

Shakespeare: A Hit With Students

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This week, nearly 4,000 middle school and high school students from the New Orleans area will attend performances of *The Comedy of Errors*, a special production by the Shakespeare Festival at Tulane on the uptown campus.



Twins complicate this comedy about mistaken identities in a production by the Shakespeare Festival at Tulane, performed this week for middle school and high school students. (Photo by Brad Robbert)

It's the only program of its type in the state, says Clare Moncrief, managing director of the [festival](#), established in 1993 by four Tulane theater professors to "fill a cultural void."

The festival's success continues to grow ? at the close of the 2010 season, it will have reached more than 49,000 young students since its founding. The Shakespeare Festival also sponsors a summer season of plays, a summer training program for high school students and educational programs throughout the year.

Siri Regan, a teacher at Meisler Middle School in Jefferson, La., has been bringing her students to the festival for a decade.

Regan says her eighth graders "no longer fear the Bard" after three years of attending the festival, engaging in workshops and participating in question-and-answer sessions with the actors and directors. Attending the plays is a unique opportunity for Regan's students, many of whom are from lower and lower-middle class homes.

"They have a good grasp of the language, can follow the plot, and look forward to studying Shakespeare's works in detail while in high school," she says, but the benefits extend beyond the classroom. "Society expects educated people to know and be exposed to certain things. Live theater and Shakespeare's plays are two of them."

The festival will perform *The Comedy of Errors* for the public on Friday (Jan. 15) at 7:30 p.m. in Dixon Hall. The box office opens at 6 p.m.

The production of *The Comedy of Errors* for schools is part of Shakespeare in American Communities: Shakespeare for a New Generation, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with Arts Midwest.

Catherine Freshley received a bachelor of arts in economics and English from Tulane in May 2009.