

OPEN-AIR THEATRE RETURNS TO GUILDFORD

27 – 31 AUGUST 2020: The award-winning Guildford Shakespeare Company (GSC) are set to return to the town centre this Bank Holiday Weekend with a special outdoor theatre event.

Across the August Bank Holiday Weekend, GSC will be returning to the open air with a brand-new theatre production for live audiences. Entitled **THY ETERNAL SUMMER**, the theatre company promises a celebration of Shakespeare, community and the joy of sharing a live theatre experience once again.

The show, whose title comes from Sonnet 18 (*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day*), will feature some of Shakespeare's best-loved scenes and sonnets from plays including amongst others *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. The cast of 11 actors will also feature many faces familiar to GSC's regular audiences.

The professional theatre company have been working with Guildford Borough Council on the project who have given special permission for the event to go ahead as a pilot event to examine what safety protocols need to be in place for future live outdoor events.

MATT PINCHES, Co-Founder: *"For all the right reasons, we have all had to reshape our summers this year, and whilst not being able to present our annual outdoor season was a huge blow for us, we are thrilled at the prospect of seeing our audiences again for these special performances. We're indebted to Guildford Borough Council, with whom we have been closely working, to make this pilot event happen. Our audiences and artists are at the centre of everything we do, so naturally their safety is our top priority."*

Using UK Government and Public Health England guidelines, the theatre company have created extensive protocols to ensure public and staff safety. Using the principles of GSC's popular Sonnet Walk Weekend, audience groups of no more than 25 will follow a prescribed route from Racks Close (off Quarry Street) to the Bandstand in the Castle Gardens. Each performance will last 75 minutes, and social distancing will be in force throughout. Seating will be provided at the three stopping points where the performances take place. The full range of protocols can be read on the GSC website.

MATT PINCHES: *"We have all been living through an extreme period of unprecedented restrictions on our everyday lives, but we hope that the shared experience of attending a live event will be another step in helping our community continue to return to some form of normal."*

It has been almost 6 months since GSC staged their last production (*Macbeth* in February), with their Spring and annual Summer Seasons being postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The company (also a registered charity) have continued to entertain and engage during this time, delivering their award-winning education and well-being programmes via online platforms and virtual performances of Murder Mysteries and a much-celebrated production of *The Wind in the Willows*, attended by over 600 households from across the world.

Tickets for **THY ETERNAL SUMMER** are on general sale from Friday 7 August, 10am.

TICKETS - DATES -TIMES

Thursday 27 August	6pm, 6.30pm, 7pm, 7.30pm
Friday 28 August	6pm, 6.30pm, 7pm, 7.30pm
Saturday 29 August	2.30pm, 3pm, 6pm, 6.30pm, 7pm, 7.30pm
Sunday 30 August	2.30pm, 3pm, 6pm, 6.30pm, 7pm, 7.30pm
Monday 31 August	2.30pm, 3pm, 6pm, 6.30pm, 7pm, 7.30pm

Tickets **Adults** (16 and over) **£20** - **Children** (under 16) **£16.50**

Running Time **75 mins** (approx.)

Box Office opens **Friday 7 August, 10am.**

Booking www.guildford-shakespeare-company.co.uk

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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 works 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.