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Pittsfield Shakespeare in the Park announces plans to return in 2021

Group seeks \$20,000 in public support for summer season and expanded community offerings

"Now is the winter of our discontent / Made glorious summer..." —Richard III

PITTSFIELD, MA — Pittsfield Shakespeare in the Park announces plans to return to the First Street Common next summer for a 6th season. The company, founded by Enrico Spada in 2014, has become a local favorite for its free productions that bring together community members from across economic, social, and cultural spectrums. If state and local guidelines deem it safe to do so, they will stage another production in 2021.

Like many area theatres, Pittsfield Shakespeare's season was paused this past summer. The same week PSP planned to announce its 2020 production, the COVID-19 outbreak closed the theatre industry entirely. "As the pandemic quickly developed we held back on announcing the title for the summer, opting for a 'wait and see' approach," explains Spada. "We waited, but the outlook never improved."

There have been silver linings, however. The canceled season gave Spada time to reflect on the company's infrastructure, sustainability, and role in the community. "Until now the effort of fundraising and producing was a labor of love for one person. Of course, that isn't sustainable in the long run. So many people have reached out asking about our plans, so it's important for us to set the groundwork for a thriving future."

For the past few months, Spada and a small group of long-time company members have been meeting over Zoom to reimagine how the company could become more sustainable. This group, which has become the organization's new board of directors, includes Pittsfield Shakespeare artists Haley Barbieri, Christopher Brophy, Julie Castagna, Brittany Nicholson, Maizy Broderick Scarpa, and Patrick Toole. The group has identified objectives including long-term financial strength, more equitable pay for artists, building community partnerships, and of course, continuing to bring free outdoor Shakespeare to Pittsfield.

To reach these objectives, the new board is leading a crowdfunding campaign this month. This campaign will be their most ambitious yet with a goal of \$20,000 in public support (to be

supplemented by foundational, state, and business support). Additionally, these funds will help the company meet the challenges of producing live theatre during a pandemic.

"This is theatre by the community for the community," says Toole. "We're local people making theatre especially for our community here in Pittsfield. That's incredibly important, and we can't do it alone"

Longtime company member Maizy Broderick Scarpa, who directed 2019's *Much Ado About Nothing*, explains that they have been using lessons from the coronavirus pandemic to inform future offerings. "We are reimagining what it means to be of service to our community this coming year, whether or not everyone can safely gather next summer. Obviously our hope is to do a full-scale production on the Common, but we are planning alternatives and contingencies, along with ideas to increase our offerings and their accessibility. The fact that we never charge admission goes a long way to increasing access, but there is always more we can do. Greater access for anyone benefits everyone." The group says they look forward to announcing more detailed plans in the coming weeks.

The fundraising campaign launches on December 1—also known as "Giving Tuesday" on social media, and concludes on New Year's Day, when the title of next summer's production will be announced via the Pittsfield Shakespeare in the Park Facebook page. PSP's Facebook page will also host a series of interactive virtual events, including games, reminiscences, and a virtual watch party.

To learn more about Pittsfield Shakespeare in the Park and to donate, visit www.pittsfieldshakespeare.org. Follow Pittsfield Shakespeare in the Park on Facebook ([facebook.com/pittsfieldshake](https://www.facebook.com/pittsfieldshake)) to join virtual events and stay up-to-date on PSP news and the campaign's progress.

ABOUT PITTSFIELD SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK

Launched in the summer of 2014, Pittsfield Shakespeare in the Park presents fully-produced performances of Shakespeare's plays under the evening sky for free to the public. Thousands of people have enjoyed its productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2014), *Romeo and Juliet* (2015), *The Tempest* (2016), *Twelfth Night* (2017), and *Much Ado About Nothing* (2019).

For photos of past shows visit <http://www.pittsfieldshakespeare.org/photos>

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