

Pick Your Plays

Age Recommendations

These play descriptions provide specific content information and our recommendation for age appropriateness. Each school and community is unique, so please read carefully to determine what is appropriate for your students. Please be aware that these recommendations are made before the plays go into rehearsal. Occasionally, decisions are made during the rehearsal process or preview performances that change the suitability of a production. When changes occur, the Education Department posts updated age recommendations on our website and makes every effort to contact group leaders.

Questions? Please contact OSF Group Sales or the Education Department at education@osfashland.org.

ROMEO AND JULIET

by William Shakespeare

February 17 – November 4

Director Laird Williamson sets Shakespeare's timeless tale in the 1840s. Two landed Old California families, the Capulets and Montagues, have hated each other for so long that no one can even remember why. Over the course of five hot summer days, that hatred boils over into new bloodshed and death. But in the midst of the violence something unexpected happens. Juliet, only child of Lord Capulet, and Romeo, only child of Lord Montague, meet and fall in love. Romeo and Juliet seek the counsel of Friar Lawrence, who sees their love as a way to end the feud—but Fate has other plans. Shakespeare's classic tragedy of young love is often funny and plays like a romantic comedy for much of its first half. Its combination of humor, romance, pathos and action make it a favorite with young and old alike. **Parents and teachers should be aware that Shakespeare contrasts the bawdy, sexual language of teenage boys (which may be physicalized onstage) with the true physical, spiritual and emotional love that exists between Romeo and Juliet. In addition there are several onstage deaths culminating in the double suicide of the heroes. With those cautions, the play is suitable for most students 12 and up, and speaks eloquently to young audiences.**

Prologue recommended.

THE WHITE SNAKE

Adapted by Mary Zimmerman

February 18 – July 8

This world premiere play is based on one of the most famous and oft-adapted parables in Chinese culture. The White Snake wishes to experience life as a human, so she and the Green Snake take on the appearance of mortal women. When the White Snake falls in love with Xu Xian, she decides to try to live happily and permanently in her human form. But a meddling Buddhist monk sees through her disguise and makes it his mission both to convince Xu Xian that he has married a demon snake and to drive the White Snake away. The play, like *Romeo and Juliet*, shows us a transcendent love fighting against seemingly insurmountable odds. **The story is fantastical, romantic, charming and witty, with a dark and dangerous undercurrent. It will be fast-paced and visually exciting, and appropriate for students 12 and up. Adapter and director Mary Zimmerman develops and writes her scripts during the rehearsal process, so check back closer to opening for more detailed age recommendations.**

Prologue recommended.

ANIMAL CRACKERS

Book by George S. Kaufman & Morrie Ryskind; music & lyrics by Bert Kalmar & Harry Ruby; adapted by Henry Wishcamper
February 19 – November 5

A madcap musical vaudeville from the 1920s, *Animal Crackers* involves a quartet of irreverent zanies who descend on a posh country weekend party and completely upend everyone's lives. Captain Spaulding is the guest of honor, but he and his secretary Jamison have no interest in manners or social status. Spaulding would much rather poke fun at everything and everyone while he tries to convince his wealthy, widowed hostess to marry him. When two irreverent musicians show up demanding to be paid—more for not playing than for playing—the comic chaos of the weekend is complete. *Animal Crackers* was first written for and performed by the Marx Brothers. The distinctive characters and costumes of Groucho, Chico, Harpo and Zeppo will appear in our production along with new and innovative surprises. **Filled with slapstick physicality and sparkling verbal wit, music, romance and mayhem, this is a screwball comedy of the highest order. The rapid-fire dialogue does contain occasional innuendo and double entendre. With that caution, *Animal Crackers* will be best enjoyed by playgoers 10 and up who can keep up with the puns and wordplay.**



ANGUS BOWER THEATRE

MEDEA/MACBETH/CINDERELLA

Adapted by Bill Rauch and Tracy Young
from Euripides (translated by Paul Roche),
Shakespeare and Rodgers & Hammerstein.
April 18 – November 3

Three familiar plays from two millennia of populist theatre—Greek tragedy, Elizabethan drama and American musical comedy—are interwoven into an astonishing whole. *Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella* tells the story of three people ambitious for power, love and their rightful place in the world. All three plays share the stage at once and interconnect in surprising, funny, moving and enlightening ways to tell a single, unique story. **The music of Rodgers and Hammerstein mingles with the choral music of Greek tragedy and Shakespearean verse in this wildly theatrical journey. *Medea* and *Macbeth* contain violent murders but both occur offstage. A surprisingly funny and haunting musical adventure, *Medea/Macbeth/Cinderella* is recommended for well-prepared students 12 and up.**

ALL THE WAY

by Robert Schenkkan

July 25 – November 3

Lyndon Baines Johnson is a figure of Shakespearean dimensions. Larger-than-life, possessing great gifts and flaws, he is the consummate politician. After unexpectedly becoming president in 1963, he faces challenges on all fronts. The Democrats are embroiled in an internal civil war: the southern Democrats are vehemently opposed to Civil Rights; northern Democrats want a comprehensive Civil Rights bill and they want it immediately. African-American leaders are split over whether to insist that the bill go all the way now, or to compromise in order to get the bill passed. LBJ must somehow use every trick in the political playbook to appease everyone and shepherd the Civil Rights Act into law. ***All the Way* is well-researched, historically accurate and highly recommended for students with a particular interest in politics and U.S. history. The play is suitable for well-prepared high-school students 14 and up who can handle frequent strong profanity and racial epithets.**

Prologue recommended.



SEAGULL

by Anton Chekhov, adapted by Libby Appel
February 23 – June 22

Konstantin, an aspiring playwright, lives in the shadow of his famous and successful actress mother Arkadina and her current love, the successful writer Trigorin. Konstantin longs for fame and recognition as a writer. He also longs for love and acceptance from his mother and from the beautiful aspiring actress Nina. These two themes, unrequited love and the desire for fame, weave themselves throughout Anton Chekhov's funny and moving masterpiece. Playing out over the course of two years at a lakeside estate in Russia in the 1890's, *Seagull* is romantic and magical. **Libby Appel's adaptation is sexy, passionate and full-blooded. The play culminates in the offstage suicide of a main character and is best suited for mature students 14 and up.**

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

by William Shakespeare
March 28 – November 4

Troilus, brother of Paris and Hector, has fallen in love with Cressida, a young Trojan woman whose father was a traitor to the Trojan cause. While Hector plans the next attack on the Greek forces besieging the city and Paris lounges the days away with Helen, Cressida's uncle Pandarus maneuvers the two young lovers toward the consummation of their love. Meanwhile in the Greek camp, Achilles feels slighted by Agamemnon and refuses to fight, while the wily diplomat Ulysses searches for a way to end the war. Expediency is the order of the day, honor is cheap and negotiable, and women are pawns. Only Hector, the epitome of chivalry and honor, stands above the disease and malaise of this drawn-out war, but his goodness is no match for the treachery that awaits him. **Shakespeare's cynical and bitterly funny indictment of the futility of war contains graphic violence, sexuality both consensual and forced, and complex moral subject matter. This production will highlight those elements, setting the action against the**

backdrop of conflict between American forces and regional opposition in the contemporary Middle East. The musical soundtrack may include strong profanity. Best suited for mature students 14 and up who are well-prepared for the brutal nature of the story.

Prologue recommended.

PARTY PEOPLE

by UNIVERSES

July 3 – November 3

Members of the Black Panther and Young Lord parties who were active in the social justice movements of the 1960s reunite in 2012. Now journalists, teachers and cultural workers, they hope to come to terms, after so many years, with their past participation in a struggle that branded itself first in free lunches and health care for their communities and later in signature berets, FBI infiltration, betrayal and violence. In a fictionalized, dynamic mix of theatre, music, poetry and hip-hop, the Bronx-based ensemble of playwrights and performers, UNIVERSES, untangles the truth and legacy of a movement and a time. **This OSF American Revolutions world premiere contains frequent strong profanity, racial slurs and moments of strong violence, as well as the possibility of sexuality. A powerful and informative look at a movement that changed America, drawn from interviews with former Party members as well as FBI files of the period, Party People is recommended for mature students 16 and up. The script is still in development so check back closer to opening for more detailed age recommendations.**



T. Charles Erickson



HENRY V

by William Shakespeare

June 5 – October 12

King Henry V has left behind his youthful rebellion and fully accepted his role as England's King. Now he must lead his army on a mission to reclaim lands in France that, in his view, belong to England. From his diplomatic skills in the chambers of power to his ability to rouse his army to an impossible victory at Agincourt, Henry proves himself a worthy king and brings great glory to England. In order to learn the full costs of war, Henry must rekindle his old skills of moving among and truly listening to the common people as well as to his noble councilors. **One of Shakespeare's masterpieces, *Henry V* gives us a truly human, multi-faceted look at war and one of the seminal victories in English history. The play will move at a quick pace, with live percussion, plenty of humor and action. Along the way there will be violence including an on-stage execution. Best suited for students 12 and up who can handle the violence and have some preparation for the political intricacies of the story. Prologue recommended.**

THE VERY MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR, IOWA

adapted from Shakespeare by Alison Carey

June 6 – October 13

Alison Carey's adaptation of Shakespeare's comedy is a line-by-line commingling of Shakespeare and contemporary text, set in the present after the Iowa Caucuses. Falstaff is a politician whose presidential bid is going nowhere and who would like to pad his coffers by seducing not one, but two, prominent women of Windsor, Iowa. Unfortunately for Falstaff, Margaret Page and Alice Ford discover what he is up to and make very merry at his expense. Problems arise when Margaret Page's husband and Alice Ford's wife, who are not in on the joke, learn about the possibility of their spouses' infidelity. To add to the mayhem, the Pages' daughter Anne would make an attractive and financially advantageous marital catch, and since same-sex marriage is legal in Iowa, many suitors of both genders are literally fighting for her hand. Much comedy and misunderstanding ensue. Along the way we learn that love is funny and complicated, that politicians who abuse the people's trust deserve to be exposed (maybe even slightly humiliated) and that ultimately, forgiveness is always the best policy. **The play is a sophisticated satire of current political issues. Witty and fun, its humor is sometimes sexual in nature, including same-sex relationships, and is best suited for students 14 and up.**

Henry IV, Part Two (2011): Kimberly Scott.

AS YOU LIKE IT

by William Shakespeare

June 7 – October 14

In Shakespeare's enormously popular romantic comedy, the banished Rosalind, her cousin Celia and the court jester Touchstone flee the court for the Forest of Arden. Rosalind, dressed as a young man, and Celia as a country maid, discover unexpected civility in the wild. When Orlando, the man Rosalind loves, winds up fleeing the court for the forest too, a comedy of hidden identity ensues. A pastoral clown trades barbs with a court clown, a shepherd maiden falls in love with a man who is really a woman in disguise, Rosalind and Orlando learn how to be true friends and not just infatuated lovers, and in Shakespeare's highest wedding count, four couples are married at the end. **Shakespeare's play is overflowing with wit, romance and song. The plots are many and the language often complex and therefore this delightful comedy will be best enjoyed by students 10 and up.**

Prologue recommended.



ELIZABETHAN STAGE/
ALLEN PAVILION



T. Charles Erickson