

NEW YORK Shakespeare exchange

Using Shakespeare and live theatre in unexpected ways
to promote cultural dialogue in New York City

“New York Shakespeare Exchange has made its entrance in grand style.
This young company is not just promising: It’s delivering.”

—Adam Feldman, *Time Out New York*



Ross Williams
Producing Artistic Director

STAFF

Agnes Fercowicz
Associate Producer
Cristina Lundy
Associate Artistic Director
Kevin Brewer
Resident Playwright
Shane Breaux
Assistant to Artistic Director

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BY MAIL

Send contributions to
NY Shakespeare Exchange
143 Prospect Ave, #2
Brooklyn, NY 11215

Make checks payable to:
Fractured Atlas

In the memo line note:
NY Shakespeare Exchange

NY Shakespeare Exchange is a sponsored project of Fractured Atlas, a non-profit arts service organization. All contributions in behalf of NYSX may be made payable to Fractured Atlas and are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Dear Prospective Board Member,

Thank you for considering becoming a member of the **New York Shakespeare Exchange** Board of Directors.

The company uses live theatre, principally Shakespeare, to explore new ways to interact with society and utilizes innovative methods to reach new audiences. In leading the board, I have had the opportunity to collaborate with those who inspire me creatively and see that inspiration become reality. Whether staging new works, as with our production of *The One Man (Two Man (not quite)) Hamlet* by Kevin Brewer or reaching new audiences with our ShakesBEER Pub Crawl, the New York Shakespeare Exchange is a dynamic organization with a fresh take on theatre.

Our artistic director Ross Williams began the organization with his passion and unique vision for a very different theatre company. From the very beginning the New York Shakespeare Exchange has been structured and organized with long term financial stability in mind. As you will see later in this packet, we were able to complete our first fiscal year free of debt. This packet will offer you information on New York Shakespeare Exchange, our history, programming, and goals. You will also find a list of current board members, the recruitment process, and board member responsibilities.

If, after reviewing this packet, you are interested in joining the board or serving the company in some other way, please contact me at **vince@shakespeareexchange.org**. The first years of any non-profit are extremely challenging, and we need a strong support system both artistically and financially. I would love to count you among the friends of the company.

Sincerely,

Vince Gatton,
Board Chair

MISSION STATEMENT

NEW YORK SHAKESPEARE EXCHANGE bridges cultural divides, starts conversations, promotes education, and brings communities together through diverse, classically-based programming that re-imagines how Shakespearean theatre and poetry can impact our modern world.

Brimming with an unwavering sense of adventure, our work honors the legacy of the Bard while intersecting his poetry with today's ever-changing social, political, and technological landscapes. From star-crossed lovers wooing across a crowded bar, to sonnets interpreted as independent film, to live productions that highlight Shakespeare's verse in a contemporary context, our projects challenge expectations and lead us forward to continued innovation.

HISTORY

New York Shakespeare Exchange began as a work/life balance initiative at American Express to give creative employees an opportunity to use their talents and provide unexpected workplace entertainment open to all.

The company launched in January 2009 with a staged reading of *The Comedy of Errors*, presented in two lunchtime installments and two “Happy Hour” post-work performances. It gave employees a surprising break in the day to relax and have a laugh on us.

The success of *The Comedy of Errors* made it evident that even though New York is commonly known as the theatre capital of the United States, there is still a large portion of the population that does not have access to live performances.

And so, **New York Shakespeare Exchange** was born.

Our first full year in 2010 was filled with great performances and warm audiences in venues as simple as our living rooms to the cutting-edge art spaces of lower Manhattan. The sensational multi-media production of *The One Man (Two Man (not quite)) Hamlet* opened to great reviews. The hilarious **What's So Funny?** stage readings had audiences engaged in a conversation about classic Shakespeare and a contemporary new play sharing similar themes. The power of exchange was present at our lively talkback sessions during this series. Members of the NY theatre community as well as many students from our nearby college theatre programs engaged scholars from St. John's University, the City University of New York, and fellow actors in finding fresh perspectives of Shakespeare's poetry.

These successes and our social events helped further our mission of offering innovative theatre programming. And, in the process, our company has grown. Our board of directors and administrative staff continue to develop, and we're proud to say that ticket sales and donations have supported our programs this year. We appreciate our audiences and are encouraged by our community's financial support.

5-YEAR GOALS

- ★ Be recognized as the leading classical theatre in Lower Manhattan and a potent member of the New York theatre community.
- ★ Produce a yearly season comprised of at least two classical plays and one original play.
- ★ Establish a youth advocacy program including apprenticeships, training, outreach, and professional development.

2010 ACHIEVEMENTS

- ★ Raised \$15,000 through individual giving.
- ★ Completed our first fiscal year free of debt.
- ★ Two leading NYC arts organizations—**HERE Arts** and **3LD Art & Technology Center**—provided grants to support artistic residencies for development and production of our spring show.
- ★ Sold over 400 tickets throughout the 2010 season.
- ★ Presented our first theatrical season featuring a three-week run of the world premiere of *The One Man (Two Man (not quite)) Hamlet* by Kevin Brewer.
- ★ Successfully established a formal board to oversee company activities, an ambitious goal for a company in its infancy.
- ★ Expanded our circle of artists by holding our first open-call audition and employing 20+ new actors for our **What's So Funny?** reading series.

2011 GOALS

- ★ Engage new audiences in New York with our exciting season of events and productions.
- ★ Express our theatrical and artistic vision through our fall presentation of Shakespeare's *The Life and Death of King John*.
- ★ Explore the relationship between classical theatre and contemporary culture with our **Apocrypha Now!** reading series.
- ★ Sell 1,000 tickets to our performances and events in 2011.
- ★ Complete the filing for our federal tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status. Currently, NYSX is a sponsored project of Fractured Atlas, a non-profit arts service organization.
- ★ Establish dialogue with various grant-making and philanthropic organizations and begin to develop the relationships that will contribute to our business longevity and sustainability.

CONTACT INFORMATION

WEBSITE

<http://www.ShakespeareExchange.org>

FACEBOOK

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/New-York-Shakespeare-Exchange>

TWITTER

@ShakesExchange

PHYSICAL ADDRESS

143 Prospect Avenue, #2 Brooklyn, NY 11215

EMAIL

Info@ShakespeareExchange.org

WHAT WE ASK OF OUR BOARD MEMBERS

- ★ Bring enthusiasm, energy, and a positive attitude.
- ★ Advance the purpose of the board and continually ensure that activities align with the broader goals of the organization.
- ★ Attend board meetings and planned activities: at least two board meetings, one performance and one fundraiser or other company function per year.
- ★ Become part of the team; get to know the company staff and collaborate with other board members.
- ★ Be an advocate for the theatre company; actively communicate the company mission and events to an influential network of associates.
- ★ Contribute ideas and advice to the board based on background and experience (other board service, non-profit work, or professional leadership).
- ★ Make a personally significant financial donation and help in fundraising efforts, including asking for donations and participating in fundraising events.

THE QUALITIES OF OUR IDEAL BOARD MEMBER

- ★ **INTELLIGENCE**—Be passionate about theatre; share advice based on experience regarding how NYSX can grow as a company while still staying true to its mission.
- ★ **DEDICATION**—Aid the company in fundraising for innovative theatre productions and in finding resources to succeed.
- ★ **RESPONSIBILITY**—Be trusted to complete assigned or accepted tasks.
- ★ **CRITICAL-THINKING**—Be diligent about helping NYSX make the right decisions; offer diverse points of view to broaden the company's appeal and strengthen the board's decision-making process.
- ★ **ENTHUSIASM**—Foster a friendly, fun-loving culture that makes participating in board activities enjoyable to all; collaborate in a way that encourages others to contribute.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

We asked our current board members how they most benefit from being a board member, and here is what they had to say. As a NYSX board member, you can:

★ INNOVATE

- ★ Affect change in theatre and share Shakespeare with someone new.
- ★ Build a grassroots, yet organized and fully realized theatre company.
- ★ Be involved in educational programs that bring theatre to the NYC community of artists, non-artists, and students, and hang out with an amazing and awesome fun board and artists.
- ★ Deliver Shakespeare in unexpected ways with a scrappy, creative company, a strong board, good legal counsel, and substantial bylaws.

★ SHARE

- ★ Collaborate with interesting individuals, meet new people and new organizations.
- ★ Make an impact and give back to the community using your talents and experience to help others.
- ★ Advise on how to create a successful company and then help NYSX implement those ideas.

★ GROW

- ★ Learn as you are exposed to the many facets of the theatre industry and non-profit organizations.
- ★ Get access to the world of theatre (rehearsals, readings, backstage before and after shows, meeting actors and directors, etc).
- ★ Develop new career skills in a burgeoning company.

★ HAVE FUN

- ★ Join a GREAT group of fellow board members that make participation FUN.
- ★ Express yourself artistically.
- ★ See good theatre.
- ★ Have fun . . . with a mission statement.

2011 BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

The NYSX Board of Director meetings are held bi-monthly with an annual planning meeting usually held in the fall. The remaining meetings scheduled for 2011 are:

October 13, 2011, 7pm-9pm

December 8, 2011, 7pm-9pm

TERM

NYSX bylaws state: Directors are elected annually by a majority vote of the entire Board. Each director shall continue in office until the conclusion of the next succeeding Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors and her or his successor has been duly elected or qualified, or until her or his prior resignation or removal.

SELECTION PROCESS

Interested candidates should contact the Board Chair, Vince Gatton vince@shakespeareexchange.org to arrange an interview. Nominations will then be made to the Board of Directors for election. Candidates will be notified of the result immediately following this process.

We welcome your contribution in making **New York Shakespeare Exchange** a sustaining member of New York's performing arts community.

Thank you for your consideration!

APPENDIX

2011 PROGRAMMING

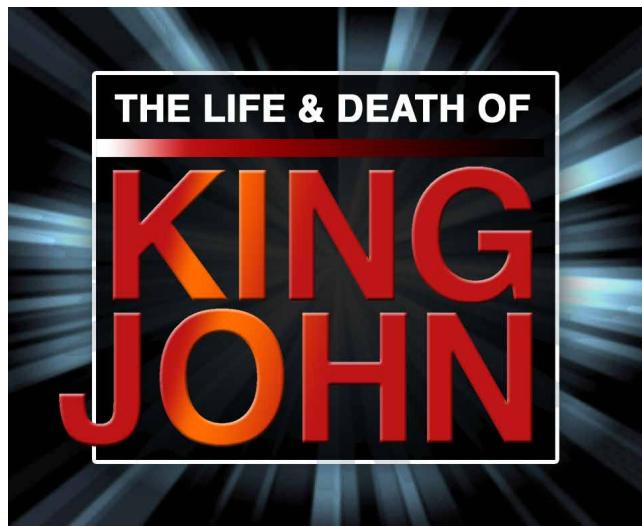


- ★ **Description:** What's better than a pub-crawl? **ShakesBEER**, NYC's original Shakespearean pub-crawl. In our premiere event at the Historic Stone Street in Lower Manhattan, we crawled from The Dubliner to Beckett's to Stone Street Tavern and then back to The Dubliner. Each ticket included four drinks and four scenes of engaging Shakespeare.
- ★ The idea stemmed from our mission of creating cultural dialogue in unexpected ways. Instead of having the standard pub-crawl, we infused the event with unexpected Shakespeare by having actors erupt into various Shakespearean scenes.
- ★ Our March event was a huge financial and creative success, and we expanded our second event in July to span two weekends in Greenwich Village.
- ★ ShakesBEER videos can be viewed at:
<http://shakespeareexchange.org/content/shakesbeer-video>
<http://vimeo.com/26965657>



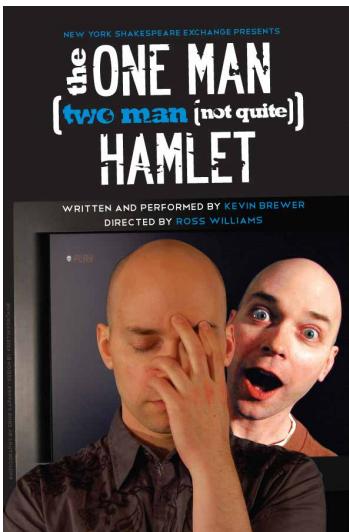
- ★ **Description:** Apocrypha? What does it mean? What does it have to do with Shakespeare? In May, we continued our popular concert reading series "Two Plays, One Conversation" by pairing the rarely-performed *Mucedorus* with Shakespeare's rollicking comedy of mistaken identity *A Comedy of Errors*. Some people say that Shakespeare wrote the Elizabethan comedy *Mucedorus* and it should be considered part of his canon, but others argue otherwise. We presented this unknown work with a confirmed Shakespearean comedy in the search for similarities and differences. Each reading had a talkback with New York scholars discussing what truly defines "Shakespeare."

- ★ *Mucedorus* is not only an obscure play but also a play of questionable authorship. A debate rages as to whether William Shakespeare penned this play. Our reading series title was a play on the term for works of questionable origin: Apocryphal.
- ★ We once again discovered new talent while casting for this reading series. We also developed a professional relationship with the staff at Urban Stages, the space hosting our production.



- ★ **Description:** What happens when everyone in the world believes they are entitled to celebrity, visibility, and power? One of Shakespeare's lesser-known plays, *King John* brings these themes to vibrant life through some of the most glorious language in all of Shakespeare's plays. Our media-soaked production will bring together the world of reality TV and the passion of Elizabethan poetry.
- ★ This is our main stage production for 2011, and performances are scheduled September 15 – October 3 at The Access Theater in SoHo.
- ★ Our first full production of a Shakespearean play garnered the attention of many theatre critics including *Backstage*, *Time Out New York*, and *TheaterMania*.
 - ★ “*King John* is one of the finest Off-Off Broadway Shakespeare productions I have ever seen.” —*Time Out New York*
 - ★ “Skull-shattering power” —*CurtainUp*
 - ★ “Clever and penetrating” —*TheaterMania*
 - ★ “This first major offering by this company is ambitious, and bodes well for smart and entertaining work in the future” —*NYTheatre.com*

2010 PROGRAMMING



- ★ Our 2010 spring world premiere production combined the epic journey of *Hamlet* with modern video technology when a single actor performed the entire show with only a video of himself as his co-star in this dynamic, multi-media romp.
- ★ With dialogue that bounced between Shakespeare's poetry and contemporary language, audiences witnessed a man grappling with his most private and palpable fear in this intriguing, new comedy. The production explored the true nature of success and the unrealistic standards to which we often hold ourselves.
- ★ The work received two grants: One at 3LD for filming the video component of the work; the other at HERE Arts as part of their HEREstay residency program.

★ Reviewers gave high praise for the ingenuity and the fresh, modern re-interpretation of the *Hamlet* story:

- ★ "What a piece of art is this show which has been keenly directed by Ross Williams . . ."
- ★ "It's surreal. I was mesmerized."
- ★ ". . . you will be intrigued and awed along the amazing, comic and sincere journey that Kevin Brewer takes you."

what's so funny?

Two Comedies.
One Conversation.

- ★ **Description:** What's So Funny? In 2010, we presented the classic *Much Ado About Nothing* by William Shakespeare. Then, we presented *Island* by Kevin Brewer, a new comedy written in Shakespearean style that embraces and twists Shakespearean archetypes and situations. After each reading, a panel of New York theatre scholars led a talkback discussing how the plays create a cultural exchange with each other and with a contemporary audience.

- ★ Our “Two Plays, One Conversation” format allows for a fresh entry into the world of classical theatre. We approach the traditional “post-show talkback” in a contemporary way. Addressing our mission of theatrical exchange, we use these conversations as a way to find the intersection points of classical theatre and today’s society. The talkbacks are always lively, irreverent, funny and ultimately illuminating.
- ★ The inaugural run was a financial success and introduced our company to new audiences. Our audition process introduced us to new, talented actors. Many of these actors continue to be involved with our company through both performing and attending shows.