

NEWS RELEASE – **Announcing 2017 Bard Season**
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Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival Celebrates 2016 Season Highlights & Announces 2017 Playbill

SEPTEMBER 24, 2016, VANCOUVER, B.C. – The 2016 Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival has ended on a major high note, with a total season attendance of just over 100,000 and four Shakespeare productions that each generated rave reviews from both critics and patrons.

On the BMO Mainstage, a music-filled production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, set in 1668 Windsor, Ontario and directed by Johnna Wright, alternated with Shakespeare's powerhouse tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Kim Collier. The Howard Family Stage (Douglas Campbell Theatre) offered an American Civil War-era *Othello*, directed by Bob Frazer, and a magical interpretation of *Pericles*, directed by Lois Anderson; both plays' performances sold out regularly and extra shows were added in September. Many of Bard's special events returned in 2016 and all generated strong ticket sales, including the extremely popular *Bard-B-Q & Fireworks*. The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra returned to the BMO Mainstage for another successful partnership. The UBC Opera Ensemble and Vancouver Opera Orchestra delighted patrons with the *Opera & Arias*' costumed concert staging of *The Magic Flute*. Wine tastings continue to sell out year after year and *Family Nights* built on last year's momentum as new generations of theatre-goers learned to embrace Shakespeare.

"We are enormously thrilled with the attendance this year," said Christopher Gaze, Bard on the Beach Artistic Director. "This year we matched our previous all-time record, where in 2014 just over 100,000 attendees took in the delights of Shakespeare and more. We also achieved our financial goals this year, and as a not-for-profit Festival with 70% of our costs funded by our ticket and retail revenue, we are grateful for that success. Now our focus is on 2017, and our plans to inspire, provoke and delight audiences for another season."

Bard continued its dedication to sharing Shakespeare with young people in 2016, offering engaging education programs and accessible pricing. Over 7,000 patrons aged 6 to 22 took advantage of the \$29 **GLOBAL BC Youth Price**, and 6,252 students attended student matinees in June and September for a deeply discounted student price. Bard on the Beach continued its summer educational offerings with sold-out *Young Shakespeareans Workshops* in July and August (ages 8-18); 240 participants gained experience performing and playing Shakespeare, led by current and past Bard acting Company members. The *Riotous Youth* program continued for its third year, giving a gifted group of 19 to 24-year-olds the chance to continue their training in Shakespearean performance, assist in various administrative roles and with the *Young Shakespeareans Workshops*, and deliver *In a Nutshell* pre-show talks in the Bard Village.

More than 240 volunteers gave their time to provide administrative and Front of House assistance, contributing over 15,000 hours of service throughout the season. Bard audience members generously contributed more than \$19,000 to Performing Arts Lodges (PAL), Theatre Cares and the Actors Fund, and Bard offered hundreds of complimentary tickets to various local charities and under-served communities throughout the season.

Bard's 2017 Season Brings High-Spirited Comedies, Provocative Dramas and a Limited-Run BC Play

The 28th Bard season, running from **June 1 to September 23, 2017**, features four Shakespeare plays plus a short-run contemporary drama; together they will take audiences from the Renaissance to modern-day Venice and Vancouver. Opening the Festival on the BMO Mainstage is a new production of an audience favourite, *Much Ado About Nothing*, set in 1599 Italy and inspired by the era's extravagantly entertaining Italian films, with John Murphy (*Measure For Measure*, 2013) directing. Alternating with *Much Ado* is *The Winter's Tale*, a magical and poignant family drama, set in Sicily and Bohemia and directed by Bard's Associate Artistic Director Dean Paul Gibson (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2014).

On the Howard Family Stage, award-winning Canadian actor-director Nigel Shawn Williams will direct a provocative new staging of *The Merchant of Venice*, set in contemporary Italy; it will alternate with a new production of Shakespeare's romantic comedy *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, directed by Bard Artistic Associate Scott Bellis (*The Comedy of Errors*, 2015). Rounding out the 2017 lineup is a short-run production in September to complement *The Merchant of Venice*. *Shylock*, directed by Sherry J. Yoon, is a single-hander written by BC's Mark Leiren-Young; it was first produced at Bard in 1996. It imagines a modern-day actor playing Shylock, who wrestles with the timely issues of censorship and political correctness.

Updates on Bard on the Beach's 2017 Festival will be posted regularly at bardonthebeach.org. Advance sales of 2017 Season Packs begin on **Monday, Sept 26, 2016**, offering a substantial discount on voucher packs for either four or five productions. Single tickets go on sale in April, 2017 through the Bard website or through Bard's Box Office at 604-739-0559.

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2016 season photography is available on the Bard website.

Please contact Cynnamon Schreinert for password access or post-season interviews.

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