

University of Mississippi

eGrove

University of Mississippi News

3-22-2021

All the World's a Stage

Katherine Stewart

Follow this and additional works at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews>

Recommended Citation

Stewart, Katherine, "All the World's a Stage" (2021). *University of Mississippi News*. 228.
<https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews/228>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Mississippi News by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

All the World's a Stage

UM theater program adapts to bring Shakespeare to audiences in time of social distancing

MARCH 22, 2021 BY KATHERINE STEWART

FaTvLiErCtSMPrSt



UM students (onstage, from left) Dayton Shegog, Haley Dawn Parker, Gabby Quintana, Madeline Colombo and LilaGrace Lara rehearse a scene from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in Fulton Chapel while Hannah Bosworth (left, seated) and director Dan Stearns watch. A 'traveling troupe' of students will perform Shakespeare scenes outdoors on campus and across Oxford this spring in 'Pop-Up Shakespeare.' Photo by Jaslyn Ballansaw

OXFORD, Miss. – To safely bring theater to the public in the time of COVID-19, the **University of Mississippi Department of Theatre and Film** is using ingenuity to put a modern spin on a classic idea.

"Pop-Up Shakespeare," a series of informal, catch-them-when-you-can performances, combines the time-honored tradition of staging Shakespeare's plays outdoors with the spontaneous, fleeting nature of trendy pop-up events.

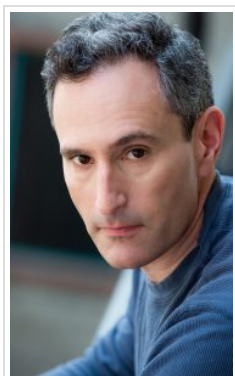
"When we began to look at what the possibilities were, thinking about the pandemic world we're living in right now and the difficulty of having an audience, I thought, 'Well, if we can do something outside, maybe now is the time to do it,'" said Dan Stearns, assistant professor of acting and the director of the production.

The performances also will include nods to certain similarities between our time and Shakespeare's.

"I am always wary of trying to make Shakespeare 'relevant,' but I thought it would be interesting to include some satire or commentary on how we live now: masks, distancing, temperature checks and so on," he said. "It's worth remembering that Shakespeare and his audience knew what this was about – the theaters were closed due to plague several times during his life."

The free performances will take place on campus and across Lafayette County on select dates from March 25 through April 20. Some dates will feature an hourlong run of several scenes, and on others, individual scenes will be performed at different locations within a given area.

Featured plays are "Much Ado About Nothing," "Twelfth Night," "Romeo and Juliet," "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Measure for Measure." Confirmed locations include the Grove, **Lamar Park**, **Oxford Community Market** and **Plein Air** in Taylor.



Dan Stearns

Follow us on social



Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children's play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

[Read the story ...](#)

More Posts from this Category

Thank You To Our Donors

Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

[Read the story ...](#)

More Posts from this Category

Ole Miss In the News

Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith's Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith's enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith's 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school's first African-American student.

"The students seem excited about it," continued Stearns, who has a background in Shakespearean performance, having earned his Master of Fine Arts from the **Shakespeare Theatre's Academy of Classical Acting** at George Washington University.



Madeline Colombo

"It's an interesting challenge for them, taking on Shakespeare, No. 1, and No. 2, thinking about performing in a space where there might be passersby, where there might be distractions, where there might be people who aren't necessarily theatergoers to see if we can turn them on to Shakespeare."

Madeline Colombo, a junior integrated marketing communications major from Mandeville, Louisiana, will play Quince in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," a play she appeared in as a high school freshman, though she did not have a speaking part.

"I do love Shakespeare, and I like reading it any chance I get," Colombo said. "I'm really excited to get to dive into it. And Dan is such an expert on this, it makes it really fun."

Colombo noted that performing outdoors and in locations of different size would be challenging.

"You have to fill up that space," she said. "Luckily, I'm a pretty loud person, and I know how to project."

Colombo believes her communications major and her love of theater are complementary, and she said she often uses aspects of one in the other, and vice versa.

"I know how to talk to people who might communicate differently than me, and that's something that's extremely beneficial," Colombo said. "As cliché as it is, communication is everything. If you cannot communicate concisely, and clearly and effectively, you're never going to get anything done."

Senior Jaslyn Ballansaw, of Jackson, who is in the department's acting for stage and screen program, will play Beatrice from "Much Ado About Nothing" as well as Juliet. Ballansaw is taking a Shakespeare class this semester, which she said has been helpful for her performance.

"We've been looking into verse and scansion, breaking down and dissecting the words of Shakespeare," Ballansaw said. "Once you understand what is being said, it really is easy to translate it into a normal style of acting."

"That's the biggest thing for me: trying to get the language right, make sure I'm pronouncing the words right, and saying it in a way that others can understand."

Ballansaw is looking forward to the challenge of performing outdoors – especially in situations where the audience may be unpredictable.

"There are going to be a lot of distractions, so just staying in character and learning how to maneuver with that; I think that's interesting," Ballansaw said, adding that it could be fun if the crowd tries to interact with the performers.

"They wouldn't be talking to me, they would be talking to the character, so I think I could stay in character with those distractions, and I think it would be fun if they would try to interact with us."

Ballansaw also appeared in last semester's "Near/Far" – an **original work of mask theater developed and produced remotely**. That piece was one of two the department conceived as a way to keep artists and audiences safe while still making theater; the other was **a series of original radio dramas** called "Listening in the Shadows."



Jaslyn Ballansaw



Emily Brauen

As far as what audiences can expect from this experience, the hope is that while people are encouraged to show up for specific performances, many will be taken by surprise when a performance begins.

And this is not "high theater," with elaborate sets and costumes. The actors are essentially portraying students who spontaneously decide to recite some favorite scenes. They will be dressed in street clothes and carrying backpacks, appearing as if they have gathered to study, for example.

The backpacks will contain simple, emblematic costume pieces, the donning of which will signal the transition into a performance.

Emily Brauen, a senior design student from Kiln, is creating some of the accessories that actors will use to transform into their characters. The

"James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier," a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

[Read the story ...](#)

[More Posts from this Category](#)

design process for this production was unusual because they're not designing fully fleshed-out characters like audiences might expect to see in a traditional staged performance, Brauen said.

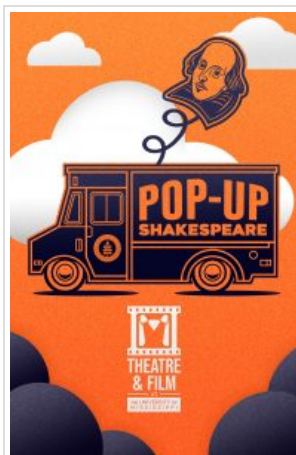
"The characters are actors pretending to be actors; the whole set-up is essentially a traveling troupe," Brauen said. "So maybe they just found a bunch of costume pieces from some old theater, or they found these accessories that they just happened to have, and they're just making it work.

"There's a character in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' who's wearing this over-the-top king's tunic that isn't necessarily perfect, but within our narrative, it makes sense that someone could just grab this garment and put it on for this character."

The first set of performances will take place Thursday (March 25) during lunchtime at several locations on campus, including the Student Union Plaza and outside the J.D. Williams Library.

Additional dates and times include Lamar Park at 2 p.m. March 27; the Grove Stage at noon March 31, 5 p.m. April 7 and 2 p.m. April 14; Plein Air in Taylor at 6 p.m. April 15; and the Oxford Community Market at the Armory Pavilion at 4 p.m. April 20. An additional performance is tentatively scheduled for the new pocket park on North Lamar Boulevard near Volta Taverna at noon April 10.

Sandwich boards will attract audiences to specific locations close to show times, and the Department of Theatre and Film will announce details and location information on social media, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @theatreilmatum.



'Pop-Up Shakespeare,' which runs on selected dates and locations from March 25 to April 20, combines the time-honored tradition of staging Shakespeare's plays outdoors with the spontaneous, fleeting nature of trendy pop-up events.

 FILED UNDER: **DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND FILM, FEATURED NEWS, NEWS RELEASES**