

Shakespeare Fest Examines Identity

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No one is who you think they are in this season's plays from the Shakespeare Festival at Tulane ? loving children are actually murderous sociopaths, oblivious fools possess more wisdom than their betters, and the man you kiss today may not know who you are tomorrow. Identity is the focal point of the festival's 16th season, with two main stage offerings set in New Orleans: *King Lear* and *The Comedy of Errors*.



Ron Gural, professor of theater, left, plays King Lear and Harold X. Evans stars as the Fool as the Shakespeare Festival at Tulane kicks off its 16th season with *King Lear*. (Photos by Brad Robbert)

"Once again we have set our productions in New Orleans, because where better to ask questions about identity than in a city with a thousand identities of its own?" asks Jim Fitzmorris, associate artistic director who directs *King Lear*. The play kicks off tonight (May 28) with a half-price preview and runs through June 13 at Lupin Theatre on the uptown campus.

The festival sets *King Lear* around the late 1950s in the Crescent City, timing that works well, says Ron Gural, professor of theater, who has the starring role. “We wanted the look of the late '50s, early '60s, to suggest the parallels of *King Lear* in modern political life and the passing down of political reigns, and that gravitated toward New Orleans with the Landrieus, the Morials,” explains Gural, who also is the Shakespeare Festival's artistic director.

When asked what he brings to the role of King Lear, Gural answers with a chuckle, “Age. I was too young when I played him previously. Now I understand much more, after raising three kids, the feeling that your kids don't value you as much as they should. Of course, King Lear makes a dreadful mistake.”

Gural's favorite line in the play? “How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!” Gural intones, then adds, “There are lots of great lines. Some lines [in the play] are cynical, but I like them.”

Tickets are \$12.50 for the half-price preview tonight and Friday (May 29). The gala opening is on Saturday (May 30), with a pay-what-you-will performance on Sunday (May 31). Performances continue June 4–7 and 10–13.



From left, Ashley Ricord (Cordelia), Trina Beck (Regan) and Rebecca Frank (Goneril) play *King Lear*'s three daughters. The production opens tonight (May 28).

“There's a large number of Tulane community involved with the show,” says Brad Robbert, operations director. “Eleven faculty, staff and/or students (including very recent graduates) are performing in the show, and 10 are designing for or working with the show in some capacity. This is all on top of the large number of non-Tulane professionals who join us.”

Next on the main stage is *The Comedy of Errors* (June 25 – July 11). Director Lorenzo Gonzalez will transport the audience to the multi-cultural world of 1750s New Orleans with this bawdy farce.

Following that is *Much Ado About Nothing* (July 22 – July 25) from the Shakespeare Festival's summer training program, All Things Shakespeare! The show, directed by the festival's managing director, Clare Moncrief, is the culmination of two sessions of training and rehearsal for young actors up to age 18.

The festival also offers an original piece by 2009 graduate Helen Jaksch, *Fighting With Two Hands* (July 16 – 18) at the McWilliams Hall Lab Theatre. Jaksch was the student speaker at the Tulane Commencement ceremony on May 16.

The season is sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, Entergy Louisiana, the Lupin Foundation, the Darwin and Mary Jane Fenner Foundation, the Cahn Family Foundation, the Arts Council of New Orleans and Whitney Bank.

For more information, contact the [Shakespeare Festival](#) box office at 504-865-5105.