

Kristen Kindoll: Read aloud — or read along — with Shakespeare

Kristen Kindoll, For The Tennessean; 11:03 p.m. CDT June 17, 2014



(Photo: Rick Malkin)

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Shakespeare Allowed! has been going strong since October 2008. During a recent table reading, Nashville Mayor Karl Dean announced that the Shakespeare on the Road project has chosen Nashville's Shakespeare in the Park as one of the 14 North American Shakespeare companies that will be featured in an upcoming documentary and book.

Shakespeare Allowed! is a program that Denice Hicks, artistic director of the Nashville Shakespeare Festival, began at a friend's wish: the desire to read all of Shakespeare's plays.

"I knew it needed to be free, and I wanted to make sure that nobody felt less than anybody else because they'd never read Shakespeare out loud," Hicks said.

She approached Nashville Public Library officials and requested space.

"They gave me a room and put the readings on their calendar," she said. "Sure enough, people showed up and we have been going strong ever since."

The free program's purpose has rotated through the cannon once and will complete the second cycle by February 2015, picking up again in March 2015. There are "read aloud" chairs for the first 12 to 16 people who want them. The rest of the seats in the room are designated "read along." Characters aren't assigned; rather, people read the speeches.

"That way, everyone gets to read a lot, and it's fun not knowing whether on your turn around the circle you'll get a whole famous speech or just have to say 'I will, my lord,'" Hicks said.

It is this kind of dynamic vision and storytelling that keeps Shakespeare alive for the modern public. This summer, the Nashville Shakespeare Festival will produce "As You Like It."

"I think of it as Shakespeare's country musical and knew that our local talent would be able to fulfill the production's requirements with flying colors," Hicks said.

The production will be set during 1930s Tennessee.

"The styles of the '30s will make for great costumes, and the music is going to set the tone for this bluesy, optimistic comedy of people going through some really hard times," Hicks said.

In conjunction with the shows Aug. 23-24, The Shakespeare on the Road team will interview artists, stakeholders, audience members and volunteers. The production's goal is to understand the community that supports the Nashville Shakespeare Festival. In addition, the team will offer a lecture about its trip at the Nashville main library Aug. 23.

Hicks encourages everyone to come and behold the magic of a table reading.

"I love all of the different dialects around the table, the practice of pushing through the difficulties and allowing the play to speak for itself," she said. "And I love that many people who'd rather not read aloud come to read along. It's a real community."

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Contact Kristen Kindoll at homeschool@kindoll.org.

To learn more

- To learn more about the Shakespeare on the Road team, visit <http://shakespeareontheroad.com>.
- To volunteer or audition for the Nashville Shakespeare Festival, all the information, including the acceptance video from the Shakespeare on the Road team, is available at www.nashvilleshakes.org.
- The next Shakespeare Allowed! event is noon-3 p.m. July 12.

