

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Optimist Theatre to Present 2015 Shakespeare in the Park Production, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”**

MILWAUKEE, WIS. – Though still under a heavy blanket of snow, Optimist Theatre announces this July’s production of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” for the 2015 season of Shakespeare in the Park. William Shakespeare’s much-loved comedy will play on three weekends: July 9-12, 16-19, and 22-23 & 25-26. This will mark the program’s third year at COA Youth and Family Centers’ Selig-Joseph-Folz amphitheater in Alice Bertschy Kadish Park.

Optimist’s staging of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” will be set in 1967 during the Summer of Love and the action of the show will reflect the social phenomenon of Haight-Ashbury. The cast will be headlined by Milwaukee-area favorite and Shakespearean theater regular Todd Denning\* as Theseus and Oberon, and In Tandem Theatre Artistic Director Chris Flieller as Bottom.

The full cast for “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”:

Marques Causey as Mustardseed  
Tess Cinpinski as Starveling  
Todd Denning\* as Theseus/Oberon  
Marcee Doherty-Elst as a Bohemian  
Liz Faraglia as a Bohemian  
Chris Flieller as Bottom  
Kristin Hammargren as Hermia  
Jeffrey James Ircink as Snug  
Mary B. Kababik as Peter Quince  
Robert W.C. Kennedy as Snout  
Mara McGhee as a Bohemian  
Emmit Morgans as Demetrius  
Tom Reed\* as Puck  
Samantha Sosatarich as Fairy  
Malkia Stampley\* as Hippolyta and Titania  
Shayne Steliga as Lysander  
Sola Thompson as a Bohemian  
Jeremy Welter as Flute  
Kat Wodtke as Helena  
and  
Rachel Zientek as Peaseblossom

\*Member of Actor’s Equity Association

The production will be directed by Ron Scot Fry, Optimist Theatre’s Founding Artistic Director, who has also directed Optimist’s “The Tempest” and “Macbeth.” Fry has also designed sets for those shows and for “As You Like It” and “The Winter’s Tale” for Optimist Theatre, as well as for Alverno College, First Stage, Wisconsin Hybrid Theatre, Milwaukee Public Theatre and Milwaukee Mask and Puppet Theatre. He has had performing roles in “Twelfth Night” and “The Winter’s Tale.”

“A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” Fry explains, “is a delightful, sensual romp in the woods. The play takes three worlds – the button-down world of the establishment, the rough-hewn world of manual laborers, and the world of the wild, magical beings who inhabit the woods – and sends them careening in a mad chase that leaves each world changed. It is a play about love, so it is ridiculous, complicated and unfair. It provides excellent opportunities for our local cast to play characters obsessed with love: romantic love,

self love, love of mischief, love for art, love for tradition and love for love itself. And it provides all of our artists a chance to create a theatrical world of magic and mischief in the night, where we can ultimately 'Let the Sun Shine.'"

The cast includes the return of several actors from prior seasons of Shakespeare in the Park, alongside a number of Optimist Theatre debuts. Denning has appeared as Touchstone in "As You Like It" in 2013 and Malvolio in "Twelfth Night" in 2011. This will be Flieller's first role with Optimist Theatre. Kristin Hammargren will also be featured as Hermia, last seen with Optimist Theatre as Rosalind in 2013's production of "As You Like It."

Optimist Theatre is in the midst of a funding drive to finance the production. With a professional cast based in the Milwaukee area, Shakespeare in the Park offers a top quality theatrical experience free to its audience. In its first five years, Shakespeare in the Park has played to a cumulative audience of more than 10,000 and employed 200-plus Wisconsin actors, crew, suppliers and vendors. With an average production cost of approximately \$40 per person coming to or involved with the play, the organization is running a populist appeal in keeping with its goals of linking those who create art with those who consume it. "The median donation is around \$100," states Managing Director Susan Scot Fry. "At the end of the day, the question is very simple: 'Should Milwaukee have Shakespeare in the Park?' We can only do this show if members of the community – businesses and individuals – answer, as I do, 'Yes!'"

### **About "A Midsummer Night's Dream"**

Believed to have been written later in the early 1590s, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" has proven to be one of Shakespeare's most popular plays and is frequently produced. The story is one that depicts an unseen fantasy world existing alongside, interacting with, and often manipulating the human one. As such, reality – and the rules of authority figures – are suspended, such that the young people who are caught up in antic confusion and various taboo scenarios are ultimately absolved.

Given that the premise of the action is a gathering to celebrate the marriage of Theseus, Duke of Athens and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons – at which a play is performed to entertain the guests, by the so-called "Rude Mechanicals" – it is believed that the play itself could also have been written in honor of a wedding. Its many memorable quotes include a line that warns, "the course of true love never did run smooth."

### **About Optimist Theatre**

Optimist Theatre is a 501(c)3 non-profit theatre company and an affiliate member of UPAF, the United Performing Arts Fund. Free Shakespeare in the Park is supported in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board and the Milwaukee Arts Board. In addition to Free Shakespeare in the Park, Optimist Theatre offers interactive educational outreach performances such as "To Be! Shakespeare Here and Now." The organization's goals include reaching artists and audiences across the economic, ethnic, and experiential landscape by creating art that is accessible to all people. They aspire to educate, entertain, and inspire through creative works of artistic integrity and, in doing so, to serve as a "gateway" theatre experience, bringing new audiences to the arts. To learn more, visit [OptimistTheatre.org](http://OptimistTheatre.org), or contact Managing Director Susan Scot Fry at [SSFry@OptimistTheatre.org](mailto:SSFry@OptimistTheatre.org) or 262/498-5777 or Artistic Director, Ron Scot Fry at [RSFry@OptimistTheatre.org](mailto:RSFry@OptimistTheatre.org) or 262/498-9788.



*The Optimist Theatre logo*



*Shakespeare in the Park logo*

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**OPTIMIST THEATRE MEDIA CONTACT:**

Susan Fry  
2010 N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53212  
[SSFry@OptimistTheatre.org](mailto:ssfry@optimisttheatre.org)  
262.498.5777  
[www.OptimistTheatre.org](http://www.OptimistTheatre.org)  
[www.facebook.com/OptimistTheatre](https://www.facebook.com/OptimistTheatre)  
[www.optimisttheatre.wordpress.com](http://www.optimisttheatre.wordpress.com)