

One-woman show opens Shakespeare Festival

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newwave@tulane.edu

Lisa Wolpe, right, and Kimberleigh Aarn, left, perform in a 2013 production of Shakespeare's Hamlet at the Odyssey Theatre in Los Angeles. Wolpe will be on the Lupin Theater stage at Tulane University May 20-22 for her show, *Shakespeare and the Alchemy of Gender*. (Photo by Enci Box)

Fresh off an international tour, Lisa Wolpe will take the Lupin Theater stage at Tulane University on Friday through Sunday (May 20-22) for her celebrated show *Shakespeare and the Alchemy of Gender*. The show will open the 2016 New Orleans Shakespeare Festival at Tulane.

Wolpe has arguably played more of the Bard's male roles than any woman in history. Created and performed by Wolpe, *Shakespeare and the Alchemy of Gender* melds Shakespeare's most iconic male characters with stories of Wolpe's life.

Women were not allowed to perform during Shakespeare's lifetime, so young men played Shakespeare's female characters. Wolpe, however, turns that idea on its head and illustrates that great actors — regardless of gender or religion — can breathe life into Shakespeare's complex and dynamic characters.

An activist as well as a celebrated actress and director, Wolpe's work coming to Tulane offers a unique and powerful perspective of courage, resilience and hope against her family's harrowed background.

In the production, Wolpe speaks of her father, who was one of the only members of her family to escape Nazi capture during World War II. He worked as a secret agent and was responsible for the death of hundreds of Nazis before he fled to Canada. Unable to silence the memories, he tragically took his own life when Lisa was 4 years old.

[Wolpe](#) says, "Sometimes I feel like Shakespeare saved my life." In 1993 she founded and continues to serve as producing artistic director of the all-female [Los Angeles Women's Shakespeare Company](#) where she produces, directs and has performed

roles including Hamlet, Richard III, Angelo, Leontes, Romeo, Shylock and Iago.

Shakespeare and the Alchemy of Gender runs at Tulane on Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 1:30 p.m. Tickets and more information can be found at neworleansshakespeare.org.

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Lisa Wolpe, actress and director