



Happy holidays!

Well! To say that 2020 has been...unexpected...would be the understatement of the year. We simply did not see the many “plot twists” coming. From the shock of COVID-19 cancellations to a renewed civil rights reckoning, from lightning strikes and wildfires to the heart-wrenching loss of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, 2020 has been—for all of us—one continual leap after another into the unknown.

Originally, we had enthusiastically planned for a season of “Make Your Choice”—Sense or Sensibility, familial pressure or personal truth (*Romeo and Juliet*), societal expectations or inner conviction (*Measure for Measure*). But then in March, the COVID-19 pandemic annihilated theatre as we knew it and we ventured into the “brave new world” of online creation. In May, we stood in solidarity against discrimination and began the ongoing work to ensure our longstanding core practices were unequivocally reflected in formal policies of equity, diversity, and inclusion. In August, lightning struck our beloved community, with wildfires burning in the mountains near our unlit stage at Sanborn Park and threatening the very place we—and so many others—call home. In September and October, we gave back to our communities, donating to the Santa Cruz Fire Response Fund to assist with fire relief and to the Malala Fund in honor of the passing of The Notorious RBG.

During this time, we forged a *new* season of choice, tirelessly pivoting 100% of our programming to provide a robust portfolio of online offerings for our community to come together and enjoy

entirely for free. In a historic move, **seven of our past productions are now available to stream online for the very first time.** These premiered with public Watch Party events, interactive live chats, and pre-show receptions/artist Q&As, connecting our community even as we remained apart. These free shows remain available to view anytime on our YouTube channel and Facebook page, and we’re thrilled to share that **we’re currently captioning each video to improve access for those who are hard of hearing.** We also created **an extensive slew of engagement events and new content, all still available and free to view,** including:



Online reading of The Tempest

- **Online performances of Shakespeare’s classics** (such as *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*, with a cast from around the globe) and **new works** (such as *Lot in Life*, a tale of biblical proportions; *Tales from the Edge of the Bard*, a series of Shakespeare-meets-ghost-stories radio plays; and *Much Improv About Nothing*, an improvised Shakespeare co-production with our good friends at ComedySportz San Jose featuring performers spanning Seattle to LA)
- **Community Connections**, a program series focused on elevating marginalized voices, cultural diversity, and groups engaged in social justice work. Our first two partners are the renowned theatre artist **Aldo Billingslea with the Fund for Black Theatre in the U.S.** and **Karen Atree Piemme of Red Ladder Theatre Company**, a nationally acclaimed social justice theatre company that brings the arts to California State prisons
- **Bard Talk, an in-depth educational series** of 15-minute videos by SVS dramaturg Doll Piccotto. Topics include “The History of *Macbeth*” and “Women in Theatre,” with “The Politics of *Julius Caesar*” and “Ira Aldridge: The First Black Shakespearean Actor” among topics to be released
- **Our podcast, ShakesPod**, with a mix of exclusive performances, behind-the-scenes interviews, and an exploration into the weird and wonderful world of William Shakespeare
- **Three book club events** and live online discussions, exploring diverse characters and strong female protagonists in a *Hamlet*-inspired Young Adult novel, a Jane Austen sea monsters parody, and a manga *Romeo and Juliet*



Summer Camp – Romeo and Juliet final project: balcony scene, puppet show

And this doesn’t even take into account our **Summer Camp for Youth and Teens**, which moved online and explored theatremaking beyond the typical performance focus; formalized (re-)commitments and program initiatives in service of **equity, diversity, and inclusion; partnerships with local community media centers** to broadcast our past productions and artist interviews (like CreatTV San Jose’s channel The Outlet, KTSF Channel 26’s show *Talk Tonight*, and Midpen Media Center’s show *Peninsula Backstage*); moving our in-class workshops to online; and so much more!



We couldn't have done all this without your generous support! While this statement is true every year—you are the lifeblood of the SVS community—it is exceptionally, poignantly true this year due to the cancellation of all our revenue-generating events. Without your support, we would not have been able to meet our fixed operating costs, like rent and insurance, let alone create the tremendous outpouring of art and human connection mentioned above.

Instead, because of you, we were able to keep the lights on, hold the SVS family together and maintain our existing shoestring staff levels, fortify existing relationships and build new ones during this singularly isolating time, dig deep into our resilience, and—with cautious optimism—plan for the next leap into the unknown of 2021 and beyond.

Because of you, and your choice to give, we have hope.

Our 2021 season announcement looks a little different than usual. Ordinarily, we'd share a rundown of the entire year, but this time—like many great works of theatre—we're unveiling our plans in a classic, tantalizing three-act structure.

"We are truly all in this together."

—Mike Rhone, donor and local artist

For Act 1 in the winter season (our 2021 "winter's tale," so to speak), we're bringing back our well-loved **48-Hour Play Festival in January** for its 7th year, again co-produced with the fabulous Foothill College. This time created entirely online with the theme "Shakespeare in Place," it will feature eight world-premiere short plays! Following that, we're also planning our **first-ever online co-production with our friends at South Bay Musical Theatre**, more **ShakesPod** podcasts and **Community Connections**, new **Bard Talks**, and the announcement of our **2021 Summer Camp**.

And all of that's just in the first few months of the year! We've got some seriously exciting, innovative, and—dare we say it?—illuminating and inspiring programs in the incubator. Stay tuned for the lineup of Acts 2 and 3, coming soon!

Until then, here's how you can help get us there:

- Send your **tax-deductible financial support now through Jan. 5th** (Twelfth Night!) using the enclosed envelope, online at svshakespeare.org/donate, or via PayPal with the QR code here.
- Shop our incredible **online auction fundraiser from Nov. 27th (Black Friday) through Dec. 5th**! Go to charityauction.bid/svs for some early holiday shopping—whether as gifts for others or for yourself, we won't judge! From private concerts to custom pet portraits, a deluxe "Gin Austen" basket to 49ers football tickets, SVS swag, and Buy-It-Now gift cards, there's truly something for everyone. And spread the word—"bring" a friend, tell your family!
- **Arrange a matching donation.** Your employer might match your gift to us. Or, **connect us with your employer** to sponsor SVS.
- Set up a **legacy gift**. A small arrangement today gives long-term support toward SVS' future.



Scan. Pay. Go.

For any questions or help arranging your support, please contact Melissa Jones, Development Manager, at 408-289-1901 or melissa.jones@svshakespeare.org. You can also contact any of us, at any time—we want to hear your thoughts!

Although the future looks different than we expected, we're thrilled to leap into the adventure of our 23rd season with you! **We deeply appreciate your choice to support** all we do for you and the community. Happy holidays!

Doug Brook
Executive Director

Angie Higgins
Artistic Director

Annalisa Tkacheff
Managing Director

Melissa Jones
Development Manager

Michelle Galloway
Chair, Board of Directors