

Media Kit

Orlando Shakes



ABOUT ORLANDO SHAKES

Celebrating its 30th Season, Orlando Shakes, in partnership with UCF, produces classic, contemporary, and children's plays. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Jim Helsinger and Managing Director PJ Albert, Orlando Shakes is one of the region's most acclaimed professional theaters, garnering national recognition from The Wall Street Journal, "Spectacular and satisfying... Broadway-quality... impressive... come to Florida and plunge yourself in..."

With ambitious, high-caliber productions like 2018's *Twelfth Night* and *Shakespeare in Love*, and 2017's *The Great Gatsby* and *Man of La Mancha*, the Theater continues to provide an innovative world-class theatrical experience to its guests, while showcasing William Shakespeare's legacy as the cornerstone of the company.

Orlando Shakes began with humble roots in 1989 as the Orlando Shakespeare Festival, featuring two productions each season, staged at Lake Eola Park's outdoor amphitheater. In 2001, the company moved to its permanent home in the John and Rita Lowndes Shakespeare Center, introducing an expanded variety of performances including a Theater for Young Audiences production, *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Later in 2006, 'Orlando Shakespeare Festival' changed their name to 'Orlando Shakespeare Theater', which better reflected the Theater's year round offerings. Now, Orlando Shakes produces seven productions, three childrens productions, along with special events during each season.

Beyond Shakespeare and the classics, Orlando Shakes is also a passionate advocate of new play development. PlayFest presented by Harriett's Charitable Trust represents one of the strongest commitments to new plays in the nation. Over the years, the festival has helped develop over 125 new works – many of which have received subsequent productions in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle, Dallas, and Washington D.C.

Orlando Shakes also offers immersive educational programming that serves Central Florida schools and the local community at large. Education opportunities include classes, summer camps, in-school workshops, and field trip performances. Some of their most significant education accomplishments are a global livestream of the World Premiere production of *Showtime with Shakespeare: A Magic Treehouse Adventure* that reached 3,691 students in 13 different states to see the show for free and reached audiences as far as Kenya, *Shakespeare with Heart*, a summer camp where students with and without special needs work together to produce a Shakespeare play, and collaborations with other local educational institutions to create STEAM camps that unite arts with maths and sciences for a well rounded experience.

Orlando Shakes Company Directors

Jim Helsinger | Artistic Director

Jim has directed the Orlando Shakespeare Theater productions of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Every Christmas Story Ever Told*, *The Imaginary Invalid*, *Tartuffe*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard III*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Compleat Works of Wllm Shkspr (abridged)*, *The Curate Shakespeare: As You Like It*, and *Hamlet*.

Other directing credits include *The Actor's Theatre of Louisville's A Tuna Christmas* and *The Compleat Works of Wllm Shkspr, Abridged*; *Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival's The Mystery of Irma Vep*, *Sleuth*, *Imaginary Invalid*, *Charley's Aunt*, and *The Compleat Works of Wllm Shkspr, Abridged*; *Florida Studio Theatre's Good Evening*; and *Cape May Stage's The Big Bang*, *Stones in His Pockets*, *King Mackerel*, *The Blues are Running*, and *The Fourposter*.

As a playwright, Jim is the author of *Robinson Crusoe*; *A Christmas Carol in Five Parts*; *The Trial of Joan the Maid*; *Frankenstein*, *the Modern Prometheus*; and *Dracula: The Journal of Jonathan Harker*. As an actor he has appeared in the titles roles of *Henry V*, *Cyrano De Bergerac*, *Oscar Wilde*, *Dracula*, and *Hamlet*.

Jim is a proud member of the Shakespeare Theatre Association of America (STAA), the National Theatre Conference (NTC), Actor's Equity Association (AEA), the Screen Actor's Guild (SAG), and the American Federation of Radio and Television Artists (AFTRA). He holds a BA from Miami University (Ohio), and an MFA from the Alabama Shakespeare Festival/University of Alabama - Professional Actor Training Program.

PJ Albert | Managing Director

PJ has been a staff member with Orlando Shakespeare Theater for more than a decade. Originally from Chicago Heights, Illinois, PJ attended school at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale where he studied Theatre.

He has worked for such organizations as Williamstown Theatre Festival, Santa Fe Opera, and RSL Theatrical and has designed lighting, sound, pyrotechnics, and handled event management for such companies as AFLAC, Synovus, and the Miss Georgia Scholarship Pageant. In 2001, he joined the staff of the Orlando Shakes as the master electrician. Since that time, PJ has held the positions of Production Manager, Guest Services Director, Business Manager, and General Manager within the company.

Anne Hering | Director of Education

Anne Hering is a member of Actor's Equity Association and Screen Actor's Guild, and has been a professional actor, director, and teacher for 30 years.

She has appeared with Orlando Shakespeare Theater in productions of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Hamlet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Macbeth*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *King Lear*, *Into the Woods*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Winter's Tale*. Additional acting credits include *The Guys*, *The Underpants*, *Boston Marriage*, *The Real Thing*, *Wit*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, and *The Little Prince*. Directing credits include *The Turn of the Screw*, *Yankee Tavern*, and *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* (at OST), *Cabaret*, *Into the Woods*, *Bat Boy: the Musical*, *Hay Fever*, *A Perfect Ganesh*, *Defying Gravity*, *Jake's Women*, *Sylvia*, and *All in the Timing*.

Anne received her MFA in Acting from The Ohio State University and is Director of Education at Orlando Shakespeare in Partnership with UCF.

What Critics Are Saying About Orlando Shakes

“Finely spoken... Theatrically potent... Exciting, absorbing.... Sumptuous.”

- Terry Teachout, Wall Street Journal

“I’ve never seen Shakespeare done better.”

- Steve Millburg, Southern Living Magazine

“Voted Best Professional Theatre in Florida.”

- Florida Monthly

“One of the best bets on Central Florida’s arts and entertainment calendar.”

- The Central Florida Future

“Bold, stylish and in your face... In terms of verve and theatricality, it succeeds in a most entertaining manner.”

- Matt Palm, Orlando Sentinel

“Shakespeare as it should be. OST is hammering out a new tradition... first rate entertainment.”

- Orlando Weekly

“This is what great theater is all about... the crown jewel of Orlando’s theater scene.”

- theotherorlando.com

“Great Shakes in Orlando... the Bard’s finest has come to Florida.”

- Southern Living Magazine

“For fresh concept, surprising intervention, precise portrayals and sleek style, it doesn't get any better than Orlando Shakespeare.”

- Florida Weekly

“The intimate setting and casual atmosphere has dispelled any of my trepidations of ‘the theater’ implied just by the mention of Shakespeare.”

- artsweb.com

“Voted Best Theater Company 2010.”

- Orlando Magazine

“Voted Best Theater Company 2012”

- Orlando Sentinel

“Best Professional Theater 2013”

- TheDailyCity.com

2018-2019 30th Anniversary Season



SIGNATURE SERIES

- *In the Heights*
- *The Mystery of Irma Vep - A Penny Dreadful*
- *A Christmas Carol*
- *A Doll's House, Part II*
- *Hamlet*
- *Gertrude and Claudius*
- *Richard II*

CHILDREN'S SERIES

- *The Little Mermaid*
- *The Jungle Book*
- *Jack and the Beanstalk*

Highlights

For our 30th Anniversary Season, we look forward to the World Premiere of *Gertrude and Claudius*, commissioned and produced by Orlando Shakes in partnership with UCF, Artistic Director Jim Helsinger, Managing Director PJ Albert. Funding generously provided by Rita and John Lowndes. Based on the award-winning novel by John Updike, the new play by Mark St. Germain serves as a prequel to *Hamlet*, offering a sympathetic look at Shakespeare's villains and the love story that lead to murder.

2017-2018 29th Anniversary Season



SIGNATURE SERIES

- *Man of La Mancha*
- *The Hound of the Baskervilles*
- *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*
- *Native Gardens*
- *Shakespeare in Love*
- *Twelfth Night*
- *The Luckiest People*

CHILDREN'S SERIES

- *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp*
- *Showtime with Shakespeare: A Magic Treehouse Adventure*
- *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*

Highlights

- Shakespeare Theatre Association presented Artistic Director Jim Helsinger with the Sidney Berger Award
- A production of *Man of La Mancha* starring Broadway's Davis Gaines
- A sold out extended run of the wild farce *The Hound of the Baskervilles*
- A production of *Twelfth Night* featuring traditional practices, such as an all-male cast and Original Pronunciation
- A global livestream of the World Premiere of *Showtime with Shakespeare: A Magic Treehouse Adventure*, reaching 3,691 students in 13 different states
- Orlando Shakes hosted National New Play Network's Showcase of New Plays
- Hosted a one-night-only special event: *An Evening with Anna Deavere Smith*
- Orlando Shakes hosted a workshop on sexual harassment led by Laura T. Fisher, founder of *The Chicago Theatre Standards/#Not in Our House*

2016-2017 28th Anniversary Season



SIGNATURE SERIES

- *West Side Story*
- *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
- *Every Christmas Story Ever Told*
- *Blackberry Winter*
- *The Great Gatsby*
- *Love's Labour's Lost*
- *Antony and Cleopatra*

CHILDREN'S SERIES

- *Beauty and the Beast*
- *Stuart Little*
- *Pinkalicious the Musical*

Highlights

- PlayFest 2016: After Pulse included six new plays plus a special reading of *The Laramie Project*. All selected plays explored issues surrounding the Pulse tragedy that occurred in Orlando in the early morning of June 12, 2016
- Orlando Shakes staff and volunteers create 'Angel Action Wings for Orlando', used to shield mourners from Westboro Baptist Church protesters after the Pulse tragedy
- Production of *Antony and Cleopatra* starred Michael Dorn
- Hosted a one-night-only event: *An Evening with Michael Dorn*

2015-2016 27th Anniversary Season



SIGNATURE SERIES

- *SPAMALOT*
- *Bakersfield Mist*
- *Peter and the Starcatcher*
- *Dancing Lessons*
- *The Tempest*
- *The Adventures of Pericles*
- *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*

CHILDREN'S SERIES

- *The Frog and the Princess*
- *Magic Tree House: A Ghost Tale for Mr. Dickens*
- *Elephant and Piggie's "We are in a Play!"*

Highlights

- Production of *SPAMALOT* starred Broadway's Davis Gaines
- As a part of Oregon Shakespeare Festival's *Play On!* initiative, Orlando Shakes produced the World Premiere of Shakespeare's *The Adventures of Pericles* as "translated" into modern English by Ellen McLaughlin
- A one-night-only special performance of Lisa Wolpe's one-woman-show *Shakespeare and the Alchemy of Gender*

2014-2015 26th Anniversary Season



SIGNATURE SERIES

- *Les Miserables*
- *The Best of Enemies*
- *A Christmas Carol*
- *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- *The Merry Wives of Windsor*
- *Henry V*
- *Bad Dog*

CHILDREN'S SERIES

- *Rapunzel*
- *The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley*
- *James and the Giant Peach*

Highlights

- Production of *Les Miserables* featured Broadway star Davis Gaines
- Promotional YouTube video of a Les Mis flash mob goes viral; video now has 5,426,297 views and counting
- World Premiere production of the biting dramedy *Bad Dog*

History of Orlando Shakes

Humble Beginnings

Orlando Shakespeare Theater finds its humble beginnings in the early 1970s. UCF Professor Stuart Omans and his students traveled to local high schools to perform scenes from Shakespeare. Dr. Omans' efforts caught the attention of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), which gifted UCF a grant for the Teacher Training Institute. In 1975, Dr. Omans organized a teacher-produced production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Loch Haven's Civic Center. With a turnout of thousands, extra performances had to be added to accommodate demand. Four years later, UCF received its second NEH grant of \$150,000 to produce *Hamlet: The Renaissance Mind*.

Getting Started

In 1987 UCF Provost Richard Astro and UCF English Department Chair John Schell released Omans from teaching at the University and charged him with starting the UCF Project for the Development of Humanities and Fine Arts. Their goal: the establishment of a Shakespeare festival. To get the project rolling, Omans relied heavily on the support of UCF, which supplied administrative offices and salaries for the Artistic Director, Business Manager, and Secretary. Before Omans knew it, start-up funding for the Orlando Shakespeare Festival began.

With funding in the works, Omans needed a space for his festival. He and Mayor Bill Frederick looked to Walt Disney World for assistance in renovating the bandshell at Lake Eola. Disney and the City of Orlando both agreed to donate funds for the expansion and additional funds were raised with the founding of the original Orlando Shakespeare Guild. The Guild held their first fundraiser at the local Enzian Theater in 1988.

1989 brought about a year of firsts for Orlando Shakespeare Festival, celebrating the assembly of its first Board of Directors, establishing administrative offices, and hiring a Business Manager and Publicist. With a season budget of \$300,000, the Festival rented costumes from the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford, England, marking the first time RSC lent garments to the USA. With the addition of the Festival's beautiful costumes, OSF's free performances became even more popular and available seats were reserved within hours. Southeast Tourism Society selected the Festival as one of the "Top Twenty Events in the Southeast".

Gaining Ground

The following year brought even more change as the Festival's performances expanded to five week runs and moved to the spring for warmer temperatures. OSF hired three professional actors from Actor's Equity Association (AEA) for their 1990 season and welcomed UCF Early Music Ensemble as their resident music group. OSF's Guild grew along with the Festival, beginning merchandise sales, raffles, and ushering during performances.

In 1992, OSF gave back with the formation of The Young Company, a high school performance troupe for at-risk youth. Three more AEA performers joined the company, one of which was Jim Helsinger, who appeared as Benvolio in *Romeo and Juliet* and Francis Flute in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The Festival held 29 performances that spring with an estimated attendance of 21,000 at Walt Disney World Amphitheatre. With their ever-increasing popularity, OSF received a \$75,000 pledge from Barker Hostetler to be given over a three-year period, beginning in 1993.

New Leadership

1994 marked Dr. Omans final season as OSF's Artistic Director. Board Chair Rita Lowndes and new UCF President John Hitt initiated a national search for Oman's replacement and appointed Jim Helsinger to the position. Under Helsinger's leadership, OSF converted a store in the old Winter Park Mall into a 120-seat venue to house the Festival's first full-length non-Shakespearean production, *Dracula: The Journal of Jonathan Harker*. Helsinger also encouraged new programming with the inception of the Shakespeare Unplugged monthly reading series, established with the goal of reading Shakespeare's entire canon. Professional actors performed in local K-12 schools with the Shakespeare Alive! program and the Shakespeare Pins for Pals Bowl-a-thon provided tickets to underprivileged schools and individuals.

Further educational opportunities were added in 1996, when OSF's Education Department began holding Saturday community classes at UCF Downtown Academic Center and a semester-long program teaching Shakespeare to at-risk students at Wymore High School. The Festival expanded to two fall productions performed at the Civic Center. The following year, OSF moved select productions to the Orange County Historical Museum in Loch Haven Park (a building scheduled to be torn down once the History Center relocated) and became a principal member of the arts fundraising organization, United Arts of Central Florida.

Moving Indoors

On behalf of OSF, John Lowndes and Gordon Arkin negotiated with the City of Orlando for a long-term lease of the Orange County History Museum building. In 1998, the costume and scene shops were moved into the old museum space. OSF used their newly acquired building to host the annual Shakespeare Theatre Association of America conference, with more than 120 Artistic and Managing Directors in attendance.

In 1999, Rita Lowndes lead a fundraising campaign to raise \$3.2 million to renovate the Historical Museum building as a new home for OSF. To help raise money, the Festival began its “Take a Seat Campaign”, naming seats in the theaters after donor patrons. The State of Florida’s Cultural Facilities Grant, City of Orlando, Darden Restaurants Foundation, Dr. Phillips, Inc., and individual donors also gave tremendous donations. With funds raised, the construction company, Jack Jennings & Sons, began demolition and renovation of the soon-to-be John and Rita Lowndes Shakespeare Center in March 2001.

With construction in the works, OSF had another reason to celebrate. The Festival won the 1999 Central Florida Awards for Best Play, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor, and the special Golden Lilly Award for 10 years of service to the community. That year, the season’s budget had grown to \$1,079,000 and OSF’s “Go Wilde Season”, lead by Jim Helsinger and Central Florida Theatre Alliance President Terry Olson, was highlighted in the December issue of American Theater Magazine. The “Go Wilde Season” celebrated the works of Oscar Wilde throughout Central Florida, and featured 15 readings and productions by local theaters and universities. Between October 28 and 29, OSF held the Pulitzer Play-a-thon, drawing local theaters together for public readings of Pulitzer Prize winning plays.

Welcome Home

2001 was a very special year for OSF. It marked the grand opening of their new home, the beautiful John and Rita Lowndes Shakespeare Center. The opening included a week of special events: a special donor dinner underwritten by Steve Goldman (Nov. 25); a Sneak Peek Tour of new facilities for community members (Nov. 28); the Gala Opening Night performance of *The Taming of the Shrew* in the new Ken and Trisha Margeson Theater (Nov. 30); and the opening of the Shakespeare Guild’s Harry and Jack Pappas Gift Shop (Nov. 30). The grand opening events were co-sponsored by Lowndes, Drosdick, Doster, Kantor, & Reed and Greater Homes Construction. The new Marilyn and Sig Goldman Theater opened on February 22 with OSF’s 2001 production of *Hamlet*, preceded by an elegant dinner underwritten by Steve Goldman.

More Shows

The newly sponsored Darden Theater for Young Audiences Series expanded to two children's productions in 2002. The PlayLab Series continued to feature monthly readings and workshops, and OSF's annual budget grew to \$1.6 million. 2003 brought more expansion, with the addition of a holiday show to OSF's seasonal offerings, bringing the a total of six productions to the Signature Series. PlayLab also grew, changing its name to PlayFest and creating a 10-day festival of new plays. The first Orlando Festival of New Plays ran November 1-9, 2003 and featured 29 plays in readings, workshops, and full productions. Highlights of the festival included Keynote Speaker Israell Horovitz (Obie and Drama Desk winner), Fringe Re-Loaded, and The Voicemail Plays (two to three-minute plays that took place on phones in the lobby).

In 2004, OSF created the Bard's Cup Golf Tournament fundraiser, played at the Rosen Shingle Creek Golf Club. OSF also premiered its first production of a musical with A Little Night Music by Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler. The second season of PlayFest ran January 14-23, 2005, featuring the World Premiere of Trapezium - A Knightly Farce by Henry Rathvon; workshops of Journey to the Center of the Earth by Richard Width and Quincunx by Henry Rathvon; and 22 readings of new plays by OSF and guest theaters, including a reading of The Beauty and the Father by Pulitzer Prize winner Nilo Cruz.

Harriett Lake & PlayFest

OSF received a large gift from Harriet Lake in 2005, with the purpose of creating "The Orlando-UCF Shakespeare Festival Endowment in Playwriting", a \$1 million endowment held by the UCF Foundation for the Development of New Plays at OSF and a playwriting curriculum in the the UCF Department of Theater. Additionally, Harriet made a four-year commitment to be the presenting sponsor of the newly named "PlayFest! The Harriett Lake Festival of New Plays". The new "Harriet's Bar" was dedicated on June 6, 2005, in honor of Mrs. Lake. The 3rd annual Playfest that year included a keynote speech by Pulitzer Prize Winner, Robert Schenkkan. The Lester and Sonia Mandell Studio Theater also opened in 2005, a 99 seat flexible theater space, capable of many different configurations for productions and rehearsals.

In 2006, OSF decided on a new name to better reflect the Theater's year-round performance schedule and permanent performance spaces. OSF removed the word "Festival" and choose the title "Orlando Shakespeare Theater in Partnership with UCF". Shakespeare with Heart, a summer camp for teens with and without special needs, was added to the Education Department's programming. United Cerebral Palsy of Central Florida agreed to assist in producing the camp, which was sponsored by the UCF Exceptional Education program. Also in 2006, the Hispanic Initiative began, which raised money toward the purchase of a caption display system to show Spanish translations during selected OST

Shakespearean productions. Theresa Rebeck, Pulitzer Prize Finalist, was the keynote speaker at PlayFest 2006.

The following year, OST received major publicity for *Into the Woods* and *the Theater*, which boasted a cover feature on *The Sondheim Review*. A new mural was painted in the McLaughlin Rehearsal Studio, where all who work for the Theater may sign their names.

20 Years and Counting

2008 marked OST's 20th Anniversary Season. The Theater paid tribute to its beginnings and to Shakespeare in many forms including productions of *The Taming of the Shrew*-inspired musical, *Kiss Me, Kate*; a new comedy about Hamlet in college, *Whittenberg*; and repertory productions of *Much Ado About Nothing* and *The Merchant of Venice*. The Theater hosted the National New Play Network Showcase of New Plays, in which professional theaters from around the country came to Orlando to attend readings of new plays. To showcase the Orlando Shakes' two-decade long journey, the Theater unveiled a visual timeline of its history in the Lowndes Shakespeare Center lobby.

During OST's 21st Season, Orlando Shakes' production of *Hamlet* celebrated the highest attendance of any Shakespeare show at the Lowndes Shakespeare Center. "All this makes for one of the most theatrically potent 'Hamlets' I've seen in a good many seasons, far fresher than last year's Jude Law-powered Broadway production and, I suspect, more accessible to boot," said Terry Teachout of the *Wall Street Journal*. 2009-2010 was also marked by special events and well known guests. The 2nd Annual Mock Trial: *The Trial of Hamlet* and *Sonnet-a-Thon*, a reading of all 154 of Shakespeare's sonnets in Downtown Orlando, were a hit with the public. Patrons were equally excited by the presence of Actor and Director Philip Seymour Hoffman as the season's PlayFest Keynote Speaker. With a new roof over the Margeson Theater courtesy of the City of Orlando and a new phone system to expedite patron calls, OST welcomed a new decade of growth.

The 2010-2011 Season was expanded to 10 productions with the return of a summer Theater for Young Audiences production, *The Little Red Riding Hood Show*. The 3rd Annual Mock Trial: *Darcy vs. Wickham* grew in success and the Cross Dress'd Reading Series included an all male *Twelfth Night*, an all-female *Julius Caesar*, and an age-reversed *Romeo and Juliet*. Season visitors included PlayFest Keynote Speaker, Playwright Mark Brown, and Minneapolis actor Charlie Bethel, who presented his nationally-acclaimed one-person production of *Beowulf*. Other 22nd Season highlights included Artistic Director Jim Helsinger's appointment as President of the Shakespeare Theatre Association (STA), and more affordable tickets for younger audiences with the implementation of '\$20 Under 30 Night'. Orlando Shakes co-produced *The 39 Steps* with the Florida Repertory Theatre, touring the production to Fort Myers and Actors' Playhouse in Coral Gables. OST also branched out in Orlando as well, with Jim Helsinger narrating Orlando Ballet's Family Series performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on April 16, 2011 at the Bob Carr Performing Arts Centre. The Theater gratefully received a grant from Dr. Phillips Charities to enhance their current lighting and people safety system, and

upgrade their pulley system for the trap room lift. The grant allowed Orlando Shakes the opportunity to provide even higher quality productions to the community.

During Orlando Shakes' 23rd Season, PlayFest alumni *The Exit* interview was selected for National New Play Network (NNPN) showcase weekend and garnered the largest interest ever from theaters for a Rolling World Premiere. OST hoped to reach new audiences by producing PB&J Theatre Factory's silent physical comedy *Sleigh* and hosting the largest Shakespeare Theatre Association (STA) conference with representatives from Italy, Brazil, Poland, and Australia. The Theater also took its act on the road, touring the Theater for Young Audiences' production of *Charlotte's Web* to Orange and Lake County schools in Spring 2012. Season visitors included PlayFest Keynote Jeffrey Hatcher (Playwright) and Broadway Actor and Director Roger Rees, who presented *What You Will: An Evening By and About the Bard*, a one-man production all about William Shakespeare. During 2011-12, the Theater also produced *Three By Tenn*, a series of readings including *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, and *Streetcar Named Desire*. The readings, which were free to the public, highlighted Orlando Shakes' mission to foster innovative programs that serve the community.

An Important Visitor

Orlando Shakes' 24th Season was highlighted by the visit of renowned film, television, and stage actor, Sir Patrick Stewart, who discussed his love of Shakespeare at *An Evening with Sir Patrick Stewart* on March 15, 2013. Jon Jory also made a special appearance as PlayFest's Keynote Speaker. Orlando Shakes' patrons were also excited by the remodel the lower lobby and concessions area, made possible through a construction grant from TBD. In addition, the grant allowed for the creation of the new Santos Dantin Studio Theater, a dye room, and lighting upgrades. PlayFest received good news when The University of Central Florida and Theatre UCF committed to producing a show in the festival every year. The inaugural production, *Zombie Town*, was directed by OST Artistic Director Jim Helsinger. That season's production of *The Exit Interview* received the largest National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere with productions at Orlando Shakespeare Theater, Riverside Theatre, Actor's Theatre of Charlotte, InterAct Theatre Company, San Diego REPertory Theatre, and Salt Lake Acting Company. Spring 2013 saw many newsworthy events including Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra and Orlando Shakes production of *Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Bob Carr Performing Arts Centre on April 27, 2013. Orlando Shakes also partnered with Magic Tree House Series author Mary Pope Osborne and Gift of Books to donate over 28,000 Magic Tree House books to every Title 1 third grader and classroom teacher in Orange County.

Celebrating 25

2013-2014 marked Orlando Shakes' exciting 25th Anniversary. Special events included the Orlando Shakes Open House, Gala Celebration, 6th Annual Mock Trial, and Free Movie Night in the Park. In addition, Orlando Shakes saw big changes, including a fresh paint job for the John and Rita Lowndes Shakespeare Center and the renaming of The Studio Series--"Harriett's New Play Series". Other exciting projects included Director of New Play Development Mark Routhier's direction of PlayFest alumnus Leveling Up as part of Theatre UCF's 2013-2014 Season. Under the leadership of Shakespeare & Company's founding Artistic Director and Shakespeare dynamo, Tina Packer, OST sent its small cast production of Julius Caesar to Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, MA, and Prague Shakespeare Company in the Czech Republic. The biggest event of the season was OST and Theatre UCF's collaboration on the two-part epic adventure, The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby. Orlando Shakes became the 4th theater in the country to professionally produce David Edgar's shortened adaptation. The production received national recognition from the Wall Street Journal's Terry Teachout.