



A Celebratory Summer With the Bard

by Makayla Hoppe

Since its founding in 1935, The Old Globe has produced 33 of Shakespeare's 36 plays. This summer, it will finally complete all of Shakespeare's theatrical work with its productions of "Henry 6 One: Flowers and France" and "Henry 6 Two: Riot and Reckoning." Erna Finci Viterbi Artistic Director Barry Edelstein has taken "Henry VI, Parts I, II and III" and adapted them into a two-part production running in repertory.

"Henry VI, Parts I, II and III" tells the story of the War of the Roses, a civil war that lasted over 50 years. After Henry V's death, the House of York, symbolized by a white rose, and the House of Lancaster, symbolized by a red rose, fought for the English throne.

"The plays tell a story about the impact of political decisions, and in particular, what happens to the country when political leaders lose sight of the values that should guide them and also what happens to the country when there's a long-lasting war," Barry said.

It was no easy feat to take such a significant, three-part story and adapt it into two parts.

Rene, "HENRY 6 ONE" — costume rendering by David Reynoso.



San Diegans participate in filming crowd scenes for “Henry 6.”

“Four years of hard work that are the culmination of 30 years as a Shakespearean [went into] trying to figure out which parts of the story to tell and which parts of the story not to tell,” Barry said. “Some of it is just trimming away repetitive material or unrelated episodes and trying to come up with a clear story for the audience to follow over two nights, and some of it is making choices about what themes to emphasize in the big sprawling canvas of Shakespeare’s story.”

The two productions will be the center of the Old Globe’s annual Shakespeare Festival. Each summer, the theater takes a Shakespearean production and surrounds it with community-wide interaction and involvement.

“From time to time, throughout Shakespeare’s three plays, [the king] visits regular people,” Barry said. “Most of the plays are about the political leaders — the king and the royal court and the queen and the various people jockeying for power — but sometimes he cuts away and just

checks in on what the impact of all this policy is on the lives of regular English people. So, we knew that the plays would need a very significant contingent of just regular citizens in order to tell that part of the story. And we decided that this was an opportunity for the Old Globe to bring together our professional art-making operation and our community-based operation, which we call arts engagement.”

The Old Globe oversees 18 programs involving 50 local nonprofit organizations, including playwriting, acting and tactical theater programs that search San Diego’s neighborhoods to help individuals learn about the world of theater. For six months, the artistic designers, composer and choreographer have been holding workshops for San Diegans to participate in.

“Some of the scenery and some of the costuming will be influenced by the input of these community members who have been working with these designers in these workshops,” Barry said.

Several large crowd scenes in the production are represented by previously recorded videos. According to Barry, The Old Globe became a studio for several weekends and welcomed hundreds of San Diegans to participate in the filming.

The “Henry 6” productions will even feature walk-on roles for community members. “Literally every night, there will be members of the community who will be on stage with the professional actors,” Barry said.

In addition to the community involvement with “Henry 6,” Barry and The Old Globe will hold “Thinking Shakespeare Live!” The one-night engagement will have Barry discussing his book, “Thinking Shakespeare: A How-To Guide for Student Actors, Directors, and Anyone Else Who Wants to Feel More Comfortable with the Bard.” The book and the production are a Shakespeare how-to for novice and experienced Shakespeare-lovers alike.

These two repertory shows of “Henry 6” will make The Old Globe the 11th theater in the country to have produced all of Shakespeare’s theatrical work.

“[The festival] is basically a huge, huge, huge celebration of Shakespeare at The Old Globe using this landmark of completing Shakespeare’s canon,” Barry said. ☆