



The Kennedy Center

THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

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History of Shenandoah Shakespeare Express

1988: *Richard III*. Jim Warren and Ralph Alan Cohen start a professional traveling troupe called the "Shenandoah Shakespeare Express." The SSE opens *Richard III* and tours Virginia.

1989: *The Taming of the Shrew*. In May, the SSE embarks on its first spring tour, taking *The Taming of the Shrew* to Delaware, Pennsylvania, Vermont, New Hampshire, and New York.

1990: *Julius Caesar* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The SSE moves to a repertory format and performs *Julius Caesar* at the annual meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America in Philadelphia.

1991: *Measure for Measure*, *Twelfth Night*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The first summer season of the SSE features an extended Valley Season in Harrisonburg, VA; extended runs in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.; and the SSE's first grant award: "Bringing Shakespeare Home - a Seminar for Teachers," funded by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy.

1992: *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Comedy of Errors*. A sold-out run on the Elizabethan stage at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. is followed by the first overseas tour: two weeks at the Shakespeare Globe Museum in London, two weeks at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland. The National Endowment for the Arts awards general-operating support.



1993: *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *The Washington Post* and *The Boston Globe* print rave reviews of the SSE. The company performs at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival in Charleston, S.C.

1994: *Othello*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. The SSE performs in 30 states, plays to over 50,000 people, and makes its first visit to Canada with a week-long residency at the University of Ottawa. The Virginia Commission for the Arts awards

general-operating support.

1995: *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest*, and *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*. SSE performs in the U.S., Canada, France, Germany, and Scotland. SSE conducts C.R.A.S.S. (the Center for



Renaissance and Shakespearean Staging), a six-week institute supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. To meet increased demand, SSE establishes an autumn tour (with the new "James" troupe) that performs *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night* concurrently with the original twelve-month ("Elizabeth" troupe) tour.

1996: *Henry V*, *As You Like It*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Julius Caesar*. The SSE performs first tour of primary and secondary schools in England, coordinated by the International Shakespeare Globe Centre. The Virginia Commission for the Arts features the SSE in the VCA Tour Directory. The second SSE James tour, performing *Julius Caesar* and *The Comedy of Errors*, christens a new Shakespeare Festival in Geneseo, Illinois and plays to twice as many colleges and high schools as the year before.

1997: *Love's Labour's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Henry IV*, and *Macbeth*. The SSE performs its fourth extended run at the Folger Shakespeare Library to sell-out crowds. The James tour of *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* inaugurates a week-long residency in the state of Kentucky. The first Young Company Theatre Camp provides high-school students with a three-week introduction to SSE-style Shakespeare, complete with classes, workshops, and a production of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

1998: *Richard III*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Measure for Measure* and *Romeo and Juliet*. The SSE continues to perform "shamelessly entertaining Shakespeare" (*The Washington Post*) across the U.S. and Canada. The James troupe, performing *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, produces Shakespeare Para Todos, a bilingual outreach project targeting Hispanic audiences in the Shenandoah Valley. The second annual YCTC draws twenty-six high-school students from locations as far away as Albany, NY and the Grand Cayman Islands. The Shubert Foundation awards general-operating support.

1999: *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *Macbeth*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *Hamlet*. The SSE officially changes its name to Shenandoah Shakespeare; moves to Staunton, Virginia; and begins work on phase one of a three-part plan to build an indoor Elizabethan playhouse called the Blackfriars, a Globe Theatre, and a Center for Research and Education. The company performs *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, by Francis Beaumont (a U.S. professional premiere and Shenandoah Shakespeare's first play by one of Shakespeare's contemporaries). A three-week run at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. proves the most successful public run in the history of Shenandoah Shakespeare. The Elizabeth troupe performs in Tennessee and Wisconsin, and the James troupe plays Florida, adding three new states to Shenandoah Shakespeare's list, which now boasts 43 states and Washington, D.C. (plus 5 foreign countries). The VFH funds "Better the Instruction," a week-long summer seminar for high-school teachers, and honors Shenandoah Shakespeare with a special award for the company's contributions to literature and the humanities in Virginia. Shenandoah Shakespeare's web site gets a major overhaul, with help from GTE.



2000: *Richard II, Much Ado about Nothing, Doctor Faustus, Othello, Twelfth Night, and The Roaring Girl.* Shenandoah Shakespeare launches a successful capital campaign and begins construction on the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, Virginia. Educators at Mary Baldwin College in Staunton, Virginia, accelerate planning for partnering with Shakespeare Shakespeare to create a new Master's Degree program in Shakespeare in Performance. During the summer, the Elizabeth troupe mounts Shenandoah Shakespeare's first-ever "Virginia Season," performing the company's full repertory in seven central Virginia cities over a six-week period. The Elizabeth troupe undertakes a cross-country odyssey to perform for the first time in Yukon, Canada; Alaska; and Wyoming. The 2000 James troupe becomes the first James troupe to feature a three-play repertory and the tour expands from 4 months to 9 months. The James troupe further adds the US Virgin Islands and Michigan to the SSE's ever-growing roster, which now includes 46 states and Washington, D.C.; 5 foreign countries; and 1 US Territory