

Students meet Shakespeare in epic play 'Cymbeline'

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The Britons push back the Romans during an epic battle in *Cymbeline*. Performing in the scene are, from left, Austin Alleman as Guiderius, David Huynh as Posthumus, Greg Baber as Belarius and Chris Silva as Arvirargus. (Photo by John Barrois)

Thousands of middle school and high school students will become theatergoers when they arrive on the Tulane University uptown campus for seven January performances of William Shakespeare's play *Cymbeline*.

The New Orleans Shakespeare Festival at Tulane presents the annual "[Performance for the Schools](#)" in Dixon Hall. Over the years, the shows have reached more than 80,000 students and teachers from public, private and parochial schools across the Gulf South.

This year's shows for schools will be held Jan. 13-22, with a one-night-only public performance on Friday, [Jan. 15](#), at 7:30 p.m.

The epic romance offers a poignant love story, a wicked stepmother, a princess in mortal danger and an adventure into a wild forest filled with both friends and foes.

While it may be less familiar than many of Shakespeare's plays, *Cymbeline* "is a roller-coaster story," says Rob Clare, who directs the festival production and is an internationally recognized Shakespeare specialist. He has acted with the Royal Shakespeare Company, was a staff director at the U.K.'s National Theatre, and has directed, performed with and coached many respected classical actors.

Clare said the play features "remarkable yet recognizably human characters who are tested in the extreme, but for whom faith and perseverance — for some, at least! — is in the end rewarded. It is at once magical, frightening and funny — potentially heart-breaking, but yet inspiring — and, we hope, ultimately affirmative and uplifting."

The January production is a remount of last summer's run of *Cymbeline*, which was praised by theater critics as "a feast for the senses at Tulane" and "a thoroughly engaging and enjoyable production." The [professional cast](#) features local actors but also talent from across the country.

"It's an elusive play but a wonderful one, which deserves to be better known."
Rob Clare, 'Cymbeline' director