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## For Immediate Release

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### Arts Midwest Announces 2015–2016 *Shakespeare in American Communities* Grants *Grants Mark 13<sup>th</sup> Year of Bringing Shakespeare to Youth*

Minneapolis, MN – Arts Midwest today announced \$1 million in grants to 40 nonprofit, professional theater companies across 26 states, plus the District of Columbia, to perform the works of William Shakespeare for students through *Shakespeare in American Communities*. The awards mark the thirteenth consecutive year of *Shakespeare in American Communities*, a national program managed by Arts Midwest in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Each of the participating theater companies will present productions of Shakespeare plays to students from at least 10 schools. Accompanying educational activities include in-school residencies, workshops, or post-performance discussions. Performances will take place between August 1, 2015, and July 31, 2016.

*Shakespeare in American Communities* introduces middle and high school students to the power of live theater and the masterpieces of William Shakespeare. Since the program’s inception in 2003, *Shakespeare in American Communities* has benefited more than 2.5 million individuals, including 2.1 million students, with live performances and educational activities.

“Arts Midwest is so proud to once again partner with the National Endowment for the Arts to support the activities of 40 outstanding theater companies that will bring Shakespeare’s plays alive for students across the country,” says Susan Chandler, vice president of Arts Midwest. “*Shakespeare in American Communities*’ goals of introducing students to the artform of theater and to Shakespeare’s timeless themes of love, ambition, jealousy, courage, and betrayal will be brilliantly executed by these theaters.”

The following examples demonstrate the types of activities that will be conducted by theater companies funded by *Shakespeare in American Communities* to engage students with Shakespeare:

**Oregon Shakespeare Festival** (Ashland, OR) will perform *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Pericles*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Twelfth Night*. In addition to providing free and discounted tickets to the performances, workshops about the plays, backstage tours, and pre- and post-performance discussions, they will offer teachers extensive training sessions, study guides, and performance tickets to enhance their ability to teach the plays. Oregon Shakespeare Festival expects to reach 42 schools and 900 students from underserved communities in California and Oregon.

**Nashville Shakespeare Festival** (Nashville, TN) will perform *King Lear* and will offer free and discounted student tickets to the performances, subsidized busing for students, post-performance question and answer sessions, school workshops about the play, and a four-day bilingual residency at a Hispanic

community center. Nashville Shakespeare Festival expects to reach 50 schools and more than 3,000 students in Nashville and nearby rural counties.

**Trinity Repertory Company** (Providence, RI) will perform *Julius Caesar*, casting a woman in the title role in an exploration of power, loyalty, betrayal, and celebrity. They will provide post-show discussions, pre- and post-show workshops, and study guides to teachers, plus will reach students with autism and other cognitive and physical disabilities. Trinity Repertory Company expects to reach 30 schools and more than 1,000 students in a broad geographic area of southern New England.

[Please view the complete list of the 40 theater companies](#) that have been selected to participate in *Shakespeare in American Communities* for 2015-2016.

One hundred and two theater companies across the United States have taken part in *Shakespeare in American Communities* since its inception 13 years ago. These companies have presented 33 Shakespeare plays through 8,600 performances and 29,000 educational activities at more than 7,900 schools in 3,400 communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Additionally, to enhance the educational impact of *Shakespeare in American Communities*, Arts Midwest and the NEA have developed a comprehensive [Shakespeare in American Communities](#) website in order to share resources and grantee spotlights.

#### **About Arts Midwest**

Arts Midwest promotes creativity, nurtures cultural leadership, and engages people in meaningful arts experiences, bringing vitality to Midwest communities and enriching people's lives. Based in Minneapolis, Arts Midwest connects the arts to audiences throughout the nine-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. One of six nonprofit regional arts organizations in the United States, Arts Midwest's history spans more than 25 years. For more information, visit [www.artsmidwest.org](http://www.artsmidwest.org).

#### **About the National Endowment for the Arts**

Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. For more information, visit [arts.gov](http://arts.gov).