

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier University

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Shakespeare's times recreated during public festival at Laurier

The public can revel in Shakespeare's times during a week-long festival beginning Tuesday, Jan. 14, at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo.

Through Tuesday, Jan. 21, the university will present "Shakespeare's England." Laurier's annual public festival will feature a Shakespearean play, lectures, musical performances, children's entertainment, displays, and an Elizabethan banquet.

Among the highlights will be three performances of *Hamlet* with professional actress Kate Hennig in the title role. Director Leslie O'Dell, a professor of English at Laurier, says casting a woman in the title role helps to more accurately portray Hamlet as a teenager facing the struggles he does. She says a woman in the part, with a tenor voice and smaller bone structure, contributes to the believability of a young Hamlet.

O'Dell says it is a wonderful experience to have a professional among the cast of 32 and crew of 15. "Everything we do is colored by her experience and professionalism. She offers (cast members) very specific, technical solutions to problems." Hennig's credits include performances with the Charlottetown Festival, the Muskoka Festival, the Grand Theatre in London, and most recently the Stratford Festival.

A rapping minstrel will help children eight years and older follow an adaptation of *The Tempest* presented Sunday, Jan. 19, by local puppet troupe Aunt Betty's Rhubarb Pies. Storyteller Mary-Eileen McClear will entertain younger children before they all join in a puppet workshop.

An authority on theatre history in the English Renaissance will offer insights on better appreciating Shakespeare's plays through an understanding of the staging and dress of the time on Wednesday, Jan. 15. Andrew Gurr, a professor of English at the University of Reading, has played a key role in the reconstruction of the original Globe theatre in Southwark. His lecture will be followed by the festival's opening ceremonies.

A life-size wax figure of Elizabeth I will reign over an exhibit of period artifacts, furniture and dress on display throughout the festival.

In a presentation Friday, Jan. 17, two professors of social work will use examples from Shakespeare's plays to illustrate some of the continuities and contrasts between Elizabethan England's and modern conceptions of the welfare state.

The perceptions and representations of women in the arts and literature of the English Renaissance will be explored by five speakers at a day-long academic colloquium on Saturday, Jan. 18. At the end of the colloquium, lutenist Terry McKenna and mezzo soprano Laura Pudwell will perform music by, for, and to the women of Shakespeare's time.

Other musical performances will include a concert Thursday, Jan. 16, of 25 madrigals celebrating 'Oriana', a name from the conventional vocabulary of pastoral poetry often applied to Elizabeth I. The faculty of music will also present a master class in English organ music of Shakespeare's time on Wednesday, Jan. 15.

Savories of the time will be available at a six-course Elizabethan banquet the evening of Sunday, Jan. 19. The menu includes veal soup, marinated hot salmon, and beet tarts, with traditional entertainment during the removes.

The topics of other lectures during the festival include the King James version of the Bible, life at the Elizabethan court, Shakespeare's plays, and the Hurontario in the 1600s. Other events include a movie night and noon-hour food fair.