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San Francisco Shakespeare Festival announces Show Titles, Directors for 2025 Season

*Shakespeare on Tour brings an hour-long production
of **Romeo and Juliet** to California schools*

*Free Shakespeare in the Park brings **The Two Gentlemen of Verona**
to Bay Area parks*

San Francisco Shakespeare Festival announces Shakespeare's ***Romeo and Juliet*** will perform in schools, libraries, and community centers this February through May, and Shakespeare's ***The Two Gentlemen of Verona*** will perform outdoors this summer for Free Shakespeare in the Park.

Following the 2024 tour of the comedy *As You Like It*, [Shakespeare on Tour](#) will be back on the road with a production of Shakespeare's tale of romance and tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. Katja Rivera, who was assistant director for last season's touring show, will direct *Romeo and Juliet*. A five-actor troupe will travel with set, costumes, and props throughout the state bringing the magic of live theater and the beauty of Shakespeare's language to students of all grade levels, elementary through college.

Shakespeare on Tour is a welcome curriculum enrichment at schools, and includes educator's curriculum materials that help teachers prepare their students to more fully engage with the performance. In addition to school performances, public shows will also be scheduled at libraries and community centers where all are welcome to attend, at no charge.

Audiences will be readily captivated with the contemporary setting for this version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The play will be set in the mid-1960's, adding a layer of tension and relevance that capitalizes on the spirit of the counterculture movement of that era. As Romeo and Juliet defy their families' animosities, their forbidden romance becomes even more poignant.

This abridged adaptation remains faithful to the essence of the play and ensures that audiences, whether familiar with Shakespeare or encountering his plays for the first time, will connect with the characters and themes, and find this classic tale to be as relevant now as it was in Shakespeare's time.

[Free Shakespeare in the Park](#) will produce ***The Two Gentlemen of Verona*** for summer of 2025. Ely Sonny Orquiza, who was assistant director for the 2024 production of *The Tempest*, will direct this production of one of Shakespeare's most entertaining comedies. Katja Rivera (director for Shakespeare on Tour's 2025 *Romeo and Juliet*) will be assistant director.

Performances will take place July through September in public parks throughout the Bay Area. SF Shakes plans to again return to Cupertino's Memorial Park, Redwood City's Red Morton Park, and San Francisco's Jerry Garcia Amphitheater in McLaren Park, as well as its newest park, Sue Bierman Park. SF Shake's first performances in Sue Bierman Park in 2024 demonstrated that the arts are critical to downtown revitalization, and the company is eager to build on its initial success. Funds are being sought for each location, and specific performance dates and times will be announced at a later date, as will the members of the cast and creative team. All are welcome to attend performances free of charge.

In this summer's ***The Two Gentlemen of Verona***, two young men journey from a small Midwestern town - rooted in simplicity and tradition - to the alluring promise of California, where dreams are made and shattered in equal measure. The two friends who venture westward confront their inner conflicts as they are seduced by the possibilities of love, success and reinvention. Grounded in the spirit of exploration, this adaptation captures the quintessential drive for self invention, while acknowledging the costs that often accompany it.

"I am so excited to explore these two plays with Katja and Ely and our whole community of artists and audience members", says Artistic Director Carla Pantoja. "2025 is going to challenge us all in so many ways; it is all the more important to gather together to share these timeless stories as we navigate these challenges together."



Katja Rivera:
Director - Shakespeare on Tour's
***Romeo and Juliet*;**
Assistant Director - Free Shakespeare in the
Park's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

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Katja is a Theater Artist, Bodyworker and Abuela. She is originally from Los Angeles, and studied theater at LACC Theatre Academy and Drama Studio London at Berkeley. Bay Area acting credits include: Shotgun Players, Magic Theatre, Theatre Rhinoceros, Center Rep. Directing credits include Shotgun Players, Theatre Cultura, Douglas Morrison, CustomMade, RPE (Danville), SF Playground and TheatreFIRST. She is a long-time company member of Shotgun Players, an associate producer with PlayGround-SF and a member of Latinx Mafia. Recent directing credits include: *Yerma* (Shotgun Players) *La Vida Loca* (Theatre Cultura) *References To Salvador Dali Make Me Hot* (Custom Made Theatre).



Shakespeare on Tour's 2025 production of
Romeo and Juliet

[\(Click for large image\)](#) / Graphic: John Western



Shakespeare on Tour's 2024 production of
As You Like It

[\(Click for large image\)](#) / Photo: Neal Ormond)



Ely Sonny Orquiza: Director
Free Shakespeare in the Park's
The Two Gentlemen of Verona

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Ely, a 2023 YBCA 100 Honoree, is a multidisciplinary Queer Filipino artistic director, stage director, and arts educator native to San Francisco Bay Area, the unceded territory of the Ramaytush Ohlone People. Through theater and the performing arts Orquiza illuminates the experiences of the Asian diaspora, explores the politics of Queer/ness, and amplifies the voices and narratives of People from the Global Majority. As an artist, Orquiza draws on his heritage and lived experiences to create stunning theatrical productions that captivate audiences and spark meaningful conversations about equity and representation. Through his art and advocacy, he is breaking down barriers and elevating marginalized voices for the American Theatre. For extended bio: elysonnyorquiza.org



Free Shakespeare in the Park's 2025
production *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

[\(Click for large image\)](#) / Graphic: Neal Ormond)



Free Shakespeare in the Park's 2024 production of *The Tempest* at San Francisco's Jerry Garcia Amphitheater

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Note to Editor: To schedule an interview with the artists and educators of SF Shakes, please email sfshakes@sfshakes.org or call 415-865-4422.

The mission of the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival is to make the words and themes of Shakespeare accessible to everyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, financial status, or level of education. We accomplish this through our flagship program of [Free Shakespeare in the Park](#) and a wide variety of education programs: [Shakespeare on Tour](#), [Bay Area Shakespeare Camps](#), [Shakespeare Residencies](#), [Shakespeare's Heartbeat](#), and [Shakespeare for All Neighbors](#).