

Chicago Shakespeare Theater presents

## *Short Shakespeare! Romeo and Juliet*

75-minute adaptation of the tragic romance offers a perfect introduction to Shakespeare  
Welcoming thousands of students from across Chicagoland and beyond to weekday matinees

Public performances Saturdays at 11:00am, February 24–March 16



Chicago—January 22, 2024—[Chicago Shakespeare Theater](#) presents a perfect introduction to Shakespeare’s work for young audiences with a 75-minute abridgement of *Romeo and Juliet*, adapted and directed by **Mikael Burke**. This production reimagines Shakespeare’s tale of young love found—and tragically lost—in the 1980s. During a four-week run of weekday matinees, Chicago Shakespeare will welcome thousands of middle and high school students from across the region to the Courtyard Theater. In addition, performances are open to the public on **Saturdays at 11:00am, February 24–March 16, 2024**. After each performance, the actors remain on stage for a question-and-answer session about the production. **Tickets for public performances start at just \$26 for students ages 18 and under.**

Verona burns under summer’s heat—and the division of two prominent families. Against a backdrop of violence and an endless cycle of vengeance, this adaptation of Shakespeare’s text poses a profound question—can true

love survive in a divided community? Combining Shakespeare’s original verse, dynamic staging, and a high-energy 1980s setting, *Short Shakespeare! Romeo and Juliet* offers a new lens for young people to experience this enduring tale.

Adapter and director **Mikael Burke** said, “It’s a cautionary tale that proves if we can’t figure out how to disentangle love from violence in our world, violence will always win. And every time it does, we stand to lose the greatest and purest things in life. That was true 400 years ago and is certainly still true today. Love and violence are scarily and upsettingly tied together in this play in a way we don’t always consider, but Shakespeare really commands us to pay attention to how closely these two things are related—and hopefully compel us to action.”

Burke is a Princess Grace Award winner and Jeff Award nominee, with credits at Goodman Theatre, TimeLine Theatre Company, Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, and more in Chicago, as well as regionally with Yale Repertory Theatre, Theatreworks Hartford, Forward Theatre, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, and more. He previously served as the associate artistic director at About Face Theatre and is an adjunct faculty member at DePaul and Roosevelt Universities.

The company of *Romeo and Juliet* features **Kenneth La’Ron Hamilton** as Romeo and **Felicia Oduh** as Juliet. The company also includes **Adeoye** (Prince/Apothecary), **Bobby Bowman** (Gregory/Lord Montague), **Ronald L. Conner** (Lord Capulet), **Jack DeCesare** (Paris/Abraham), **Barbara Figgins** (Nurse), **Rasell Holt** (Mercutio), **Carolyn Kruse** (Lady Capulet), **Ian Maryfield** (Tybalt), **Alex Benito Rodriguez** (Benvolio), **Donovan Session** (Sampson/Peter), and **Jonah D. Winston** (Friar Laurence). Understudies include **Diego Longoria**, **Carlos Olmedo**, **Priscilla Torres**, and **Sarafina Vecchio**.

Creating the world of *Romeo and Juliet* are Choreographer **Frankie DiCiccio**, Scenic Designer **Alyssa Mohn**, Costume Designer **Gregory Graham**, Lighting Designer **Eric Watkins**, and Original Music and Sound Designer

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**Ethan Korvne**. Also joining Burke on the creative team are Intimacy Director **Courtney Abbott**, Fight Choreographer **Rachel Flesher**, Verse Coach **Tyler Meredith**, and Assistant Director **Christina Casano**.

Chicago Shakespeare's *Short Shakespeare!* series is part of the Theater's nationally recognized [Team Shakespeare](#) education programs, which have impacted two million students to date. Chicago Shakespeare brings Shakespeare's work to life in the school curriculum—through live performance, professional learning for educators, comprehensive teaching resources, and opportunities for students to perform Shakespeare. These initiatives—in concert with the free citywide Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks tour and summer family musical series—exemplify the Theater's steadfast commitment to young audiences.

*Short Shakespeare! Romeo and Juliet* will be presented to the public on Saturdays at 11:00am from February 24-March 16, 2024, in Chicago Shakespeare's Courtyard Theater. Single tickets (\$26 for audience members age 18 and under; \$42 for adults) are on sale now. Special discounts will be available for groups of 10 or more. For more information or to purchase tickets, contact Chicago Shakespeare Theater's Box Office at 312.595.5600 or visit the Theater's website at [www.chicagoshakes.com](http://www.chicagoshakes.com).

### **ABOUT CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER**

Regional Tony Award-recipient Chicago Shakespeare Theater produces a bold and innovative year-round season—plays, musicals, world premieres, family productions, and theatrical presentations from around the globe—alongside nationally recognized education programming serving tens of thousands of students, teachers, and lifelong learners each year. Founded in 1986, Chicago Shakespeare's onstage work has expanded to as many as twenty productions and 650 performances annually. CST is dedicated to welcoming the next generation of theatergoers; one in four of its audience members is under the age of eighteen. As a nonprofit organization, Chicago Shakespeare works to embrace diversity, prioritize inclusion, provide equitable opportunities, and offer an accessible experience for all. On CST's three stages at its home on Navy Pier, in classrooms and neighborhoods across the city, and in venues around the world, Chicago Shakespeare Theater is a multifaceted cultural hub—inviting audiences, artists, and community members to share powerful stories that connect and inspire. [www.chicagoshakes.com](http://www.chicagoshakes.com).

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