV Parts 1 and 2, and Kayama in Pacific Overtures. Other Chicago credits include productions with: Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Writers Theatre, Marriott Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Remy Bumpppo Theatre Company, Drury Lane Theatre, and Victory Gardens Theater. International credits include: five seasons with Stratford Festival; Canadian Stage; Donmar Warehouse; and the Royal Shakespeare Company (CST tour). Film credits include: While You Were Sleeping, Home Alone III, and The Poker House. Television credits include: Chicago Fire, Crisis (NBC); Boss (STARZ); Empire, The Chicago Code (FOX); and Early Edition (CBS). Mr. Gudahl is a multiple Jeff Award recipient and CST verse coach.

KAI ALEXANDER EALY (Drugeon Drury/O’Kelly/Sheriff) makes his Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Other Chicago credits include: Franklinland (Jackalope Theatre Company); Two Mile Hollow (First Floor Theater); 30th Young Playwrights Festival (Pegasus Theatre Chicago); Migration, In De’ Beginnin’, and Among All This You Stand Like a Fine Brownstone (eta Creative Arts Foundation). Film credits include Fallen. Television credits include Chicago Fire (NBC).

ROBERT JASON JACKSON (George Talbot) makes his Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Other Chicago credits include: The Road and Death and the King’s Horseman (Goodman Theatre). Favorite roles include: Othello in Othello (Denver Center for Performing Arts Theatre Company); Polonius in Hamlet (Shakespeare Theatre Company); and Bolingbroke in Richard II (Mark Taper Forum NAACP Best Actor nomination). Broadway credits include Amonasro in Aida (Palace Theatre) and Judge Brack in Hedda Gabler (Roundabout Theatre Company). Off-Broadway credits include: A Soldier’s Play (Second Stage Theater); The Merchant of Venice, The Treatment (Public Theater); The Bubbly Black Girl Shoes Her Chameleon Skin (Playwrights Horizons); and Funnyhouse of a Negro (Signature Theatre). Regional credits include: The Greeks (Hartford Stage); Macbeth ( Guthrie Theater); and Antipholus of Madon and Mourning Becomes Electra (Quintessence Theatre Group). Television and film credits include: guest-starring roles on Law & Order, Law & Order: SVU, Third Watch, Feds, New York Undercover, New Jersey Drive, and Altamont. Mr. Jackson is a graduate of Northwestern University (BA) and Temple University (MFA).

MICHAEL JOSEPH MITCHELL (Count Bellevue/William Davison) makes his Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Off-Broadway credits include: The Gravediggers Lullaby (The Actors Company Theatre); The Queen & The Cat (Signature Theatre); and The Dowsers’ Dive (Second Stage). Film credits include: After Party (Best Feature Comedy 2017 Madrid International Film Festival); Home (Dances with Films 2013 Industry Choice Award); Anna and the King; and The Sleeping Dictionary. Short film credits include: You Beautiful Crazy Bitch (Best Feature 2016 LA Shorts Film Festival); and The Audition (NatPac Entertainment, directed by Martin Scorcese); and Memory Box. Television credits include: The Good Wife (CBS); Gossip Girl (The CW); Mercy (NBC); and White Collar (USA). Ms. Maggie is a Partial Comfort Productions company member, as well as an adjunct professor for Pace University’s film and television department. She received her MFA in acting from Columbia University.

M. MICHAEL MITCHELL (Count Bellevue/William Davison) makes his Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Off-Broadway credits include: The Gravediggers Lullaby (The Actors Company Theatre); The Queen & The Cat (Signature Theatre); and The Dowsers’ Dive (Second Stage). Film credits include: After Party (Best Feature Comedy 2017 Madrid International Film Festival); Home (Dances with Films 2013 Industry Choice Award); Anna and the King; and The Sleeping Dictionary. Short film credits include: You Beautiful Crazy Bitch (Best Feature 2016 LA Shorts Film Festival); and The Audition (NatPac Entertainment, directed by Martin Scorcese); and Memory Box. Television credits include: The Good Wife (CBS); Gossip Girl (The CW); Mercy (NBC); and White Collar (USA). Ms. Maggie is a Partial Comfort Productions company member, as well as an adjunct professor for Pace University’s film and television department. She received her MFA in acting from Columbia University.

K.K. MOGGIE (Mary Stuart) makes her Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Off-Broadway credits include: The Gravediggers Lullaby (The Actors Company Theatre); The Queen & The Cat (Signature Theatre); and The Dowsers’ Dive (Second Stage). Film credits include: After Party (Best Feature Comedy 2017 Madrid International Film Festival); Home (Dances with Films 2013 Industry Choice Award); Anna and the King; and The Sleeping Dictionary. Short film credits include: You Beautiful Crazy Bitch (Best Feature 2016 LA Shorts Film Festival); and The Audition (NatPac Entertainment, directed by Martin Scorcese); and Memory Box. Television credits include: The Good Wife (CBS); Gossip Girl (The CW); Mercy (NBC); and White Collar (USA). Ms. Maggie is a Partial Comfort Productions company member, as well as an adjunct professor for Pace University’s film and television department. She received her MFA in acting from Columbia University.

K.K. MOGGIE (Mary Stuart) makes her Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Off-Broadway credits include: The Gravediggers Lullaby (The Actors Company Theatre); The Queen & The Cat (Signature Theatre); and The Dowsers’ Dive (Second Stage). Film credits include: After Party (Best Feature Comedy 2017 Madrid International Film Festival); Home (Dances with Films 2013 Industry Choice Award); Anna and the King; and The Sleeping Dictionary. Short film credits include: You Beautiful Crazy Bitch (Best Feature 2016 LA Shorts Film Festival); and The Audition (NatPac Entertainment, directed by Martin Scorcese); and Memory Box. Television credits include: The Good Wife (CBS); Gossip Girl (The CW); Mercy (NBC); and White Collar (USA). Ms. Maggie is a Partial Comfort Productions company member, as well as an adjunct professor for Pace University’s film and television department. She received her MFA in acting from Columbia University.
KELLY OVERBEY (Elizabeth) makes her Chicago Shakespeare Theatre debut. Broadway credits include: The Coast of Utopia, Twentieth Century, “Q.E.D.”; Judgment at Nuremberg, Present Laughter, and Buried Child. Off-Broadway credits include: Women Without Men (Drama Desk nomination, Mint Theatre Company); Dada Woof Papa Hot (Lincoln Center Theater); Love and Information (New York Theatre Workshop); Rapture Blister Burn, The Savannah Disputation (Lucille Lortel nomination), Betty’s Summertime (Playwrights Horizons); Sleeping Rough (Drama Desk nomination, Page 73 Productions); Lemon Sky (Koen Company); Animals Out of Paper, Good Boys and True (Second Stage Theatre), The Music Teacher (Minetta Lane Theatre); Hamlet (Classic Stage Company); Gone Home, Comic Potential, and The Debutante Ball (Manchester Theatre Club). Film credits include: Imitation Girl, That’s What She Said (also Screenwriter), Favorite Son, Sweet and Lowdown, 35 Miles from Normal, Outbreak, Defeasence, and Misplaced. Television credits include: Law & Order: SVU, Blindwords, 30 Rock, The Good Wife, Law & Order, Unforgettable, The Job, That’s Life, and The Stand. Ms. Overbey is an Eastern Principle Councilor at Actors’ Equity Association, a founding member of Fair Wage OnStage, and the executive director of the nonprofit “A is For.”

BARBARA ROBERTSON (Mama Kennedy) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, where her credits include: Tug of War, Foreign Fire, The Temple, Gypsy, Julius Caesar, Hamlet, A Little Night Music, The Winter’s Tale, Kabuki Lady Macbeth, King Lear, and Antony and Cleopatra. Other Chicago credits include: The Detective’s Wife (Writing Theatre); Life Sucks (Lookingglass Theatre Company); Winter (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble); On the Town (Marriott Theatre); Love Loss and What I Wore, Working, Grand Hotel (Broadway Playhouse at Water Tower); Wicked (Cadillac Palace Theatre, Oriental Theatre); Yeast Nation (the triumph of life) (American Theatre Company); Pursued by Happiness (Steenwolf Theatre Company); Camino Real, The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?, House and Garden (Goodman Theatre); Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, La Bête, Little Foxes (Court Theatre); and Emma’s Child (Victory Gardens Theater). Regional credits include Other Than Honorable (Geva Theatre Center). Touring credits include Angels in America Parts 1 and 2 (first national tour). Film credits include Robert Altman’s The Company and David Lynch’s A Straight Story. Recipient of more than twenty awards and nominations as an actress, Ms. Robertson also teaches at Columbia College.

DAVID STUDEVALL (Lord Burleigh) makes his Chicago Shakespeare Theatre debut. Other Chicago credits include: As You Like It, Pal Joey, Romeo and Juliet, Sunday in the Park with George, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Goodman Theatre. He directed the critically acclaimed productions of Abundance at the Playwrights Horizons and Sleeping Rough at the Drama Desk Center. Mr. Studevall received a BFA in musical theatre from the University of Michigan and an MFA in directing from the University of Illinois.

[Image]

MARK RYLANE, forming part of the 2002 season that won the Evening Standard Award for Best Season. Phyllida Lloyd’s production of Mr. Oswald’s version of Schiller’s Mary Stuart won the South Bank Award. In 2016 Mr. Oswald co-founded The Abyss Theatre Company, where he served as writer and actor, performing at: The Tobacco Factory, Bristol; Soho Theatre, London; and English Theatre, Berlin. In 2016 he co-founded the Cambina Theatre Company, devoted to poetry performance and new plays rooted in the commedia tradition. Mr. Oswald writes and performs poems and long story-poems based on Icelandic sagas and folktales, which he has performed at the Folger Theatre, Washington, DC; Hay Festival; and Wells Festival. He performed his long poem Weyland (Oberon Books) at the Ledbury Festival. Additional published poems include Three Folktales (Letterpress, 2014) and Sonnets of Various Sizes (Shearsman, 2016). Mr. Oswald received a Society of Authors traveling scholarship in 2016. He lives in Devon, UK, with his wife, Alice, and three children. www.peteroswald.net

JENN THOMPSON (Director) makes her Chicago Shakespeare Theatre debut. Recent credits include: The Secret Garden (Denver Center for the Performing Arts); Oklahoma! (Garden Theatre); Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley (Repertory Theatre of St. Louis). Other credits include: Love and Murder (Rubicon Theatre Company); A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder (Casa Manana); and Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley (Repertory Theatre of St. Louis). Other Chicago credits include: Women Without Men (Mint Theatre Company); Lucille Lortel, Off-Broadway Alliance Award nominations for Outstanding Revival, and five Drama Desk Award nominations, including Outstanding Director and Revival). Ms. Thompson served as co-artistic director of Off Broadway’s The Actors Company Theater from 2011 to 2015, directing the critically acclaimed productions of Abundance (2015 Off Broadway Alliance Award for Best Revival), Lost in Yonkers (2012 Drama Desk nomination), The Memorandum, The Late Christopher Bean, Bedroom Farce, and The Eccentricities of a Nightingale. Additional credits include: Bye Birdie (Goodspeed Musicals); Bye Bye Birdie (Goodspeed Musicals). Ms. Thompson is a member of the Playwrights’ Center. She teaches in the graduate design program at NYU Tisch School of the Arts, where she earned her MFA.

LINDA CHOI (Costume Designer) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, where she designed Othello and Two Noble Kinsmen (Jeff Award nomination). Broadway credits include: Anastasia (Tony Award nomination), A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder (Tony Award), and The Velocity of Autumn. Other Chicago credits include work at the Goodman Theatre. Regional credits include: Hartford Stage, Long Wharf Theatre, The Old Globe, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Arena Stage, Guthrie Theater, American Conservatory Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Williamsburg Theatre Festival, and Goodspeed Musicals. Opera credits include: Los Angeles Opera, and the executive director of the nonprofit “A is For.”

ANDROMACHE CHALFANT (Scenic Designer) makes her Chicago Shakespeare Theatre debut. Off-Broadway credits include: The Purple Lights of Joppa Illinois (Atlantic Theater Company); Rimbaud in New York (BAM); A Kid Like Jake, brownsville song (b-side for tray) (Lincoln Center); Sex with Strangers (Second Stage Theatre); Wild Animals You Should Know (MCC); Food and Fadwa (New York Theatre Workshop); Massage, The Long Shift, Through the Yellow Hour (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater). Regional credits include: Hartford Stage, Two River Theatre Company, McCarter Theatre, American Repertory Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Actors Theatre of Louisville, The Old Globe, Arena Stage, Minnesota Opera, Virginia Opera, and Opera Philadelphia. Ms. Chalfant is a company member of LAYrinth Theatre Company and an associate artist of The Civilians. She teaches in the graduate design program at NYU Tisch School of the Arts, where she earned her MFA.
PROFILES

OPERA THEATRE OF SAINT LOUIS. She will make her Metropolitan Opera debut next season with Samson et Dalila. Ms. Cho is a recipient of the Irene Sharaff Young Master Award and the Ruth Morley Design Award from the League of Professional Theatre Women. She is an alumna of McGill University and holds a MFA degree from the Yale School of Drama. www.lindachoo.com

GREG HOFMANN (Co-Lighting Designer) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: Love’s Labor’s Lost, Ride the Cyclone, Road Show, and Short Shakespeare! productions of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Twelfth Night, and Romeo and Juliet. Other Chicago credits include: Elf, Jesus Christ Superstar, Mamma Mia!, Hair, Oklahoma, The Who’s Tommy (Jeff Award), Mary Poppins, Annie, 42nd Street (Paramount Theatre); The Game’s Afoot, Les Misérables (Jeff Award nominee), Olivier! (Drury Lane Theatre); A Loss of Roses, Vieux Carre (Raven Theatre); and The Book of Joseph. Other Chicago credits include: The Hunter and the Bear (Writers Theatre); The Wolves, 2666, The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window, Venus in Fur (Goodman Theatre); Learning Curve, Feast, and God’s Work (Albany Park Theatre Project). Off-Broadway and regional credits include: The Treasurer, A Life (Playwrights Horizons); The Undertaking (The Civilians/BAM); Tiger Style! (La Jolla Playhouse); The Royal (American Theater Company, City Theatre Company, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis); The World of Extreme Happiness (Manhattan Theatre Club); Fulfillment (The Flea Theatre); American Theater Company); and The Old Man and the Old Moon (City Theatre Company, The Old Globe, New Victory Theater, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Writers Theatre). Film credits include: Glitch, The Wise Kids, and In Memoriam. Mr. Fiksel has received two Lucille Lortel Awards and Drama Desk nominations, multiple Jeff Awards, and the Michael magnesium Emerging Designer Award. www.mikhailfiksel.com

MIKHAIL FIKSEL (Sound Designer) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater where his credits include: Short Shakespeare! productions of Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night’s Dream, the Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks production of Romeo and Juliet, and The Book of Joseph. Other Chicago credits include: The Hunter and the Bear (Writers Theatre); The Wolves, 2666, The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window, Venus in Fur (Goodman Theatre); Learning Curve, Feast, and God’s Work (Albany Park Theatre Project). Off-Broadway and regional credits include: The Treasurer, A Life (Playwrights Horizons); The Undertaking (The Civilians/BAM); Tiger Style! (La Jolla Playhouse); The Royal (American Theater Company, City Theatre Company, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis); The World of Extreme Happiness (Manhattan Theatre Club); Fulfillment (The Flea Theatre); American Theater Company); and The Old Man and the Old Moon (City Theatre Company, The Old Globe, New Victory Theater, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Writers Theatre). Film credits include: Glitch, The Wise Kids, and In Memoriam. Mr. Fiksel has received two Lucille Lortel Awards and Drama Desk nominations, multiple Jeff Awards, and The Michael Maggie Emerging Designer Award. www.mikhailfiksel.com

PHILIP ROSENBERG (Co-Lighting Designer) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: The Book of Joseph, King Charles III, Othello, Henry V, Gagarin (Jeff Award nomination), The School for Lies, Sunday in the Park with George (Jeff Award nomination), Beauty and the Beast, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Elizabeth Rex. The Taming of the Shrew, Macbeth, Edward II, Amadeus (Jeff Award nomination), and Cymbeline (Jeff Award nomination). Broadway credits include: The Elephant Man, A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder, and It’s Only a Play. Off-Broadway credits include The Explorers Club and Cactus Flower. Regional credits include productions with: The Kennedy Center, La Jolla Playhouse, Ford’s Theatre, Guthrie Theatre, The Old Globe, TheatreWorks, Huntington Theatre Company, Portland Stage Company, The Actors Company Theatre, Barrington Stage Company, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Bay Street Theater, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Hartford Stage, George Street Playhouse, and Westport Country Playhouse.

MIKHAIL FIKSEL (Co-Sound Designer) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater where his credits include: Short Shakespeare! productions of Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night’s Dream, the Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks production of Romeo and Juliet, and The Book of Joseph. Other Chicago credits include: The Hunter and the Bear (Writers Theatre); The Wolves, 2666, The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window, Venus in Fur (Goodman Theatre); Learning Curve, Feast, and God’s Work (Albany Park Theatre Project). Off-Broadway and regional credits include: The Treasurer, A Life (Playwrights Horizons); The Undertaking (The Civilians/BAM); Tiger Style! (La Jolla Playhouse); The Royal (American Theater Company, City Theatre Company, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis); The World of Extreme Happiness (Manhattan Theatre Club); Fulfillment (The Flea Theatre); American Theater Company); and The Old Man and the Old Moon (City Theatre Company, The Old Globe, New Victory Theater, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Writers Theatre). Film credits include: Glitch, The Wise Kids, and In Memoriam. Mr. Fiksel has received two Lucille Lortel Awards and Drama Desk nominations, multiple Jeff Awards, and The Michael Maggie Emerging Designer Award. www.mikhailfiksel.com

MILES POLASKI (Co-Sound Designer) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include The Book of Joseph. Other Chicago credits include productions with: Collaboration Theatre, 2nd Story, Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, American Theatre Company, Red Tape Theatre (Jeff Award for Mouse in a Jar), Chicago Dramatists, The Gift Theatre, Stepp Theatre Company, and About Face Theatre, among others. New York credits include productions with: The Flea Theater (Drama Desk nominee, Jeff Award nominee for Outstanding Designs), The Playwrights Realm, National Asian American Theatre Company, Ma-Yi Theater Company, Pace Gallery, and MBL Productions, among others. Mr. Polaski was the resident sound and video designer for five seasons at Barter Theatre in Abingdon, VA, where he designed over sixty-five musicals and plays.

RICHARD JARVIE (Wig & Make-up Designer) is the wig and make-up supervisor for Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: Red Velvet, The Taming of the Shrew, Madagascar, the Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks production of Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare in Love, Short Shakespeare! Romeo and Juliet, Love’s Labor’s Lost, and King Charles III, and the inaugural season of Chicago Shakespeare on Navy Pier. Mr. Jarvie spent twenty-eight years with Lyric Opera of Chicago, eleven as the wig master and make-up designer. Other Chicago credits include productions with: Goodman Theatre, Court Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, and Drury Lane Theatre Oakbrook. Regional and international credits include productions with: the Tom Patterson Theatre in Stratford, Ontario; Guthrie Theatre (wig master); Alliance Theatre; and McCarter Theatre. Opera credits include productions with: The Atlanta Opera, San Francisco Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Chicago Opera Theater, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and the Spoleto Festivals of Charleston, South Carolina, and Italy.

DAVID WOOLLEY (Fight Choreographer) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: Red Velvet, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, As You Like It, Peter Pan, Henry V, Antony and Cleopatra, Cymbeline, King John, Troilus and Cressida, Macbeth, and Short Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Current Chicago credits include The Gentleman Caller (Raven Theatre) and Beauty Queen of Leenane (Northlight Theatre). Off-Broadway and regional credits include: The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity (Second Stage Theatre) and Edmond (Provincetown Playhouse). Regional credits include: The Three Musketeers and Henry V (Utah Shakespeare Festival); The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity (Geffen Playhouse); God of Carnage, Escanaba in da Moonlight, Norma and Wanda (Oakland Press Award), and, currently, The Case of the Elusive Ear (The Purple Rose Theatre Company). Mr. Woolley is a co-creator and performs as Guido in Dirk & Guido: the Swordsman! He has received two Joseph Jefferson Awards for fight direction. A professor at Columbia College Chicago, he coordinates violence and intimacy, short Shakespeare master with the Society of American Fight Directors and is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society and Actors Equity Association.

KATHRYN WALSH (Wig Coach) returns to Chicago Shakespeare theater where her credits include: King Charles III, the Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks production of Twelfth Night, Short Shakespeare! Twelfth Night, The Comedy of Errors, Henry VIII, The Feast, and The Madness of George III. Chicago directing credits include: Women Beware Women, Richard II, As You Like It (Two Pence Theatre Company); James and the Giant Peach (Filament Theatre); and breaks & bikes (Pavement Group). Ms. Walsh received her MFA from Northwestern University and BA from Harvard University. She teaches and serves as program mentor in Northwestern’s MFA Directing Program.

EVA BRENEMAN (Dialect Coach) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where her credits include: Red Velvet, Shakespeare in Love, King Charles III, Tug of War: Foreign Fire and Civil Strife, Henry V, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Elizabeth Rex, and The Madness of King George III. Recent Chicago credits include: Blind Date, Yasmina’s Necklace (Goodman Theatre); The Doppelganger (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); All My Sons, The Belle of Amherst (Court Theater); Plantation, Hard Times (Lookingglass Theatre Company); The Importance of Being Earnest (Writers Theatre); and In the Next Room or, The Vibrator Play (TimeLine Theatre Company). Regional credits include: Three Seasons (American Players Theatre); Always…Patsy Cline, The Who and the What (Milwaukee Repertory Theatre Company); and Love’s Labour’s Lost (Actors Theatre of Louisville). National tours include: Fun Home, Motown the Musical, and Mamma Mia. Ms. Breneman is an associate artist at TimeLine Theatre Company.
DEBORAH ACKER (Production Stage Manager) has stage managed the past twenty-eight seasons at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Other stage management credits include: Puttin’ on the Ritz (National Jewish Theater); Six Degrees of Separation, Driving Miss Daisy, I’m Not Rappaport (Briar Street Theatre); The Nerd (Royal George Theatre); and A... My Name Is Alice (Ivanhoe Theatre). She has production managed extensively throughout Chicago, and has also provided lighting designs for: the Apollo Theatre, Candlelight Dinner Playhouse, Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s Tecta Shakespeare, the Museum of Science and Industry, Some Like It Cole (tour), and Pump Boys and Dinettes in Branson, Missouri.

JINNI PIKE (Assistant Stage Manager, through March 25) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where she assistant stage managed Ride the Cyclone. Other Chicago credits include: Elf the Musical, Sweeney Todd, Disney’s The Little Mermaid, Hairspray, Guys and Dolls (Paramount Theatre); Bakersfield Mist, Danny Casoloro Died for You, The How and the Why, Raisin in the Sun, and Wasteland (TimeLine Theatre Company). Regional credits include: seven production stage manager with Heart of America Shakespeare Festival (Kansas City, MO); three seasons as production stage manager and twenty-five productions at Unicorn Theatre (Kansas City, MO); and A Christmas Carol at Kansas City Repertory Theatre.

ELISE HAUSKEN (Assistant Stage Manager, beginning March 27) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where her credits include Short Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night’s Dream and CPS Shakespeare! The Taming of the Shrew. Other Chicago credits include: The Minutes, Linda Vista (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); Crazy for You (Drury Lane Theatre); Arcadia, Isaac’s Eye, Days Like Today, Hedda Gabler, The Old Man and the Old Moon, The Liar, Sweet Charity, Hamlet, A Little Night Music, and Hesperia (Writers Theatre); and The Apple Family Plays (TimeLine Theatre Company). During the summer, Ms. Hausken serves as the production manager at Ravinia Festival. She holds a BA in theatre and English literature from Northwestern University.

BOB MASON (Artistic Associate/Casting Director) is in his eighteenth season as CST’s casting director, where his credits include over one hundred productions and thirty-two plays in Shakespeare’s canon. In addition to numerous productions with Barbara Gaines, other production note include: a host of Sondheim musicals directed by Gary Griffin; Rose Rage: Henry VI, Parts 1, 2, and 3, directed by Edward Hall; and The Molière Comedies, directed by Brian Bedford. He recently directed and co-created Shakespeare Tonight! with Beckie Menzie, as part of CST’s Shakespeare 400 Chicago festival. Prior to casting, Mr. Mason enjoyed a career as a Jeff Award-winning actor, and has been a visiting educator for the School at Steppenwolf, Acting Studio Chicago, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Northwestern University.

NANCY PICCIONE (New York Casting) is the director of casting at Manhattan Theatre Club. Broadway credits include: Jitney, Heisenberg, The Father, Venus in Fur, Wit, Time Stands Still, Top Girls, The Assembled Parties, Outside Mullingar, Casa Valentina, and Constellations. She cast the original productions of Proof and The Tale of the Allergist’s Wife on Broadway and off-Broadway, as well as regional tours. Off-Broadway credits include: Linda, Incognito, The Explorers Club, Choir Boy, The Whipping Man, Ruined, Equivocation, The World of Extreme Happiness, directed Of Good Stock, Prior to working at Manhattan Theatre Club, she was a member of the casting staff at the New York Shakespeare Festival for ten years, where she worked on shows at the Public and numerous productions in the Park and park productions at the Public Theatre. She cast the American actors for the first two seasons of the Bridge Project, produced by BAM and the Old Vic London. She is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama and a member of the Casting Society of America.

RICK BOYNTON (Creative Producer) focuses on current and future artistic planning and production, as well as the development of all new plays, musicals and adaptations for CST. Projects include: The Book of Joseph, Ride the Cyclone (CST, MCC, upcoming at 5th Avenue/ACT), Gagarin’s Premiere (CST, Old Globe), Cadre (co-director) (CST, Johannesburg, Grahamstown, Edinburgh, Vancouver), Othello: The Remix (CST, London, Germany, Edinburgh, South Korea, New York), Funk It Up About Nothin’ (CST, Edinburgh, Australian tour, London), A Flea in Her Ear (CST, Williamstown Theatre Festival), The Three Musketeers (CST, Boston, London), The Emperor’s New Clothes, The Adventures of Pinocchio, Murder for Two (CST, New York), and The Feast: an intimate Tempest (in collaboration with Redmoon). Former artistic director of the Marriott Theatre and multiple Jeff Award-winning actor, he has starred in productions nationally, including CST’s production of A Flea in Her Ear as Jefte (Jeff Award, Dark Award). As casting director/associate at Jane Alderman Casting, projects included: the television series Early Edition, Missing Persons, Untouchables and ER; the films While You Were Sleeping and Hoodlum, among others; and numerous national tours. Mr. Boynton has lectured at his alma mater Northwestern University, and is the former president of the board of the National Alliance for Musical Theatre.

BARBARA GAINES (Artistic Director/Carl and Marilyn Thomas Endowed Chair) founded Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where she has directed nearly fifty productions of Shakespeare’s plays and 800 other plays, which include: the 2008 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre; the prestigious Honorary OBE (Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in recognition of her contributions strengthening British-American cultural relations; and Joseph Jefferson Awards for Best Production (Hamlet, Cymbeline, King Lear and The Comedy of Errors), and for Best Director (Cymbeline, King Lear and The Comedy of Errors). Ms. Gaines has directed at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon, Lyrical Opera of Chicago and The Old Globe in San Diego. As the cornerstone production of Shakespeare 400 Chicago, the 2016 international celebration of Shakespeare’s legacy, she created a world premiere Shakespeare history cycle, Tug of War, including the rarely staged Edward III. Ms. Gaines received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Birmingham (UK), the University Club of Chicago’s Cultural Award, and the Public Humanities Award from the Illinois Humanities Council.

CRISS HENDERSON (Executive Director) has produced Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s past twenty-eight seasons, and developed the citywide, yearlong celebration through 2016 of Shakespeare’s legacy, Shakespeare 400 Chicago. Under his leadership, CST has become one of the nation’s leading regional theaters and one of Chicago’s most celebrated cultural organizations, honored with the 2008 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, as well as multiple Laurence Olivier and Joseph Jefferson Awards. Mr. Henderson has garnered multiple honors, including the 2013 Cultural Innovation Award from the Chicago Innovation Awards; the Arts Administrator of the Year by Arts Management Magazine at the Kennedy Center and the Chevalier de L’Ordre des Etats des Lettres by the Minister of Culture of France. He was named among the top 40 business people under the age of 40 in Crain’s Chicago Business. He serves as president of the Producers’ Association of Chicago Theaters and is director of the MFA/Arts Leadership Program, a two-year graduate-level curriculum in arts management training created through a joint partnership between the Art Institute, the Marriott Theatre and The Theatre School at DePaul University.
In Mary Stuart, politico-theological conflict plays out as a tug of war between two radically different monarchic temperaments: Mary’s sensual, impulsive, open-hearted; Elizabeth’s cool, calculating, and self-contained. Mary has been wed (and widowed) three times, and even now has many suitors, one of whom describes her as having “the gift of life” so fully “in her possession,” that “to be with her is ecstasy forever.” Elizabeth has suitors too, but plays them off each other for political gain, and already aspires, as dexterous politician and Virgin Queen, never to wed at all. Again and again she reminds herself and others that “I am not like the Stuart.”

In important ways, though, she’s partly wrong. Schiller, like Shakespeare, knows that opposition achieves its fullest dramatic torque not in difference but in kinship. The clash resounds most forcefully only when—and because—the mighty opposites turn out to have much in common.

So it is with Mary and Elizabeth. They share a common bloodline, a fierce intelligence, and even, at various points in the play, the seductive attentions of the same man. And they share too, with one another but with few other women in history, a barely precedent experience of power: as queens by succession and not by marriage, each has known what it is to rule in her own right. For both of them, the play makes clear, this predicament is at once profoundly solitary and, in a world still overflowing with masculine prerogative, overcrowded.

And this turns out to be the common ground to which Schiller devotes his most sustained attention. He surrounds each queen with many, varied men—Machiavellian, humane, amorous, ambitious, baffled, subservient—and tracks the complicated consequences.

At its first appearance, in 1800, Mary Stuart flourished (and still does) as a high verse tragedy mingling the grandeur of the Greeks with Shakespeare’s gorgeous incandescence. In 2018, amid the mighty maelstrom of #MeToo, the play works...
also as an audacious thought experiment: what if women were to hold the highest power possible, but with all the presumptuousness of male manipulation still forcibly in play?

Mary alone understands the ways in which their commonalities might lead to redemption, or to ruin, for both of them.

The results, while galvanic, are also unsettling. Though Elizabeth aspires to rule her kingdom “like a man,” she gradually embraces a craven tactic, offloading all responsibility for her fateful, equivocal decisions onto her factious, opportunistic male adherents. We’re used to imagining this queen as virtually the patron saint of Shakespeare (think Judi Dench, in Shakespeare in Love) and hence of our own humanity. It’s striking to watch Schiller (and Oswald in his new version) call hers so stringently into question.

Mary’s humanity is never in doubt. She too is beset by men who assert their allegiance to her, but who nurture their own needs even more. Generous, discerning, and endangered, she earns her primacy, as the tragedy’s titular character, by virtue of her larger soul. Her humanity deepens scene by scene. It is she, far more than Elizabeth, who recognizes the “we” in their shared predicament. Having been tried, as she points out, by “a court of men, and none of them my peer,” she now implores her handlers to set up a meeting with Elizabeth, because

with the Queen I share
My sex, my blood, my rank. To her alone,
Sister, queen, woman, can I speak in freedom.

In the fulfillment of her request lies Schiller’s sharpest departure from actual history. In real life, the two queens never met. In the play they do, precisely because Mary alone understands the ways in which their commonalities might lead to redemption, or to ruin, for both of them.

The poet Alexander Pope once declared, in praise of playgoing, that at the theater we get to “be what we behold”; we become, while our absorption lasts, the characters we watch. In Mary Stuart, by this logic, we become for the time being both Elizabeth and Mary, recognizing in them our own conflicting impulses toward tactical self-interest and toward freer, truer, and imprudent passions. Absorbed in the clash on stage, we end up adjudicating our own inner lives, weighing, however subliminally, where to place ourselves along the spectrum between these mighty opposites.

Neither Schiller nor Shakespeare ever asks of us anything less. Early in the play, in a gruff incisive line, Schiller sets forth what might serve as all great playwrights’ First Commandment to their nightly audiences: “You are the Judges. So judge!”
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