

Chicago Youth Shakespeare Presents

William Shakespeare's

KING LEAR

Directed by Louis Fantasia

Assistant Director, Jeremy Ohringer

Production Manager, Annie Fishbein

Original music by Simon Cohen

Production Assistants, Sophie Harris & Midge Makowski

Artistic Director, Manon Spadaro

Cast of Characters

LEAR, king of Britain.....	David Lively*
GONERIL, Lear's eldest daughter.....	Evelyn Reidy
DUKE OF ALBANY, her husband.....	Gabriel Girson
OSWALD, her steward.....	Sophia Carlin
REGAN, Lear's second daughter.....	Sarah Liz Bell
DUKE OF CORNWALL, her husband.....	Ryan Borgdorff
CORDELIA, Lear's youngest daughter.....	Sonia Zartman
KING OF FRANCE, her suitor and then husband.....	Israel Terrell
DUKE OF BURGUNDY, her suitor.....	Oskar Westbridge
EARL OF KENT.....	Lawrence Grimm*
FOOL.....	Dexter Zollicoffer*
EARL OF GLOUCESTER.....	Demetrios Troy*
EDGAR, his elder son.....	Luke Steadman
EDMUND, his younger and illegitimate son.....	Joshua Zambrano
CURAN, gentleman of Gloucester's household.....	Freya Trefonides
KNIGHT/THIRD SERVANT to Cornwall.....	Esther Segal
GENTLEMAN to Lear.....	Levi Donnell
GENTLEMAN to Cordelia.....	Kevin Johnson
FIRST SERVANT to Cornwall/HERALD	Siah Berlatsky
SECOND SERVANT to Cornwall	Jacinda Dorian
MESSENGER.....	Lauren Marut
DOCTOR.....	Karla Corona
CAPTAIN.....	Cameron Speta

Musicians

Nicole Kwasny.....	violin
Lia Palombo Schall.....	cello
Hannah Briones.....	viola

*We wish to express our gratitude to the Performers' Unions: ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION and SAG-AFTRA through Theatre Authority, Inc. for their cooperation in permitting the Artists to appear on this program.

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A Note from the Artistic Director

I personally believe that Shakespeare was and is the world's greatest storyteller of the human experience. I also believe that his plays continue to resonate with audiences today because, despite an ever-changing world, the story of our human condition remains the same. Regardless of the century we live in, the language we speak, the gods we worship, or the hierarchical space we inhabit, the one thing we all have in common is our humanity, our very *human* nature.

With this in mind, we ask our young artists to consider the question: “**Why *this* play *now*?**” What can *King Lear*, a 400-year-old work based on the legend of an ancient king of Britain possibly say to a modern audience? *What is the play really about?* Is it about the destruction of an empire at the hands of an aging ruler; a man who abuses his power, loses touch with reality, and falls prey to a world that has grown more mistrustful, violent, and lacking in empathy by his example? If so, would *that* play hold any resonance with our present moment? Or, is *Lear* essentially a family drama about the psychological influences of shame on the relationship between parent and child; the story of a father and daughter who are ultimately “saved” by learning to “forget and forgive?” Would a play about the power of love and forgiveness be something we could use right about now? Or, is *Lear* about how men of all ages can only come to understand and “see how this world goes” by learning to “feel what wretches feel?” Could a play that challenges us to experience empathy provide a valuable message for our current time?

It seems that *King Lear* might be about *all* of these things, and more. It challenges all of us to “See better,” to confront our very *human* nature, and in doing so, to achieve a greater understanding of ourselves, each other, and our present moment. And for me, this idea of *seeing better* is where this play, this reading, this multi-generational ensemble of artists, and the mission of CYS seem to converge. If an actor's job is to, as Hamlet puts it, “hold...the mirror up to nature,” then actors must learn to be keen observers of the human condition, or in other words, they must learn to “see better” in order to portray a character's humanity with truth and empathy. It would follow then that, if acting is the study of human behavior, the plays of William Shakespeare may be the actor's greatest resource; and, if theatre is supposed to speak to our present moment while simultaneously catalyzing empathy for our shared human experience, then *King Lear* may actually be the play of our time. So whether you are a GenZ or a Baby-Boomer, an artistic director or an accountant, an actor on the stage or a member of the audience, *King Lear* has something to say to us all.

Tonight's reading is made possible in part by generous support from



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