



## MONTANA SHAKESPEARE IN THE SCHOOLS BEGINS FALL 2009 TOUR

**09/30/09**      **Contact: Kathy Jahnke, (406) 994-1220, [kjahnke@montana.edu](mailto:kjahnke@montana.edu)**  
**News-dailies, News-weeklies, News-local, MSU-All-News, News-internal, Wyoming list**  
**Colleges/A&A, Media and Theatre Arts, Outreach**

**Bozeman** – Of all of Shakespeare’s plays, *Romeo and Juliet* is arguably the most popular and has been adapted into musicals and films from generation to generation. Montana Shakespeare in the Schools will bring an exciting live production of this timeless classic to 15,000 students in nearly 50 communities over a 10 week span. Shakespeare in the Schools, an outreach program of the renowned Montana Shakespeare in the Parks company based at Montana State University, will perform at schools throughout Montana and Wyoming during its 17th season tour, beginning in early-October and ending in December.

Joel Jahnke, a professor at MSU since 1976, serves as artistic director for Montana Shakespeare in the Schools as well as Montana Shakespeare in the Parks. According to Jahnke, “as with the summer tour, the program places special emphasis on underserved, rural areas. Nearly 70% of the schools that we will perform in this year will be in communities with a population of less than 5,000.

This year’s production of *Romeo and Juliet* will be directed by award-winning Chicago director, William Brown. Although he has directed *Romeo and Juliet* for adult audiences he is particularly excited about focusing his energies on a production intended primarily for today’s teenage audiences. In a recent interview, Brown said, “The stress of peer and family pressure set against the backdrop of a young couples’ love is as timely now as ever. I feel very strongly that the relevance of the play becomes alive for young people when they experience it in a live performance.”

Montana Shakespeare in the Schools began in 1993 with two actors who performed scenes from Shakespeare’s plays with minimal costumes and scenery. It has grown to a seven-member professional company that offers a full Shakespearean production complete with ornate costumes and scenery. For the six consecutive year, Montana Shakespeare in the Schools is funded in part by a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Arts "Shakespeare in American Communities: Shakespeare for a New Generation." Additional funding support comes from the Montana State University College of Arts and Architecture, the Montana Arts Council; Artist in the Schools program, the Homer A. and Mildred S. Scott Foundation, and Target.

The company's annual Elise Event, a fundraiser named in honor of sponsor Elise Donohue, will be held at 6:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 6, at MSU's Black Box Theater located at 11th and Grant. St. The event will feature an after-show catered wine reception and a 75-minute performance of "Romeo and Juliet," followed by a “talk back” with the actors and workshop demonstrations with members of the Montana Shakespeare in the Schools company. Tickets are \$25 per person and advance reservations are highly recommended. For more information call 994-3310.

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