

Shakespeare Fest gets ninth grant for schools program

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The Shakespeare Festival at Tulane will once again bring performances to local middle- and high-school students thanks to a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. (Photo from the Shakespeare Festival at Tulane)

Through a newly awarded \$25,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the New Orleans Shakespeare Festival at Tulane in the School of Liberal Arts will continue bringing professional Shakespeare into the lives of local students.

NEA, in conjunction with Arts Midwest, began its Shakespeare in American Communities national initiative in 2003. This program awards grants to 40 theaters annually.

The New Orleans Shakespeare Festival has received the grant an astounding nine times.

"It's a fabulous program, demonstrating the vision of the NEA," says Clare Moncrief, managing director of the New Orleans Shakespeare Festival at Tulane. "All of us are so concerned about literacy. This is an effective way to use Shakespeare's words to awaken students through the power of language and theater art."

Festival actors will perform the romantic comedy *Two Gentlemen of Verona* for this year's annual "Performance for the Schools." For seven days in January, more than 5,000 students from 70 to 80 area schools will attend matinee performances in Dixon Hall on Tulane's uptown campus. The NEA grant also supports Chaney Tullos, the festival's director of operations, conducting follow-up workshops for students.

"Many of the students have little or no experience with live, professional theater," states Moncrief. "Even more of them have never seen live, professional Shakespeare. The learning opportunity for them is extraordinary."

Moncrief adds that performing Shakespeare for middle and high school students is gratifying, as they become incredibly engrossed in the drama. "Having an audience that is so open to what you're doing, so responsive, is tremendously rewarding to the actors."

The New Orleans Shakespeare Festival at Tulane puts on two main stage productions each summer, plus various lagniappe events. The festival celebrated its 23rd season of producing professional, classical theater primarily focusing on the works of William Shakespeare in summer 2016.

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