

# Stratford Tribune

NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL GUILD

FALL 2020

## It's Hard to Say Goodbye

*"Love hates that game of words!  
It is a crime to fence with life – I tell you,  
There comes one moment, once – and God help those  
Who pass that moment by! – when Beauty stands  
Looking into the soul with grave, sweet eyes  
That sicken at pretty words!"*

*"At the greatest height or depth of any human emotion, there is silence."*

The first quote above is from my favorite play of all time, *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand.

The second quote is a statement I often made to student actors while teaching and directing during the past 54 years.

I never thought this day would come, the day when I would hand over my keys and close my office door for the last time. The day when I would get in my car and drive the all-too-familiar route back home, feeling the road become distance behind me.

Today (August 24) is our fifty-second anniversary. My beautiful wife Anna agreed to share her life with me more than half-a-century ago, and during those years, she gave me a perfect son and sacrificed many things she always dreamed of having to support me in my work, wherever that took us. A week from today is my 78th birthday (impossible) and my final day of employment at Kilgore College and the Texas Shakespeare Festival.

As I drove to work this morning, knowing I needed to write this, images and memories of the past 54 years flew through my mind faster than the stripes on the highway. The years blended together, the faces and voices and memories were both vivid and swirling. I thought, "I need to speak every name in reverence and gratitude, but that will be impossible. I owe far too much to far too many people, some of whom have passed on. Whom do I thank? I cannot list them all. I pray that each one of them will know deep inside that I am eternally grateful. Amen."

My parents, my siblings, my extended family, my wife and son, all of my teachers, each of my many students, a long list of colleagues at the high school, at Ouachita University, and here at Kilgore College, and every artist who has shared their talents as a company member of the Festival since 1986 – all of these special people fill my heart.

Then, there are all those who



have supported our work as patrons, volunteers, Guild members, Foundation Board members, donors, and sponsors. How can I thank them? How can I list all their names? If you are reading this, you must know you are one of those sterling people.

I thank God for allowing me to earn a living doing the one thing I have always enjoyed the most. How fortunate I have been! I have never watched the clock, anticipating the end of the workday; never watched the calendar, waiting for the weekend; never counted the weeks, eager for vacation; and never waited for years to pass, looking forward to retirement. How many souls are so lucky?

But suddenly, here we are. That inevitable day has arrived. This performance comes to an end, and I begin to prepare for a new role.

I speak my last lines and prepare to exit, stage left. I reenter for the curtain call and hear the kind applause. I take a modest bow and look out over

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### FOLLOW THE GUILD



The TSF Guild is now officially social—on two platforms. Follow the Guild on

**Facebook:** [TexasShakesGuild](#)  
or on  
**Twitter:** [@TxShakesGuild](#)

We'll be sharing news, photos, and interesting facts that inquiring Festival fans and Guild members might want to know. Follow your Guild today!

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## Simpson, Simpson, and Dodd Carrying on the Festival

With the announcement of Raymond Caldwell's retirement, a pattern has emerged. The first part of the pattern is an expression of appreciation for all Raymond has done to build the Festival. Grateful patrons from all over the country have sent messages of love and admiration for what the Texas Shakespeare Festival and Raymond have brought to their lives. The second part of the pattern is a question: What now?

The answer to that has been brewing for many months now, and we are pleased to share it with you all. Kilgore College held a nation-wide job search to fill the position of Artistic Director, and the candidate selected was Meaghan Simpson. In recent years, Meaghan has worked directly with Raymond to learn firsthand everything that goes into season selection, planning, hiring, and casting as well as the execution of the summer season once the company arrives. Matthew Simpson will serve as Director of Development/Associate Artistic Director, continuing the work he has been doing with grant writing, fundraising, and budget management as well as remaining an integral part of the artistic decision-making. Completing the staff is John Dodd in his role as Managing Director. Now in his 34th year with Kilgore College, John facilitates the daily Festival needs, manages the details of the hiring process, and manages the company upon arrival in Kilgore.

We as a team joyfully anticipate carrying forward the baton passed from Raymond and maintaining a smooth transition, beginning with programming as early as the fall of 2020.

Goodbye, continued from page 1

the familiar auditorium filled with smiling faces. My heart is full of love and gratitude.

In the front row I see my wife Anna and my son Brent. In the wings stand John Dodd, Meaghan and Matthew Simpson, ready to walk onstage hand-in-hand to a fresh round of applause and cheers. And all around me, filling every inch of the cavernous theater from the basement dressing rooms to the back of the booth, are the spirits and souls of every beautiful person who has been a part of my life's journey. I love each one, and my heart is reaching out to them in deepest gratitude. But this experience is too big for words.

I thank you for the past 54 years, especially for the last

35 spent with the Festival. I thank Kilgore College for letting me be here. I thank the wonderful people of Kilgore and East Texas for their welcome and encouragement. And I thank the Great I Am for everything.

The first poem I ever memorized, the same year I saw my first play at the age of seven, was this one. It's called "The Gift" written by Christina Rossetti:

*"What can I give you,  
Poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd  
I'd give you a lamb.  
If I were a baker,  
[I'd bake you a tart.]  
But what can I give you?  
....  
I give you my heart."*

## Foundation News

### "...Thanks, and Thanks, and Ever Thanks"

The TSF Foundation Board is deeply grateful for the support the TSF Foundation has received during this difficult time. Even with all that is happening, our steadfast donors have continued to reach out, sending gifts large and small, along with many kind notes of encouragement. It's a testament to just how special our family of supporters is and how much the Texas Shakespeare Festival means to our patrons and this community.

### Texas Shakespeare Festival Foundation Prospero Society

*"We are such stuff as dreams are made on, / and our little life is rounded with a sleep."*

-Prospero

Named after the generous magician in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, The TSFF Prospero Society recognizes those who have provided for Texas Shakespeare Festival Foundation in their estate plans. Bequests, charitable trusts, and other planned gifts allow donors to provide future gifts from their estate to support the Festival without impacting their current financial situation. These gifts will be used to help build the TSFF endowment, a fund designed to provide the Festival with long-term financial stability.

You'll be hearing more about this in the future, but we wanted you to be the first to know about this new opportunity to make an enduring impact on the Texas Shakespeare Festival. If you're interested in learning more, please contact Matthew Simpson at (903) 983-8119 [msimpson@texasshakespeare.com](mailto:msimpson@texasshakespeare.com) or Melissa DeCarlo (903) 571-4793 [mdecarlo@texasshakespeare.com](mailto:mdecarlo@texasshakespeare.com)

Raymond Caldwell's retirement and birthday were celebrated at the TSF Center on August 31, 2020, with only TSF staff present. Since we could not be at the party, hundreds of "Dear Raymond" notes which were presented to him that day were our understudies.

Guild members, Kilgore College colleagues, TSF alumni, former students, and devoted fans all expressed our appreciation, affection and admiration in a virtual outpouring of messages. Dean of Arts and Mathematical Sciences Becky Johnson also recognized his 40+ years as an employee of Kilgore College.

Waiting outside in the parking lot, twenty current and former board members of the Guild and Foundation greeted a surprised Raymond with the Happy Birthday song, balloons, and posters for a socially-distanced send-off.

The joyful celebration and send-off rally originally scheduled for this fall by the TSF Foundation and Guild has been postponed until 2021.

Raymond's illustrious career, including the history of the Texas Shakespeare Festival, is commemorated in a documentary film which premiered on August 31. View it on the TSF YouTube channel.

He leaves with an overwhelming tsunami of thankfulness for his legacy of the Texas Shakespeare Festival.

## 2021 Summer Season Announcement

It is TSF's plan that in 2021 we will be able to produce the same five plays you would have experienced in the Van Cliburn Auditorium this past summer. To that end, it is our fervent hope that each company member will join us in 2021 as contracted in 2020. We do not want to miss the opportunity to work on these plays with this company as originally planned. In addition to the summer plays, we are hard at work planning a fall radio play production of *The War of the Worlds*, and a spring Roadshow tour. Because of the uncertainty of current health concerns, we will create an in-person plan in tandem with a virtual plan so that the "show will go on" no matter the circumstances.

### The Merry Wives of Windsor

By William Shakespeare

*"Wives may be merry... and yet honest too."*

### The Book of Will

By Lauren Gunderson

*"No one can help the passing of time or friends."*

### Romeo and Juliet

By William Shakespeare

*"From ancient grudge break to new mutiny, where civil blood makes civil hands unclean."*

### The Bridges of Madison County

Book by Marsha Norman

Music and Lyrics by Jason Robert Brown

*"It all fades away... but you."*

### The Gnomes of Gnot-a-Hill

Written by Grace Abele and DJ Canaday

See email edition online for a synopsis of each play.

<https://www.texasshakespeare.com/stratford-tribunes>



## Historic East Texas Giving Day

Thanks to your support, the Texas Shakespeare Festival raised more money than any non-profit in all of Gregg County on East Texas Giving Day back in the spring. This was a historic year for the Festival, giving us our highest funds raised to date at over four times more than we raised last year, totaling \$21,419.

### Now Streaming

Over the course of April and May, TSF began a Saturday Streaming Series posting previous Shakespeare productions to our YouTube page. This offering is free, but many patrons have purchased a "virtual ticket" as a token of appreciation. Below is a list of the productions, and a link to view the shows and purchase a virtual ticket.

*The Book of Luke*

*The Merry Wives of Windsor*

*Romeo & Juliet*

*The Princess and the Players*

*Twelfth Night*

*Measure for Measure*

*Much Ado About Nothing*

*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*

*An Evening with Raymond Caldwell*

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/texasshakespeare>

Purchase a Virtual Ticket: <https://texas-shakespeare-festival-foundation.networkforgood.com/projects/108904-2021-annual-campaign>

### 35 Sonnets for 35 Years

In honor of 35 amazing years in Kilgore, a fantastic group of TSF alums have each recorded a sonnet, and TSF has compiled them into a video called "35 Sonnets for 35 Years." This video is a love letter to you, our patrons, and a thank-you for everything you have done to keep TSF thriving for 35 years. If you haven't seen this yet, make some time. It is varied and beautiful in its execution. Link: <https://youtu.be/TqJ2I2nWyko>



See more photos online at:  
<https://www.texasshakespeare.com/stratford-tribunes>

## Join the Green Group—for Three Reasons

If you have not yet joined the “Green Group” by signing up to receive *The Stratford Tribune* newsletter via email rather than through regular postal service, please consider doing it today for three reasons: (1) it saves the Guild substantial cost in printing and postage; (2) it allows you to receive a greatly enhanced version of the newsletter, including full-color pictures; and (3) it includes you on the Festival’s email list, which lets you receive more timely notifications of many TSF activities. And there is a fourth reason, too: it saves trees!

We are dividing the TSF Green Group into two specific groups.

- **Green Group**—You will receive the TSF newsletters *only* via email.
- **Green Group Plus**—You will receive the TSF newsletters via email and occasional correspondence about Festival activities. Examples of these might be information about the Lunch Bunch, TSF Foundation, raffles, and special TSF events. These emails might be informative or request help with events, etc. and will not be excessive. *We do not share your email address with other entities.*

If you are already a Green Group member, thank you.

**When you join the Green Group, please let us know your choice—*Green Group* or *Green Group Plus*.**

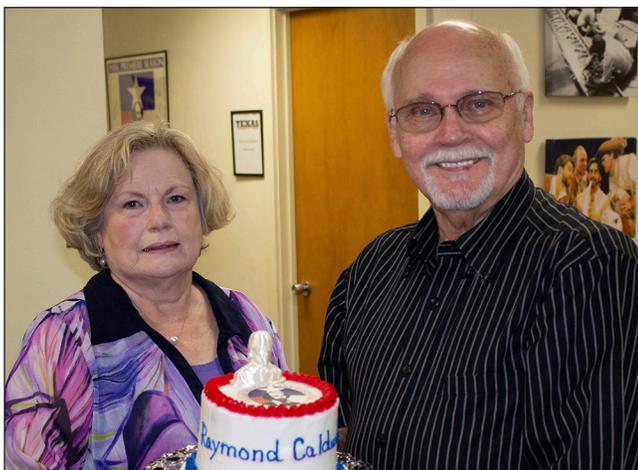
To join either Green Group, send an email to [LEKnouse2020@outlook.com](mailto:LEKnouse2020@outlook.com). Please be sure to include your name. Sometimes it is difficult to identify you by your email address.



## 2020—2021 Executive Board

<b>President</b>	<i>Gem Meacham</i>
<b>President—Elect</b>	<i>Karen Peters</i>
<b>Recording Secretary</b>	<i>Sharon Noblit</i>
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	<i>Lois Knouse</i>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<i>Rhonda Stephens</i>
<b>Past President</b>	<i>Claudia Morgan-Gray</i>
<b>VP—Guild Events</b>	<i>Kimberly Macedo</i>
<b>Co-VPs—Company Events</b>	<i>Eileen Kosnik</i> <i>Linda Crabtree</i>
<b>Co-VPs—House Events</b>	<i>Melinda Johnson</i> <i>Martha Rutherford</i>
<b>Co-VPs—Communications</b>	<i>Martha Dalby</i> <i>Kate Wells</i> <i>Lynn Wells, Graphic Design</i>
<b>TSF Artistic Director</b>	<b>Meaghan Simpson</b>
<b>TSF Director of Development</b>	<b>Matthew Simpson</b>
<b>Associate Artistic Director</b>	
<b>TSF Managing Director</b>	<b>John Dodd</b>

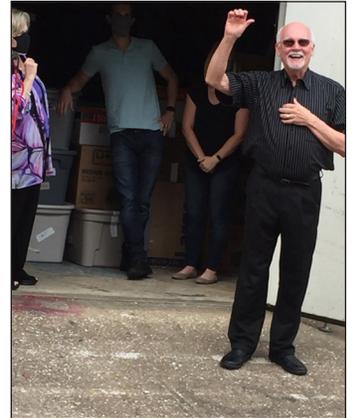
## RAYMOND’S RETIREMENT BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION AND



He leaves with an outpouring tsunami of thankfulness for his legacy of the Texas Shakespeare Festival.



# ..... GUILD SURPRISE PARK-IN



# Pandemic Projects

With extra time on our hands this summer, the TSF staff have been working on a few projects around the Festival Center to make things more organized and functional, including:

*-organizing the room of fabric storage and donating the fabric that is too small for Festival use*



*-cleaning and organizing storage closets*



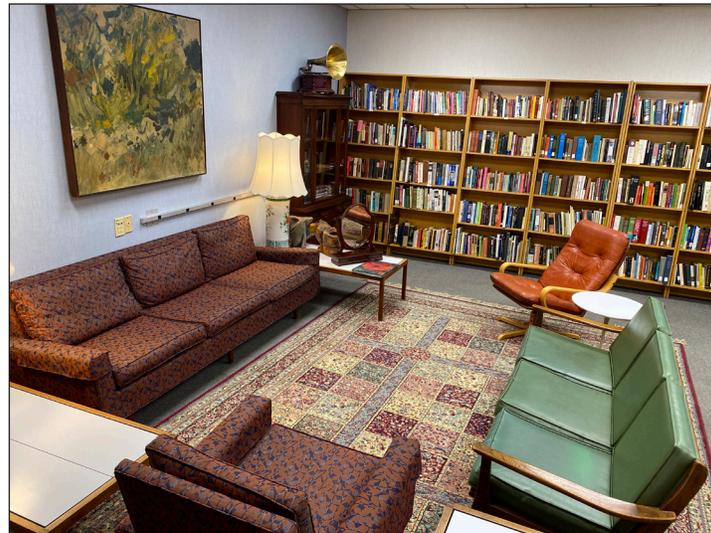
*-setting up the new risers in the Rehearsal Hall*



*-mounting a TV in the lobby for Zoom meetings*



*-moving all of the books we have to our library*



*-organizing the sound studio*



*-and many more projects to come!*