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BARD ON THE BEACH ANNOUNCES 2007 ATTENDANCE & 2008 SEASON PLAYBILL

VANCOUVER, British Columbia: September 27, 2007 - Artistic Director **Christopher Gaze** is delighted to announce that Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival broke all previous box office records in 2007. Every one of the 205 Shakespeare performances during the 17 week season was sold out and attendance exceeded **86,000**, approximately 6,000 more than last season.

The programming included some favourite Shakespeare plays but these were given fresh stagings in non-traditional time periods. On the Mainstage, *The Taming of the Shrew* directed by Miles Potter was framed as an 1880s Spaghetti Western, while Dean Paul Gibson gave the classic romantic tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* a modern brush. In the intimate Studio Stage tent, director Katrina Dunn placed the great Roman drama *Julius Caesar* in the Renaissance era of Galileo. Even the nearly unknown Bard tragedy *Timon of Athens* played to capacity houses, a tribute to James Fagan Tait's simple but creative staging that integrated live music into the performance. More than 7,000 students attended the Festival's **Student Matinee Series** or came to evening performances when the matinees quickly filled up. Both the **Bard-B-Q & Fireworks** evenings and **Celebrating Red & White** wine tasting sold out well in advance. A fourth, matinee performance was added for the popular *A Merry Evening of Opera* concerts, allowing close to 2,000 patrons to enjoy opera and operetta favourites performed by UBC Opera Ensemble and members of Vancouver Opera Orchestra.

"This season has been a triumph," enthused Christopher Gaze. "It is the season we have dreamed about since Bard began to have our loyal Bard audiences flock to see the shows and delight in the productions and fill our theatres night after night. Vancouver has nurtured Bard and we in turn acknowledge our community and their guests and friends from far and wide for their dedicated commitment to us. Thanks, thanks and ever thanks!"

In keeping with Bard tradition, Christopher Gaze announced the line up for next summer on closing night. **Bard on the Beach's** 19th season will run **May 29 through September 21, 2008** featuring the comedy/tragedy pairings of *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear* in the Mainstage tent and *The Tempest* and *Titus Andronicus* in the intimate Douglas Campbell Studio Stage tent. **David Mackay** will return for his second directorial role with Bard (*Troilus and Cressida*, 2006) to stage *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare's hilarious tale of cross-dressing, misplaced affections, and mischievous hoaxes. **James Fagan Tait**, who directed *Timon of Athens* in 2007, will bring his visionary styling to the titanic story of greed, cruelty and madness that is unleashed when King Lear

makes a foolish error in judgment. Christopher Gaze will play Lear in a long-awaited return to a leading role at Bard; he last played Bottom in 1999 and Richard III in 1998.

Two talented new faces will make their Bard directorial debuts with the 2008 Studio Stage productions. Well-known actress and sound designer **Meg Roe** will oversee the staging of *The Tempest*, Shakespeares magical tale of revenge, romance and reconciliation on an enchanted island. **Kim Collier**, co-Founding Director of the Electric Company Theatre, will bring her unique dramatic style to a production of the bloody revenge drama *Titus Andronicus*, where hateful plotting leads to the death of Titus sons, the ravaging of his daughter, and the self-amputation of his own hand.

“As Bard approaches its 19th summer and British Columbia celebrates its 150th Anniversary, I am thrilled to announce that we will present a completely made-in-BC-season. Therefore four Vancouver directors will oversee the staging of Bard on the Beach’s 2008 Season,” says Gaze. “When you have reached the pinnacle of success - with 100% sold out houses in 2007 - it is a time to move ahead and take even more artistic risks. In recent years, we have become known for our top calibre actors and our theatrical and innovative work, and Vancouver has responded to the high standards that Bard has achieved. It would be easy and safe to fall back on the tried and true, but I believe that by nurturing new, emerging talent we are ensuring both the development and the enrichment of future Canadian theatre. We shall not sit on our laurels - we shall continue to strive to create an even greater Shakespeare Festival for the years to come.”

Updates on Bard on Beach’s upcoming Festival will be posted regularly at www.bardonthebeach.org. Tickets will go on sale in March 2008 through the website or by calling 604-739-0559.

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Photos can be downloaded from the Bard website. Call Cynamon, 604-802-2733, for password access.