

New Bedford Launches First Shakespeare in the Park

On September 16, 2017 at 3PM, The Glass Horse Project, in association with the City of New Bedford, New Bedford Free Public Library, and the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Beaches will launch New Bedford's first Shakespeare in the Park, aptly called "Shakespeare in Buttonwood," with the famed tragedy, Romeo & Juliet.

The production is free and encourages an audience of all ages to attend; seating will not be supplied, so break out your lawn chairs and picnic blankets for one last summer experience.

Shakespeare in the Park, a longstanding New York staple that is now an international success, started in the 1950s in an effort to bring the world's most popular playwright to the masses at large. The Glass Horse Project's founder, Korey Pimental, saw the opportunity to bring the concept to New Bedford and jumped at the chance. "There hasn't been a free, outdoor production in the city in recent memory," explained Pimental.

Emma Givney of Waltham directs the production, ably assisted by stage manager Sarah Kramer of New Bedford. Romeo & Juliet also features a talented cast of actors, including Corrinne Pavão and Korey Pimental of New Bedford, Jess Wilson of Onset, Samantha Egge of Providence, Tony Ferreira of Swansea, and Eddie Fuller, Lissa King, Alyssa Steen, and Meg Sullivan of Weymouth.

This inaugural production of Romeo & Juliet is "unique and special to this community," according to Pimental. Set in a post-apocalyptic matriarchy, two young lovers are tasked with navigating their forbidden love in a society where staunch

gender and class lines have been redrawn. As a commentary on how extremism on either end of the spectrum can only cause harm, the “star-crossed” pair ultimately still perish for their love due to the rivalry between their families.

An added layer of the production is the inclusion of American Sign Language and a Juliet, played by Lissa King, that is 65% deaf. Instructional videos, a script gloss, and separate rehearsals were made to ensure correct translation.

On top of the pop-culture relevant setting and inclusive directing choices, the show will also feature live combat. Through the instruction of professional fight choreographer Garrett Olson, four different combat sequences have been designed for the production.

“Some of us have trained for weeks to have stage combat be involved in the show,” said Alyssa Steen, who plays the memorable Mercutio, “We all want the production to be as intense and entertaining as possible, while still keeping the original story and language intact.” “The stage combat is an integral part of this production,” agrees Jess Wilson, who plays Tybalt and Paris, as well as serving as the production’s fight captain. “Updating the setting also required us to update the fighting styles and weaponry being used. I think our audience will appreciate the work the actors have done to ensure as authentic an experience as possible.”

Shakespeare in Buttonwood will run their debut free, outdoor performance of Romeo and Juliet on Saturday, September 16th in Buttonwood Park near the Lawler Library. The show begins at 3 pm and is free to all, although donations are gratefully accepted. Seating is not provided; bring a blanket or lawn chair! Please note the show is weather permitting and any cancellation due to inclement weather will be posted on The Glass Horse Project’s Facebook page. The rain date will be Sunday, September 17th, also at 3pm.