

# Upcoming: January 15-16, 2011 — “Mary Stuart”

## THE SHAKESPEARE PROJECT OF CHICAGO

December 2010

*the world in words*

### Shakespeare Project Offers Student Internships



David Skidmore and Barbara Zahora perform “50 Minute Hamlet” in the Miller Studio at Roosevelt University on December 5.

The Shakespeare Project of Chicago formally kicked off its new partnership with The Theatre Conservatory at Chicago’s Roosevelt University on December 5 when it presented Jeff Christian’s

adaptation “50 Minute Hamlet” to a standing-room only audience of Roosevelt University students. Sean Kelley, Associate Dean/Director who is the sponsor for The Shakespeare Project’s program at Roosevelt was also in attendance. Later in the week, Artistic Director Peter Garino and Associate Artistic Director Barbara Zahora held auditions for Roosevelt theatre majors to participate in an internship program around The Project’s theatrical readings. Karen Vance, Harrison Schneider and Alexandra Gonzalez have been selected to intern on “The Tempest”, which will be produced April 30 and May 1, 2011. Vance and Schneider will serve as acting understudies while Gon-

zalez will assist Michelle Shupe with dramaturge responsibilities in pre-production and serve as assistant director during rehearsal. Garino commented, “We are very excited to play a role in the professional development young actors exploring Shakespeare.” The student interns will be paired with a Shakespeare Project actor who will mentor them during the rehearsal process and debrief with them after the performances. Zahora is an adjunct professor of theatre at Roosevelt University and was instrumental in helping develop and bring to fruition this important work for the Shakespeare Project of Chicago.

#### Special points of interest:

- “50 MINUTE HAMLET” PERFORMED AT ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY
- 3 STUDENTS SELECTED TO INTERN ON “THE TEMPEST”
- NEW PARTNERSHIP ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE SHAKESPEARE PROJECT AND ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY.

### AUSL Shakespeare Workshops

The Shakespeare Project will commence Shakespeare education workshops in January for three local high schools as part of its partnership with the Academy For Urban School Leadership (AUSL). The Shakespeare Project will be providing augmentation to the students’ study of Shakespeare that includes its “Page to the Stage” and

Performance workshops around “Macbeth”, “Romeo and Juliet” and The Sonnets. AUSL manages the turn-around of chronically under-performing public schools. “We are honored to have been selected by AUSL to provide Shakespeare programming for these schools”, commented Shakespeare Project Director of Education



TURNING AROUND SCHOOLS

Melissa Carlson. The schools to be served include Collins, Phillips and Orr Academy High Schools. Many thanks to Jeff Christian for helping develop this opportunity and to Cescily Washington of AUSL. More info on AUSL is here: [www.ausl-chicago.org](http://www.ausl-chicago.org)

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### Moreau and Zahora to Portray Rival Monarchs



Jennie Moreau will portray Mary Stuart.

Culminating their six-season exploration of the history plays, The Shakespeare Project of Chicago brings to life Friedrich Schiller's “Mary Stuart”. On the heels of last season's adaptation of King Henry VIII, the incendiary historical drama examines the relationship between Henry's daughter, Elizabeth I and her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots. Shakespeare Project veterans Jennie Moreau and Barbara Zahora are scheduled to perform Mary

and Elizabeth respectively, supported by a cast which includes Jeff Christian, Sean Cooper, Peter Garino, Linda Kimbrough, James Krag, John Kishline, Steve Schine and Fredric Stone. Christian directs. An introduction to the play will be given by dramaturge Michelle Shupe that will commence 15 minutes prior to curtain. January 15: 10:00AM Newberry Library; 2:00pm Wilmette Public Library; January 16: 2:00PM Highland Park Public Library



Barbara Zahora will portray Elizabeth I.

“WE WANT TO BE IN A POSITION TO OFFER ‘50 MINUTE HAMLET’ TO AS MANY POTENTIAL AUDIENCES AS POSSIBLE.”

### “50 Minute Hamlet” to Reach New Audiences

Jeff Christian's successful adaptation of “The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark” has been a central component of The Shakespeare Project's education outreach program since its premier in 2002. In the past year, it has been performed at Northwestern and Roosevelt Universities. Associate Artistic Director Barbara Zahora

commented, “We want to be in a position to offer ‘50 Minute Hamlet’ to as many potential audiences as possible.” The Shakespeare Project has recruited and trained multiple actors who will be ready to perform the work on demand. Joining Shakespeare Project veterans David Skidmore and Gail Rastorfer on the 50MH team

are James Krag, Matthew Fahey, Barbara Zahora, Michelle Shupe and Melissa Carlson. A targeted mailing campaign is planned to reach high school teachers in the greater Chicago area who teach Shakespeare in order to further promote this theatrical and memorable telling of Hamlet's journey.



The cast of “My Name Is Will” on November 5, 2010: Patrick Gagnon, Mary Ringstad, Gail Rastorfer and Nathan Hosner

### “My Name Is Will” Opens MMLA Convention

The Shakespeare Project was honored to perform its original adaptation of Shakespeare's sonnets and songs, “My Name Is Will” to an international audience at the opening night of the Midwest Modern Language Association's 2010 convention that was held November 5 at McCormick Place, Chicago.

Nathan Hosner, Mary Ringstad, Gail Rastorfer and Shakespeare Project newcomer Patrick Gagnon presented the piece developed by Peter Garino with an original score by Chris Walz. “My Name Is Will” had its premier with The Shakespeare Project in 1999 in a staged reading format and

was later presented as a full production in 2000 at Oakton Community College. It was most recently reprised in 2007 with new songs composed by Walz and additional sonnets. For more information on booking “My Name Is Will” contact [Melissa@shakespeareprojectchicago.org](mailto:Melissa@shakespeareprojectchicago.org)

## “Measure For Measure” Opens 2010-2011 Season

The Shakespeare Project opened the 2010-2011 season in October with its theatrical reading of Shakespeare’s “Measure For Measure”, the first time that The Project has offered this problem play since 1996. Gail Rastorfer (Isabella) and Nathan Hosner (Angelo) were featured in the play’s leading roles in a cast that included Stephen Spencer, David Skidmore, Sean Cooper, Blake Hackler, Dan Rod-

den, Richard Henzel, Michelle Shupe and newcomers Amanda Catania, Ron Turner, Jane Hannemann, Charles Stransky and Weston Blakesley. Peter Garino directed. Shupe also served as the dramaturge for the reading by preparing the text for production and providing an introductory exposition on the play’s history and its relevancy in today’s world. In her introduction she suggested, “If children are la-

beled ‘problem children’ or ‘gifted children’ they tend to live up to that standard – so it is with plays – so I challenge you, as you’re watching this play, to throw aside the scholarly debate that classifies this as a ‘problem play’ and see what you hear.”

A lively post-show discussion followed each performance.



Sean Cooper as Claudio at the first read-thru of “Measure For Measure” on October 9.

## AEA Auditions

The Shakespeare Project held Equity auditions in the summer and fall. A total of 80 actors participated in the auditions for casting consideration in the 2010-2011 theatrical reading season and The Project’s education outreach programs. “We were impressed but not surprised by the quality of the work and preparation of the actors that we

saw,” commented Barbara Zahora, Associate Artistic Director. Artistic Director Peter Garino continued, “While we have a very strong core group of actors that work regularly with us, it’s exciting to bring new people into the mix.” The fall reading of “Measure For Measure” featured several actors that come out of the

auditions including Weston Blakesley, Jane Hannemann and Ron Turner. Actors were asked to prepare two selections for the audition: a 2-minute memorized Shakespeare monologue and their choice of one of Shakespeare’s sonnets which could be read.



Weston Blakesley made his Shakespeare Project debut in “Measure For Measure.”

## Thank You to Our Patrons

We were recently asked, “How do you measure your success?” Perhaps the best measurement of our success is the fact that we are now in our 16<sup>th</sup> year of continuous operation since our founding in 1995. Not many theatre companies can cite 15 years of continuous operations and very few of those can state

that they have never charged an audience member a single dime for admission to one of their plays. Simply stated, we provide an outlet for the work of the world’s greatest dramatist, performed by the best local professional actors for an admission charge of nothing. No one else does what we do. But none of that

would be possible without the ongoing generous support of our patrons and our venues who make it possible for us to do what we do. And, for that, we are very grateful.



Curtain call for “Antony & Cleopatra” at the Highland Park Public Library, April 25, 2010.

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Shakespeare Project of Chicago founding member Jack Hickey will portray Sir John Falstaff in the upcoming reading of “The Merry Wives of Windsor” February 26-27.

### “The Merry Wives of Windsor” - Feb. 26-27

Associate Artistic Director Barbara Zahora will make her directing debut with The Shakespeare Project in February as she takes the helm for “The Merry Wives of Windsor,” the first presentation of this comedy by The Project since 1998. In Shakespeare’s middle-class comedy, set in suburban Windsor, we find two respectable married women propositioned simultaneously by the penniless and unscrupulous Sir John Falstaff. Will he suc-

ceed in using the women for his financial gain, or will the wives and the community teach him a lesson he won’t soon forget? “Merry Wives” is one of Shakespeare’s most farcical plays as seen by its reliance on physical gags and linguistic jokes to establish a comic tone that influence the play’s ultimate spirit of reconciliation, after all the intrigues have been sorted out. As of press time, the cast will include Tony Doborowski, Peter Garino, Susan Gos-

dick, Christian Gray, Jack Hickey, Blake Hackler, Ron Keaton, Mary Michell, Gail Rastorfer, Dan Rodden and Malcolm Rothman. Michelle Shupe will serve as Dramaturge for the reading and provide an introduction to the play 15 minutes prior to curtain.

February 26: 10:00AM Newberry Library; 2:00pm Wilmette Public Library; February 27: 2:00PM Highland Park Public Library



Shakespeare Project veteran Fredric Stone will play Prospero in “The Tempest” - April 30 and May 1.

### “The Tempest” - April 30 - May 1

Mark your calendars now for the final offering of our 2010-2011 theatrical reading season as we present Shakespeare’s “The Tempest.” The crowning jewel in the group of romances composed at the twilight of Shakespeare’s career, “The Tempest” presents some of his most personal reflections on the cycle of life. A banished Duke and his daughter have

been exiled to a remote, mysterious island. Over the course of twelve years, the Duke develops magical powers to lead his enemies to the island. The confrontation that ensues meditates on themes of vengeance and forgiveness, death and resurrection. Shakespeare project veteran Fredric Stone is slated to portray Prospero, the banished Duke with magical powers.

Amanda Tanguay is scheduled to make her Shakespeare Project debut as Prospero’s daughter Miranda. Peter Garino directs and Michelle Shupe will serve as the reading’s dramaturge. April 30: 10:00AM Newberry Library; 2:00pm Wilmette Public Library; May 1: 2:00PM Highland Park Public Library



Michelle Shupe will collaborate with Barbara Zahora on development of “50 Minute Romeo and Juliet”.

### In Development: “50 Minute Romeo and Juliet”

As part of its goal to meet the programming needs of high schools, The Shakespeare Project has initiated development on “50 Minute Romeo and Juliet” to follow the success of “50 Minute Hamlet.” Artistic Director Peter Garino commented, “We’ve had considerable interest expressed from high

school teachers that are teaching Romeo and Juliet and are interested in a presentation of the play that can be performed in a regular class period. Romeo and Juliet is generally requested for freshman and sophomore classes while junior and senior classes are more likely to study Hamlet.” Barbara

Zahora and Michelle Shupe are developing the script that will be performed by four actors. The goal is to have “50RJ” ready for its first performance in April 2011.

## Seen On Stage

Familiar faces from The Shakespeare Project of Chicago were seen on many Chicago area stages during the past year. Most recently, founding member Judy Blue portrayed Lady Capulet in Chicago Shakespeare Theatre's production of "Romeo and Juliet" at Navy Pier. Stephen Spencer and James Krag performed leading roles in Tom Stoppard's "Night and Day" at Remy Bumpo Theatre. If you ven-

tured to the Illinois Theatre Center you could have seen Melissa Carlson in another Stoppard work, "The Real Thing" working alongside Michael Joseph Mitchell who will be making his debut with The Shakespeare Project in our upcoming "Macbeth" workshops for AUSL. Associate Artistic Director Barbara Zahora performed the title role in "Candida" at Shaw Chicago. Jeff Christian has been busy with Seanachai

Theatre's highly acclaimed production of "The Weir" and just closed "Moon Over The Brewery" at Artist's Ensemble Theatre in Rockford. Fredric Stone was featured in Silk Road Theatre's production of "Scorched". Look for Nathan Hosner in Chicago Shakespeare Theatre's upcoming production of "As You Like It" and Lesley Bevan as Lady Macbeth in CST's Short Shakespeare "Macbeth."



Education Director Melissa Carlson recently appeared in "The Real Thing" at the Illinois Theatre Center.

## Actor Profile: Gail Rastorfer

Gail's journey with The Shakespeare Project began in 2001 in "Twelfth Night". This season, she reprised her role in "My Name Is Will" for the MMLA (see accompanying story) and also portrayed Isabella in "Measure For Measure". This past summer, she played opposite David Skidmore in "50 Minute Hamlet" at Northwestern

University and served as assistant director for December's performance at Roosevelt University. Other recent appearances for The Project include Queen Elizabeth in "Richard III" and Antiphola of Syracuse in "The Comedy of Errors." Gail has worked for the Goodman Theatre, Northlight, The Chicago Theatre and First Folio Theatre

among others and has performed regionally with Indiana Rep, Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre and Hope Summer Rep. You may have seen Gail on TV selling a steam cleaner or paper towels. When she's not acting, Gail shares a healthy appreciation for Star Trek and Andy Griffith with her husband Dan Rodden.



Gail Rastorfer has worked with The Shakespeare Project since 2001 and most recently played Isabella in "Measure For Measure" this season.

## @ The Jeff Awards

The Shakespeare Project of Chicago was well-represented at the recent Jeff Awards ceremony held on October 25 at the Drury Lane Theatre in Oakbrook, Illinois. Two Shakespeare Project regulars, Stephen Spencer and James Krag appeared in shows that were nominated for "Best Ensem-

ble." Spencer was part of the cast of "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" at the Court Theatre while Krag was part of the cast of "The Incredible Entrance of Chad Deity" at the Victory Gardens Theatre which won multiple awards including "Best Ensemble." Congratulations to Steve and Jim. "Chad Deity" took top

honors for a play with a total of five awards. The world premier by Kristoffer Diaz, uses professional wrestling to focus on the manipulation of American prejudices. After opening in Chicago, the play was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize in Drama and transferred to New York.



At the Jeff Awards: Helene Augustyniak, Peter Garino, Gail Rastorfer and Jeff Award recipient James Krag.

# THE SHAKESPEARE PROJECT OF CHICAGO

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P.O. Box 25126  
Chicago, Illinois 60625

Phone: 312-409-0107  
E-mail: peter@shakespeareprojectchicago.org  
Website: shakespeareprojectchicago.org

#### **Staff:**

Peter Garino, Artistic Director  
Barbara Zahora, Associate Artistic Director  
Melissa Carlson, Director of Education

#### **Board of Directors:**

David Skidmore, President  
Ron Weiner, Vice President  
Allen Arnett, Treasurer  
Mary Ringstad, Secretary  
Deborah Clifton, Member at Large

#### **Theatrical Reading Venues:**

The Newberry Library, Chicago  
Wilmette Public Library  
Highland Park Public Library



Jeff Christian

Since 1995, The Shakespeare Project of Chicago has dedicated itself to presenting free theatrical readings of William Shakespeare and other classic dramatists to Chicago area audiences. The Shakespeare Project of Chicago also offers education outreach programs on Shakespeare studies to local schools. The company draws its talent from the extraordinary pool of local professional actors, all members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors. The actors receive a stipend for their work which is well below their regular union pay scale. The Shakespeare Project actors lend their talents to The Shakespeare Project because they share the Project's mission of making the Shakespeare experience accessible to all, regardless of proximity or economic means.



The Newberry Library, Chicago. Photograph by Melissa Carlson

## Looking Back on 2010 — A Very Good Year!

2010 was a very busy and productive year for The Shakespeare Project of Chicago. In January, we warmed cold winter hearts with "A Midsummer Night's Dream" under Jeff Christian's direction. The laughter continued in February with Richard Brinsley Sheridan's comedy of manners "The Rivals" featuring Barbara Zahora as Mrs. Malaprop. In April our 2009-2010 theatrical reading season concluded when Stephen Spencer and Melissa Carlson portrayed the title roles in Shakespeare's unforgettable epic tragedy "Antony and Cleopatra." In May, The Shake-

speare Project was invited to assist the Milton Project in bringing to the stage Regina Schwartz' adaptation of "Paradise Lost" under the direction of Jeff Christian and this time featuring Spencer and Carlson as Adam and Eve. The reading was presented at The Newberry Library. In June, we thanked Jeff Christian for his eight incredible years as Artistic Director of The Shakespeare Project as Peter Garino and Barbara Zahora took on new leadership roles. On Labor Day, David Skidmore and Michelle Shupe presented "A Celebration of Shakespeare" to a private audience. By

fall, planning was well underway for our work with the Academy For Urban School Leadership (AUSL) to provide workshop-in-residency programs for AUSL high schools. In October, "Measure For Measure" kicked off our 16th season. In November, we presented "My Name Is Will" for the Midwest Modern Language Association. And, in December, we presented "50 Minute Hamlet" at Roosevelt University. We look forward to building on our successes in 2011 and invite you, our patrons, to join us!

Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for the New Year!