THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR
“Experience is a jewel, and it had need be so, for it is often purchased at an infinite rate.”
—The Merry Wives of Windsor

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“O earth, I will befriend thee.”
—W.S.
DEAR FRIENDS,

Welcome to Chicago Shakespeare Theater. The Merry Wives of Windsor is a joyous comedy, and we are humbled by the astounding actors featured in today’s production—truly some of the finest classical comedians in North America. Their artistry is further revealed by the selected timeframe of post-war England featuring ebullient music and dance—the perfect pairing for this charming tale. We hope this journey to Windsor brings a smile to your face!

As Chicago’s home for Shakespeare, we are not only dedicated to bringing work from the canon to life in extraordinary productions. We also have an unwavering commitment to serving as a partner in literacy for Chicago schools and as a cultural ambassador for the world-class city we call home. To this end, during the run of Merry Wives, two other exciting projects will be under way. Preparations will begin for our spring abridgment of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, which will play to nearly 40,000 students here on Navy Pier and on tour across the Midwest. Across vast oceans, CST’s collaboration with the Q Brothers, Othello: The Remix, will mark our debut at the esteemed Sydney Festival in Australia.

This trifecta of Shakespeare’s work, brought to life in startling clarity for audiences on Navy Pier, in Chicago schools and across the world, is only made possible by your patronage. Thank you for helping us realize our potential as a world-class theater reflective of our global city!
Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST) believes that Shakespeare speaks to everyone. A global theatrical force, CST is known for vibrant productions that reflect Shakespeare’s genius for storytelling, language, and empathy for the human condition. The Theater has evolved into a dynamic company, producing award-winning plays at its home on Navy Pier, throughout Chicago’s schools and neighborhoods, and on stages around the world. CST serves as a partner in literacy to Chicago Public Schools, working alongside English teachers to help struggling readers connect with Shakespeare in the classroom, and bringing his text to life on stage for 40,000 students every year. And each summer, 17,000 families and audience members of all ages welcome CST’s free Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks into their neighborhoods across the far north, west and south sides of the city. Reflecting the global city we call home, CST is the leading producer of international work in Chicago and has toured its plays abroad to Africa, Asia, Australia and Europe.

The Theater’s tradition of excellence and civic leadership has been honored with numerous national and international awards, including the Regional Theatre Tony Award, three Laurence Olivier Awards, and seventy-seven total Joseph Jefferson Awards. CST was the 2012 recipient of the Folger Shakespeare Library’s national Shakespeare Steward Award for its innovative teaching of Shakespeare in American classrooms. Among its many international engagements, CST participated in the Royal Shakespeare Company’s 2006 Complete Works Festival and was selected to represent North America at the Globe to Globe festival as part of London’s 2012 Cultural Olympiad.
On November 4, at the 45th Annual Joseph Jefferson Awards, CST’s artists took home the top number of honors: seven Jeff Awards for Artistic Excellence. The awards recognized Artistic Director Barbara Gaines’ The School for Lies, Associate Artistic Director Gary Griffin’s Sunday in the Park with George, and Othello: The Remix by The Q Brothers, developed with CST Creative Producer Rick Boynton. Each award celebrates the Theater’s unparalleled commitment to bringing complex stories to life with great clarity and heightened theatricality. This public celebration of the past season follows a year in which CST launched 650 performances of eighteen productions, playing on forty-five stages at home and around the world.

During the month of October, the CPS Shakespeare! ensemble of twenty-one students and nine teachers from eleven Chicago Public Schools turned CST’s rehearsal hall into a learning lab. Working with a full team of professional artists, they devised a unique sixty-minute production of Shakespeare’s Othello, performed in CST’s Courtyard Theater on November 1 and 2. The students recruited for CPS Shakespeare! are selected for their potential, personally and academically, to benefit from this immersive six-week experience. Supported by their teachers alongside a cadre of theater professionals, students from neighborhoods across the city work together, providing mutual support for risk-taking, creative expression, personal exploration and academic development.

January marks CST’s debut at one of the world’s most respected and sought-after arts festivals, the Sydney Festival. The Theater’s internationally heralded collaboration with Chicago artists the Q Brothers, Othello: The Remix, continues its worldwide tour with a one-week engagement in Australia. Following tours to London, Germany, Edinburgh and South Korea, the Sydney Festival will offer the artistic team behind this fusion theater/hip-hop piece the opportunity to be in creative conversation with a broad spectrum of international artists. Ranging from burlesque circus to contemporary dance and indigenous arts practice, the Sydney Festival presents an invigorating program of artistic innovators. CST is proud to represent a production indicative of the innovation inherent to the stages of our global city at this esteemed festival.

On October 30, Chicago’s most innovative businesses were honored at the 12th annual Chicago Innovation Awards. Several special awards were given that night, including the Cultural Innovation Award presented to Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s Artistic and Executive Directors, Barbara Gaines and Criss Henderson. CST was in the company of other special award recipients Stephanie Izard (Executive Chef at Girl and the Goat), Million Dollar Quartet, Chicago Public Library and Ingenuity, Inc. The awards are open to businesses of any size in any industry, and the winners represent a broad spectrum reflecting Chicago’s diverse industry landscape. CST is proud to be counted among those organizations continuing Chicago’s tradition of innovation and excellence.

photo credits: CST leadership and artists at the Jeff Awards (2013); CPS Shakespeare! in rehearsal (2013); photos by Liz Lauren and Johnny Knight.
A Conversation with the Director

Artistic Director Barbara Gaines met with Director of Education Marilyn Halperin to discuss her production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Let’s begin with your decision to stage this *Merry Wives* in post-World War II England.

I wanted to find a time and place where life was returning to some kind of normalcy following a long war. Windsor in the late 1940s in postwar England was still a small town. You have Falstaff and his followers as British soldiers who have returned from battle, out of work—and needing cash. And you have a society that is trying to separate itself from the horrors of war and rebuild itself. Hope and optimism are in the air—and the music of the period reflects that. The women are dressed in those beautiful prints from that period. I love the music of this time; the songs that will fill our production are mostly from America, which is what they were listening to in England after the war. It’s turning into this beautiful swing musical romp through Windsor.

Americans after the war in England were their heroes.

Yes, but I’ve decided to make Fenton, who Anne Page falls in love with against her parents’ wishes, an American ‘fly boy’—so he’s not part of the Windsor community and, like the other outsiders, he’ll speak in his own dialect that distinguishes him from the other characters.

In Windsor, Shakespeare makes the various dialects of his characters a topic of discussion—and humor.

We are dealing with a lot of people here who mangle the “pure,” beautiful British spoken word. They make fun of the Welsh Parson’s accent, and Dr. Caius’s accent—and they’ll probably make fun of Fenton’s American accent, too. Mocking others is all part of the fun. In Windsor, they may make fun of you, they can mock you in a witty—and occasionally hurtful—way. But in the end, they’re going to say, ‘Enough of this. Come over for dinner and we’ll laugh at our faults.’ That’s one of the reasons that I would love to live in my fantasy Windsor, because I could feel very comfortable and feel forgiven. Perhaps this Windsor is the Stratford-upon-Avon where Shakespeare grew up. He knew how small towns worked. He knew the inside bickering. He knew the pettiness. He knew how people could make fun of anyone who is remotely different. But he also knew that forgiveness is probably the only thing that would allow mankind to survive—and it’s a theme he returns to time and time again throughout the canon.

Certainly the wives are having a really good time, but poor Mr. Ford...

He’s got ‘crotchets’ in his head, as Mrs. Ford declares. Meaning that there are some people who just go to the dark side before they go anywhere—and he’s one of them. His wife can always cheer him out of it, but he doesn’t have the inner stability that Mr. Page does. He loves his wife so much that the mere thought of somebody trying to seduce her is agony—as it would be for many of us. He makes these assumptions without first going to her—much like Othello does in a very different story. Neither Ford nor Othello trusts his wife the way Mr. Page does because neither one of these men trusts himself.
Do we end up identifying with the jealous husband of comedy in a different way?

Comedy has to come from the most intimate, true place. It’s essential that we feel the pain in comedy, that we identify with Ford’s jealousy, and we’ll be able to laugh not only at him, but at ourselves.

We’ve met Falstaff, of course, in the Henry IV plays already. Is this the same Falstaff, or is he notably altered as many critics contend?

I know what all of the critics say, and it’s true: two wives do get the better of him this time. But that says a great deal, too, about the strength and intelligence of these two women—and the strong bond of friendship that ties the two of them together in this ‘conquest’! And what’s wrong with women pulling a fast one over men? But I do feel like he’s the same character. He is still greedy to live every moment to the fullest. His lust for living is as immense as he is. Yes, you can argue that his wit and psyche don’t have the same depth, but this comedy doesn’t require that of him. I think that instead of being disappointed in Falstaff, people have to let their heads give way to their hearts.

Based on what you’ve said about the wives, is Shakespeare doing something just a bit subversive as he gives the women the upper hand in Windsor?

There’s no doubt about Windsor being a male-dominated society. But as married women, they’re ruling their own homes. They decide to make the best of a bad situation—and they do. These are not two women who are going to run for Parliament or start a riot for women’s rights. They’re going to manipulate in the subtle ways that women have for thousands of years.
WHAT'S ON STAGE  2013/14 SEASON

NOVEMBER 30–DECEMBER 22, 2013
A Q BROTHERS’ CHRISTMAS CAROL
written by GQ, JQ, Jackson Doran, and Postell Pringle
developed with Rick Boynton
Upstairs at Chicago Shakespeare

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR
by William Shakespeare
directed by Barbara Gaines
in CST’s Courtyard Theater

MARCH 30–APRIL 13, 2014
FROM CORNWALL, ENGLAND
Kneehigh’s
TRISTAN & YSEULT
written by Carl Grose and Anna Maria Murphy
adapted and directed by Emma Rice
in CST’s Courtyard Theater

APRIL 29–JUNE 15, 2014
HENRY V
by William Shakespeare
directed by Christopher Luscombe
in CST’s Courtyard Theater

FEBRUARY 6–MARCH 23, 2014
GYPSY
A Musical Fable • book by Arthur Laurents
music by Jule Styne
lyrics by Stephen Sondheim
directed by Gary Griffin
in CST’s Courtyard Theater

MARCH 13–MAY 4, 2014
ROAD SHOW
music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim
book by John Weidman
directed by Gary Griffin
Upstairs at Chicago Shakespeare

ON TOUR IN SOUTH KOREA, LONDON AND SYDNEY
OTHELLO: THE REMIX
written, directed and music by GQ and JQ
developed with Rick Boynton

ON TOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA, EDINBURGH AND VANCOUVER
CADRE
written by Omphile Molusi
directed by Omphile Molusi
in collaboration with Rick Boynton

Saturdays at 11:00 a.m.
February 22–March 22, 2014
SHORT SHAKESPEARE!
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM
by William Shakespeare
adapted and directed by David H. Bell
in CST’s Courtyard Theater

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There will be one 15-minute intermission.

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There will be one 15-minute intermission.

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

written by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE


directed by BARBARA GAINES

This is for Bernie and Jane Sahlins. - BG
Cast

in order of appearance

Sir Hugh Evans
Justice Robert Shallow
Slender, cousin to Shallow
Master Page
Sir John Falstaff
Bardolph
Pistol
Nym
Anne Page
Simple, servant to Slender
Host of the Garter Inn
Mistress Quickly
John Rugby, servant to Dr. Caius
Dr. Caius
Fenton
Mistress Page
Mistress Ford
Master Ford
Robin, page to Falstaff
Dolores, barmaid at the Garter Inn
John, servant to the Fords
Robert, servant to the Fords
Cricket, Lego, Gunther

Understudies never substitute for listed players unless an announcement is made at the time of the performance: Joe Bianco for Dr. Caius; Erica Bittner for Anne Page; Christopher Chmelik for Fenton; Matt DeCaro* for Justice Robert Shallow, Master Page, Host of the Garter Inn; Sean Gallagher for Bardolph, John Rugby, John; Robert; Tim Gittings for Sir Hugh Evans, Slender, Ryan Imhoff for Pistol, Nym, Simple; Angela Ingersoll* for Mistress Ford, Amy Montgomery* for Mistress Quickly, Mistress Page; Daniel Pass for Robin; Julie Schroll for Dolores; David Turrentine* for Sir John Falstaff, Master Ford; Tilly for dogs.

*denotes member of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers.

*Chicago Shakespeare Theater gratefully acknowledges Carin Silkaitis and Sean Kelley along with the faculty and students of North Central College and Roosevelt University for their participation in this production’s intern program.

For more information about how you can support our work on stage, in the community and around the world, please contact Brooke Flanagan, Director of Institutional Advancement, at 312.595.5581 or bflanagan@chicagoshakes.com.
THE STORY

The citizens of Windsor lead decidedly provincial lives. The men go to work, the children go to school—and the women? They take care of everything else. Masters Page and Ford are two well-to-do citizens whose daily lives convivially converge in this country town.

Then Sir John Falstaff bursts onto the scene, and schemes to seduce two Windsor wives in a last-ditch effort to buttress his sagging finances—Mistresses Page and Ford, as it happens. While the wives step forward to take matters into their own capable hands, Master Ford falls hook, line and sinker for the rumors spread by Pistol and Nym who, after being dismissed from Falstaff’s service, have an agenda of their own.

Sir John is not the only one with amorous ambitions in Windsor. As the wives deflect Falstaff’s advances, the Pages’ daughter is pursued by several bachelors of varying desirability: Slender, the dimwitted cousin of a local justice; Dr. Caius, a Frenchman whose reason is subordinated by his emotions; and Master Fenton, a young American whose life is changed by falling in love. Enter Mistress Quickly, who serves as a go-between for any soul in need of assistance.

Scandal, suspicion and sweet revenge reign in Windsor—until order can be restored and life continue on in merry fashion.

A BRIEF PERFORMANCE HISTORY

According to an early—and entirely unsubstantiated—eighteenth-century tradition, Shakespeare was said to have composed The Merry Wives of Windsor at the command of Queen Elizabeth I, who so appreciated Falstaff in Shakespeare’s Henry IV that she longed to see the character back on stage—and this time in love. Though little is known about the play’s early production history, it is documented to have been presented by Shakespeare’s acting company, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, sometime between 1597 and 1601, and was revived at court for King James I in 1604. Its final audience prior to the English Civil War included the soon-to-be-beheaded Charles I at London’s Cockpit Theatre in 1638. The play was staged in the American colonies, in Philadelphia in 1770 and New York in 1773. Eventually, Victorian sensibilities found Falstaff too gross for its tastes, and the successful Merry Wives productions were refined, operatic ones. Both Nicolai’s 1849 The Merry Wives of Windsor and Verdi’s 1893 Falstaff center on the Fenton-Anne love interest, while distilling the remainder of the story.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater has previously staged the play twice, both times directed by Barbara Gaines: first in 1997 at the Ruth Page Theatre, and again in 2004 here at Chicago Shakespeare Theater.
Profiles

Joe Bianco (Pistol) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where he appeared in Timon of Athens and as an understudy in Othello: The Remix and Funk It Up About Nothing. Other Chicago credits include: Amadeus, Richard III, Henry V (Oak Park Festival Theatre), The Comedy of Errors, Space Wars (Picolcolo Theatre); Art, My Kinda Town, Nightmares in Paradise 4, Fight Night: The Killing (Nothing Special Productions); Cold, Cold Feet (Diamante Productions); and Fish Story (winning radio play of Deathscirbe 2012). Regional credits include The Front Steps (Alley Stage). Mr. Bianco graduated with a BFA in acting at Millikin University. www.actorjoebianco.com

Christopher Chmelik (Simple) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include Short Shakespeare; The Comedy of Errors. Other Chicago credits include: MotorTown, The Hollow Lands (Steep Theatre Company); Reverb (Redtwist Theatre); Coriolanus (The Hypocrites); Letters from Home, On the Shore of the Wide World, The Hostage (Griffin Theatre); The Sea (Theatre Mir); Wuthering Heights (Lifeline Theatre); and The Earl (The Inconvenience). Television credits include Si-rens (FX) and Double Cross (ID). Mr. Chmelik received his BFA in acting from The Theatre School at DePaul University.

Tiffany Yvonne Cox (Anne Page) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, where her credits include two summers with Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks and Short Shakespe-are! The Taming of the Shrew. Other Chicago credits include Godspell (Provision Theatre) and Letters Home (Griffin Theatre). Regional credits include: The Tempest (American Players Theatre); Crumbs from the Table of Joy (UPROOTED/Renaissance Theatreworks); Jackie and Me (First Stage Children's Theatre); Avenue Q (Skylight Music Theatre); Romeo and Juliet (Chicago Shakespeare Festival). TV: Diamante (Theater Mir); Wuthering (Overture). Ms. Cox received a BFA in musical theatre, with minors in Spanish and dance from Catawba College, and acting internships at Milwaukee Rep and PCPA Theaterfest.

Matt Decaro (Bardolph) returns to Chi- cago Shakespeare Theatre, where his credits include: Edward IV and Ratcliff in Richard III and Duke Freder- ick in As You Like It. Other Chicago credits include: The Lieutenant of Inishmore, Dinah Was, Talley's Foxy (Northlight Theatre); Perfect Mending, Glengarry Glen Ross, Men of Turtoge, Slaughter- house V (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); Romance, Heartbreak House, The Play about the Baby (Goodman Theatre); A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Mystery Cycle, The House of Blue Leaves (Court Theatre); Driving Miss Daisy, Laughter on the 23rd Floor (Briar Street The- atre); and the world premieres of Spinning Into Butter and Boy Gets Girl (Goodman Theatre, Lin- coln Center Theater, Manhattan Theatre Club). Regional credits include: Oxenford, A Streetcar Named Desire, Machinal (American Conservatory Theatre); and most recently he appeared as Andrew Carnes in Oklahoma! (Lyric Opera of Chicago) and White Snake (McCarr- et Theatre). Film and television credits include: Prison Break, Mr. 3000, Eagle Eye, U.S. Marshalls, Curb Your Enthusiasm, House, The Office, among many others.

William Dick (Sir Hugh Evans) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, where his credits include: Cyrano de Bergerac, Henry VIII, Timon of Ath- ens, The Madness of George III, The Taming of the Shrew, Macbeth, The Comedy of Errors, Cymbeline, Troi- lus and Cressida, Two Noble Kinsmen, Top Girls, in Her Ear, Much Ado About Nothing and The Merchant of Venice. Other Chicago credits in- clude: The Odd Couple (Northlight Theatre); The Pritteu Painters (TimeLine Theatre Company); Enda Walsh's Spider's Web (Fischerspooner); The Fugitives with a Hammer (Next Theatre Company); A Christmas Car- ol (Drury Lane Theatre Oakbrook); Moonlight and Magnolias, House and Garden, The Goat or Who is Sylvia? (Goodman Theatre); and We All Went Down to Amsterdam (Steppenwolf Thea- tre Company). Regional credits include the Father in Eurydice (Milwaukee Repertory Thea- tre) and work at Michigan Public Theatre, Studio Arena Theatre and the Los Angeles Theatre Center. Television credits include Le- verage and Chicago Fire. Film credits include: The Company, Ice Harvest, Stranger Than Fiction, The Break Up, The Promotion, The Merry Gentle- man, Fred Claus and Oz The Great and Powerful.

Don Forston (Host of the Garter Inn) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, where his credits include: Beckett in The Adventures of Pinocchio, The Emperor in The Emperor's New Clothes, Tom and Goaler in The Comede- dy of Errors, George Seacole in Much Ado About Nothing, Papa and Biff Kabibble in The Princess and the Pea, Hugh Evans in The Merry Wives of Windsor, Snee in Peter Pan and the Cowardly Li- on in The Wizard of Oz. Other Chicago credits include: Al in the world premiere of Hero (Marriott Theatre); J.P. Morgan in Ragtime (Drury Lane Theatre Oakbrook); and the Chicagoland premiere of Another Night Before Christmas (Theatre at the Center). Regional credits include Dad in Leaving Iowa (Fox Valley Repertory) and The Guy in the world premiere of Another Night Before Christ- mas (American Heartland Theatre). Mr. Forston is a five-time Jeff Award nominee and an After Dark Award recipient.

Kelli Fox (Mistress Page) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, where she appeared as Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing. Regional credits include the title role in Ham- let (Geva Theatre). Canadian credits include: twelve seasons with the Shaw Festi- val, three seasons with the Stratford Festival, The Penelopiad (Dora Award-Best Ensemble, Nightwood Theatre); Mrs. Bennett in Pride and Prejudice (Globe Theatre); Slava!'s Scroched, The Children's Republic (Tarragon Theatre) and Credulous (Dora Award nomination, Soulepepper Theatre); Love's Labour's Lost, A Winter's Tale, All's Well that Ends Well (National Arts Centre, Ottawa); Frozen, August; Osage County (Citadel Theatre); The Blonde, The Brunette and the Vengeful Red- head (Manitoba Theatre Centre); and Bluete Spirit (Segal Centre). Ms. Fox's recent directing credits include a developmental project inspired by poet Edna St. Vincent Millay and Chloe Moss's This Wide Night (Toronto's Summerworks Festival). She received a Jessie Award for Keeley and Du, and has also been recognized by the Critics Cir- cles in both Toronto for Penelopiad and Ottawa for A Room of One's Own.

Tim Gittings (Nym) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where he appeared in Short Shakespe-are! The Tempest, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Taming of the Shrew and Short Shakespeare! The Tam- ing of the Shrew. Other Chicago credits include: Awake and Sing! (Northlight Theatre); A Christ- mas Carol (Goodman Theatre); As You Like It, Heartbreak Hotel (Writers Theatre); When You Comin’ Back, Red Ryder (Circle Theatre); and Mrs. Mackenzie’s Beginner’s Guide to the Blues (Stage Left Theatre). Regional credits include: four seasons at American Players Theatre, two seasons at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival and seven seasons with Door Shakespeare.

Kevin Gudahl (Master Page) returns to Chi- cago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: Henry VIII, The School for Lies, the title roles in Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra and Troilus and Cressida; William Shakespeare in Elizabeth Rex, Brutus in Julius Caesar, Fredrick in A Little Night Music (Toronto’s Summerworks Festival). Film credits include: While You Were Sleeping, Home Alone III and The Poker House. Mr. Gudahl is a multiple Jeff Award recipient.

(Goodman Theatre); Albin in La Cage Aux Folles (Candlelight Dinner Playhouse); and Quixote in Man of La Mancha (Light Opera Works). He is the recipient of eight Jeff Awards. Touring credits include: Evita, The Fantasticks (including Japan tour recording); and Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. Directing credits include: Me and My Girl (Theatre at the Center); Some Enchanted Evening (Drury Lane Evergreen Park); and The Fantasticks (Pegasus Players).

ANGELA INGERSOLL
(Mistress Ford) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where her credits include: The School for Lies, Sunday in the Park with George, Cat in The Adventures of nocchio and Helena in Short Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Other Chicago credits include: Wicked (Broadway in Chicago); and productions with: Commercial Collective/TimeLine Theatre Company, Drury Lane Theatre Oakbrook, Northlight Theatre, Writers Theatre, Marriott Theatre, Court Theatre, Drury Lane Evergreen Park, Theatre at the Center and American Theatre Company. Regional credits include: Disney’s Beauty and the Beast on tour; and productions with: Maine State Music Theatre, Theatre Works, Peninsula Players and Bar Harbor Theatre. Concert credits include: Ravinia Festival, The Three Divas, Kevin Cole, Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Pensacola Symphony Orchestra. Film credits include Man of Steel. Ms. Kettingen is a six-time Jeff Award nominee and the recipient of four Ostrander Awards. She is a graduate of Ithaca College.

Scott Jaec
(Sir John Falstaff) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: Henry V, Twelfth Night, Troilus and Cressida, Henry IV Parts 1 and 2 (CST and on tour to Royal Shakespeare Company), Much Ado About Nothing, The Merchant of Venice, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Julius Caesar, Love’s Labor’s Lost and Richard III. Other Chicago credits include: Three Sisters, Time Stands Still, Penelope (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); Stage Kiss, Mary, The Seagull, Dinner with Friends (Prismatic Theatre); Inherit the Wind, The Red Herring, How I Learned to Drive (Northlight Theatre); Someone Who’ll Watch Over Me (Victoria Gardens Theatre); Benefactors and Our Town (Writers Theatre). Broadway credits include: August: Osage County and The Night of the Iguana. Regional credits include: Tamburlaine, Edward II (Shakespeare Theatre Company); Inherit the Wind (Cleveland Playhouse); How I Learned to Drive (Alliance Theatre); Dinner with Friends (Indiana Repertory Theatre); and Romeo and Juliet (Milwaukee Repertory Theatre). Film credits include The Lucky Ones and Washington Square. Television credits include: Person of Interest, Boardwalk Empire, Prison Break, ER, NYPD Blue, Seinfeld and Star Trek: Voyager and Next Generation.

HEIDI KETTENRING
(Mistress Ford) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where her credits include: The School for Lies, Sunday in the Park with George, Cat in The Adventures of noccio and Helena in Short Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Other Chicago credits include: Wicked (Broadway in Chicago); and productions with: Commercial Collective/TimeLine Theatre Company, Drury Lane Theatre Oakbrook, Northlight Theatre, Writers Theatre, Marriott Theatre, Court Theatre, Drury Lane Evergreen Park, Theatre at the Center and American Theatre Company. Regional credits include: Disney’s Beauty and the Beast on tour; and productions with: Maine State Music Theatre, Theatre Works, Peninsula Players and Bar Harbor Theatre. Concert credits include: Ravinia Festival, The Three Divas, Kevin Cole, Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Pensacola Symphony Orchestra. Film credits include Man of Steel. Ms. Kettingen is a six-time Jeff Award nominee and the recipient of four Ostrander Awards. She is a graduate of Ithaca College.

ROSS LEHMAN
(Master Ford) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: Cyrano de Bergerac, As You Like It, Feste in Twelfth Night, Dudley Marsh/ Dromio of Syracuse in The Comedy of Errors, Troilus and Cressida, Henry IV Parts 1 and 2 at CST and on tour to the Royal Shakespeare Company, STREET-UPON-AYON, King Lear and Cymbeline. Other Chicago credits include: Fiddler on the Roof, The Producers (Marriott Theatre); The Man Who Came to Dinner. Waiting for Godot, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum (Jeff Award), Stage Kiss (Goodman Theatre); A Man of No Importance (Jeff Award), The Dress er (After Dark Award), As You Like It and Hamlet (Writers Theatre). Broadway credits include: A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, The Tempest and One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest. International credits include Koko in the London production of Hot Mikado (Laurence Olivier Award nomination).

AMY MONTGOMERY
(Dolores) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where her credits include: Troilus and Cressida, As You Like It, Short Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night, Romeo and Ju liet, The School for Scandal, All’s Well That Ends Well and Henry IV Parts 1 and 2. Regional credits include: She Stoops to Conquer, Twelfth Night, King John, Richard III, Love’s Labor’s Lost, Pygmalion (Michigan Shakespeare Festival); A Christmas Carol (Milwaukee Repertory Theater); The Hadeleyburg Project (Metropolitan Playhouse, New York); Bump in the Road (New York Musical Theatre Festival), as well as several Ziegfeld Societies Midnight Frolics in NYC. Television credits include Boss. Ms. Montgomery holds an MFA in acting from the Theatre School at DePaul University, a BFA in musical theatre from The College of Saint Benilde and completed the one-year classical acting program at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts.

MATT MUELLER
(Fenton) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where he appeared in Julius Caesar, King Lear, A Christmas Carol, The Taming of the Shrew and The Taming of the Shrew (Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks). Other Chicago credits include Assassins (Chicago Shakespeare Festival); and productions with: Maine State Music Theatre, Theatre Works, Peninsula Players and Bar Harbor Theatre. Concert credits include: Ravinia Festival, The Three Divas, Kevin Cole, Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Pensacola Symphony Orchestra. Film credits include Man of Steel. Ms. Kettingen is a six-time Jeff Award nominee and the recipient of four Ostrander Awards. She is a graduate of Ithaca College.

PAV PROCZKO
(John Rugby) makes his Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Other Chicago credits include: The Light in the Piazza (Theo Ubique); Meet John Doe (Porchlight Music Theatre); The Suitcase Opera Project (Chicago Folk Festival); and Godspell (Brown Paper Box Co.). Regional credits include work with Acorn Theater and Hope Summer Repertory Theatre. Mr. Proczko received his BFA in musical theatre from Roosevelt University and studied improvisation and writing at Second City Training Center.

MICHAEL SEMANIC
(Robin) makes his Chicago Shakespeare Theater debut. Other Chicago credits include: The Artful Dodger in Oliver!, the Mayor of Munchkinland in The Wizard of Oz (Music on Stage); Winthrop Paro in The Music Man (Footlighters Theatre); and Louis Leonowens in The King and I (LZP Productions). He recently performed the roles of Gherardino and the Boxer in The Inspector General with Gianni Schicchi and Suor Angelica (Main Street Opera), and was a featured soloist with the Wheaton Symphony. Film credits include the lead role of Timmy in The Focus Group. Commercial credits include the Museum of Science and Industry. He sings with the Elgin Children’s Chorus (Soprano I) and at various churches around Chicagoland. Michael is in 7th grade, plays violin in his middle school orchestra and enjoys writing original stories on his blog. www.MichaelSemanic.com.

STEVEN SUTCLIFFE
(Slender) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where he appeared as Ned Lowenscroft in Elizabeth Rex (Jeff Award nomination). Mr. Sutcliffe’s Shaw Festival credits include: An Ideal Husband, On the Rocks, Serious Money, Play, Orchestra, Play and Sunday in the Park with George, among others. His Stratford Festival credits include: Caesar and Cleopatra, Love’s Labour’s Lost, The Glass Menagerie, Nones Off and Pride and Prejudice, among others. Other Canadian production credits include work with: Arts Club Theatre, Theatre Calgary, Citadel Theatre, Stratford Festival, Canadian Stage, Soulpepper Theatre, National Arts Centre and Neptune Theatre. United States production credits include work with: Goodman Theatre, A Contemporary Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Eugene O’Neill Theater Center, L.A. Theatre Works, New York City Center and Broadway.
GREG VINKLER
(Dept. of English and Theatre, Williams College)
returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where his credits include: Oronte in The School for Lies, the title role in King Lear (Jeff Award), Falstaff in Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2 (CST and on tour to the Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford-upon-Avon), Jacques in As You Like It, Honorary OBE (Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in recognition of his contributions strengthening British-American cultural relations; and Jest a Second (Victory Gardens Theater). Most recently, credits include: Doc in the long-running Broadway revival of West Side Story. Sandman in Chicago Shakespeare’s three-year production of the Library Theatre Company production of Macbeth.

BARBARA GAINES
(Original Music and Sound Design) has created music and sound for and designed over twenty productions at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, including: Henry VIII, Julius Caesar and Henry IV (Parts 1 and 2). Other Chicago credits include productions with: Goodman Theater, Steppenwolf Theater Company, Northlight Theater and Lookingglass Theatre Company. Broadway credits include: A Time to Kill (Jeff Award), Off Broadway credits include: Wild with Happy, The Brother/Sister Plays, Secret, Rx, 100! and Beautiful Thing. Regional credits include productions with: Guthrie Theater, South Coast Repertory, McCarter Theater, Northlight Theater, Mr. Peck is a former co-director for Wilson Dow Group and Under the Radar.

LINDSAY JONES
(Music Director) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where she has been the music director for Beauty and the Beast and Seussical: The Musical, and musical supervisor for Willy Wonka. Winner of six Joseph Jefferson Awards and two After Dark Awards, Mr. Peck’s other Chicago credits include work with: Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Writers Theatre, Marriott Theater, TimeLine Theatre Company, and Peninsula Players. His concert collaborations with his husband Rob Lindley include Chicago Shakespeare’s collaborations with: The Chicago Symphony Orchestra; as well as an annual concert evening for the Chicago Humanities Festival. He can be heard on the recordings Bright Young People: The Songs of Noel Coward, Foiled Again: Live, and Loving Repeating: A Musical of Gertrude Stein. Mr. Peck studied at Northwestern University and Interlochen Center for the Arts.

DOUG PECK
(Music Director/Vocal Arranger) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where he has been the music director for Beauty and the Beast and Seussical: The Musical, and musical supervisor for Willy Wonka. Winner of six Joseph Jefferson Awards and two After Dark Awards, Mr. Peck’s other Chicago credits include work with: Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Writers Theatre, Marriott Theater, TimeLine Theatre Company, and Peninsula Players. His concert collaborations with his husband Rob Lindley include Chicago Shakespeare’s collaborations with: The Chicago Symphony Orchestra; as well as an annual concert evening for the Chicago Humanities Festival. He can be heard on the recordings Bright Young People: The Songs of Noel Coward, Foiled Again: Live, and Loving Repeating: A Musical of Gertrude Stein. Mr. Peck studied at Northwestern University and Interlochen Center for the Arts.
DEBORAH ACKER (Production Stage Manager) has stage managed the past twenty-four 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 (Ivanthoe 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 Team Shakespeare, the Museum of Science and Industry, Some Like It Cole (tour), and Pump Boys and Dinnetes in Branson, Missouri.

CALYN P. SWAIN (Assistant Stage Manager) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where her stage management credits include: production stage manager for Short Shakespeare! The Comedy of Errors and Short Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night’s Dream; assistant stage manager for Henry VIII, The School for Lies, Timon of Athens, Elizabeth Rex, As You Like It, Aladdin and Amadeus and stage manager for Romeo y Julieta. Other Chicago credits include: August: Osage County, The Pillowman, Harriet Jacobs (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); Richard III, Cymbeline, The Merchant of Venice, Hamlet (Our Dame Shakespeare Festival); and numerous productions including M. Proust and Eleven Rooms of Proust with About Face Theatre. Additional stage management credits include productions with: Lookingglass Theatre Company, Grand Rapids Ballet and Anchorage Opera. She holds a BFA from Cincinnati Conservatory of Music (CCCM).

AMANDA J. DAVIS (Assistant Stage Manager) returns to Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where her credits include: production stage manager for A Q Brothers’ Christmas Carol, assistant stage manager for Murder for Two and Short Shakespeare! Macbeth; and stage coordinator for CPS Shakespeare! Romeo and Juliet and The Taming of the Shrew. Other Chicago credits include: production stage manager for 42nd Street (Theatre at the Center); Fugitive Songs (The Music Theatre Company); The Exonerated (Next Theatre Company, Theatre and Interpretation Center of Northwestern University); and The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs (ETOPiA). Ms. Davis is a graduate of Northwestern University.

BOB MASON (Artistic Associate/Casting Director) is in his fourteenth season as CST’s casting director, where his credits include over eighty productions and twenty-nine plays of Shakespeare’s canon in addition to eighteen productions with Artistic Director Barbara Gaines, other CST productions of note include: a quintet of Stephen Sondheim musicals (Pacific Overtures, Sunday in the Park with George, A Little Night Music, Passion and Follies) directed by Gary Griffin; as well as Rose Rage: Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3 directed by Edward Hall; and The Molière Comedies directed by Brian Bedford. Additional Chicago casting credits include: the Sondheim/Hal Prince premiere of Bounce (Goodman Theatre and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts) and productions for Northlight Theatre and Northwestern University’s American Music Theatre Project. Prior to casting, Mr. Mason enjoyed a fifteen-year career as a Jeff Award-winning Chicago actor and singer, and has been a visiting educator for School at Steppenwolf, Acting Studio Chicago, University of Illinois at Chicago and Northwestern University.

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. Credits include: A Q Brothers’ Christmas Carol, Cadre (co-director) (CST, Johannesburg, Grahamstown, Edinburgh), Othello: The Remix (CST, London, Germany, Edinburgh, South Korea), Funk It Up About Nothing (CST, Germany, Berlin, 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 2015) 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, M*A*S*H, Undechables 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 president of the board of the National Alliance for Musical Theatre.

CRISS HENDERSON (Executive Director) has produced CST’s past twenty-four seasons. Under his leadership the Theater has become one of the city’s major cultural attractions. Honors include the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, as well as multiple Laurence Olivier and Joseph Jefferson Awards. Mr. Henderson was named Arts Administrator of the Year by Arts Management Magazine at The Kennedy Center; was recognized among the top 40 business people under the age of 40 in Crain’s Chicago Business; and was named Chevalier de L’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the Minister of Culture of France. He serves as president of the Producers’ Association of Chicago-area Theatres, and on the board of the League of Chicago Theatres. Mr. Henderson is director of the MFA/Arts Leadership Program, a two-year, graduate-level curriculum in arts management training created through a joint partnership between Chicago Shakespeare Theatre and The Theatre School at DePaul University.

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The scenic, costume, lighting and sound designers of this production are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.
A Local Habitation and a Name

The poet’s pen,” says Duke Theseus late in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, “… gives to airy nothing / A local habitation and a name. Such tricks hath strong imagination …”

A few years after the Dream, Shakespeare’s strong imagination would perform this trick with unusual specificity. In a play first touted as Sir John Falstaff and the Merry Wives of Windsor, he combined an emphatically local habitation—Windsor, a prosperous suburb thirty miles from his own playhouse— with the name of the most celebrated and resilient character he had yet created. Though he may at first have intended Falstaff for a comic turn in a single play (Henry IV, Part 1), he ended up featuring him in four, of which the Merry Wives may well (or may not) have been the last. According to legend, appealing but unreliable, Queen Elizabeth, enamored of Falstaff in the earlier plays, commanded Shakespeare to write “one play more,” in which the Merry Wives may well (or may not) have been the last. According to legend, appealing but unreliable, Queen Elizabeth, enamored of Falstaff in the earlier plays, commanded Shakespeare to write “one play more,” in which he was to show Sir John “in love.” And that’s what we get to see in this one play more: Sir John in love, or lust, or greed (neither he nor we can be quite sure which) with those merry wives.

But the play itself’s in love with Windsor. Geographically, the Merry Wives is unique in Shakespeare’s canon. Apart from the history plays, necessarily centered in London, no other Shakespeare play transpires in England, and even the histories travel far afield (France, Wales). Here then is Shakespeare’s most local play of all; no other cleaves so assiduously close to home. Part of this play’s point is that there’s no place like it.

Windsor differs from other Shakespearean settings in what might be called its social tessitura, the pitch and spectrum of its characters. There’s a lower proportion of higher-ups—no kings, queens, princes, dukes—and a wide diversity within the middle register: two prosperous bourgeois households, a genial innkeeper, a Welsh priest, a French doctor, and more small children running about than anywhere else in Shakespeare.

The variety makes itself manifest in language too. In this emphatically English play, the English tongue is twisted in ways innumerable, at the hands of an English playwright utterly intoxicated with it and infinitely capable of putting it through new permutations. Out of mangled oaths, preposterously protracted small talk, impenetrable foreign accents, cross-lingual double entendres, and a Latin tutorial gone horribly awry, Shakespeare constructs a deliriously comic tower of babble. (In a fine finishing touch, he names his luckless Latin pupil William.) One character remarks of Falstaff, “He loves the gallimaufry”—a stew made up of any and all ingredients at hand. Windsor itself proves such a melting pot, and in its capacious laughing way, the Merry Wives loves a gallimaufry too.

They’re clearly crazy about each other, an Elizabethan Lucy Ricardo and Ethel Mertz

But what it may love best is the merry wives themselves: Mistress Page and Mistress Ford, witty, collusive, and indomitable. Appalled by Falstaff’s adulterous advances, they giddily conspire in his punishment. Our pleasure in their company arises partly from their pleasure in one another, partly from the ingenuity of their tricks and traps. They’re clearly crazy about each other, an Elizabethan Lucy Ricardo and Ethel Mertz, but without the end-of-show subordination to their menfolk, whom they best at almost every turn. And their inventiveness aligns strikingly with Shakespeare’s: in their three attempts to foil Falstaff, they end up scripting, directing, and starring in their own remarkably subtle play, via performances of ardor and alarm faked for the fat knight’s benefit.

Their climactic stunt, involving a midnight rendezvous in a nearby forest, mingles the domestic and the fantastic with strong echoes from an earlier comedy. “I do
perceive,” Falstaff shouts as his distress peaks, “that I am made an ass”; in that last word audiences may well recall such another figure of fun. Like Bottom in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Falstaff (wearing buck’s horns as his prototype wore ass’s ears) believes himself improbably beloved, and finds himself in the woods at night surrounded by what he thinks are fairies acting on the dictates of a formidable Fairy Queen. Unlike Bottom, though, Falstaff experiences pain, not passion—and in a markedly different, more down-to-earth context: the Fairy Queen is in ordinary life the doctor’s housekeeper, the puckish chief sprite is in truth the Welsh priest; and the fairies themselves are Windsor children in masquerade. Shakespeare writes as though, this time round, the local habitation and its inhabitants can provide magic and mirth enough on their own, without supernatural intervention.

...the local habitation and its inhabitants can provide magic and mirth enough on their own, without supernatural intervention.

What then of the big name whom Shakespeare has transposed into this new milieu out of the history plays that first gave him birth, berth, and girth? Falstaff fares badly, and Falstaff fares well. “[‘ve] suffered the pangs of three several deaths,” he exclaims at one point, exasperated and exhausted by the punitive ordeals the merry wives have conjured up. (Hyperbole has always been his strong suit.) And during that final forest punishment, he appears to suffer rejection at the hands of the tight-knit community the play so deeply prizes.

But in Shakespeare’s hands, the punishment readily enough transmutes into something more generous. When Falstaff complains of having suffered “three separate deaths,” he may, from the vantage of Shakespeare’s audience, be telling a subtle truth. In his three history plays, Falstaff “dies” three different ways. In the first, he cunningly (and comically) counterfeits death on the battlefield long enough for the audience to believe him actually dead, up to the hilarious moment of his reanimation. In the second, he cunningly (and comically) counterfeits death on the battlefield long enough for the audience to believe him actually dead, up to the hilarious moment of his reanimation. In the second he suffers a rejection so painful that his friends fear he will shortly die of it—though the playwright, in an epilogue, promptly reassures his audience that their favorite will return in the sequel. In that sequel, though, the playwright potently breaks his promise. Falstaff never reappears; instead, he dies offstage.

For Shakespeare’s first audiences, subjected in the histories to this piquantly orchestrated sequence of delight, death, and disappointment, the Merry Wives may well have figured as an all unlooked-for resurrection. Here Falstaff remains alive, self-admiring, and reasonably cheerful (despite the occasional sputtering complaint) from start to finish. And perhaps beyond. Some of the final scene’s homespun enchantment rubs off on him. Dressed, at the merry wives’ instructions, as a horned figure out of folklore, he may attain a measure of that immortality befitting what Shakespeare’s strongest imagination had already made of him: a mighty and anarchic English myth.
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