



great river SHAKESPEARE festival

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GREAT RIVER SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL RECEIVES GRANT FROM NEA

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WINONA, Minn.— Winona's Great River Shakespeare Festival recently received word that it would receive \$10,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts, the nation's flagship government agency for arts funding. The NEA's Access to Excellence grant will help support the Festival's 2009 season production of Shakespeare's late romance, **The Tempest**, which opens Sunday, June 28 and plays in rotating repertory with **Love's Labour's Lost** through Sunday, July 26.

"It's incredibly encouraging to receive this kind of early recognition from the NEA; it speaks volumes about our accomplishments and reputation, and the way in which word has spread quickly about GRSF," says Paul Barnes, founding company member and Producing Director. "Funding from the NEA has helped enable us to bring back Jef Awada, company Movement Coach, who is collaborating with director Alec Wild on what promises to be a unique and very physical production, and is also intended to help support specific education programs having to do with **The Tempest**."

Now entering its sixth season, GRSF is still a young organization, making the receipt of funding that much more notable. Jim Volz, President of Consultants for the Arts and one of the founding members of the Shakespeare Theatre Association of America (STAA), says that "few Shakespeare Festivals have received NEA funding in such record time and, of course, many are *never* recognized with this national stamp of artistic approval." According to Volz, this grant is "an indicator of artistic integrity, administrative stability and a growing awareness of the joys of Shakespeare in Winona, Minnesota!"

Brian Frederick, GRSF Company member and leader of the Festival's grant-writing task force, commented that applying to the NEA is an extremely competitive process. "In 2008, the number of applicants for the theater portion of the Access to Excellence grant far exceeded their expectations. Another panel had to be created just to work through all the submissions. Being singled out for this prestigious honor is a testament to the artistic quality of the Great River Shakespeare Festival."

In addition to being recognized nationally by the NEA, GRSF receives support from a gradually increasing number of local, regional and state agencies. "It is clear that GRSF is positively impacting the surrounding area by staging thoughtful, articulate, and engaging productions of Shakespeare's plays and helping draw people to Winona. The Festival is beginning to fulfill its promise for the city and the region," according to Jeff Stevenson, GRSF General Manager.

Though the grant from the NEA does help significantly, GRSF still has much fundraising to do. "We do, of course, need to keep in mind that we received just a third of our request," says Barnes, "and that there is still much work to be done, not just on completing fund-raising for the current season, but for 2010 and beyond. However, the endorsement from the NEA helps us know that we are definitely on the right track."