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befriend thee."
—W.S.

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Welcome



DEAR FRIENDS,

We are thrilled to welcome you to *Romeo and Juliet*. Today, this tale of love and tragedy unfolds in a vivid urban setting in August 2020. By propelling the famous young lovers and feuding families into the near future, we are reminded that this 400-year-old work truly is a story of our times. In a city divided by generations of conflict, *Romeo and Juliet*—two souls with an extraordinary capacity for love and imagination—dare to inhabit a world where hearts are not ruled by hatred.

This production reflects a core belief behind everything we do at Chicago Shakespeare: the conviction that works by Shakespeare and other classic writers have tremendous power to resonate with audiences today. While *Romeo and Juliet* plays in the Jentes Family Courtyard Theater, *Q Brothers Christmas Carol* puts a wildly entertaining spin on Charles Dickens' beloved novella in The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare. Fusing contemporary musical styles—ranging from reggae to dancehall music, dubstep, and epic rock ballads—this joyous “ad-rap-tation” embodies the holiday spirit of generosity and goodwill. Also this winter, student ensembles representing high schools from across the Chicago region creatively explore Shakespeare's plays by developing original performance pieces in the third annual Chicago Shakespeare Slam.

As the 2019/20 Season continues in the new year, we are pleased to present a charming musical based on Jane Austen's *Emma*; the Royal Shakespeare Company's groundbreaking production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, reimagined in a matriarchal world; and an exuberant adaptation of *As You Like It*, infused with songs of The Beatles. From Shakespeare to Austen and Dickens, these reinterpretations of classic works speak with fresh relevance to the world we live in today. With these compelling productions and more ahead, we hope to welcome you to the Theater again soon! ■

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About CST

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 defies theatrical category. This Regional Tony Award-winning theater's year-round season features as many as twenty productions and 650 performances—including plays, musicals, world premieres, family programming, and presentations from around the globe. The work is enjoyed by 225,000 audience members annually, with one in four under the age of eighteen. Chicago Shakespeare is the city's leading presenter of international work, and in touring its own productions across five continents has garnered multiple accolades, including the prestigious Laurence Olivier Award. Emblematic of its role as a global theater, the company spearheaded Shakespeare 400 Chicago, celebrating Shakespeare's legacy in a citywide, yearlong international arts and culture festival, which engaged more than one million people. The Theater's nationally acclaimed arts in literacy programs support the work of English and drama teachers, and bring Shakespeare to life on stage for tens of thousands of their students each school year. Over the summer, the company tours a professional production of Shakespeare's work, free for all, to neighborhood parks across the city. In 2017 the Theater unveiled The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare—with its innovative design that has changed the shape of theater architecture. Together with the Jentes Family Courtyard Theater and the Thoma Theater Upstairs, The Yard positions Chicago Shakespeare as the city's most versatile performing arts center. ■

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On the Boards



As temperatures drop outside, The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare will be heating up with *Q Brothers Christmas Carol*. Created by Chicago hip hop sensations the Q Brothers Collective (GQ, JQ, Jax, and Pos), and developed with CST Creative Producer Rick Boynton, this wildly entertaining “ad-rap-tation” begins November 29. *Chicago Sun-Times* raves, “this mile-a-minute, rap-fueled, DJ-spin take is unlike anything you might imagine Dickens could be.” Fully decked out in the holiday spirit, The Yard will be strewn with more than two miles of twinkling lights as the ghosts of hip hop Past, Present, and Future lead Scrooge on a journey of rhythm, rhyme, and redemption. Filled with cheeky spirit and a whole lot of heart *Chicago Now* declares it “will have you dancing in your chair and laughing with holiday cheer!”

This fall, teams representing high schools from across the Chicago region come together to celebrate the power of Shakespeare and their own voices in the third annual Chicago Shakespeare Slam. Following a day-long workshop, each ensemble prepares two pieces to showcase at a Regional Bout: a scene of their choice from Shakespeare's canon, and a creative exploration inspired by a single play that the entire Slam community focuses on together—this year, *The Comedy of Errors*, the play that CST will stage for tens of thousands of students this winter. Finalist teams perform in the Final Bout, held in The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare on December 9. Above all, the Slam is an ensemble program that seeks to build community across its many schools.

Following the recent North American Premiere of *The King's Speech* in The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare, Director Michael Wilson's production launches its tour to theaters in Hartford, Washington, DC, Phoenix, and Toronto. Against a turbulent political backdrop, this remarkable true by David Seidler story illuminates King George VI's journey to assume the mantle of leadership as he overcomes debilitating self-doubt with the help of an unconventional counselor. *Chicago Tribune* praised it as “lively, enjoyable entertainment,” while *Chicago Sun-Times* heralded its “pageantry and sweep of history.” *The King's Speech* tour expands CST's tradition of presenting world premieres and developing new works prior to their regional, international, or Broadway runs.

Roberta Duchak, one of Chicago's most esteemed music directors and vocal coaches, is the recipient of the 2019/20 Bob Tilles Music Chair, an honor created in 1998 by Board of Directors member Gayle R. Tilles and Glenn R. Tilles. Each year, this award recognizes one of the noteworthy musicians who play a vital role in CST productions—from composers and lyricists to music directors, musical arrangers, and sound designers. Duchak served as music director for last season's acclaimed production of *Hamlet* and the North American Premiere of the Broadway-bound musical *SIX*—for which she earned a Jeff Award. This winter, she brings her creative talents to *Emma*, a musical adaptation of Jane Austen's beloved novel, staged by Artistic Director Barbara Gaines. Under Duchak's leadership as music director, composer and lyricist Paul Gordon's score is sure to charm audiences.

From left: Postell Pringle in *Q Brothers Christmas Carol*; Students participating in Chicago Shakespeare Slam; Rebecca Night and Harry Hadden-Paton in *The King's Speech*; Roberta Duchak. photos by Liz Lauren and Joe Mazza.

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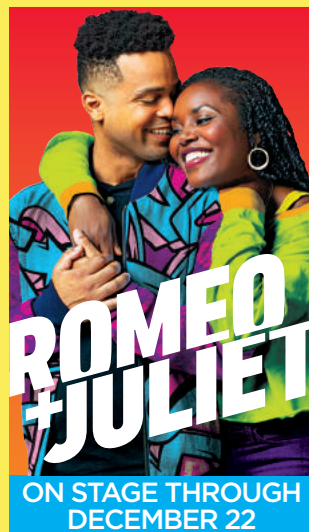
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A Conversation with the Director

Artistic Director Barbara Gaines spoke with her cast and CST staff on the first day of rehearsal about her vision for *Romeo and Juliet*.

Though I've been directing Shakespeare for more than three decades now, this is the first time that I've directed *Romeo and Juliet*. I simply hadn't yet found my way into it. But when I reread it a couple of years ago, I was overwhelmed. This time, I didn't read it as a story primarily about young love. Instead, their relationship became a metaphor—a metaphor for the larger pain of an entire community, uprooted by conflict. A metaphor for lost innocence, for the dream of romance and true love. Romeo and Juliet are souls with extraordinary capacity for love. And when they die, we grieve, as I think we will grieve for everyone in this story who becomes a victim of violence. All that is good is savagely fragmented by the hatred between these two families. This is a play about violence destroying everything of value, everything that matters.

Shakespeare's message in this play is one that is profoundly anti-violence. This story could take place here or in any town torn apart insensibly by all that divides us from one another. Any city suffering from too many young deaths sprung from hatred—hatreds of decades and centuries ago. Shakespeare calls these “ancient grudges.”

We're not making a *Romeo and Juliet* about gangs, racial, or ethnic differences. I didn't want the conflict to be rooted in the color of people's skin. We cast both families to reflect the rich diversity we see in the world around us. But there are no real differences between them—only their “ancient grudge.” The parents hate, and they teach their children to hate—and they don't even remember why.



We start out in the opening scene giving the servants' lines to the parents instead. Having the patriarchs of the Capulets and the Montagues start the fight, they are not only part of that fight, *they* are its instigators. Right from the first moments of this production, I want to establish this generational, truly tribal hatred. The stage

This story could take place here or in any town torn apart insensibly by all that divides us

erupts in flash violence—action that happens so fast you can't think. An action that happens without any attention paid to what will happen *if* I do this. We're all too familiar at this moment in history with the incendiary possibility of flash violence and the shock it leaves behind.

Young people senselessly die for their parents' and their grandparents' hatred. There is nothing romantic about these deaths, perpetuated across borders and decades.

Ultimately, our hatreds will destroy even the most beautiful of hearts. We all have to fight against violence in our own ways. The thing that I can do in my life is to hopefully shift people's perspective through art-making.

When I reread *Romeo and Juliet*, I kept picturing the work of Chicago painter Kerry James Marshall. Marshall changed the art world with his painting. What he paints is authentic and magnificent. Visually, it cuts right through your heart and goes right to the truth. The design of our production is very much inspired by Marshall's use of color, heat, dynamic, and humanity.

Shakespeare places his story in Verona. It could be Verona, Illinois, it could be Verona, Italy. We open this production in early November and we close just before the New Year. But our story is set in August of 2020, nine months into the future. I placed it in the future for only one reason: because none of these deaths need to have happened. Individually, we all have to be responsible for them not happening, for ending violence in our own neighborhoods and our worlds. For me, there's possibility for change and, therefore, for hope. ■

Barbara Gaines and Julian Parker in rehearsal; photo by joe mazza

Visit chicagoshakes.com to explore more ideas and stories behind the art on CST's stages.

ROMEO AND JULIET

- BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
- DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES
- COURTYARD THEATER
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presents

ROMEO AND JULIET

by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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SCOTT DAVIS

Costume Design
MIEKA VAN DER PLOEG

Lighting Design
AARON SPIVEY

Sound Design & Compositions
MIKHAIL FIKSEL

Wig & Make-up Design
RICHARD JARVIE

Fight Direction
RICK SORDELET

Choreography
STEPH PAUL

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TYRONE PHILLIPS

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NANCY PICCIONE, C.S.A.

Production Stage Manager
DEBORAH ACKER

directed by BARBARA GAINES

This production is dedicated to Kerry James Marshall, whose paintings and life have inspired us, fed us, and opened up brilliant dialogues about race, dignity, and the soaring beauty of life. Thanks to him, a light will forever shine... leading the way towards opportunity and empathy.

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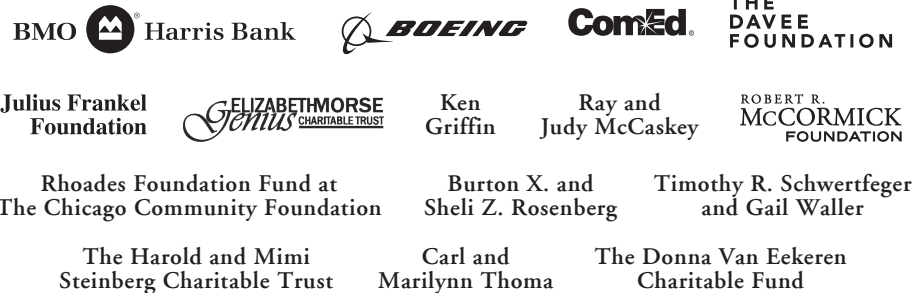
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There will be one 15-minute intermission.

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Cast (in order of appearance)

SETTING: VERONA, AUGUST 2020

Mr. Capulet	JAMES NEWCOMB*
Mrs. Capulet	LIA D. MORTENSEN*
Mr. Montague	DALE RIVERA*
Mrs. Montague	BRIANNA BUCKLEY
Tybalt	SAM PEARSON*
Benvolio	CAGE SEBASTIAN PIERRE*
Chief of Police Hakeem	AMIR ABDULLAH*
Romeo	EDGAR MIGUEL SANCHEZ*
Paris	JULIAN PARKER
Petra	DANIELLE DAVIS
Nurse	BETSY AIDEM*
Juliet	BRITTANY BELLIZEARE*
Mercutio	NATE BURGER*
Friar	DARLENE HOPE*
Balthasar	BYRON COOLIE
Apothecary/Capulet's Mother	JAQ SEIFERT
Rosaline/Girl	KEARSTYN KELLER
Ensemble	BOBBY BOWMAN
	RASELL HOLT
	KEARSTYN KELLER
	CLAIRE LOSTUTTER†
	MARIA CLARA OSPINA†
	ALEX PEREZ†
	LAURA QUIÑONES†
	ZAC RICHEY†
	MADLYNN JOY STUENKEL†

Understudies never substitute for listed players unless a specific announcement is made at the time of the performance: Bobby Bowman for *Mercutio*, Mr. Montague; Brianna Buckley for *Mrs. Capulet*; Byron Coolie for *Benvolio*; Alejandro Cordoba for *Chief of Police Hakeem*; Danielle Davis for *Nurse*; Rasell Holt for *Tybalt*, *Paris*; Kearstyn Keller for *Juliet*; Cage Sebastian Pierre* for *Romeo*; Maya Prentiss for *Mrs. Montague*, *Friar*; Dale Rivera* for *Mr. Capulet*; Jaq Seifert for *Petra*; and Julia Sismour for *Rosaline*, *Ensemble*.

Production Stage Manager	DEBORAH ACKER*
Assistant Stage Manager	CARA PARRISH*

*denotes member of Actors' Equity Association.

†Chicago Shakespeare Theater gratefully acknowledges Laura Lodewyck and Jason Gerace of North Central College and Carin Silkaitis of Columbia College for their participation in this production's intern program.

Playgoer's Guide

THE STORY

In Verona, the Montagues and Capulets are mortal enemies, and have been for longer than anyone can remember. And so it is decreed: any further violence between these two proud households will be answered by a sentence of death. Still, life in Verona goes on. For sport, the young Montagues decide to crash the Capulets' party. Romeo, Montague's son, sees Capulet's daughter Juliet there, and the two fall in love. Early the next morning, the Friar agrees to wed the young couple, hoping that this marriage might at last put an end to their families' discord.

Their vows just made, Romeo is confronted in the street by Capulet's nephew Tybalt, enraged by the Montague's bold intrusion of the night before. But it is Mercutio who takes up Tybalt's challenge and, as Romeo attempts to break the two apart, Mercutio is slain. In blind fury, Romeo turns on his new kinsman, murdering him. The Capulets demand the young Montague's death; but instead Romeo is banished from Verona.

After a wedding night cloaked in secrecy, Romeo parts from Juliet at daybreak. Moments later, Mrs. Capulet seeks out her daughter with news of Juliet's impending wedding day, arranged between her father and Paris. After the Nurse advises Juliet to forget all about her first husband, Juliet seeks the Friar's counsel. The Friar's plan is a desperate one: he instructs Juliet to drink a potion that will induce a deathlike trance; once she is buried in the Capulet tomb, the Friar will send word to Romeo to rescue her there and return with her to Mantua until their two families can be reconciled. But time and the undercurrents of history are unrelenting, and as Montague and Capulet vow to end the killing, it is a peace purchased with their treasures.

ITS ORIGINS

To Shakespeare and his audiences, the story of Romeo and Juliet was already a familiar one. The playwright's most direct source was likely the English narrative poem, *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet*, composed by Arthur Brooke. The popular work was first published approximately thirty years earlier and subsequently reprinted a few years prior to Shakespeare's play first appearing on stage. Stories of love, death, and resurrection followed by death are more ancient than the myths of Orpheus and Eurydice and Ovid's own Pyramus and Thisbe (innocently parodied by Shakespeare's amateur actors in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, written in the same period as *Romeo and Juliet*).

IN PRINT

Romeo and Juliet was Shakespeare's first major tragedy, likely first staged ca. 1595. Along with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Richard II*, also from this period, *Romeo and Juliet* helped establish Shakespeare as one of London's most successful playwrights. Its immediate popularity contributed no doubt to the rapid publication of a First Quarto in 1597, referenced by scholars as a "bad" quarto, "piratical and dependent on an especially unreliable means of transmission of the text" (Arden edition, 2000), which was subsequently corrected by a Second ("good") Quarto, just two years later, which, according to its own editors, was "newly augmented and corrected." So popular was this play that, by the time Shakespeare's plays were compiled posthumously by two members of his acting company, a Third Quarto had already been published—significant within a canon of which only half had ever been printed prior to Heminge and Condell's publication of the First Folio in 1623.

IN PERFORMANCE

The title page of the First Quarto, printed in 1597, proclaims that the play was performed frequently "with great applause." However, no written record remains of any production prior to 1662—following the Restoration of the English monarchy and the reopening of London's theaters. Just a few years later, Shakespeare's story was adapted to suit contemporary tastes, ending happily—and staged on alternating nights with Shakespeare's tragic version. It was subsequently David Garrick's adaptation that held the stage throughout the eighteenth century. Used as a star vehicle, the play not uncommonly featured a Juliet well into her thirties or forties. It was not, in fact, until the 1960s that Shakespeare's bawdy comic language was generally restored—notably by Italian director Franco Zeffirelli, whose stage version at the Royal Shakespeare Company preceded his classic film released in 1964. In 1996 Australian director of opera, dance, and film Baz Luhrmann set his contemporary production in Verona Beach—a violent, multi-cultural, amphetamine-driven city, where guns and switchblades of deadly street gangs replaced rapiers and daggers. Chicago Shakespeare Theater has staged full-length productions of *Romeo and Juliet* first in 2005, directed by Mark Lamos, and again in 2010, directed by Gale Edwards. ■

Profiles



AMIR ABDULLAH (*Chief of Police Hakeem*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *Short Shakespeare!* *Macbeth*, *Othello: The Remix* (CST/Edinburgh Fringe Festival). **REGIONAL:** *Barbecue* (Geffen

Playhouse); *Life Is a Dream* (California Shakespeare Theater); *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Raisin in the Sun* (A Noise Within); *CTRL+ALT+DELETE* (Penn State Centre Stage). **FILM:** *Radioflash*, *Elevate*, *The Untimely Concurrence*, *Goliath*, *Booze Boys and Brownies*, *Love: As You Like It*. **TELEVISION:** *The Odd Couple* (CBS); *Tosh.0* (Comedy Central); *Relationship Goals* (Go90); *Hollywood 911* (Revolt). **EDUCATION:** MFA, Penn State University; BFA, University of Miami. Mr. Abdullah's playwright debut, *Pray to Ball*, had its world premiere at Skylight Theatre Company in Los Angeles.



BETSY AIDEM (*Nurse*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **BROADWAY:** *Lady Bird* in Tony Award-winning *All the Way* opposite Bryan Cranston; *Beautiful*. **SELECT OFF BROADWAY:**

Final Follies (Primary Stages/Cherry Lane Theatre); *Nikolai and the Others*, *Road* (Lincoln Center Theater); *The Celebration* (Atlantic Theatre Company); *Mary Rose*, *The Metal Children* (Vineyard Theatre); *Crooked* (WP Theatre); *Stone Cold Dead Serious*; *A Lie of the Mind*; *Steel Magnolias* (original production); *Balm in Gilead* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company/Circle Repertory Theatre). **INTERNATIONAL:** *1000 Airplanes on the Roof*, *Seven*. **FILM:** *The Greatest Showman*, *A Vigilante*, *Irrational Man*, *Margaret*, *The Bleeding House*. **TELEVISION:** *The Blacklist*, *Bull*, *Madam Secretary*, *The Americans*, *Orange Is the New Black*, *Law and Order: SVU*. **REGIONAL:** George Street Theatre, Huntington Theatre Company, Long Wharf Theatre, Westport Playhouse, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Lake Lucille Chekhov Project, Hartford Stage, Portland Stage. **AWARDS:** Obie Award for Sustained Excellence of Performance; Broadway World Award for *Mama's Boy*. **DIRECTING:** *A Doll's House Part 2* (George Street Theatre).



BRITTANY BELLIZEARE (*Juliet*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **REGIONAL:** *The Magician's Daughter* (Geva Theatre Center); *King Hedley II*, *Seven Guitars* (Two River Theater); *Skeleton Crew*

(Baltimore Center Stage); *The Bluest Eye* (Guthrie Theater); *Sunset Baby* (TheaterWorks); *The Last Tiger in Haiti* (NAACP Theatre Award nomination - Ensemble in a Play, La Jolla Playhouse/Berkeley Repertory Theatre); *The Mountaintop* (Northern Stage); *Archy and Mehitabal* (The Yard); *Sunjata Kamalenya* (McCarter Theatre Center). **NEW YORK:** *In the Blue Hour* (La Maison d'Art); *A Raisin in the Sun* (Gallery Players); *Peter/Wendy* (the cell, a Twenty-First Century Salon). **TELEVISION:** *The Blacklist*, *Eye Candy*, *The Knick*. **EDUCATION:** MFA in acting, The School of Drama at The New School; BS in mathematics, Spelman College. www.brittanybellizeare.com



BOBBY BOWMAN (*Ensemble*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *Shakespeare in Love*. **CHICAGO:** *Shadows of Birds* (Glass Apple Theatre); *Through the Elevated Line* (Silk Road

Rising); *Fair Maid of the West* (Oak Park Festival Theatre); *Hand to God* (Victory Gardens Theater); *Richard III* (The Gift Theatre); *A Loss of Roses* (Raven Theater). **REGIONAL:** *The Comedy of Errors*, *Death of a Salesman*, *King Lear* (American Players Theatre); *Julius Caesar*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Montana Shakespeare in the Parks); *The Merchant of Venice*, *Richard III* (Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival). **EDUCATION:** BFA in acting, Oklahoma City University.



BRIANNA BUCKLEY (*Mrs. Montague*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CHICAGO:** *The Color Purple* (Associate Director, Drury Lane Theatre) *Queen of the Mist* (Firebrand Theatre);

Othello (Babes with Blades Theatre Company); *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (Emerald City

Theatre); *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* (Jeff Award - Best Supporting Performer, Raven Theatre); *The Light Fantastic* (Jackalope Theatre); *Dontrell Who Kissed the Sea* (First Floor Theater). **EDUCATION:** BFA in theater, Michigan State University. Ms. Buckley was named as one of the acclaimed "10 New Hottest Faces in Chicago" by the *Chicago Tribune*.



NATE BURGER (*Mercutio*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *Love's Labor's Lost*, *The Heir Apparent*, *Short Shakespeare!* *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. **CHICAGO:** *A Number*, *The Liar* (Writers

Theatre); *Mansfield Park*, *Butler* (Northlight Theatre); *Wasteland*, *'Master Harold'...* and *the Boys* (TimeLine Theatre Company); *A Christmas Carol* (Goodman Theatre); *The Man Who Was Thursday* (New Leaf Theatre). **REGIONAL:** Asolo Repertory Theatre, Forward Theater, nine seasons as a core company actor with American Players Theatre. **TELEVISION:** *Chicago Med*, *Chicago Fire* (NBC). **EDUCATION:** Loyola University Chicago.



BYRON COOLIE (*Balthasar*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CHICAGO:** *Kingdom* (Broken Nose Theatre); *The Toilet* (Haven Chicago); *Starting Over* (MPAACT). **REGIONAL:** *Romeo and Juliet*, *The*

Two Gentlemen of Verona, *The Winter's Tale* (Kentucky Shakespeare Festival). **TELEVISION:** *Chicago Fire* (NBC); *Smoketown* (TBN). **EDUCATION:** MFA in theater arts, University of Louisville.



DANIELLE DAVIS (*Petra/Dance Captain*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. **CHICAGO:** *The Music Man* (Goodman

Theatre); *BLKS* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *Fun Home* (Victory Gardens Theater); *An Octoroon* (Definition Theatre Company); *Ragtime* (Griffin Theatre); *Rent* (Theo Ubiq Cabaret Theatre); *Love Loss*

and *What I Wore* (First Folio Theatre); *Women at War* (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble); productions with Chicago Children's Theatre, Lifeline Theatre, Adventure Stage Chicago. **TELEVISION:** *Shameless* (Showtime); *Chicago PD* (NBC); *Empire* (FOX); *Sense8*, *Easy* (Netflix). **EDUCATION:** BFA in acting, Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University.



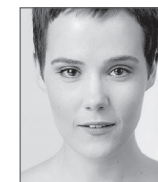
RASELL HOLT (*Ensemble*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CHICAGO:** *A Story Told in Seven Fights* (The Neo-Futurists); *Wit* (The Hypocrites); *The Hairy Ape* (Oracle Productions). **REGIONAL:** American

Players Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville. **FILM:** *Drive Slow* by Terrence Thompson. **TELEVISION:** *Chicago PD* (NBC).



DARLENE HOPE (*Friar*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **OFF BROADWAY:** *Sistas the Musical*, *Normalcy*. **REGIONAL:** Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Shakespeare

Theatre of New Jersey, American Stage Theatre Company, Playhouse on Park, Polk Theatre, Norwegian Cruise Line, TheatreWorksUSA. **FILM:** *Commedia By Fava*. **TELEVISION:** *FBI*, *God Friended Me* (CBS). **NEW MEDIA:** *Don't Shoot the Messenger*, *A Visit from Aunt Flo*, *When Bae Doesn't Pay Attention*. **EDUCATION:** MFA in acting, Florida State University/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training; BA in theater arts, University of South Florida.



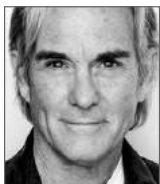
KEARSTYN KELLER (*Rosaline/Girl/Ensemble*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CHICAGO:** *Cardboard Piano* (TimeLine Theatre Company); *Proof*, *Equus* (MadKap Productions);

The Love Talker (Muse Theatre Collective); *Penny* (2016 Chicago Fringe Festival). **FILM:** *Blush*. **TELEVISION:** *Cold Blooded* (SundanceTV). **EDUCATION:** MFA in acting, Northern Illinois University.

**LIA D. MORTENSEN**

(Mrs. Capulet) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *Pericles, Measure for Measure, All's Well That Ends Well.* **CHICAGO:** *Mystery of Love and Sex, Company* (Writers Theatre); *An*

Inspector Calls, Night and Day (Remy Bumpo Theatre Company); *Cymbeline* (First Folio Theatre); *Faith Healer* (The Den Theatre); *Rabbit Hole* (Goodman Theatre); *The Big Meal* (American Theater Company); *City of Conversation, Ten Chimneys, Lady Windermere's Fan, Sky Girls, Talley's Folly* (Northlight Theatre); *No Wake* (Route 66 Theatre); *Merchid* (16th Street Theatre); *Closer, Faith Healer* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *Fighting Words* (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble); *Well, A Doll's House, Macbeth, The Illusion* (Next Theatre Company); *Ghosts, All's Well That Ends Well, Measure for Measure, Serious Money* (Court Theatre). **FILM:** *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (2010), *Blink, Consumed, Market Value, View from Tall, Resurrecting McGinns, Soul Sessions.* **TELEVISION:** *Empire, Shameless, Chicago Med, Mix Tape, Electric Dreams, Crisis, Easy Abby, Chicago Fire, The Onion, Chicago Code, Family Practice.*

**JAMES NEWCOMB**

(Mr. Capulet) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *Love's Labor's Lost, Tug of War: Foreign Fire and Civil Strife, Henry V, Timon of Athens, The Madness of George III, Macbeth.*

CHICAGO: Duke in *Measure for Measure* (Goodman Theatre). **REGIONAL:** Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Denver Center Theatre, The Old Globe, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, South Coast Repertory, Utah Shakespeare Festival, New York Shakespeare Theatre, BAM, Geva Theatre Center, San Diego Repertory Theatre, Shakespeare & Company (founding company member). **SELECT ROLES:** Roy Cohn in *Angels in America*, Richard III, Coriolanus, Iago, Touchstone, Feste, Benedick, Oberon, Apemantus, Gloucester, Thersites, Bottom. **AWARDS:** Denver Critics Award, Drama Logue Award, Oxford Society Award for Artistic Excellence. **FIGHT DIRECTION:** Chicago Shakespeare Theater, The Old Globe, La Jolla Playhouse,

Portland Stage Company, South Coast Repertory, Oregon Shakespeare Festival. San Diego Repertory Theatre. **TELEVISION:** *Honky* (PBS).

**JULIAN PARKER** (Paris)

CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE: Debut. **CHICAGO:** *Pass Over, Gospel of Franklin, Blacktop Sky, Head of Passes* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *An Octoroon, Genesis,*

Dutchman, The Brothers Size (Definition Theatre Company); *Hamlet, Julius Caesar, Smart People* (Writers Theatre); *Prowess* (Jackalope Theatre); *The Hairy Ape* (Jeff Award – Actor in a Principal Role, Oracle Productions); *Landladies, Charm* (Northlight Theatre); *The Royale* (American Theater Company). **REGIONAL:** *Seize the King* (La Jolla Playhouse). **FILM:** *Pass Over* directed by Spike Lee (Amazon Studios); *Swing Shift* (Greenslate Productions). **TELEVISION:** *The Chi* (Showtime); *Chicago PD, Chicago Fire* (NBC); *Home for the Weekend* (Comedy Central). **EDUCATION:** BFA, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Mr. Parker is a co-founding member of Definition Theatre Company.

**SAM PEARSON** (Tybalt)

CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE: *Hamlet, Macbeth, King Charles III, Short Shakespeare! Romeo and Juliet*, Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks production of *Romeo*

and *Juliet.* **CHICAGO:** *Familiar* (understudy, Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *Southern Gothic* (Windy City Playhouse); *The Madness of Edgar Allan Poe* (First Folio Theatre); frequent collaborator with The Back Room Shakespeare Project. **REGIONAL:** *The Home Place, The Sunshine Boys, A Christmas Carol* (Guthrie Theater); *Of Mice and Men, Good People, The Red Box* (Park Square Theatre). **TOURING:** *Richard III, The Comedy of Errors* (Montana Shakespeare in the Parks). **TELEVISION:** *The Chi* (Showtime); *Chicago PD* (NBC); *Empire* (FOX); *In an Instant* (ABC). **EDUCATION:** University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater BFA Actor Training Program.

**CAGE SEBASTIAN PIERRE**

(Benvolio/Fight Captain) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *Macbeth, Q Brothers Christmas Carol*; Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks production of *A Midsummer Night's*

Dream; Short Shakespeare! productions of *Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet.* **CHICAGO:** *Too Heavy for Your Pocket* (TimeLine Theatre Company); *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (Writers Theatre). **REGIONAL:** American Players Theatre. **TELEVISION:** *Empire* (FOX); *Chicago P.D.* (NBC). **EDUCATION:** BFA, University of Minnesota.

**DALE RIVERA**

(Mr. Montague) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *Short Shakespeare! Macbeth.* **CHICAGO:** *Goodbye Stranger, A Tale of Two Cities* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *Anna*

in the Tropics (Victory Gardens Theater); *They All Fall Down: The Richard Nickel Story* (Lookingglass Theatre Company); *Guinea Pig Solo* (Jeff Award nomination – Actor in a Principal Role, Collaborator). **REGIONAL:** *Ground* (Actors Theatre of Louisville). **FILM:** *The Dark Knight, Uncle Nino, Light It Up, Dustclouds.* **TELEVISION:** *Electric Dreams* (Amazon Studios); *Empire, Prison Break* (FOX); *Chicago Med, Chicago Fire, Chicago PD, ER, Crisis* (NBC). **EDUCATION:** MA in communication, media, and theater, Northeastern Illinois University.

**EDGAR MIGUEL SANCHEZ**

(Romeo) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *Macbeth, Short Shakespeare! Twelfth Night*, Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks production of *Romeo and Juliet.* **CHICAGO:** *In the*

Next Room or the vibrator play (TimeLine Theatre Company); *Hobo King* (Congo Square Theatre Company); *Dutchman/TRANSit* (American Blues Theater); *Sweat, stop. reset.* (Goodman Theatre); *Water by the Spoonful, Native Son* (Court Theatre); *The Wheel* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company). **REGIONAL:** *Fences* (Arizona Theatre Company/Indiana Repertory Theatre/Milwaukee Repertory Theater); *Water by the Spoonful*

(TheatreSquared); title role in *Hamlet* (GableStage); *Twelfth Night, Richard III, Troilus and Cressida, The Admirable Crichton* (American Players Theatre); *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Othello, The Comedy of Errors* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival). **FILM:** *Blueprint.* **TELEVISION:** *Sense8* (Netflix); *Chicago PD* (NBC). **EDUCATION:** BFA in acting, minor in sociology, DePaul University.

**JAQ SEIFERT** (Apothecary/Capulet's Mother)

CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE: Debut. **CHICAGO:** *Darling Grenadine* (understudy, Marriott Theatre); *Macbeth* (Oak Park Festival Theatre); *Captain Blood*

(First Folio Theatre); *Gertrude* (The Back Room Shakespeare Project); *Sagittarius Ponderosa, Our Town* (Redtwist Theatre); *Twelfth Night* (Gary Shakespeare Company). **INTERNATIONAL:** *The Capitano Must Die, Gli Zannanti, Avanti il Prossimo* (Arscomica/Antonio Fava). **FILM:** *The Taking of Pelham 123, Nick and Nora's Infinite Playlist.* **TELEVISION:** *Empire* (FOX). **EDUCATION:** MFA, Western Illinois University. **AWARDS:** Jeff Award nomination – Fight Choreography for *Not One Batu* (Nothing Without a Company); New York Innovative Theatre Award nomination for *The Accidental Patriot* (Stolen Chair Theatre Company). Mx. Seifert is an adjunct professor at Aurora University, a fight and intimacy choreographer, and executive producer of *The Buttcracker: A Nutcracker Burlesque.*

**BARBARA GAINES**

(Director/Artistic Director/Carl and Marilyn Thoma Chair) has directed nearly sixty productions at Chicago Shakespeare since founding the Theater in 1986, including thirty of

Shakespeare's plays. Honors 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, the Making History Award, as well as multiple Joseph Jefferson Awards for Best Production and for Best Director. Ms. Gaines has directed at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-on-Avon, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and The Old Globe in San Diego.

SCOTT DAVIS (*Scenic Designer*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** over twenty productions, including *The Wizard of Oz*, *Hamlet*, *Q Brothers Christmas Carol*, *Red Velvet*, *Madagascar – A Musical Adventure*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *The Book of Joseph*, *King Charles III*, *Tug of War: Foreign Fire and Civil Strife*, *Ride the Cyclone*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Pericles*, *Road Show*, *Shrek the Musical*, *Othello: The Remix* (CST/ international tour), *Cadre* (CST/tour to South Africa, Edinburgh, Vancouver), *Beauty and the Beast*, *Murder for Two*; Short Shakespeare! productions of *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*. **CHICAGO:** Court Theatre, Paramount Theatre, Steppenwolf Garage, Drury Lane Theatre, Marriott Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Windy City Playhouse. **OFF BROADWAY:** *Ride the Cyclone* (MCC Theater); *Othello: The Remix* (Westside Theatre). **REGIONAL:** Signature Theatre, Children's Theatre Company, Utah Shakespeare Festival, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Walnut Street Theatre. Mr. Davis is the co-founder of the Chicago-based design firm Aether and Nyx. www.scottadamdavis.com

MIEKA VAN DER PLOEG (*Costume Designer*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*; Short Shakespeare! productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*; *CPS Shakespeare! Macbeth*, *SIX* (associate costume designer); former costume shop stitcher. **REGIONAL:** *Miss Bennett: Christmas at Pemberley* (Milwaukee Repertory Theater); *Frankenstein* (Manual Cinema at The Public Theater). **CHICAGO:** *The Great and Terrible Wizard of Oz* (Jeff Award nomination, The House Theatre of Chicago); *Skin of Our Teeth* (Jeff Award nomination, Remy Bumppo Theatre Company); *Golden Boy* (Jeff Award nomination, Griffin Theatre); *Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play* (co-design with Mara Blumenfeld, Jeff Award nomination, Theater Wit); productions with Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Lyric Unlimited, Writers Theatre, Court Theatre, Paramount Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre Company, About Face Theatre, Chicago Children's Theatre, Manual Cinema, Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, Steep Theatre Company, The House Theatre of Chicago, Griffin Theatre, Albany Park Theater Project.

AARON SPIVEY (*Lighting Designer*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *Tug of War: Civil Strife*. **CHICAGO:** *The Winter's Tale*, *Blind Date*, *Ah Wilderness!*, *2666*, *Brigadoon* (Goodman Theatre). **OFF BROADWAY:** *Shadowlands*, *Inner Voices*, *Jukebox Jackie*, *Wanda's World*, *From My Hometown*, *4 Guys Named José*, *Golf: The Musical*, *Elle*. **REGIONAL:** *Sweat*, *La Cage Aux Folles* (Pioneer Theatre Company); *Matilda*, *West Side Story* (Contra Costa Musical Theatre); *The Full Monty* (Pittsburgh CLO); *Beauty and the Beast*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Saturday Night Fever* (Broadway by the Bay); *The Secret Garden* (Idaho Shakespeare Festival); *Marry Me a Little* (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park); *The Bomb-itty of Errors* (Syracuse Stage); *4 Guys Named José* (Actors' Playhouse at the Miracle Theatre); *Mame* (Helen Hayes Performing Arts Center). **NATIONAL TOUR:** *Dame Edna's Glorious Goodbye*. **INTERNATIONAL:** *A Chorus Line* (Mexico City). **BROADWAY:** associate/assistant lighting design on thirty productions, including: *Aladdin*, *Motown*, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, *The Coast of Utopia*.

MIKHAIL FIKSEL (*Sound Designer/Composer*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *Schiller's Mary Stuart*, *The Book of Joseph*; Short Shakespeare! productions of *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*. **CHICAGO:** Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, Writers Theatre, TimeLine Theatre Company, Victory Gardens Theater, Albany Park Theater Project. **OFF BROADWAY:** The Public Theatre, Playwrights Horizons, BAM, Manhattan Theatre Club, Second Stage Theater. **REGIONAL:** Center Theatre Group, La Jolla Playhouse, Actors Conservatory Theater, The Old Globe, City Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Dallas Theatre Center. **AWARDS:** multiple Jeff Awards, two Lucille Lortel Awards, Michael Maggio Emerging Designer Award. www.mikhailfiksel.com

RICHARD JARVIE (*Wig & Make-up Designer*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *The King's Speech*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Nell Gwynn*, *Peter Pan – A Musical Adventure*, *Macbeth*, *Schiller's Mary Stuart*, *Red Velvet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Madagascar – A*

Musical Adventure, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *King Charles III*; Short Shakespeare! productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*; Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks productions of *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*; the inaugural season of Chicago Shakespeare on Navy Pier. **CHICAGO:** Goodman Theatre, Court Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Drury Lane Theatre, twenty-eight years with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, eleven as the wig master and make-up designer. **REGIONAL:** Alliance Theatre, McCarter Theatre, Guthrie Theater (wig master). **OPERA:** Atlanta Opera, San Francisco Opera, Hawaii Opera, Chicago Opera Theatre, Saint Louis Opera; the Spoleto Festivals of Charleston, South Carolina, and Italy. **INTERNATIONAL:** Tom Patterson Theatre, in Stratford Festival.

RICK SORDELET (*Fight Director/Intimacy Consultant*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The School for Lies*, *Romeo and Juliet* (Jeff Award). **BROADWAY:** seventy-four productions, including *The Lion King*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Tina*, *The Outsiders* (upcoming). **OFF BROADWAY:** hundreds of credits including *Fuerza Bruta*. **OPERA:** *Cyrano* (Metropolitan Opera/Royal Opera House/La Scala); *Don Carlo* (Metropolitan Opera). **INTERNATIONAL:** fifty-three credits, including *Ben Hur Live* (European tour); *As You Like It* (The Bridge Project at BAM/European tour/London). **FILM/TELEVISION:** *The Game Plan*, *Dan in Real Life*, *Hamlet*, *Ben Is Back*, both seasons of *Kevin Can Wait*, and twelve years as chief stunt coordinator for *Guiding Light* with over 1,000 episodes. Mr. Sordelet received an Edith Oliver Award for Sustained Excellence by the Lucille Lortel Foundation and is an instructor at Yale School of Drama and William Esper Studio. He and his son, Christian Kelly-Sordelet, are the creators of Sordelet Inc. and bring over thirty-five years of action movement experience to the entertainment industry. They have also teamed up with author David Blixt to create SordeletInK, an e-publishing house for the emerging author. www.sordeletinc.com and www.sordeletink.com

STEPH PAUL (*Choreographer*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *Short Shakespeare! Romeo and Juliet*. **CHICAGO:** *Learning Curve* (Albany Park Theater Project/Third Rail Projects); *Ofrenda*, *Feast*, *God's Work*, *Home/Land* (Albany Park Theater Project); *Mansfield Park* (Northlight Theatre); *Last Stop on Market Street* (Chicago Children's Theatre); *The Royale* (American Theater Company); *Water by the Spoonful* (Court Theatre); *In the Red and Brown Water* (Northwestern University). **REGIONAL:** Shakespeare Theatre Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Studio Theatre, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, City Theatre Company. **INTERNATIONAL:** National Theatre of Scotland, Royal Opera House Muscat. **DANCE:** Chicago Dance Crash, Be the Groove. **EDUCATION:** Northwestern University. **AWARDS:** Helen Hayes Award – Outstanding Choreography in a Play for *The Wolves* (Studio Theatre). Ms. Paul is a resident director of Albany Park Theater Project and an artistic associate of Chicago Dance Crash.

KEVIN GUDAH (*Verse Coach*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *The King's Speech*, *Hamlet*, *Schiller's Mary Stuart*, *Tug of War: Foreign Fire and Civil Strife*, *Pericles*, *King Lear*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Henry VIII*, *The School for Lies*, *Elizabeth Rex*, *Brutus in Julius Caesar*, *Fredrik in A Little Night Music*, *Hal in Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *Kayama in Pacific Overtures*; title roles in *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Troilus and Cressida*. **CHICAGO:** Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Writers Theatre, Marriott Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, Drury Lane Theatre, Victory Gardens Theater. **INTERNATIONAL:** five seasons with Stratford Festival, Canadian Stage, Donmar Warehouse, Royal Shakespeare Company (CST tour). **FILM:** *While You Were Sleeping*, *Home Alone III*, *The Poker House*. **TELEVISION:** *Chicago Fire*, *Crisis* (NBC); *Boss* (STARZ); *Empire*, *The Chicago Code* (FOX); *Early Edition* (CBS). Mr. Gudahl is a multiple Jeff Award recipient and a frequent CST verse coach.

TYRONE PHILLIPS (*Dramaturg*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** *Hamlet*, *Red Velvet* (associate director); *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *King Charles III*, Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (actor). **CHICAGO:** *An Octoroon*, *A Doll's House*, *Genesis*, *The*

Brothers Size (Definition Theatre Company); George Orwell's *1984* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *Father Comes Home from the Wars* (Goodman Theatre). **REGIONAL:** *Assassins*, *A Christmas Carol*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Mountaintop* (understudy), *Clybourne Park* (understudy, Milwaukee Repertory Theater). **FILM:** *Gimmick*, *Boss*, *Divergent*, *Fare Thee Well*. **TELEVISION:** *The Red Line* (CBS); *Chicago Justice* (NBC); *McDonald's Mario-Kart Happy Meal* commercial; *DiGiorno's Don't Settle* commercial. **EDUCATION/TRAINING:** BFA in acting, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign; Shakespeare's Globe. Mr. Phillips is the founding artistic director of Chicago's Definition Theatre Company. He was recently selected as one of "Newcity Stage's Players 2019: The Fifty People Who Really Perform for Chicago."

BOB MASON (*Artistic Associate/Casting Director*) is in his twentieth season as CST's casting director, where his credits include over 150 productions and thirty-two plays in Shakespeare's canon. In addition to numerous productions with Barbara Gaines, other productions of note include: a host of Sondheim musicals directed by Gary Griffin; *Ride the Cyclone* (CST, MCC, Fifth Avenue/ACT), directed by Rachel Rockwell; *Rose Rage: Henry VI, Parts 1, 2, and 3*, directed by Edward Hall; and *SIX* (CST, A.R.T., Citadel, Ordway Center, and opening on Broadway in March 2020), by Toby Marlowe and Lucy Moss. He directed and co-created *Shakespeare Tonight!* with Beckie Menzie, as part of Shakespeare 400 Chicago. Prior to casting, Mr. Mason enjoyed a career as a Jeff Award-winning actor and singer, 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:** *Choir Boy*, *Jitney*, *Heisenberg*, *The Father*, *Venus in Fur*, *Wit*, *Time Stands Still*, *Top Girls*, *Shining City*, *The Assembled Parties*, *Outside Mullingar*, *Casa Valentina*, *Constellations*. She cast the original productions of *Proof* and *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife* off Broadway, on Broadway, and their national tours. **OFF BROADWAY:** *Sugar in Our Wounds*, *Cost of Living*, *Linda*, *Incognito*, *The Explorers Club*, *Choir Boy*, *The Whipping Man*, *Ruined*,

Equivocation, *The World of Extreme Happiness*. Prior to working at MTC, she was a member of the casting staff at the New York Shakespeare Festival for ten years, where she worked on Shakespeare in the Park and numerous productions at The Public Theater. She cast the American actors for the first two seasons of *The Bridge Project*, produced by BAM/The Old Vic. She is a graduate of Yale School of Drama and a member of the Casting Society of America.

DEBORAH ACKER (*Production Stage Manager*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** thirty seasons. **CHICAGO:** *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); *A...My Name is Alice* (Ivanhoe Theatre). Ms. Acker has production managed extensively throughout Chicago, and has also provided lighting designs for the Apollo Theatre, Candlelight Dinner Playhouse, Chicago Shakespeare's Team Shakespeare, the Museum of Science and Industry, *Some Like It Cole* (tour), and *Pump Boys and Dinnettes* in Branson, Missouri.

CARA PARRISH (*Assistant Stage Manager*) **CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE:** Debut. **CHICAGO:** *Gem of the Ocean*, *Electra*, *Hard Problem*, *Photograph 51*, *Five Guys Named Moe*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (Court Theatre); *Witch*, *Port Authority*, *Yellow Moon*, *The Letters*, *The Caretaker*, *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf*, *The Blonde the Brunette and the Vengeful Redhead* (Writers Theatre); *Too Heavy for Your Pocket*, *In the Next Room or the vibrator play* (TimeLine Theatre Company); *James and the Giant Peach* (Drury Lane Theatre); *Jabari Dreams of Freedom* (Chicago Children's Theatre); *Beauty's Daughter*, *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* (American Blues Theatre, artistic associate). **REGIONAL:** The Hippodrome State Theatre, The Fabulous Palm Springs Follies, Detroit Music Hall.

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 Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST). Projects include: *SIX* (CST, American Repertory Theatre, and upcoming at Citadel Theatre, Ordway Center for the

Performing Arts, Broadway), *The Book of Joseph*, *Ride the Cyclone* (CST, MCC, 5th Avenue/ACT, Alliance Theatre), *Sense and Sensibility* (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 Camille (Jeff Award, After 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.



CRISS HENDERSON (*Executive Director*) has produced the Theater's past thirty seasons. Under his leadership, CST has become one of Chicago's most celebrated cultural organizations and a leading American regional theater, honored with the 2008 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, as well as multiple Laurence Olivier and Joseph Jefferson Awards. He oversaw the Theater's move to its home on Navy Pier in 1999 and led the recent development of The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare. In 2016 he spearheaded the citywide, yearlong celebration of Shakespeare's legacy, Shakespeare 400 Chicago. Mr. Henderson has garnered multiple honors, including: the 2013 Cultural Innovation Award from the Chicago Innovation Awards; Arts Administrator of the Year by *Arts Management Magazine* at the Kennedy Center; recognition in *Crain's Chicago Business* "40 under 40"; and the Chevalier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the Minister of Culture of France. This year with Barbara Gaines, he was honored with the Making History Award, given to Chicagoans whose contributions to the city have made it "a better and more vibrant place to live." Mr. Henderson has served on the boards of directors of the League of Chicago Theatres and Arts Alliance Illinois, and for many years as president of the Producers' Association of Chicago-area Theaters. Mr. Henderson is director of DePaul University's MFA/Arts Leadership Program, a two-year graduate-level curriculum in arts management training created through a joint partnership between Chicago Shakespeare Theater and The Theatre School.

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Four hundred years after his death, Shakespeare continues to raise questions, arguments, and point/counterpoints among—and sometimes between—scholars and theater practitioners. The same script through different lenses reveals itself in myriad ways—leaving us, the readers of text and performance, to think and rethink our own points of view. Such is the legacy that Shakespeare left us. We hope that our program notes enrich, deepen, and sometimes even challenge our audiences' experience with the production they witness.

Plague

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Stuart Sherman, who contributes this essay, is a professor of English at Fordham University and the author of *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660–1785*.

“Boundless as the sea”: that’s the way Juliet, at the height of happiness, describes her love. The play has stayed Shakespeare’s most popular for the ways in which it makes us feel that boundlessness, in word and action. But beneath its ravishing waves of ardor, the playwright works strong undertows, drawn from darker narrative materials. There’s a horror story in here too, with visions of death at its most macabre. And a tale of social terror also: a fever-dream of perpetual conflict from which we’ve not yet found a viable way to wake.

Halfway through the play, Shakespeare compresses both these elements into a single oft-quoted line: “A plague o’ both your houses.” Romeo’s friend Mercutio, mortally wounded in a street skirmish, intones the curse three times quickly, as though it were his dying mantra.

For Shakespeare’s audiences, Mercutio’s *o’* would have sounded doubly, signaling not just *on*, but also, more strangely, *of*—as if the plague were already intrinsic to the feuding houses of Capulet and Montague, as though the conflict between them were the plague, inbred and maybe ineradicable. Here it claims Mercutio as the play’s first victim.

In Mercutio’s mouth, the “plague” is metaphorical, a commonplace curse-word of the time (with the particular curser’s chosen target slotted in after that *o’*). But for *Romeo and Juliet*’s first audiences, plague was real too. Everyone in the theater on opening day (ca. 1596) had survived a visitation of the Black Death in London just three years earlier. They could recall the screams of the afflicted locked up in their own



houses (to contain contagion); they would have witnessed the decanting of the dead from those same houses into carts bound for mass burial: hundreds of human corpses dumped into one common pit. The presence of plague in houses was something Shakespeare, his actors, and his audience could feel on their own shaking pulses.

The horror story in *Romeo and Juliet* derives from death’s insistent omnipresence even in a play scintillating with life at its liveliest and most quicksilver: parties, dancing, weddings, wordplay, swordplay; puppy love frustrated (Romeo’s for Rosaline); passionate love requited, savored, sanctified,

**The ‘houses’
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house of death**

and consummated. Shakespeare’s alchemy, just a few years into his career, is already so subtle as to produce a new blend of comedy with tragedy, of giddy pleasure and deep pain. Mercutio, the very embodiment of that alchemy, and mercurial to the very end, tucks in a last joke among his triple curses: “Ask for me tomorrow,” he tells his anxious friends, “and you shall find me a grave man.” The pun establishes him, in a single syllable, as witty, serious, and doomed.

That mixture hovers over the whole play. *Romeo and Juliet*, even at the apex of their passion, voice intimations of their own mortality. Later in the play, the premonitions grow more Gothic. In a harrowing riff, Juliet prophetically envisions herself walled up—alive, alone, awake—among the dead within her family’s ancestral sepulcher. And that in fact is where the play will end, with all of its core characters, living and dead, encompassed in the confines of the Capulet tomb. Mercutio’s curse and pun come true at once: the “houses” themselves are fatal; their conflict has delivered even the survivors into the house of death—grave men and women talking their way through unfathomable loss.

And therein lies too the play’s tale of social terror—of the plague as a deadly disorder in the body politic. Elizabethans had experienced the actual plague as a force of nature, inexorable, inexplicable, and beyond human control. ►►

(The discovery of its cause, in the bites of rat-borne fleas, lay centuries into the future.) What's terrifying about Verona's plague is that it arises out of human choice. From the very beginning, we watch the Montagues and the Capulets, opting to live, and to die, within a code of their own arbitrary making.

What's terrifying about Verona's plague is that it arises out of human choice.

By the power of the love story, Shakespeare calls such choosing into question. In language precariously balanced, he plays the pleasures of fusion against the pressures of conflict. "My only love sprung from my only hate!" exclaims Juliet when she first learns Romeo's identity. Those mirrored phrases, like so many in this highly patterned play, tease out the possibility of a tipping point: the hope that young love may undo ancient hate.

Can it? The play's equivocal. The hopeful symmetries of its verse are often twisted by the dark torque of its plot. Characters sometimes speak of peace, but cannot quite attain it. When Romeo, in the bliss of his secret marriage to Juliet, greets her cousin in the street as kin instead of foe, the result is not fusion but a swordfight, and two men killed. Even at play's end, when the survivors of the two houses, overwhelmed by the cost of conflict, seek resolution, their moves feel muted: self-soothing and symboling, not audacious enough to make a difference. As elders, they are the "wrong" survivors, and ominously, they are already in the tomb.

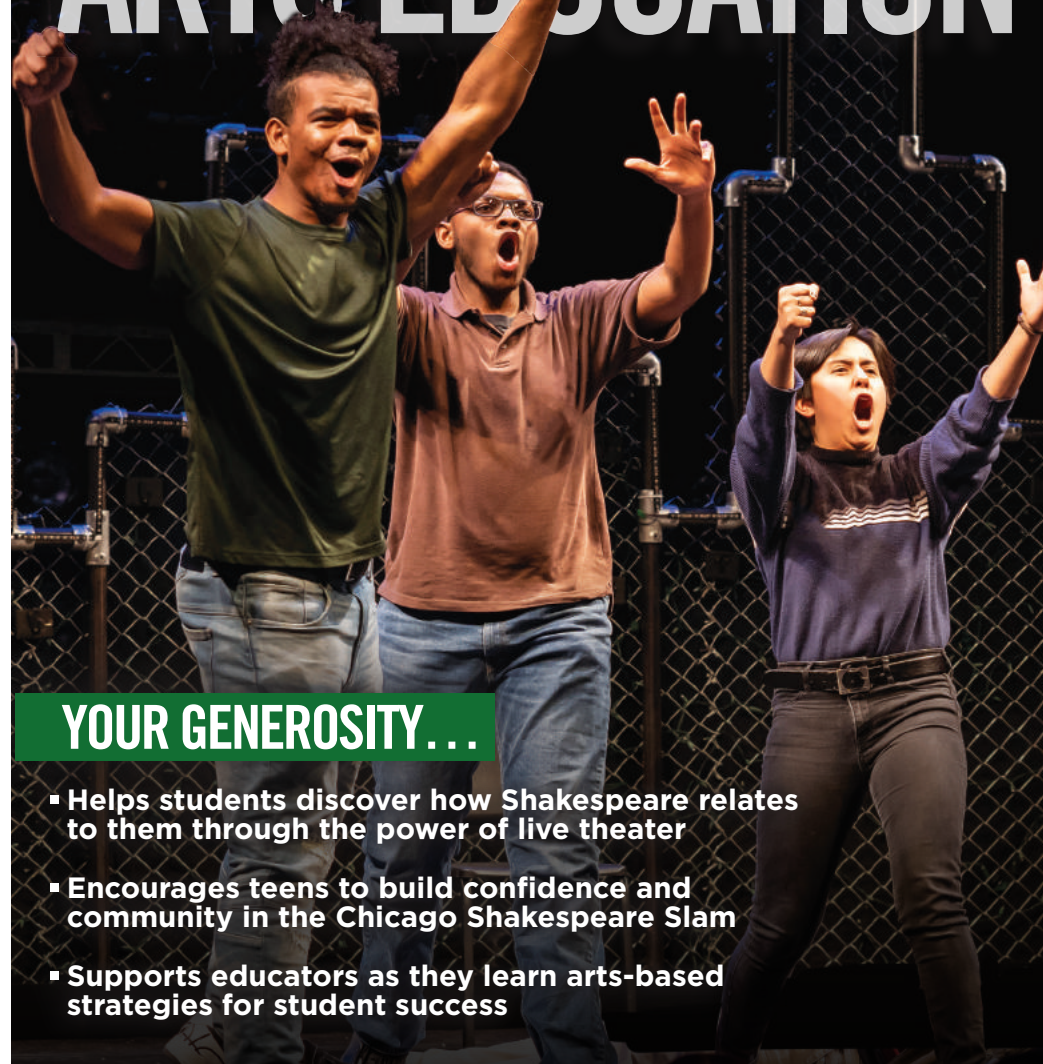
It's now only seven decades since modern medicine found, in antibiotics, the cure for bubonic plague. We've not yet found the cure for Mercutio's. In a world fresh-torn by faction, Shakespeare, as always, can help us trace the causes and the consequences. The cure is up to us. ■

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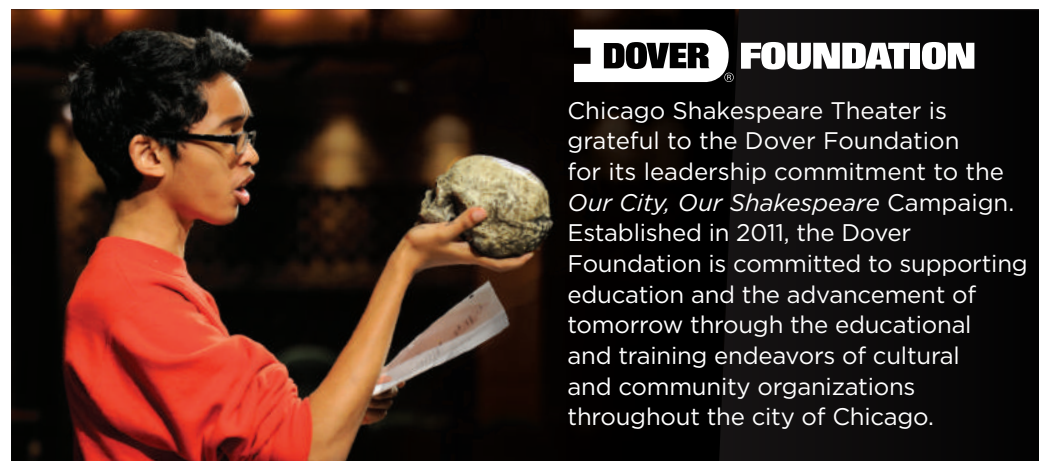
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