As we look ahead to summer, I’m reminded time and again how fortunate Montana Shakespeare in the Parks is to have such wonderful friends in communities far and wide.

For more than 46 years, these “happy few” have come together to help bring our productions into communities and schools, building our company into what it is today. Equally important to the artistic work we present on stage, the continued friendship of donors, sponsors, audiences, and volunteers is what motivates us to continually find new ways to make Shakespeare accessible and relevant to all.

One of the company’s oldest friends, however, is made of wood, and while unable to speak, it tells stories spanning decades. I am of course referring to our summer stage! Much as the “Wooden O” has come to symbolize Shakespeare’s famous Globe Theater, MSIP’s summer stage is now an iconic part of summers in Montana, easily recognized in communities throughout five states.

For the past 46 years, this trusty old friend has traveled over one hundred thousand miles, supporting well over a thousand performances and braving many storms. This resilient and sheltering friend has been the consistent link that has brought our company together each summer, serving as our primary vehicle for bringing Shakespeare’s works to life. Can you imagine the stories its wooden boards could tell, and the blood, sweat, and tears that have soaked into its pine grain over the course of its life?

Thanks to the generosity of two longstanding supporters, we have this year secured funding to revitalize our old friend, the summer stage, and upgrade the sound system you will experience at this summer’s performances. Work has been underway for several weeks, and it’s thrilling to know that we’ll soon be sharing the results with you.

Even more exciting is that this project is in the hands of two seasoned MSIP Alumni: Gordon Carpenter, who joined us this year as our Technical Director after having built and performed on nearly every version of MSIP’s stage, and Miles Duffy, a veteran of nine tours who has not only been assisting Gordon but also acting as a hands-on consultant regarding the challenges actors face when building and tearing down the stage. Without a doubt, both Miles and Gordon have a significant personal and professional investment in this project, providing us with a completely revitalized stage that will carry MSIP through the next decade.

As you can imagine, it takes a diversity of talent and resources to make each summer’s tour successful. So much of our success has been made possible through the continued generosity of close friends, the enthusiasm of supporters, and the dedication of talented artists from all across the country. We look forward to unveiling our revitalized stage this summer, and showing you the “new face” of our company’s old friend, which will support many performances for years to come.

I look forward to seeing you at one (or more!) of this year’s performances!

KEVIN ASSELIN EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, Montana Shakespeare in the Parks
Why did you choose Othello for this season? This is a play we haven’t produced in our entire 46-year history. I thought it was time for us to look into it. It’s the best play there is, and I performed it in on an acting scale and had fundamental pieces of the impact it has on an audience.

So how is it relevant today? The play can still resonate because it’s about us. We are all capable of manipulation and love. O’Neill, Shakespeare, and all these people have recognized this about the human condition. The role of Iago is masterful in the way he manipulates the characters, and we all know people like that. We recognize those kinds of people in our own lives, and if we recognize ourselves, we can’t move forward.

For better or worse, Shakespeare provides us with a platform to experience these deep conversations and challenging themes in a safe environment. You’ve played Iago before. What’s the difference between performing in the past and performing now? I expect Iago to do it exactly the same if I did (laughs) All of Shakespeare’s characters are crafted to do this. I think it’s one of the only characters that can be approached in a way that is different, but not better or worse. I think it’s a character who can approach the audience and that’s his ability to sympathetic to the dark undertones of a character. I’m excited to do it again with some of the people who I’ve already worked with, which will be totally different than I expect it to be.

Stealing Leat! (laughs) Yes, but it means that even more to me and I’m going to try to help it make it easier for the character. About Iago: People have a general stereotype about the character. But the thing that gets to us is that he looks like me and I do. From the outside looking in, you’re wondering what it’s like.

The Play is Hypersyntactic. I think it’s symmetrical. I think Shakespeare wrote Othello not too seriously.

Tell us about your role in Love’s Labour’s Lost. This is one of my favorite Shakespeare roles! The character is stock characters drawn from the Italian commedia dell’arte. There are three that I play in this one. I’m also the director of the commedia dell’arte. The idea is to go for a modern, whimsical, and making the audience laugh at themselves and at the play itself. To show up, Shakespeare’s brilliant next step with professional actors who are supported by modern production values.

What can we expect from the production? First and foremost, I think you’re going to be entertained by the audience. I like Shakespeare productions when the audience is a very much a part of the productions. The role of Iago is stock characters, so it’s going to be done in the same way. I think the audience is easily accessible. I’m going to try to make this an audience-friendly production. It’s going to be a fun and raucous experience for sure. I hope that for the Go Go, the audience experience will be enhanced by modern technology, but it’s through the implementation of comprehensive lighting design. It’s going to be by the same author.

Tell us about a little background. This is my first major Shakespeare role since I was in college. I used to play Shakespeare when I was in college. It was a different environment, but there were some really good lines that I felt we had to get rid of because of running time, and that’s occasionally the most rewarding aspect of adaptation. One of the reviews was headlined: “It Takes Some Arrogance to Rewrite Shakespeare.” It’s very hard to imagine what the opposite is. Do you say every word? People would soon get very bored. This goes back to what I said in the beginning: people have always rewritten Shakespeare. It’s very important to adapt it and make it relevant to today’s audience.

What’s the most rewarding aspect of adaptation? If you don’t get to see the final production, you’re going to miss out on some really good lines that I felt we had to get rid of because of running time… and that’s occasionally the most rewarding aspect of adaptation. One of the reviews was headlined: “It Takes Some Arrogance to Rewrite Shakespeare.” It’s very hard to imagine what the opposite is. Do you say every word? People would soon get very bored. This goes back to what I said in the beginning: people have always rewritten Shakespeare. It’s very important to adapt it and make it relevant to today’s audience.

How do you think the audience will respond to your version of “The Play is Hypersyntactic.” I think it’s symmetrical. I think Shakespeare wrote Othello not too seriously.
Othello

There is a difficult play to watch. Largely, this comes from what Shakespeare never brought to life, manipulations of the characters so effectively that they are bound in a way that makes it impossible to question them. As a result, even though a performance has been so true to the text that you're not aware of it, when you finish, you can't help but wonder how the plot could have evolved.

The full title of the play, which Shakespeare wrote in 1604, is Othello: Love’s Labour’s Lost. It was an interesting challenge to bring the elements of this story to life in a way that would hold an audience’s attention.

In poetry, art, clothing, and music, and in the languages of all the other arts, we are constantly trying to show off our skills. Elaborate and ostentatious display was one of this era’s fads.

One of the most insistent questions this play raises is: Why? Why would Iago do such a thing? What motivates him to act so horrifyingly? Shakespeare’s prose materials were clear about the villain’s motivations, but he makes the reader much more curious in his play. Love goes up and down several seasons, sometimes contrariness or contorted, leading the audience uncertain and interested. This is a very different kind of storytelling, and it’s what makes the play so powerful.

Iago’s role in the play is to manipulate those he loves. He is a master of the language games, and he uses them to create a series of traps for those he loves. This is a difficult play to watch. Largely, this comes from what Shakespeare never brought to life, manipulations of the characters so effectively that they are bound in a way that makes it impossible to question them. As a result, even though a performance has been so true to the text that you’re not aware of it, when you finish, you can’t help but wonder how the plot could have evolved.
When summer is over, MSIP goes back to school — or schools as the case may be. Did you know that MSIP reaches over 110 schools K-12 between October and May each year with its educational programming?

**EDUCATIONAL Outreach**

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**BLACK BOX SERIES**

Joe Fisher as Caliban delights a young audience in *All the West’s A Stage: The Tempest*.

Audiences responded enthusiastically:

“I love seeing School’s House and Brian Cullinan’s performance as Willy Loman, and then realizing how similar it is to my own.”

“Amazing acting. As good as the Ashland Oregon plays I’ve seen and could be off Broadway quality in quality. Probably even better.”

“Thank you for continuing to bring quality theater to Bozeman. It fills the soul and inspires the heart and mind.”

“I saw it the Black Box Theater. Theater seating arrangement. Makes it feel like you are right in the middle of the play.”

**DEATH OF A SALESMAN**

Audiences responded enthusiastically:

“I’ve seen Dustin Hoffman and Brian Dennehy’s performance as Willie Loman, and John Gilhousen’s performance is followed by tailor-made workshops for different age levels that drive home the themes of the play they’ve just seen.”

**MONTERA SHAKES!**

Who knew that *Montana Shakespeare* could be so silly? Since 1999, Montana’s youngest students have had the chance to experience Shakespeare in performance along with their older peers. *Montana Shakespeare* brings an original play that features scenes, stories, and characters from Shakespeare to K-12 classrooms in Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho between February and May. This highly participatory performance makes students’ first encounter with Shakespeare unforgettable, engaging, and FUN! The performances are followed by tailor-made workshops for different age levels that drive home the themes of the play they’ve just seen.

**ELISE EVENT**

Join us on Saturday, November 3 for the 18th Annual Elise Event.

Founded by Elise Donohue and sustained by her children Sam and Elise Phares, the Elise Event showcases our middle and high school tour and provides necessary funding for this vital program. The event includes wine, heavy hors d’oeuvres and desserts, and a rare performance of Shakespeare in the Schools’ current production. Join us on Saturday, November 3rd, for a rare chance to see *Julius Caesar* smart and fun open to and popular with the public and would not be possible without the generous support of the Ellen Theatre.

**SPECIAL Events**

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**BECOME PART OF MONTANA’S FAVORITE SUMMERTIME TRADITION!**

Montana Shakespeare in the Parks’ performances are a summertime favorite of communities large and small — and it takes all of us working together to make it happen. Since 1999, MSIP has relied on generous support at all levels to ensure our ability to bring performances to their audiences.

There are several ways you can help keep MSIP continue offering great performances, including:

- **Fledge your monthly support**, or make a one-time gift, at: www.shakespeareintheparks.org
- Join the Artistic Director’s Circle by making an annual contribution of $1,000 or more, and receive special insider news updates and invitations to exclusive events.
- **Make a Planned Gift** by including MSIP in your estate or other planned gift vehicle, such as a charitable remainder trust.

For more information about giving to MSIP, please contact Development Director Michael Wainwright at 406-994-2904 or michael.wainwright@montana.edu

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**2018 TOUR SPONSORS**

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**2018 Tour Schedule**

**June**
- 13 Bozeman, MT: 8:00pm MSU Grove
- 15 Bozeman, MT: 8:00pm MSU Grove
- 16 Bozeman, MT: 8:00pm MSU Grove
- 20 Bozeman, MT: 8:00pm MSU Grove
- 21 Bozeman, MT: 8:00pm MSU Grove
- 22 Bozeman, MT: 8:00pm MSU Grove
- 25 Hobson/Utica: 6:30pm Utica Clubhouse Lawn
- 26 Lewistown: 6:30pm Pine Meadows Golf Course
- 27 Conrad: 6:00pm Conrad City Park
- 29 Sidney: 6:30pm Veterans Memorial Park Pavilion
- 30 Wolf Point: 6:30pm Faith Home Park

**July**
- 1 Belgrade: 6:30pm Dahl Memorial Nursing Home
- 2 Colstrip: 6:30pm Rye Park Pavilion
- 3 Miles City: 6:30pm Water Plant Park
- 5 Beach, ND: 6:30pm Beach Swimming Pool Park
- 6 Glendive: 7:00pm Makeihaka Park
- 7 Forsyth: 6:00pm Rosebud County Courthouse Lawn
- 8 Bynoe: 6:00pm Pondera Park
- 9 Hardin: 6:00pm South Park
- 10 Columbus: 6:30pm Heritage Park
- 11 Anaconda: 6:30pm Fishtail Family Park
- 12 Red Lodge: 6:30pm Lions Park
- 13 Gardiner: 6:00pm Arch Park
- 14 Silver Gate/Canal City: 6:30pm Silver Gate Park

**August**
- 1 Big Timber: 6:30pm Lives Club Park
- 16 Powell, WY: 6:30pm Washington Park
- 17 Cody, WY: 6:30pm Cascade Park
- 18 Worland, WY: 6:00pm Sanders Park
- 19 Roundup: 6:00pm City Park
- 20 Townsend: 6:00pm Heritage Park
- 21 Driggs: 6:30pm Driggs City Plaza
- 22 W. Yellowstone: 6:00pm W. Yellowstone School Football Field
- 23 Bozeman/Othello: 6:30pm Community Center Lawn
- 24 Thayne, WY: 6:30pm Gillette City Park
- 25 Pocatello, ID: 6:30pm ISU Quad
- 26 Pocatello, ID: 6:30pm ISU Quad
- 27 Billings: 6:00pm Veterans Memorial Park Pavilion
- 28 Billings: 6:00pm Veterans Memorial Park Pavilion
- 30 Cuero: 6:00pm Cuero Main Lawn
- 31 Big Sky: 5:30pm Town Center Park

**September**
- 1 Livingston: 6:00pm Shane Lalani Center for the Arts Parking Lot
- 2 Bozeman Family/Grad Housing: 6:00pm Family/Grad Housing Lot
- 3 Brisbane: 6:30pm Lewis & Clark Park
- 4 Manhattan: 6:00pm Altamont Park

Please go to www.shakespeareintheparks.org for the most up-to-date schedule and rain locations.