



## The Nashville Shakespeare Festival

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### **SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK TURNS 20** *20<sup>th</sup> Season Opens August 16 in Centennial Park*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Nashville Shakespeare Festival (NSF) is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> season of **Shakespeare in the Park** by bringing comedy, action, and betrayal to Centennial Park this summer.

The festival, which kicks off Aug. 16, features performances of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, two of Shakespeare's most famous comedies. One play runs nightly, Thursday through Sunday, plus Labor Day, through Sept. 9, and they are free and open to the public. Donations are kindly accepted. All shows are held at the Centennial Park Bandshell and begin at 7:30 p.m. with pre-show entertainment starting at 6:30 p.m.

Both *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* will be performed with a slight twist. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* will be set to Mardi Gras, while clowns will perform *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The professional actors went through a rigorous clowning workshop in preparation for their performances, and, in turn, they taught their skill to the younger actors. NSF also brought in a vocal and dialect coach to work with both groups.

“Both plays contain rapid-fire comedy and unusual story lines. In order to understand the productions completely, we wanted to perfect the different accents used in the plays by the actors for a maximum amount of comprehension,” explained Nancy VanReece, NSF executive director.

The NSF is one of the few companies in Nashville that employs professional actors. Professional actors hold the major roles in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and the Apprentice Company does so for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The Apprentice Company is a group of 12 skilled, young actors, ages 13 and up, who audition to be a part of the Apprentice Company in hopes of being cast in the NSF plays. As a part of the Apprentice Company,

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students learn everything from acting, which includes physical humor and clowning techniques they will use in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, to stage hand skills.

As usual, the audience is encouraged to bring blankets, picnics, chairs, bug spray, and, of course, their dogs. In addition to the official 2007 “Spirit of Nashville” Shakespeare in the Park poster, hot dogs, hamburgers, fruit smoothies and vegetarian options will be available at various concession stands.

For more information about Shakespeare in the Park and the pre-show entertainment, please call the Nashville Shakespeare Festival at (615) 255-2273 or e-mail [thebard@nashvilleshakes.org](mailto:thebard@nashvilleshakes.org). Only one play is performed per night. Visit the Web site, [www.nashvilleshakes.org](http://www.nashvilleshakes.org), for the complete schedule.

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### **The Nashville Shakespeare Festival**

The Nashville Shakespeare Festival is a non-profit theater company whose mission is to educate and entertain the Mid-South community through professional Shakespearean experiences. Since its inception in 1988, the Nashville Shakespeare Festival has become one of Nashville’s best-loved traditions, having entertained more than 150,000 people with its annual **Shakespeare in the Park** productions. In addition, the company brings its energetic performances and interactive workshops to schools throughout Nashville and Middle Tennessee as well as communities across the state. This year, NSF hosted the Shakespeare Theater Association of America’s annual conference in Nashville.