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## **20 Students and Their Teachers from 10 Chicago Public Schools Perform Chicago Shakespeare Theater's *CPS Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream***

**Chicago—October 23, 2009**—A 29-person ensemble of 20 high school students and 9 teachers from **Chicago Public Schools (CPS)** led by a team of **Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST)** artists is undergoing a four-week intensive rehearsal that began on September 26 and will culminate in a 60-minute adaptation of William Shakespeare's popular comedy, ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***. CST's landmark education program, ***CPS Shakespeare!*** brings together students and their teachers from across the city in a collaborative process that provides training with a team of theater professionals including the director, designers, text coaches and a fight choreographer. The program concludes with two public performances of ***CPS Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream***, adapted and directed by **Kirsten Kelly**, and performed in CST's Elizabethan-style Courtyard Theater on Navy Pier. Public performances of *CPS Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream* are Friday, October 23 at 4:30 p.m. and Saturday, October 24 at 11:00 a.m. The one-hour performances are followed by a 30-minute post-show discussion with the entire ensemble. Tickets are \$5.00 and may be purchased by calling Chicago Shakespeare Theater's Box Office at 312.595.5600 or visiting [www.chicagoshakes.com](http://www.chicagoshakes.com).

***CPS Shakespeare!*** is a central component of CST's commitment to serving the community through its far-reaching arts-in-education programs. Many of the participating educators have graduated from CST's year-long professional development seminar, **Bard Core Curriculum: Reading into Shakespeare**, which mentors English teachers from some of the most challenged Chicago public schools with drama-based reading strategies that have been documented to improve the basic skills of struggling and reluctant readers.

"Each year, we discover anew the transformative power of 'conquering' Shakespeare," says CST Director of Education **Marilyn Halperin**. "In this ensemble of teachers and students working side by side, we learn first-hand the enormous power of Shakespeare's language as we explore the story and creative process in an active, personal, and fully engaged way through the weeks of rehearsal together."

Ten schools from across the Chicago Public School system, represented by 20 students and nine English teachers, will collaborate in this year's production. Participating schools include: **Chicago International Charter School – Ralph Ellison Campus, Chicago Vocational Career Academy, Curie Metropolitan High School, Gwendolyn Brooks College Prep, Julian High School, Kenwood Academy High School, Phillips Academy High School, Prosser Career Academy, Roosevelt High School and Taft High School.**

**Sandra Shimon**, a Prosser Career Academy teacher who has participated in the program for the past two years, returns this year to serve as Assistant Director under the mentorship of Director Kirsten Kelly. "***CPS Shakespeare!*** is a unique opportunity for students to learn, and have the experience of performing Shakespeare on the stage of a

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nationally recognized theater working alongside other students and teachers from across the city and under the tutelage of theater professionals,” says Shimon. “This exploration through theater is extraordinary. The very real understanding and appreciation the students develop for William Shakespeare, the experience they gain both as collaborators and leaders, and the friendships they develop with students from such diverse backgrounds all make this program a powerful educational tool. As a teacher, it is a pleasure to watch the students who have been part of the program mature, and witness them, often bringing their leadership skills back to the classroom and their day-to-day lives.”

Directing the production and leading the creative team is **Kirsten Kelly**, returning to CST for a fourth year to stage the CPS production. An award-winning film and theater director currently residing in New York, Ms. Kelly is a co-creator of the *CPS! Shakespeare* program and has directed past productions of *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. She recently directed **Daniel Talbott's** *Slipping* at **Rattlestick Playwrights Theater** and *Crash*, an ensemble created piece based on the Great Depression and the current economic crisis with **Roots & Branches Theater Company**. Other credits include: the Midwest premiere of **David Mamet's** *Boston Marriage* for which she won an **After Dark Award for Best Director**; **Rebecca Gillman's** *Boy Meets Girl* for **Theatre Alliance** for which she was nominated for a **Helen Hayes Award for Best Direction** and **Sam Shepard's** *Savage Love/Tongues* with the **Julliard Percussion Ensemble** at **Lincoln Center**.

The creative team for *CPS Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream* includes: costume design by **Rachel Healy**; lighting design by **Joel Moritz**; sound design by **James Savage**; wig and make-up design by **Mary Patchell**; and fight choreography by **David Chrzanowski**.

Ensuring the future of *CPS Shakespeare!*, **Eric's Tazmanian Angel Fund** has made a generous commitment to support Chicago Shakespeare's arts-in-education program. This fund will also provide for the **Eric Curtis Skowronski Spirit Award**. The award, given to eight teachers, provides a monetary gift for their support of the arts, literature or library programs.

Now in its fourth year, *CPS Shakespeare!* is an important element of Chicago Shakespeare's array of arts-in-education initiatives. CST's flagship education program, **Team Shakespeare**, is in its 18<sup>th</sup> year serving students and their teachers through classroom activities and an extensive professional performance series for students—both at CST's home on Navy Pier and on tour to area schools.

Performances of *CPS Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream* are scheduled on Friday, October 23 at 4:30 p.m. and Saturday, October 24 at 11:00 a.m. The one-hour performance will be followed by a 30-minute post-show discussion with the entire ensemble. Tickets are \$5.00 and may be purchased by calling Chicago Shakespeare Theater's Box Office at 312.595.5600 or visiting [www.chicagoshakes.com](http://www.chicagoshakes.com).

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Principal support for *CPS Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream* is provided by Eric's Tazmanian Angel Fund

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# CPS Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream

By William Shakespeare  
Directed and Adapted by Kirsten Kelly

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**Title:** *CPS Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream*

**Written by:** William Shakespeare

**Directed and Adapted by:** Kirsten Kelly

**Assistant Director:** Sandra Shimon

**Schools:** Chicago International Charter School – Ralph Ellison Campus; Chicago Vocational Career Academy; Curie Metropolitan High School; Gwendolyn Brooks College Prep; Julian High School; Kenwood Academy High School; Phillips Academy High School; Prosser Career Academy; Roosevelt High School; Taft High School

**Teachers:** Eugene Hazzard; Bridget Haddad-Null; John Keith; Kate Plechaty; Christin Plunkett; Bryan Quinlan; Jill Stone; Shannon White

**Students:** Warren Baskin; Erika Davis; Olivia Gala; Nick Gonzalez; Cristina Granados; Shelique Humphrey; Lassell Johnson; Jade Landon; Patrick Lebron; André McCaskey; John Nikolov; Nancy Salgado; Jorge Santoyo; Shantell Steve; Tia Steward; Ariel Thompson; Anthony Vega; Jade Vinson; Aaron Walker; Tyisha Ward

**Designers:** Costume Designer Rachel Healy; Lighting Designer Joel Moritz; Sound Designer James Savage; Wig and Makeup Designer Mary Patchell; Fight Choreographer David Chrzanowski

**Dates:** October 23 and 24, 2009

**Schedule:** Friday, October 23 at 4:30 p.m.  
Saturday, October 24 at 11:00 a.m.

**Location:** Courtyard Theater  
Chicago Shakespeare Theater  
800 East Grand Avenue

**Tickets:** \$5

**Box Office:** [www.chicagoshakes.com](http://www.chicagoshakes.com)  
312.595.5600