How Tevye the Dairyman Became an International Superstar

By Lisa Higgins

levye the Dairyman leaps off the pages of Sholem Aleichem's collected stories with such exuberance that he seems destined for worldwide renown—like many other larger-than-life literary characters. But even the indomitable Tevye could have remained locked in history and near obscurity if Fiddler on the Roof had never moved beyond its status as one of the world's most unlikely musicals.

Sholem Aleichem, born Sholem Rabinovitz in Ukraine in 1859, was a highly regarded writer of Yiddish stories, novels, and plays before making his way to America in 1907. His first few plays in his new country were "both artistic and financial failures... rejected by the New York Yiddish theater establishment."1

Nonetheless, Aleichem pursued adapting his Tevye stories and monologues into a play for the stage. In a letter to a fellow playwright he wrote: "The play contains both tragic and comic situations, jokes, songs, breathtaking scenes, and singing, but the main thing is that from the first act to the last curtain, Tevye pulls out all the stops, the audience laughs and gets to love him more and more." He predicted that the role would bring him and the actor who played the role fame and fortune. In 1919, three years after Aleichem died, Tevye took the stage—and the play remains "a classic of the Jewish stage to this day."2

The role of Tevye in the musical Fiddler on the Roof did indeed bring fame and fortune to many actors, first and foremost was Yiddish actor and comic genius Zero

> Mostel, who originated the role on Broadway. Other great Broadway character actors such as

Herschel Bernardi, Theodore Bikel, and more recently Alfred Molina and Harvey Fierstein received acclaim for

their portrayals. Israeli actor Chaim Topol, who portrayed Tevye in the London production and the 1971 Academy Award-winning film, subsequently played the role in revivals and tours.

Before Fiddler on the Roof became an international phenomenon, the team that adapted Aleichem's Tevye stories into the Broadway musical Fiddler on the Roof knew that they would have a hard sell to investors and audiences. Joseph Stein, a Broadway veteran whose book won the Tony Award said: "I couldn't conceive of going to a producer and saying, 'We have this idea of a show about a lot of Jews in Russia. They have a pogrom and get thrown out of their village."

Stein, along with Lyricist Sheldon Harnick and Librettist Jerry Bock-all successful Broadway artists—chose Jerome

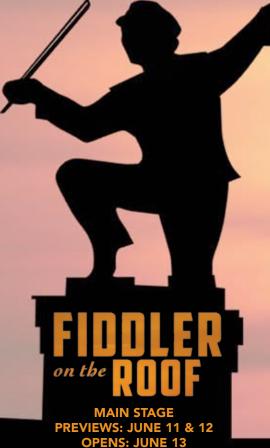
Robbins, the choreographic genius responsible for West Side Story, to direct and choreograph the new musical. In Broadway Song and Story, Harnick recalls:

Robbins kept asking and hammering at us for months: 'What is this show about?' If we gave him an answer like, 'Well, it's about this dairy man, and he has three daughters,' he would reply, 'No.... We have to find out what it is that gives these stories their power.' I don't know (who) finally said it: 'Do you know what this play is about? It's about the dissolution of a way of life.'

'If that's what it's about,' Robbins said, 'then we have to show more of the way of life that is about to dissolve. We have to have an opening number about the traditions that are going to change. This number has to be like a tapestry against which the entire show will play.' And that was the beginning of 'Tradition.'

fter previews in Detroit and Washington, D.C., Fiddler opened on Broadway in 1964 and was the first musical ever to surpass 3,000 performances (a record that held for almost 10 years). According to the New York Times, "By 1971, when the production became Broadway's longest-running musical... it had already been produced in 32 countries in 16 languages." Nominated for 10 Tony Awards, winning 9, including Best Musical, Score, Book, Direction, and Choreography, Fiddler has since spawned four Broadway revivals and a film adaptation that won three Academy Awards.

PSF Director Dennis Razze reflects that: "Tevye's trademark is his humorous discussions with God throughout the play and his ability to see issues on 'one hand and the other hand.' Tevye talks with God as he



CLOSES: JUNE 29

continues on page 3

Notes from the Producing Artistic Director

"If I were a rich man..." sings Tevye.

The aim to enrich is at the heart of the Festival's mission.

Tevye sings first of
his yearning for material
wealth, an easier life for
him and his family. But the song ends with

the higher aims of his longing.

As philosopher Roger Scruton reminds us in his book entitled *Beauty*, people associate the arts and beauty with their highest endeavors and aspirations and are disturbed by their absence. In the experience of artistic beauty, the world comes home to us, and we to the world.

The arts are one of the greatest of life's gifts to us, and theatre is one of the greatest of art forms, blending most of the other art forms into one. Scruton suggests that the word 'beautiful' denotes a particular kind of charm and grace by which we may be enraptured, a process that is elevating, lifting us out of the ordinary utilitarian thoughts that dominate our practical lives.

Art is not optional. It responds to a fundamental need of a higher order.

We invite you to give yourself the gift of "rooms by the dozens" of artistry and richness this summer at PSF. Please join us.

Patrick Muleury

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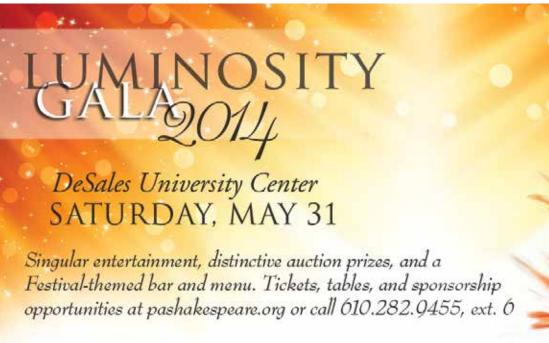
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Festival Host





Tevye continued

would with an old friend with familiarity and reverence at the same time.

"Tevye is an everyman with whom we can easily identify—a man who has five daughters, an irascible wife, and a partially lame horse.

"We all see part of ourselves in Tevye. When things go wrong, when we hit a rocky road, we say 'why me?"

Razze knows Tevye and the musical well: he directed *Fiddler* at American University in 1983 and for DeSales University's Act 1 in 1990. Now 24 years later he is thrilled to be directing *Fiddler* again: "Every time I direct something I

directed previously it's different because I'm different—I have a lot more life experience to draw from. With the superb cast of professionals we have assembled, supplemented by stellar local talent and students, I expect this to be a deep, rich production."

The production will feature the largest cast PSF has ever put on stage—35 actors, singers, and dancers.

All professional productions are required to reproduce Jerome Robbins' original choreography—"which is a great thing because it's some of the finest choreography ever created for a musical," Razze says. The famed "To Life" number where the Jewish villagers of Anatevka face off against a group of Russian Cossacks is one of the strongest displays of stamina and athletic dancing in the show and

represents two cultures pitted against each other. Robbins' famous choreography will be taught to the large cast of dancers by the talented Stephen Casey, who choreographed last season's *Oklahoma*!

"Fiddler on the Roof will be a great opening to our 23rd season," says Casey Gallagher, PSF managing director. "With the creative team we have working on it and under Dennis' leadership, it will be a production our audiences will enjoy when they see it—and enjoy again in their memories for years after."

- 1. Weitzner, J. (1994). Sholem Aleichem in the Theater. (1st ed., Vol. 0, p. 5). Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- 2. Ibid., 75.

leichem was often referred to as the "Jewish Mark Twain" because of the two authors' similar writing styles and use of pen names. Both authors wrote for both adults and children, and lectured extensively in Europe and the United States. When Twain heard the writer called "the Jewish Mark Twain," he replied, "Please tell him that I am the American Sholem Aleichem."

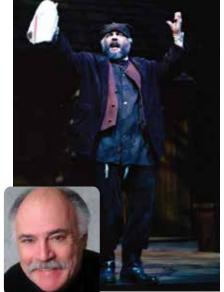
Cast News

Taking on the role of Tevye is Joe Vincent, who played Big Daddy in PSF's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* in 2012.

"As soon I saw Joe as Big Daddy, I knew I wanted to do *Fiddler* with him—he has the depth and command of the stage to play the role," says Director Dennis Razze.

Vincent brings experience to the role: "I've played Tevye in three different and wonderful venues. The first time was in the magnificent American Musical Theatre in San Jose, California (now closed). The company was famous for staging giant musicals in a 2,700-seat theater with a full orchestra.

"After that I played him again in a beautiful little 300-seat theater in Concord, California. And the last time I visited the role was at the world-famous Chautauqua Opera in western New York. That production included an ensemble of 30 young opera singers. It was spectacular.



Joe Vincent as Tevye in the American Musical Theatre production. He'll reprise the role in this summer's *Fiddler on the Roof.* Photo by Duane Morris.

"I'm really looking forward to returning to Pennsylvania to play the role again," he says. "I discovered many things playing Tevye. First, it is probably one of the most emotional journeys that an actor can take with an audience. Unlike, say, LaMancha, who

we can really only wish to identify with, Tevye is a beautiful, loving, and funny creature that we ALL identify with. He is a very real Everyman. A gem!"

Long-time Festival favorite John Ahlin—Falstaff in *Merry Wives* and *Henry IV, Part 1; Playboy of the Western World*—will play Lazar Wolf. (At press time, more casting is in progress: look for updates at pashakespeare.org.)



John Ahlin

If I Were Rothschild

In Collected Stories of Sholom Aleichem: Tevye's Daughters, Tevye chronicles his family life and the social conflict in the last days of Tsarist Russia in the early 1900s. Some of the characters, scenes and stories translate directly into the musical, while others serve as inspiration.

Tevye fantasizes about what he would do with his riches in Aleichem's short story, "If I Were Rothschild." He would buy the whole house "from foundation to chimney" and "no more worries about making a living." He would provide a "new roof for the old Synagogue" and "throw down the old poorhouse and put up a hospital."

But he is not content with just buildings and schools. He dreams of peace. "If I were Rothschild I would do away with war altogether. I would wipe it off completely from the face of the earth."

"If there are no more weapons and armies and ...trappings of war, there will be no more envy, no more hatred, no Turks, no Englishmen, no Frenchmen, no Gypsies and no Jews. The face of the earth will be changed."

Imagine that.

True Love, True Friendship, and Being True to Oneself

By Heather Helinsky, Dramaturg

wo gentleman, two servants, two cities, and two lovely ladies provide unparalleled comic possibilities in this play written by the twenty-something William Shakespeare. Yet, audiences should not expect apprentice work. The rawness and openness of *The Two Gentlemen*

of Verona excites veteran
Pennsylvania Shakespeare
Festival director Matt Pfeiffer.
"The play contains some of
Shakespeare's best ideas. He
really starts to find his voice
with this play. The play is
about the loss of innocence as
Valentine and Proteus grow up
and discover that they didn't
know anything about life.
Emotionally, it explores how
a young person feels when he
leaves home and becomes part
of a more sophisticated world."

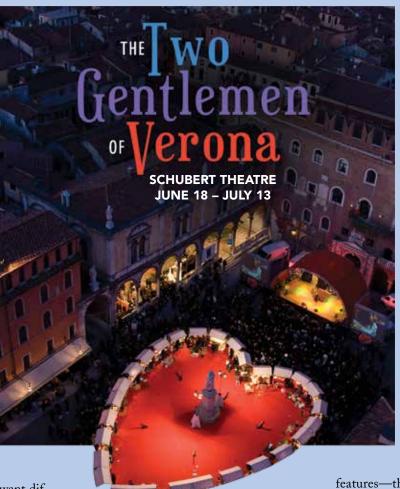
Under Pfeiffer's direction, audiences will enter the theatre with a live band already on stage to give the sense of celebration and summer revels. The musical style will be developed with the cast and PSF sound designer Matt Given.

The music both unites and underscores the relationship between Valentine and Proteus. "These two guys know each other better than they know themselves. However, they're

at a critical point where they both want different things: one guy wants love, the other wants education," says Pfeiffer. "It's dramatically exciting to see how much they change over the course of the play as they begin to question the value of friendship. And yet, when the truth is on the line, they are able to look deep and recognize each other. It's an unspoken connection, it's something spiritual, like music can be."

Shakespeare immediately creates a symmetrical relationship in Valentine and Proteus, introducing them in a pair of speeches of almost exactly the same number of lines, playfully sparring in a witty exchange. Yet this perfect friendship is disrupted by the need for the friends to part. Valentine plans "to see the wonders of the world abroad" and travel by ship to

the Duke of Milan's court, while Proteus is going to stay at home and woo his beloved Julia. But Proteus' father sends his lovelorn son to Milan as well, where Proteus promptly falls in love with the object of Valentine's desire: the Duke of Milan's daughter Silvia. Proteus then decides to follow his changeable heart.



In Elizabethan times, the idea of male friendship was a higher state of unity than even our contemporary understanding of brotherhood. Young Elizabethan schoolboys like Shakespeare were well-versed in Cicero's *Di Amicita* which stated the ideal friend was an "alter ego" or "another I or self." The French Renaissance essayist Michel de Montaigne, whose essay "Of Friendship" was well-known by Englishman in the 1580s, builds on Cicero with his assertion:

For the rest, what we commonly call friends and friendships, are nothing but acquaintances and familiarities.... by means of which there happens some little intercourse betwixt our souls. But in the friendship I speak

of, they mix and work themselves into one piece, with so universal a mixture, that there is no more sign of the seam by which they were first conjoined. If a man should importune me to give a reason why I loved him, I find it could no otherwise be expressed, than by making answer: because it was he, because it was I."

For the Renaissance audience, the friendship of Valentine and Proteus exemplified the classical deep friendships of Orestes and Pylades, Theseus and Pirithous, Achilles and Patroclus. The male friendship bond was higher than marriage, as women were seen as inferior beings and therefore not capable of the kind of friendship men had.

In later plays, however,
Shakespeare gives similar
weight to female friendships, such as the bond between
Helena and Hermia in A
Midsummer Night's Dream or
Celia's declaration about her
cousin Rosalind in As You Like
It: "If she be a traitor,/Why, so
am I....And wheresoe'er we
went, like Juno's swans/Still we
went coupled and inseparable."

Pfeiffer sees Proteus' dilemma around betraying his best friend in pursuit of Sylvia as "one of the play's best

features—the fact that your lead romantic character is both Orlando from As You Like It and Iago from Othello all wrapped up in one. My goal is the audience both loathes him and loves him, but that in the ultimate climax of the play, they have an understanding that Proteus recognizes his own folly and will change for the better. The journey of the character matches Shakespeare's own journey as a young writer. He hasn't quite mastered his craft. He's impulsive and the play is messy at times. But in the end, like Proteus, he discovers truth in a way that resonates with me and I hope the audience."

Male friendship at a dramatically explosive crossroads is familiar terrain for Pfeiffer as a director. From his recent Theatre Exile production of Sam Shepard's

4 • The Quill, Spring 2014 610.282.Will



True West to Annie Baker's new play The Aliens, Pfeiffer says he "gravitates towards these stories because I value the vulnerability of growing up. Friends are the family you make for yourself and come to appreciate through adulthood. Men fundamentally push against vulnerability, so I'm always interested in stories that address this and feature characters compelled to find the courage to deal with oneself. At the end of the play, the characters know who they are as adults—which can be a scary thing. But we all have to go through it."

With such themes, perhaps it's not surprising that some of the most popular productions of *The Two Gentleman of Verona* include adaptations into musicals. In 1821, an operatic version with a libretto by Frederick Reynolds and music by Henry Bishop opened at Covent Garden. Popularity followed thanks to the featured song "Who is Sylvia?," an overture, and 11 elaborately arranged vocal pieces—solos, duets, glees, choruses, and a grand finale. The words for the music were derived mostly from Shakespeare's sonnets and passages from other plays.

he 1971 Broadway musical *The Two Gentleman of Verona* was adapted into a rock opera for the New York Shakespeare Festival's Shakespeare in the

Park by John Guare and Mel Shapiro with music by Galt MacDermot. As playwright John Guare remarked, "The play itself was freewheeling enough that it didn't have the sacred textual holiness of *Lear* or *Hamlet*. It's shot through with beautiful poetry, and it's a good, funny little story."

PSF director Matt Pfieffer will neither turn his production into a musical nor update it to a contemporary time period. Pfeiffer's instincts are to use the same kind of scenic architecture that Shakespeare would have used. Since the play includes scenes in a rural area, a city, and a forest, it will not be set in a specific time period or place, but will evoke an environment that is at once progressive and country to celebrate the follies of young love.

Part of the play's charm is the confusion created by letters that get destroyed, misdelivered, or misread. "We're trying to evoke a fable that's not our world," states Pfeiffer. "The space between our time and these characters gives the audience some distance to enjoy the comic misunderstandings. Words and communication are not simple things. The stakes are higher when communication happens through letters delivered by people rather than text messages conveyed instantly. Besides, if these characters had cellphones, half the plot would disintegrate!"

In Elizabethan times, the idea of male friendship was a higher state of unity than even our contemporary understanding of brotherhood.

Two Clowns and a Dog Named Crab

Servants often serve as clowns in Shakespeare's works, and the two servants for the gentlemen of Verona "are young, full of humor, and fond of mischief," according to Frederick Ward in *The Fools of Shakespeare*. "Both are shrewd and keenly observant, particularly of the foibles and weaknesses of their masters."

While their masters claim to be the best of friends, Proteus, who has already promised himself to Julia, falls instantly in love with Valentine's beloved Silvia. Then Proteus sets out to betray Valentine, claiming: "At first I did adore a twinkling star,/But now I worship a celestial sun..."

Speed, servant to Valentine, does not always live up to his name in action but is often quick-witted in understanding things his master does not. Launce, servant to Proteus, is forced to leave home to accompany Proteus in his travels.

With loyalty to his betrothed and his best friend cast aside, Proteus is outclassed by Launce, who was so torn at leaving home he brings along his beloved pet dog, Crab. Although Launce lavishes attention and affection on Crab, the dog hardly seems to notice.

Throughout theatre history, many actors who played the role of Launce in *The Two Gentleman of Verona* have had to prove their acting chops to play against the role of Crab the dog—while a dog only has to lie there and be a dog to throw the audience into fits of laughter.

Even in Shakespeare's time, every dog had its day.

While all Shakespeare's comedies are a mixture of darkness and light, *The Two Gentleman of Verona* is rich with laughter and merriment as passionate, impulsive teenagers experience the transformative power of love through the double funhouse mirror of comedy.

Heather Helinsky is a freelance dramaturg with an MFA from A.R.T./Moscow Art Theatre Institute for Advanced Theatre Training at Harvard and is a 2001 alumna of DeSales University Theatre.

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2014 SEASON SPONSOR: PARTNERSHIP BY DESIGN

BRESLIN RIDYARD FADERO ARCHITECTS

By Jeanne Shook

"Rare," is how Robin W. Breslin, president of Breslin Ridyard Fadero Architects (BRFA), describes the long-term relationship between his company, PSF, and DeSales University. It all began in 1979 when Robin's father, Robert J. "Bob" Breslin, the company's founder and principal, met Fr. Jerry Schubert, founder of the DeSales theatre program and architect of the Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival. That year, BRFA was commissioned to design the Labuda Center for the Performing Arts, the first of seven building projects with the University, launching a 35-year partnership that spans two generations of the Breslin family.

In 1987, DeSales chose BRFA as its architect to oversee the development of its master plan. That same year, Robin was assigned his first campus project: the design of Trexler Library. A succession of building design and renovation projects followed, including McShea Center, Billera Hall, the Priscilla Payne Hurd Science Center, the DeSales University Center, the Gambet Center for Business and Healthcare, and renovations to Dooling Hall, currently underway.

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EDITOR Lisa Higgins
DESIGN Laura Zielinski

CONTRIBUTORS: Heather Helinsky and Jeanne Shook

In January 2011 at its winter commencement, the University awarded Bob Breslin the DeSales Medal, the institution's highest non-academic accolade that recognizes "the outstanding contributions to the development of the University through personal service as well as financial support." This honor is reserved for respected members of the community "distinguished for the witness they give to the ideals most highly prized by St. Francis de Sales."



At the 2009 PSF Gala, Breslin Ridyard Fadero Architects was celebrated as the recipient of the Will Shakespeare Award. First row, left to right: Andie Breslin, Zane Sommese, Kaitlin Breslin, Saige Sommese, Kelsey Breslin; second row: Kristin Breslin Sommese, Barbara Breslin, Cathi Breslin, Gwen Breslin, Gregg Breslin; third row: Bobby Breslin, Robert Breslin, Robin Breslin, and Lanny Sommese.

"Our company has been a proud participant and partner throughout the University's growth. To watch the campus expand from a few buildings among the cornfields to so many buildings, academic programs, and the addition of so many faculty and staff has been quite rewarding," says Robin. His wife, Gwen, senior project designer with the firm, has also been actively engaged in these projects, and together, she and Robin support PSF's gala and DeSales' annual dinner dance.

The Labuda Center became the home of the newly created Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival in 1991, and the alliance that was forged a dozen years earlier between Fr. Schubert and Bob Breslin would serve as the blueprint for a longstanding partnership—and friendship—that has endured for 23 years. BRFA first served as the Festival's Season Sponsor in 1994; since then, the company has sponsored some of PSF's most memorable productions, including A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It, The Importance of Being Earnest, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, and Pride and Prejudice. When asked to recall his favorite PSF production, Robin said, "without hesitation, Patrick Mulcahy's production of The Tempest...it was visually spectacular."

The Breslin "stamp" on PSF's evolution is truly a family affair. Robin's mother, Barbara Walker Breslin, served on the Festival's first Board of Directors and chaired PSF's first gala. Her Board tenure lasted 11 years, and she continued as an active participant on the gala committee for many of those years. Sadly, Barbara passed away in 2009, but her guidance and leadership in PSF's early years left an indelible mark on the Festival.

Robin joined the Board in 1999, where he remained for nine years, during which time he served on multiple Board committees. His term ended in 2008, but he continues to be a consistent source of wisdom and encouragement, and a valued friend and PSF supporter, evidenced by his company's season sponsorship, which underscores his belief that, "for the arts in the Lehigh Valley... the more that can be provided, the better we become as a culture."

"It is difficult to imagine a PSF season without the Breslins," says Artistic Director Patrick Mulcahy. At its 2009 gala, PSF chose BRFA as the recipient of its Will Shakespeare Award, given annually to "a person, group, or organization that enriches the world by the sharing of gifts, inspires others through luminosity of spirit and engages with society in a way that leaves an indelible and beautiful impression." Bob Breslin accepted the award on behalf of the company and his family. Mulcahy recalls that, while the award "recognized the Breslins on a more 'global' level for their commitment to the arts, on a more personal level it was testimony to our profound gratitude to the Breslins and their company for their ongoing presence, loyalty and support...and the longevity of this most remarkable association."

For Children and Families

by Lisa Higgins

When the children in the audience outnumber the adults: that's one of my favorite experiences in the theatre. The excitement and anticipation before the performance begins practically electrifies the air. In the Schubert Theatre, children and parents (or grandparents, teachers, or caregivers), negotiate their seats—to sit on the carpet sections right on stage—or not. And there's always the unexpected stage direction: "Don't eat the apple!" one child yelled to Snow White a couple seasons back.

Truth be told, *Shakespeare for Kids* is not just for kids. It is so inventive and engaging, you would have to be some kind of grinch not to appreciate how the scripts blend the Bard's original language with current references, sing-along music, and the kind of high-energy antics that kids love.

My three daughters, now twenty-somethings, grew up attending the children's shows at PSF. They still love seeing the children's shows. Of course, they see the "grown up" productions, too.

From the inception of the Festival in 1992, PSF has included a children's show production. PSF founder Fr. Gerard J. Schubert, OSFS, considered quality, live performance of classic children's sto-



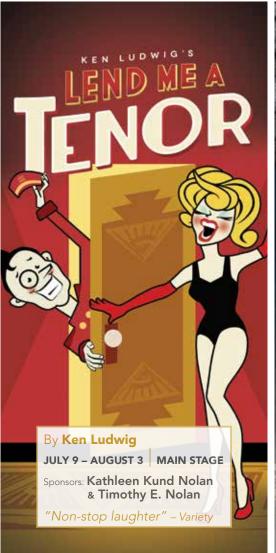


MAIN STAGE
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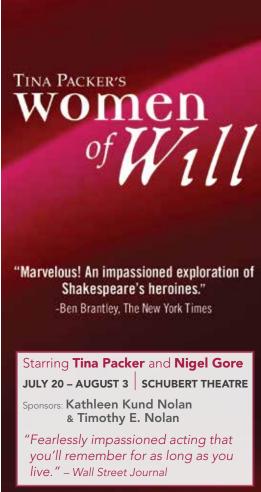
ries to be essential to the Festival's foundation and to its long-term success—building an audience for the future.

As it turns out, building an audience for the future also helps build skills for young people who attend live performing arts—including language skills like listening and reading, social skills like empathy, and problem-solving skills like creativity.

Each year, Producing Artistic Director Patrick Mulcahy offers a few remarks to the cast at the first rehearsal of the children's show: "This is your opportunity to invite young people to fall in love with live theatre." So if you have children in your life, bring them to PSF. Chances are you will have as much fun as they do.













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Eat, Drink, Be Merrily Edutained

Multiple-course meals themed to the play and easy conversation with artists and Festival leaders are additional options for PSF patrons again this season. Specialty dinners follow select matinees and precede select evening performances throughout the season; \$35 includes dinner and full bar. Contact the box office to make your reservation.

Dinner with Dennis and Deb:

PSF Associate Artistic Director Dennis Razze and Director of Development Deb Walter host themed dinners featuring behind-the-scenes insights.

> Fiddler on the Roof: Saturday, June 21 • 5:30 p.m.

Lend Me A Tenor: Wednesday, July 16 • 5:30 p.m. Sunday, July 20 • 5:30 p.m.

Savoring Shakespeare:

Extend your appreciation of the play and linger over a Shakespeare-inspired dinner. Share conversation and insight with noted Shakespearean scholar Dr. June Schlueter.

> The Two Gentlemen of Verona: Thursday, July 10 • 5:30 p.m. & Saturday, July 12 • 5:30 p.m.

Macbeth and Women of Will: Saturday, August 2 • 5:30 p.m. & Sunday, August 3 • 5:30 p.m.



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> For scotch lovers and learners, come enjoy a menu designed to optimize the enjoyment and appreciation of scotch. Bring a favorite scotch to share (one bottle if attending as a couple) at dinner and then stroll over to the theater to see Macbeth.

> Cost is \$100 per person, and includes an elegant dinner, full bar, and premium seats to Macbeth at 8:00 p.m.

Dinner will begin at 6:00 p.m. in the elegant Butz and McFadden rooms of the Trexler Library—just steps from the Labuda

For more information contact Deb Walter at 610.282.9455, ext. 6 or debra.walter@pashakespeare.org.

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