

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**L.A. SUMMIT TO DEFINE SHAKESPEARE AS KEY COMPONENT
TO SECONDARY EDUCATION NATIONWIDE**

Shakespeare Festival/LA (SF/LA) hosts youth and education experts from The Shakespeare Theatre Association of America (STAA).

As local school districts face steep budget cuts, **Shakespeare Festival/LA (SF/LA)** hosts the first-ever national summit of educational leaders from The Shakespeare Theatre Association of America (STAA) about the increasingly important role they are taking to enhance literary education in their respective communities.

Convening December 10 & 11, 2008 at the SF/LA headquarters Downtown, this meeting occurs less than a month after the company honored filmmaker Baz Luhrmann, producer Mark Gordon and Harvard Project Zero Director Steve Seidel with Crystal Quill awards for their enduring contributions to arts education.

Each of the participating theatres share the core belief that Shakespeare is an innovative tool for shaping their unique role in supplementing the education provided by local school districts. "This is a fantastic opportunity for us to increase the impact we have on the cities we all work and tour in," observed Chris Anthony, SF/LA's Director of Youth and Education and Associate Artistic Director. "We're all committed to evaluating and measuring our contributions to the youth we serve."

Barry Oreck, Ph.D., a research consultant to school districts and arts organizations across the country, will spearhead the process. His work has focused on professional development of classroom teachers and teaching artists.

Among the other STAA-affiliated theatres represented are Utah Shakespearean Festival, Shakespeare & Company (Lenox, MA), Shakespeare Theater of New Jersey, Shakespeare Theater Company (Washington DC), Georgia Shakespeare, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, American Shakespeare Center (Staunton, VA) and Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Funding for this summit and the subsequent planning process is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, whose national initiative **Shakespeare in American Communities** is the largest tour of Shakespeare performances and related educational activities in the history of the United States. Since its 2003 inauguration, Shakespeare in American Communities has reached more than 2,000 communities in all 50 states. For more information, visit www.ShakespeareInAmericanCommunities.org

With a membership comprised of acknowledged national and international leaders in the production of classical theater, The **Shakespeare Theater Association of America** (STAA) believes that classic literature and drama have timeless and universal relevance to our contemporary lives. For more information, visit www.STAAonline.org

Since 1985, Shakespeare Festival/LA has been a cherished community resource. Whether it's through nationally recognized youth and education programming; award-winning, free, professional outdoor productions that uniquely reflect the people, landscape and history of Los Angeles; or presentation of the Crystal Quill, a national award recognizing enduring contributions to arts education, SF/LA is committed to making the Bard's works accessible, relevant and enriching for people from all walks of life. www.FreeWillLA.org

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