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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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San Francisco Shakespeare Festival Announces Dates, Cast, and New Virtual Medium for Free Shakespeare in the Park at Home, *King Lear*

This summer, Free Shakespeare in the Park will become Free Shakespeare at Home as the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival transitions its public theater program to a virtual format. Offering live virtual performances of *King Lear* is the safest way to continue thirty-eight years of tradition in the face of the current pandemic. Using Zoom and OBS technologies, the Festival will regale home audiences with a pioneering experience in live virtual theater that offers an array of opportunities for engagement, such as pre- and post-show commentary by the artists and moderated live chat among audience members. A fun and educational Green Show for families will be pre-recorded and available to view at any time on the Festival's website.

The transition to a virtual stage upholds the Festival's mission of providing live and widespread access to Shakespeare's plays regardless of age, ethnicity, financial status or level of education. As always, performances are free. A performance schedule and information on how to access this live play are available on the Festival's website (www.sfshakes.org). The San Francisco Shakespeare Festival is proud to present these performances with its civic partners, the cities of Cupertino, Redwood City, and San Francisco, who will be sponsoring select performances dedicated to promoting cultural events, local businesses, and the arts in their respective communities.

Composed during a period of deadly plague, a play concerned with national turmoil, cutthroat politics and fallible leadership feels uncannily suited to the current moment. *King Lear* will feature actor Jessica Powell* in the titular role, a white matriarch presiding over a multiracial family. Directed by Elizabeth Carter, the play also features Phil Lowery* as the Earl of Gloucester, Leontyne Mbele-Mbong* as Goneril, Melissa Ortiz* as Regan, Diana Lauren Jones as Cordelia/The Fool, Cassidy Brown* as the Earl of Kent, Ron Chapman as Edmund/Duke of Burgundy, Yohana Ansari-Thomas as Edgar/King of France, David Everett Moore* as the Duke of Albany/Oswald, Sharon Huff as the Duke of Cornwall/Lear's Attendant and performance interns Viv Helvajian, Suhail Kumar, and Tessa Nesbet in ensemble roles. View the cast on the Festival's website (www.sfshakes.org/programs/free-shakespeare-in-the-park/cast-of-king-lear).

Graphic and technical design is by Festival Technical Director Neal Ormond. Sound design is by Lana Palmer, costume design by Hyun Sook Kim, hair and makeup design by Amelia Van Brunt, lighting design by John Bernard, fight choreography by Sydney Schwindt, and stage management by Karen Schleifer and Gabriella Howell. Stage management interns are Macy Taylor and Sarah Orttung, and literary interns are Arin Roberson and Eliana Lewis-Eme. The Green Show is directed by Christian Haines.

The Tragedy of King Lear is the story of a nation disrupted by a vain and aging leader who divides the kingdom among her daughters and renounces political responsibility without also renouncing power. The result is family dysfunction, political strife, and a murky stage upon which few are who they purport to be. The play was composed in 1606 as Shakespeare sheltered from a deadly plague ravaging London. A recently-ascended King James struggled to unite under one crown the disparate archipelagic polities that comprised the British world: England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. The nation was still reeling from the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, a failed terrorist attempt on the part of England's Catholic minority to blow up King James and Parliament. This pervading state of distress infects this tragedy and resonates with the dis-ease engendered by modern pandemics and current crises— dis-ease only curable by returning to the natural world and the very core of our shared humanity.

Performances begin in July and run through September. Visit the Festival's website (www.sfshakes.org) for performance schedules and instructions for accessing this free live play throughout the summer.

For more information, call the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival at (415) 558-0888, or visit www.sfshakes.org

*denotes member of Actors' Equity Association

Performance Schedule

Show times are Saturdays at 7PM, Sundays and Labor Day Monday at 4pm.

Dates are subject to change.

Sat July 18, Preview

Sun July 19, Preview

Sat, July 25, Opening

Sun, July 26

Sat, Aug 1

Sun, Aug 2

Sat, Aug 8

Sun, Aug 9

Sat, Aug 15

Sun, Aug 16

Sat, Aug 22

Sun, Aug 23

Sat, Aug 29

Sun, Aug 30

Sat, Sept 5

Sun Sept, 6

Mon, Sept 7, Labor Day

Sat, Sept 12

Sun, Sept 13

Sat, Sept 19

Sun, Sept 20

Sat, Sept 26

Sun, Sept 27

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Note to Editor: artists and staff are available for interviews at (415) 558-0888.

Press photos available at www.sfshakes.org/media/photos/free-shakespeare-at-home-2020

About San Francisco Shakespeare Festival: The mission of the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival is to make the words and themes of Shakespeare accessible to everyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, financial status, or level of education. We accomplish this through our flagship program of **Free Shakespeare in the Park** and a wide variety of education programs: **Shakespeare on Tour**, **Tailor-Made Residencies**, **Bay Area Shakespeare Camps**, and **Midnight Shakespeare**. *Shakespeare on Tour* performs abridged Shakespeare plays at schools, libraries, and community centers all over the state. *Tailor-Made Residencies* connect teaching artists with classroom teachers for in-class theater enrichment specifically tailored to curricular learning objectives. *Bay Area Shakespeare Camps* for ages 7-13 and 12-18 are affordable two-week theater camps that are being conducted in a virtual format this summer. *Midnight Shakespeare* brings theater education to underserved Bay Area youth.