



**MONTANA SHAKESPEARE IN THE SCHOOLS WILL BRING SHAKESPEARE'S CLASSIC
THE TRAGEDY OF OTHELLO, THE MOOR OF VENICE
TO FIFTY SCHOOLS THIS FALL!**

(Bozeman, MT) Beginning in October, Montana Shakespeare in the Schools, (SIS) the nationally renowned outreach program of Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, will bring a powerful production of Shakespeare's classic tragedy, *Othello*, to an anticipated 15,000 middle school and high school students. In its 15th fall season, this professional touring program has become so popular that since 2003, it has grown by 60%, now traveling to a total of 50 schools throughout Montana and Wyoming. With a focus on economically deprived, rural communities, SIS typically serves schools on or near most of Montana's Indian reservations. Approximately 28% of the schools served are located in communities with a population less than 1,000; the smallest being Shephard, MT pop 193.

Based on the success of the SIS production of *The Merchant of Venice* in 2005 as well as student surveys and conversations with teachers since then, school audiences have proven themselves ready to take on Shakespeare's *Othello*, a complex tragedy of political intrigue, love, trust and revenge. Directed by Montana Shakespeare in the Parks artistic director and MSU Theatre Arts professor, Joel Jahnke, the 80-minute production will be performed by a company of seven professional actors from Chicago. Half of the 2007 acting company has toured with the Company before. Eric Leonard, company manager for the second year in a row has toured with both the Schools and summer tours for multiple seasons. Other actors returning from the summer tour include Ian Anderson, Tonya Andrews and Michael Gonring. New to the company this fall are John Frazier, who will play the title role, Patrick Halley and Elaine Robinson.

Set against the backdrop of the wars between Venice and Turkey during the latter part of the sixteenth century, technical director Tom Watson built a traveling set that evokes Byzantine and classical Italian architecture. Costume designer Claudia Boddy has used the paintings of Austrian symbolist Gustave Klimt, specifically "The Kiss", as her inspiration for the play's Byzantine costumes, each one accentuated with a creative collage of rich colors.

Other MSIP alum involved in this impressive touring program include Seattle choreographer Gordon Carpenter from Seattle who is choreographing the fights; Susan Dickerson joins the Company as the show's properties designer; and Education Consultant Bobbie McKean returns from the University of Arizona to create new workshops and train the actors to effectively teach high school students.

OTHELLO

The story begins with Desdemona, a young woman of Venice, having just eloped with the "noble Moor" Othello. Othello's ensign, Iago, is angry at Othello for passing him over for a promotion and giving the rank of lieutenant, which Iago believes is rightfully his, to the inexperienced Cassio. Swearing vengeance on Othello, Iago begins to lay his plot of revenge. Meanwhile, the Duke of Venice summons Othello to lead his army and sail to the island of Cyprus to defend it against the Turks. Othello asks his "trusted" ensign Iago to take care of his new wife and follow him to Cyprus.

Once in Cyprus, Iago attempts to turn Othello against Cassio by insinuating that Cassio is having an affair with Desdemona. During this time of methodically plotting behind Othello's back, Iago begins to insinuate himself into the Moor's confidences while sabotaging his trust in Cassio. He convinces Othello that Cassio and Desdomona are having an affair by planting her handkerchief, Othello's first gift to her. Following much deception and manipulation, Iago is so successful in convincing Othello of his wife's false affair that he kills Desdemona in a jealous rage. In the end, Iago's deceptions are revealed and Othello is so stricken with grief that he kills himself.

SHAKESPEARE FOR A NEW GENERATION

For the fourth year in a row, Shakespeare in the Schools has been selected by the National Endowment for the Arts to receive a grant from *Shakespeare in American Communities: Shakespeare for a New Generation*. This award that is given to a select number of theatre companies from throughout the nation will allow the regional touring company to continue offering a quality cast, innovative workshops, elaborate costumes and sets and study materials that the schools have now come to expect.

THE ELISE EVENT

On Saturday, November 17th, the public will have an exclusive opportunity to experience the Shakespeare in the Schools production firsthand. Fondly named *The Elise Event* as a tribute to patron Elise Donohue, the evening will feature the only local non-school performance of *Othello* in the new Black Box Theater on the campus of Montana State University. Beginning at 7 p.m., guests will also be invited to take part in a post-show "talk-back" with the actors, a hosted reception and theatrical workshops. This is the fifth year of this unique event. Please be advised that the play, *Othello*, deals with mature subject matter. Seating is limited. For ticket information, call the Montana Shakespeare in the Parks office at 406-994-3310.

MONTANA SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARKS 2007 TOUR FACT SHEET

WHAT: Professional Shakespearean Outreach Program for Schools featuring an 80-minute production of Othello and four interactive workshops.

SHOW: THE TRAGEDY OF OTHELLO, THE MOOR OF VENICE
by William Shakespeare
directed by Joel Jahnke
costumes designed by Claudia Boddy
set designed by Tom Watson
props by Susan Dickerson

CAST: ERIC LEONARD – COMPANY MANAGER, FOURTH TOUR
JOHN FRAZIER
IAN ANDERSON
TONYA ANDREWS
MICHAEL GONRING
PATRICK HALLEY
ELAINE ROBERTSON

WHERE: 50 performances in
50 different communities throughout Montana, northern Wyoming
10-week tour commences October 4, 2007

MORE INFO: Contact- Kathy Jahnke
406-994-1220
kjahnke@montana.edu

2007 SHAKESPEARE IN THE SCHOOLS TOUR OF *OTHELLO*

Anderson School, Bozeman, October 5, Friday
Manhattan Christian, Manhattan, October 8, Monday
Cody High School, Cody, WY, October 9, Tuesday
Meeteetse Schools, Meeteetse, WY, October 10, Wednesday
Buffalo High School, Buffalo, WY, October 11, Thursday
Powell High School, Powell, WY, October 12, Friday
Hardin High School, Hardin, October 15, Monday
Riverside High School, Basin, WY, October 16, Tuesday
Sheridan High School, Sheridan, WY, October 17, Wednesday
Ten Sleep Schools, Ten Sleep, WY, October 18, Thursday
Literary Roundup, Big Timber, October 19-21
Sweet Grass County High School, Big Timber, October 22, Monday
Roundup High School, Roundup, October 23, Tuesday
Moore High School, Moore, October 24, Wednesday
Bainville High School, Bainville, October 25, Thursday
Wolf Point High School, Wolf Point, October 26, Friday
Star Valley High School, Afton, WY, October 29, Monday (morning and evening)
Ophir School, Gallatin Gateway, October 31, Wednesday
Sacajawea Middle School, Bozeman, November 1, Thursday
Chief Joseph Middle School, Bozeman, November 2, Friday

Box Elder School, Box Elder, November 5, Monday
White Sulphur Springs High School, November 6, Tuesday
Helena High School, Helena, November 7, Wednesday
Townsend High School, Townsend, November 8, Thursday
Billings Senior High School, Billings, November 9, Friday
Ft. Benton High School, Ft. Benton, November 12, Monday
Geraldine High School, November 13, Tuesday
Rudyard High School, Rudyard, November 14, Wednesday
Anaconda High School, Anaconda, November 15, Thursday
Belgrade High School, Belgrade, November 16, Friday
The Elise Event, Bozeman, Black Box Theater, November 17, Saturday (tickets required)
Absarokee High School, Absarokee, November 19, Monday
Bozeman Senior High, Bozeman, November 20, Tuesday
Shield Valley High School, Clyde Park, November, 21, Wednesday
Hamilton High School, Hamilton, November 26, Monday
Sentinel High School, Missoula, November 27, Tuesday
Noxon Schools, Noxon, November 28, Wednesday
Augusta High School, Augusta, November 29, Thursday
Sleeping Giant Middle School, Livingston, November 30, Friday
Manhattan High School, Manhattan, December 3, Monday
Great Falls High School, Great Falls, December 4, Tuesday
Corvallis High School, Corvallis, December 5, Wednesday
Polson High School, Polson, December 6, Thursday
Kila High School, Kila, December 7, Friday
Joliet High School, Joliet, December 10, Monday
Columbus High School, Columbus, December 11, Tuesday
Sheridan High School, Sheridan, MT, December 12, Wednesday
Ennis Schools, Ennis, December 13, Thursday
Shepherd High School, Shepherd, December 14, Friday