



# Press Release

Date: 28 September 2020 Use: **IMMEDIATE**  
GSC Honorary Patron **Brian Blessed OBE**

## 68 ARTISTS - 73 ORIGINAL LIVE PERFORMANCES, THANK YOU

The two Co-Founders of Guildford Shakespeare Company would like to take a moment to say a huge thank you to their staff (employees and freelance), volunteers, audiences, partners, and participants.

As we are all aware this has been an incredibly tough time for the whole world, but especially theatre and the arts.

As a non-NPO organisation, with no regular, core or guaranteed funding, and safe in the knowledge that as a small theatre company, despite nearly 15 years of producing and employing 130 people each year, we knew that GSC would not be high on the list of theatre companies to rescue in the coming future.

Thankfully, we received a rescue grant of £35,000 from ACE at the start of lockdown and that combined with the help of furlough, has meant that we have managed to retain all staff members, and not make any redundancies.

However, we have not been able to sit back on our laurels, we have not had a wealth of pre-recorded live shows and material to rely upon, and our team have worked hard and creatively to find new ways to engage audiences and participants.

Classes have continued via Zoom, an online well-being project was created, as well as two interactive online live Murder Mysteries and a live Zoom production of *The Wind in the Willows* in association with Jermyn Street Theatre and Yvonne Arnaud.

Currently in performance is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, live via Zoom, in a co-production with the Octagon Theatre, Bolton. Meanwhile our exceptionally talented freelance directors Caroline Devlin and Charlotte Conquest, are turning our 2019 open-air production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* into a 4-part sitcom, with all the actors filming themselves in isolation.

Our education department are currently rehearsing and producing three Shakespeare shows that would usually tour to Primary and Secondary schools. These will be filmed instead, to ensure the work and support that we do in these schools continues.

At the end of August, we were delighted to produce *Thy Eternal Summer*, a socially distanced, open-air production with performances happening in multiple locations in Guildford. Both the delight of the audiences to be back at live theatre, and the joy of the actors to be performing again, was palpable and a mandate for the importance of live theatre.

Since 23 March, GSC has managed to employ 68 freelance artists on all of the above projects.

**Co-Founders SARAH GOBRAN & MATT PINCHES:** *"We would like to take this moment to express our gratitude to the freelancers, volunteers and dedicated audiences that have continued to support and enable our work.*

**Continues 1/2**



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*"This message is also huge, huge thank you to our trustees and employees, who have constantly championed, adapted, created and supported whether it was developing new classes or outreach projects online, recording our primary schools clubs, generating endless virtual backgrounds, marketing campaigns, risk assessments, pages and pages of protocols or taking furlough graciously and with kindness and understanding."*

**Ends 2/2**

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## Note to Editors

**Guildford Shakespeare Company** is an award-winning, site-responsive theatre company. Established in 2006 by **Actor-Managers Sarah Gobran and Matt Pinches**, it has produced over 40 shows in unique venues including Guildford Cathedral, Watts Gallery, West Horsley Place and a Flemish Spiegeltent. In 2015, Brian Blessed OBE played the title role in *King Lear*. Its Education and Outreach Depts work with over 5000 people young and old every year including free-to-access social inclusion programmes. GSC is one of the largest producers of home-grown theatre in the region.