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Shakespeare-

Entertainment for a

by Juilene Osborne-McKnight



FREE-SPIRITED SHAKESPEARE: Is performed by the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival.



ankside London, circa 1600.

Atop the octagonal Globe Theater a white flag is flying — a play by William Shakespeare will be staged today. It is high summer and ferrymen are already shuttling groups of theater-goers across the wide river Thames. Will Shakespeare and his troupe of actors, the King's Men, are rehearsing to the three tiers of seats, preparing weapons for sword fights. Will himself is powdering his face, for today he will play the role of the ghost of Hamlet's father. The weather, it seems, will be fine. The sometimes drunken and always rowdy peasants, who will stand in the open air pit before the stage, will not get wet.

On-Hudson midsummer's night



Shakespeare's plays are staged outdoors on a replica of Will's own Globe Theater. Playgoers view the play from seats ranged down the side of a green hill, and the natural lighting and outdoor setting are true to the original staging of the plays. Performers are all members of Actors' Equity and this year's production will be directed by Richard Klees, who also directed last summer's staging of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

All's Well That Ends Well is considered one of Shakespeare's "problem" plays. Although it has a happy ending, the characters are not the lighthearted, likeable lot of some of the other comedies. Rather, in several main plots and a subplot, the characters are full of trickery and deception. "What you have in *All's Well That Ends Well*," says director Klees, "is a tale of a young man corrupted by bad company. It's a very modern theme that I think our audience will relate to. Parents send their children to college to be educated, just as the Countess in *All's Well* did. They don't want them to fall in with bad company, so our performance will focus on youth and how youth is corrupted."

The Renaissance Festival is open every weekend from July 29 through September 17 and *All's Well That Ends Well* will be staged once every day. For Shakespeare fans, scenes from a selection of plays are also staged several times a day in "Shakespeare Off the Cuff" or "Instant Shakespeare" performances. The cost for the Renaissance Festival is \$12 per person. That price includes the Shakespeare play and all other festival entertainments. For more information about the New York Renaissance Festival, call 914-351-5171.

Imagine a moonlit summer night beside the Hudson. Clouds move gently across the

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TRADITIONAL SHAKESPEARE: Is performed both on stage and impromptu at the New York Renaissance Festival.



COURTESY OF NEW YORK STATE RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

Contemporary bardolaters may regret that they are unable to view Shakespeare at the Globe Theatre, which was torn down by the Puritans in 1644, but Shakespearean productions are alive and well in other theaters around the world, including those along the banks of the wide Hudson River, where this summer several of the Bard's high comedies and dramas will thrill audiences much as they did in London nearly 400 years ago.

Among the highlights:

Now in its 12th year, the **New York Renaissance Festival**, in Sterling Forest (Orange) is a celebration of Renaissance recreation, complete with period food and drink, jousting tournaments, hurdy-gurdy men, living chess games and hundreds of

costumed participants and visitors.

Authenticity is paramount at this festival. Festival participants must be trained in fencing, dialect and Renaissance comportment. This year, the festival is focusing on the *Three Musketeers* time period, and that theme will be carried over in the festival production *All's Well That Ends Well*.

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sky and the water seems almost silver. Along the quiet pathways of a formal garden, old-fashioned lanterns cast a warm glow and the fragrance of summer flowers weaves an almost magical spell.

Add one gold-striped awning and you have Shakespeare at Boscobel, staged at the historic mansion in Garrison (Putnam).

"We were so lucky to get Boscobel as our home," says Melissa Stern, producing director of the **Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival**. "It's so beautiful that the setting really lends itself to the plays."

The Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival's first season was staged in the summer of 1988 with a performance of *As You Like It*. Striving to make the most of the bucolic environs of Boscobel, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival incorporates the outdoor setting into its performances, with plays staged on the lawn at Boscobel under a huge awning. But, true to Shakespeare's own style, the plays are performed with almost no scenery and very few props. "Our focus is on the acting," says O'Brien. "We tend to minimize scenery and properties."

Costuming is modern. Last year it ranged from gentle lacy sundresses to humorous Miami Vice-style suits with eye patches. "I let the actors choose their own costumes," says director Terrence O'Brien. "I encourage the actors to make their costume choices as much a part of their characters as words and gestures."

This summer, the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival will feature *Twelfth Night*, directed by O'Brien, who also staged last summer's *As You Like It*. *Twelfth Night* is Shakespeare in his trickster mood. Mooning melancholy lovers, foppish dandies and drunken servants, women disguised as men and letters intercepted and misinterpreted create interesting twists on Shakespeare's theme that things are not always what they seem.

Performances of *Twelfth Night* at Boscobel will take place July 21 to 23 and 27 to 30. Performances begin at 8 p.m. and the cost is \$15 per ticket, with discounts for seniors and children. Contact the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival at 155 Main Street, Cold Spring-on-Hudson, New York 10516.

Twelfth Night will also be performed this summer in Albany. For the second season, the Actors' Shakespeare Company will make the state's capital its home for a summer of **Shakespeare in the Park**. The company will perform *Twelfth Night* in repertoire with *Measure for Measure*.

Shakespeare and his company staged *Measure for Measure* for King James I and his court on the day after Christmas 1604. The play is also considered one of Shakespeare's problem plays, revolving as it does around the question of promises made and broken, but its happy ending saves it for lighter summer fare.

Last year, the Actors' Shakespeare Company staged *Romeo and Juliet* in the dress of the 1940s. This season, they plan to set con-

temporary music to Shakespeare's lyrics in *Twelfth Night*, and will once again perform both plays in 20th century costumes.

The artistic director for the productions is Peter Greenberg. He trained with the Sacramento Theatre Company in California and has acted with the Idaho Shakespeare Festival. Major roles will be played by local actors and actresses who have spent the winter months training and acting with the Sacramento Theatre Company.

The plays will be performed in Albany's Washington Park. *Twelfth Night* will open on Friday, July 14 and *Measure for Measure* on Friday, July 21. The productions will rotate every Thursday through Sunday through Aug. 13. Performances of Shakespeare in the Park are free and open to the public. All begin at 8 p.m. For more information, write: The Actors' Shakespeare Company at P.O. Box 85, Albany, NY 12260.

Last but not least, the Manhattan-based **American Globe Theatre** will open its debut season of Shakespeare at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson (Dutchess) this August. Artistic director John Basil plans to stage Shakespeare's plays outdoors on the campus. The play for this premiere season will be *As You Like It*, starring Bard graduate Jacqueline Lowry.

"We will be costumed in the time period of the play," says Basil. "Our organization likes to present the plays very simply in the styles Shakespeare's people did it. We try to make the plays as accessible and entertaining to the audience as possible." The company will recreate the ambiance of Shakespearean theatre-going with orange sellers, jugglers and musicians. Cast members will also be available after each performance to discuss the shows.

The company plans three performances next summer. "Eventually," says Basil, "we hope to be up there from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and we want the community to be involved as much as possible." To that end, Basil plans to stage workshops for children and adults, take plays out into the community, use local actors and write and perform historical "playlets" based on local historical events and landmarks.

The American Globe Theatre will present *As You Like It* from August 1-6 on the Bard campus. Curtain will be at 7 p.m. and tickets will be \$15 for adults, and \$10 for children, students and senior citizens. For more information call (212) 695-3292.

Shakespeare must have liked the summertime. Not only are many of his plays set in this fair season, but he often makes favorable reference to it. In *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, he proclaims that "This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath/May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet." Was he speaking of love — or one of this summer's productions? ■

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