



Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival Marks 2017 Season Highlights & Looks Ahead to 2018

SEPTEMBER 23, 2017, VANCOUVER, B.C. – The 2017 Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival has ended on a high note, with a total season attendance of almost 100,000 and a set of successful productions and special events that resonated with both critics and patrons.

The 28th Bard season, from **June 1 to September 23**, featured four Shakespeare plays plus a short-run contemporary drama; together they took audiences from an ancient mythical kingdom to modern-day Venice and Vancouver. The Festival opened with an audience favourite, ***Much Ado About Nothing***, set in 1959 Italy and inspired by the extravagantly entertaining Italian films of that era. *Much Ado* ran on the BMO Mainstage in repertory with ***The Winter's Tale***, a magical and poignant family drama set in Sicily and Bohemia. The intimate Howard Family Stage offered a provocative new staging of ***The Merchant of Venice***, set in contemporary Italy, alternating with a new production of Shakespeare's romantic comedy ***The Two Gentlemen of Verona***. Both productions' endings were given original new treatments that brought the plays' issues and themes into sharp contemporary focus. Rounding out the 2017 lineup was ***Shylock***, a short-run play to complement *The Merchant of Venice*. The single-hander, written by BC's Mark Leiren-Young, imagines a modern-day actor exploring the timely issues of censorship and political correctness; its performances were all virtually sold out. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, with Gertie the Basset hound playing Crab, was also a major hit; additional performances were added to meet ticket demand.

Many of Bard's special events returned in 2017 and all generated strong ticket sales, including the extremely popular ***Bard-B-Q & Fireworks*** nights. The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra returned to the BMO Mainstage for a sold-out concert and the UBC Opera Ensemble and Vancouver Opera Orchestra delighted patrons with a costumed concert staging of *The Barber of Seville*, this season's ***Opera & Arias*** performance. Pre-show wine tastings also sold out as in past years, and themed ***Family Nights*** encouraged a new generation of young theatre-goers to embrace Shakespeare and the Bard experience.

"We are thrilled with both our artistic achievements and our attendance this year," said Christopher Gaze, Bard on the Beach Artistic Director. "We also exceeded our revenue goals, and as a not-for-profit Festival, with over 70% of our costs paid for by ticket and retail revenue, we are grateful for that success. Now our focus is firmly on 2018, and our plans to inspire, provoke and delight audiences for another season."

Bard continued in its mission to share Shakespeare with young people, offering engaging education programs and accessible pricing. Almost 7,500 patrons aged 6 to 22 took advantage of the \$30 ***GLOBAL BC Youth Price***, and 5,500 students attended student matinees in June and September, paying a deeply discounted student price. Bard also offered its popular *Young Shakespeareans Workshops* again in July and August (ages 8-18); 240 participants gained experience performing and playing Shakespeare in 17 workshops, led by current and past Bard acting Company members. The *Riotous Youth* program continued for its fourth year, giving a gifted group of young adults the chance to continue their training in Shakespearean performance, while working in various administrative roles, supporting Bard's Teaching Artists in the *Young Shakespeareans Workshops*, and delivering *In a Nutshell* pre-show talks in the Bard Village.

More than 275 volunteers gave their time to provide governance, administrative, site and Front of House assistance, contributing a record total of 15,000 hours of service throughout the season. Bard audience members generously contributed more than \$20,000 to Theatre Cares, the Actors Fund and Bard's own youth-education Bursary Fund, and the Festival gave over 1,000 complimentary tickets to various local charities and under-served communities throughout the season, setting a new record for tickets given by the Festival to other not-for-profit groups, service organizations and charities.

The Festival's 2018 Season: Bard Meets the Beatles & Bold Dramas Abound

The 2018 Festival season will run from **June 6 to September 22** and will include three Shakespeare plays: a pair of major audience favourites, and a provocative reimagining of a rarely-produced drama. Also on the bill, a Greek classic, adapted to incorporate a contemporary political angle. The BMO Mainstage will host an exciting new production of ***As You Like It***, set in '60s Vancouver and filled with Beatles songs; it will alternate with a powerhouse classic staging of Shakespeare's epic drama ***Macbeth***. On the Howard Family Stage there will be two innovative new productions: Shakespeare's ***Timon of Athens***, redefined with a female-dominated cast and starring Colleen Wheeler as Timon, and a Bard-commissioned new adaptation of ***Lysistrata*** by Jennifer Wise and Lois Anderson. Additional details about Bard on the Beach's 2018 Festival plays can be found at bardonthebeach.org and updates will be posted regularly.

Advance-priced 2018 **Season Packs** are currently on sale and offer a substantial discount on tickets for all four 2018 productions. Single tickets go on sale in April, 2018 through the Bard [website](http://bardonthebeach.org) or through Bard's Box Office at 604-739-0559.