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44th Season of Free Shakespeare in the Park Returns to San Francisco with Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*

Performing at McLaren Park Sept 5 - 13 & Sue Bierman Park Sept 19 - 27

San Francisco Shakespeare Festival is pleased to announce its **44th season** of 2026 Free Shakespeare in the Park, featuring William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. This compelling drama returns to two San Francisco locations this season:

- McLaren Park's Jerry Garcia Amphitheater

September 5 – September 13,
Saturdays, Sundays, and Labor Day Monday at 2 pm

- Sue Bierman Park at Washington & Drumm Streets

September 19 – September 27,
Saturdays & Sundays at 2 pm

The show will run approximately 90 minutes without intermission.

This timeless tale of power, passion, and politics examines the conflict between duty and desire, and the impact of personal relationships on political power. The heart of the drama lies in the powerful and intoxicating relationship between Mark Antony and Cleopatra — a bond that transcends borders yet threatens the very foundations of political order. Their love challenges loyalty, tests ambition, and reshapes the course of history. Director Katja Rivera looks forward to offering audiences a compelling exploration of power, sacrifice, and the enduring tension between the heart and the state.

This will be the Festival's first staging of *Antony and Cleopatra* in its 44 years of presenting Free Shakespeare in the Park. It continues the season of "Empire", following the touring production of *Julius Caesar* that staged over 80 performances at schools, libraries, community centers, and senior centers throughout the Bay Area and beyond. Taken together, these two plays start with the civil war in Rome and move to the destabilization of Egypt thirteen years later. *Antony and*

Cleopatra will conjure the merriment and creativity of the Roaring 20s stalked by the spectre of rising fascism.

Free Shakespeare in the Park, a cornerstone of the festival's outreach, was established over forty years ago. It has become a cherished summer tradition, offering family friendly performances in public spaces and maximizing accessibility to all. Throughout the festival's history. San Francisco performances have been staged in Golden Gate Park and the Presidio. Performances at Jerry Garcia Amphitheater in **McLaren Park** debuted in 2013 and quickly became a favorite venue, offering bench seating as well as the option to roll out a blanket and a picnic on the hillside.

Sue Bierman Park, located at Washington and Drumm Street, joined the festival lineup for the first time in 2024, bringing renewed energy and cultural vibrancy to the Embarcadero through a collaboration with the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department. "This new offering of Free Shakespeare in Sue Biermann Park demonstrates the vital role the performing arts play in downtown's revitalization," said San Francisco Shakespeare Festival Executive Director Toby Leavitt. "We're thrilled to activate these underutilized spaces and create new opportunities for the community to gather, engage, and experience live performance in a welcoming public setting."

2026 Free Shakespeare in the Park production of *Antony and Cleopatra*

Cupertino, Memorial Park Amphitheater, Stevens Creek Blvd and Mary Ave

- Saturday, July 25 at 6:00 pm (Preview)
- Sunday, July 26 at 6:00 pm (Preview)
- Saturday, August 1 at 6:00 pm (Preview)
- Sunday, August 2 at 6:00 pm (Preview)
- Saturday, August 8 at 6:00 pm (Opening)
- Sunday, August 9 at 6:00 pm

Redwood City, Red Morton Park, Vera Ave and Valota Rd

- Saturday, August 15 at 6:00 pm (Preview)
- Sunday, August 16 at 6:00 pm (Opening)
- Saturday, August 22 at 6:00 pm
- Sunday, August 23 at 6:00 pm
- Saturday, August 29 at 6:00 pm
- Sunday, August 30 at 6:00 pm

San Francisco, McLaren Park, Jerry Garcia Amphitheater, off of John F. Shelley Dr. between Cambridge St and Mansell St

- Saturday, September 5 at 2:00 pm (Preview)
- Sunday, September 6 at 2:00 pm (Preview)
- Monday (Labor Day), September 7 at 2:00 pm (Opening)
- Saturday, September 12 at 2:00 pm
- Sunday, September 13 at 2:00 pm

**San Francisco, Sue Bierman Park, Washington and Drumm St;
just north of Embarcadero Plaza, across from the Ferry Building**

- Saturday, September 19 at 2:00 pm (Preview)
- Sunday, September 20 at 2:00 pm (Opening)
- Saturday, September 26 at 2:00 pm
- Sunday, September 27 at 2:00 pm

Admission is free. For more information call the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival at 415-558-0888 or visit www.sfshakes.org



Katja Rivera, Director San Francisco Shakespeare Festival's 2026 production of *Antony and Cleopatra*
[Click to download image](#)
Photo: courtesy of the Director



Free Shakespeare in the Park at McLaren Park's Jerry Garcia Amphitheater
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Photo: John Western



Free Shakespeare in the Park at Sue Bierman Park

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Photo: John Western



(L to R) Jeremy Ohta Lee* plays Antony and Elizabeth Carter* plays Cleopatra in San Francisco Shakespeare Festival's 2026 Free Shakespeare in the Park production of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

(*Member Actors' Equity Association)

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Photo: Jay Yamada



(L to R) Elizabeth Carter* plays Cleopatra and Jeremy Ohta Lee* plays Antony in San Francisco Shakespeare Festival's 2026 Free Shakespeare in the Park production of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

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Antony+Cleopatra signature artwork
 ([Click to download image](#))
 Graphic Design: Neal Ormond



Empire signature artwork
 ([Click to download image](#))
 Graphic Design: Neal Ormond

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Note to Editor: To schedule an interview with artists or staff please email sfshakes@sfshakes.org or call 415-558-0888.

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.