



NEWS RELEASE

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OKLAHOMA SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK MOVING TO THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN OKLAHOMA CITY

OKLAHOMA CITY – December 12, 2006 – Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park (OSP), Oklahoma's premiere classical theater, announced today at the Myriad Botanical Gardens that beginning in 2007 and beyond, it will stage its summer seasons in the heart of downtown Oklahoma City. Remarks were made by Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett ; Jim Tolbert, chairman of the Myriad Gardens Authority and chair-emeritus of the Myriad Gardens Foundation; and David Holt, president of the OSP Board of Directors.

The inaugural 2007 season will kick-off June 14 and continue through Sept. 1. It will be staged on the Myriad Botanical Gardens Water Stage, which the Myriad Gardens Foundation (MGF) in a partnership with OSP will renovate in the coming months. OSP has partnered with the MGF to raise private funds for the renovation. Improvements will include new sound and lighting, seating and a stage structure. The renovated theater will add a new premiere venue to downtown Oklahoma City and will be available for other bookings when OSP is not in residence. OSP will also move its offices to Stage Center in Oklahoma City's Arts District.

The announcement came on the day that OSP's three-year lease with the Myriad Gardens Authority and the City of Oklahoma City for use of the Water Stage was unanimously approved by the Oklahoma City Council. It had previously been unanimously approved by the OSP Board of Directors and the Myriad Gardens Authority. This approval represents the culmination of a process that began in the spring of 2005, when OSP's stage in Edmond's Hafer Park was burned down for a second time. Because of that tragedy, OSP staged its summer seasons the past two years at the University of Central Oklahoma. Today is the fifth anniversary of the first burning of the Hafer Park stage in 2001.

"This is a day that we celebrate OSP's emergence, quite literally, from the ashes," said David Holt, president of the OSP Board of Directors. "What's great about this move is that it's not just an exciting announcement for OSP, but also for the Myriad Botanical Gardens and for downtown Oklahoma City. In many ways, this move represents the fulfillment of goals that were set by each of these entities over 20 years ago. Today, OSP moves to a centrally-located garden gem that since its inception has envisioned this type of use, in a downtown area that is thriving like it hasn't in decades, with hotels, housing, conventions, restaurants and a burgeoning Arts District all within blocks. We could not be more excited about the opportunities that lie ahead for OSP in downtown Oklahoma City."

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“This announcement shows that success breeds success,” said Mick Cornett, mayor of Oklahoma City. “The addition of live outdoor theater is a great step forward for downtown Oklahoma City. This is part of creating a living downtown, where citizens live, work and play. I can think of no greater image to show what downtown Oklahoma City has become than to picture thousands of Oklahomans enjoying live theater in the middle of this beautiful garden, with the skyline as backdrop. I am proud and happy to welcome Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park to Oklahoma City.”

Holt expressed appreciation for those who helped make this day possible, including the people of Edmond and the University of Central Oklahoma, which will continue to be OSP’s partner.

“We are especially grateful for the people who have made this possible, like Jim Tolbert and Mayor Cornett,” added Holt. “At the same time, we could not be more grateful to the City of Edmond for hosting us all these years. Our existence after 22 years is a testament to their support. And we are forever grateful for UCO, especially for these past two years. Our partnership with UCO will continue, and through that, we will maintain a strong relationship with Edmond. We can’t wait to host our old Edmond friends in our new OKC home.”

Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park was founded in 1985 by current Artistic Director Kathryn McGill and the late Jack O’Meara. The past 22 summer seasons have been staged in the City of Edmond. Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park traditionally mounts a summer season consisting of three plays; a winter season of one play, which is traditionally performed at Stage Center in downtown Oklahoma City; a production of *A Christmas Carol*, which will remain at the University of Central Oklahoma; and statewide touring productions year-around. Educational outreach is also a core part of OSP’s mission.

Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park’s next two productions are *A Christmas Carol*, Dec. 15-17 at UCO’s Mitchell Hall and *The Tempest*, Jan. 25-28 at Stage Center in downtown Oklahoma City.

OSP is supported in part by the Oklahoma Arts Council, Allied Arts, Chesapeake Energy, OG&E, the Kirkpatrick Family Fund, the Kirkpatrick Foundation, the Inasmuch Foundation, and Target Stores. For more information, visit www.oklahomashakespeare.com.

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