

Stratford Tribune

NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL GUILD

SPRING 2021

The Readiness Is All

A Note from TSF Artistic Director
Meaghan Simpson

The show will go on! At this time, we are moving forward with our full summer season while also keeping a close watch on the COVID-19 situation, especially the vaccine distribution. Our website, TexasShakespeare.com, will have the most up-to-date information about the calendar, how to purchase tickets, and what to expect this summer. There were many things to consider when making these decisions: How do we keep our company members safe? How do we keep audience members safe? Do we have to reduce seating capacity? If so, how do we make up for that loss in ticket sales? And most importantly, how do we stay true to our mission of producing culturally rich entertainment for East Texas? Suffice it to say, it is a big decision that I do not take lightly. Thankfully, I feel that we have a good plan A, plan B, and plan C. As Hamlet reminds us: "The readiness is all"

On a personal note, I want to say thank you to Kilgore College, the TSF Foundation, and the incredibly loyal members of the TSF Guild who have not wavered in your support. I have watched many theatre companies around the country shut their doors since March of 2020 and quite simply, you are the reason why we are still here. There is no real word for the depth of my gratitude so rather I would like to thank you by bringing back the thing that I know makes all of our hearts sing: live theatre.

A New Building in TSF's Future?

Over the past year, TSF staff has been working with architectural firm Johnson & Pace Inc. (JPI), to determine the Allowed Uses for the TSF Center space. The official opinion is that we will be able to use the TSF Center for all of the activities we have been conducting for the past several years with the exception of performances in the Upstairs Space. It is their opinion that the capacity of the rehearsal room must not exceed 49 people and the City of Kilgore agreed with this decision. We're disappointed to lose performances in the Upstairs Space, but relieved to know that our building is safe for all other uses.

With this matter settled, TSF has set its sights back on the dream of renovating the Safeway building. As a refresher, the Safeway building is the large building that is attached to the back of the Festival Center. TSF staff have long talked of the possibility of remodeling this building into a scene shop and costume shop. JPI did some initial investigation into the viability of this, and they feel this could be an achievable project and a

A Big Year for Grants

With a number of new funding opportunities made available in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, TSF has already brought in more than \$100,000 in grant funding this year – an organizational record! There's still one major grant opportunity coming up that TSF staff are working with Kilgore College on preparing: the Shuttered Venue Operators grant. This program was created to support venues that have been forced to close their doors because of the pandemic. There is major funding with this program for arts organizations, and TSF believes it could receive around \$125,000 to \$150,000 in funds. This money could be used to offset whatever losses TSF might sustain in ticket sales for the upcoming season, should they need to limit audience seating capacity. Applications for the program have not yet opened up but should in the coming weeks.

smart one for TSF to consider. There's more information that is still being gathered on environmental issues and the possibility of phasing the work over several years, but TSF staff is planning a meeting with the TSF Foundation's Building Committee to review our options and discuss how best to proceed.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Dates to Remember.....	2
Lunch Bunch.....	2
East Texas Giving Day.....	2
Guild President.....	2
President-Elect.....	2
Amazon Smile.....	2
TSF Foundation News.....	3
Roadshow Hospitality.....	3
Welcoming Roadshow.....	3
Notes from TSF Staff.....	3
Green Group.....	4
Guild Board.....	4
.....



FOLLOW THE GUILD



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

Facebook: [TexasShakesGuild](https://www.facebook.com/TexasShakesGuild)
or on
Twitter: [@TxShakesGuild](https://twitter.com/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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Dates to Remember

May 1-7

Guild & Foundation ONLY online ticket sales open
Online Code: **GUILDTIX2021**

• *This date for ticket sales may be even more important to note this year, since capacity in the Van Cliburn Auditorium is fifty percent of normal seating.*

May 23

Company is in residence and Lunch Bunch activates.

May 26-28

Box office opens for Guild & Foundation ONLY for in-person or telephone ticket sales.

July 1-4

Plays open.

July 29-Aug. 1

Plays close.

Lunch Bunch

YES! There will be Lunch Bunch this season! Volunteers are still needed on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. BUT, due to the changing times caused by the virus and our desire to keep the company and Guild members healthy, we don't know exactly what it will look like--yet. More details will follow as we get closer to May 23, our first day with the company in residence. Remember "flexibility" is the word for 2021!

Guild members have been so incredibly responsive and helpful in the past. We know we can count on you this year, too, as we add "patience" to our requests.

We are grateful for your devotion and commitment to the Festival and its Company and look forward to working together again this summer to provide the wonderful hospitality for which TSF is known.

• If you can assist with the Lunch Bunch between May 23-August 1, please contact Linda Crabtree, lcraabtree795@gmail.com, 903-918-1365

The Empty Seat Campaign

The good news is that there WILL be a 2021 TSF season, but social distancing in the Van Cliburn Auditorium will be required in order to keep our patrons in attendance safe. Fewer seats in the auditorium means fewer tickets sold and fewer dollars earned. This year on East Texas Giving Day, the Festival is asking for donations of \$35 (the average cost of a single ticket) to help make up for the difference.

East Texas Giving Day is an online event that provides

critical funding for area non-profits. East Texas Communities Foundation is partnering with area non-profits to give thousands of donors from every community in East Texas a chance to raise funds for local needs.

The official day to give is Tuesday, April 27th, 2021 from 6:00 a.m. to midnight.
www.easttexasgivingday.org

Thank you for helping us in this cause!

Notes from Gem Meacham, Guild President

Loyal and generous Guild members: Thank you for your 2021 membership, which allows your Guild to move into the 2021 season with renewed vigor. We are grateful that over 50% of our members rejoined.

Your 2021 membership allowed us to host the nine-member Roadshow Company in February and will enable our summer activities. The Guild's traditional welcome containers will be ready when the company arrives. The Lunch Bunch volunteers will be organized, and the lobby Guild table and door greeters will activate.

We expect some COVID precautions to continue, and the Guild remains flexible. We do not expect to hold large gatherings such as our lobby receptions and the Welcome/Strike Dinners. Our hope is to sponsor company meals in whatever configuration is possible.

During 2020, the pandemic shifted TSF realities away from a planned, orderly transition from outgoing to incoming leadership. This deprived Raymond Caldwell of his last season before retirement last fall. Meaghan Simpson was hired by Kilgore College to assume duties as TSF's second Artistic Director. Director of Development/Associate Artistic Director Matthew Simpson managed to generate more grant funding than ever for a year when no productions were possible. John Dodd continues as Managing Director and binds together the old and new. We are grateful to have them, and we thank Raymond for founding the Festival and guiding us to our present success.

Check the revamped Festival website to view their credentials. Impressive! <https://www.texasshakespeare.com/about>

Karen Peters, President Elect

Please Join Us by Becoming a Guild Member

The 2021 TSF Guild Membership Drive was highly successful. The initial mailing of 648 letters in the Fall of 2020 resulted in a return of 269 responses. A second mailing in January and February 2021 generated additional responses.

At this time Lois Knouse reports a total membership of 568. We will continue to accept 2021 memberships until May 1, 2021. During this year's season, anyone that joins will be designated as a 2022 member. All members will be listed in the playbill to be recognized for their membership.

You can still join the Guild by going to the Festival website, texasshakespeare.com. Click on Support, then click on the box labeled "Join the Guild Now." Follow the directions from there.

We hope to see you at the 2021 Shakespeare Festival performances. Thank you for your continued support!

Help Out with a Smile (through Amazon)

So many of us are using Amazon to supply us with a myriad of items. You can help the Festival through your ordering if you sign up to use Amazon Smile and designate TSF Foundation as your charity of choice. A small portion of your order then goes in as a donation. Every little bit adds up and helps!

TSF Foundation News

Trip for Two to Jackson Hole, Wyoming

Jackson Hole, Wyoming, is known for its blend of rugged beauty and luxurious accommodations. With magnificent mountain views, a quaint downtown, world-class snow skiing, and proximity to two national parks in the summer (Grand Teton, and Yellowstone), Jackson Hole has year-round appeal.



Photo by lailaskalsky

The trip includes:

- ✂ Roundtrip airfare from DFW to Jackson Hole, Wyoming.
- ✂ 5 nights for two in a Luxury Condo Suite at the beautiful Snow King Resort. (Condo is 2 bath/1 bedroom, but can sleep 2 additional guests in a Murphy bed for an added fee, or the winner can upgrade to larger condo at their added expense)
- ✂ A full-size (4-door) car rental for your entire stay.
- ✂ \$1,000 spending money.
- ✂ Only 350 tickets will be sold.

*Reservations must be made at least 6 weeks in advance.

*Travel is not permitted December 19—January 5.

The drawing will be held the last night of the Festival, Aug. 1.

You Can Help Make the Drawing a Success!

The social-distancing rules mean smaller audiences this summer, and that presents a special challenge to sell the tickets for the drawing. The TSF Foundation Board has agreed to pitch in and start selling tickets to friends and family, and we're hoping the Guild can help as well.

Please reach out to your friends and family about the drawing. It's a fun way to help the Festival, and after this last year, winning a spectacular vacation would be quite a treat!

Tickets are \$100 each and available for purchase on the TSF Website (www.texasshakespeare.com) under the "Tickets" tab at the top. We can also accept cash or checks (made out to Texas Shakespeare Festival) for tickets for the drawing. Those payments need to be brought to the Festival Center, where we can get purchasers' info into the computer and generate a ticket for the buyer.

Thank you. Any help will be greatly appreciated!

Roadshow Hospitality, with Pandemic Adjustments

Led by Eileen Kosnik and Linda Crabtree, the Guild's Company Events committee joyfully geared up during the month of February to host the Roadshow artists who arrived from all parts of the USA: DJ Canaday, Psacoya Guinn, Charleston Owensby, Anna Rock, Jeffrey Salisbury, Lauren Ufkes, Marco Vega, and Libby Zabit.

A Mardi Gras Park-In welcomed them Feb. 1, followed by a carry-out lunch. Each of our artists received gift cards from three local eateries since our usual "Adopt-An-Artist" hospitality was not possible.

During their three-week residency, the Guild planned five meals, three lunches, and two carry-out dinners. Alas, we were thwarted by the weather. Forever flexible, we served two lunches and a dinner in Kilgore, then sponsored a second dinner in Odessa. Just like so many events this past year, adjustments were made, but appreciation, warmth, and East Texas hospitality were still conveyed. Thanks to all who made that possible for the Roadshow company.

Welcoming the Roadshow Company: Report from Eileen Kosnik

Well, we will all agree that 2021 is unique, and so was our welcoming for the Roadshow company! Rather than hosting a Welcome Dinner, we served individually prepared meals, served in baskets, for the Monday lunches. The first two worked beautifully, and then we had snow!

Lunch the first Monday was a Carnival theme with individually planned po-boys tailored to the special diets of our cast – either shrimp, chicken or sauteed vegetables. White chocolate bread pudding, pralines and Mardi Gras cookies were added to eat when energy levels were flagging. The meals were left in the Center without contact between the lunch fairies and the company. The baskets had Mardi Gras fabric liners, beads and masks!

The second week, the theme was Valentine's Day, again with individual baskets and social distancing. That week the basket liners were Valentine fabric, and the food was cold raspberry soup, chef salad, and corn muffins for the entrée, with petit fours and chocolate-dipped strawberries for dessert. Snacks included peppermint kisses, truffles, jelly lollipops and heart-shaped springerle cookies to fill in the energy needs as required.

The third week was planned, but even the lunch fairies couldn't make it to Kilgore because of generally nasty un-Texas-like weather. We ended on the most unique note of all!

Notes from TSF Staff

On the Road—Success Amid the Adaptations

The TSF Roadshow had a very successful stay in Kilgore for the month of February. They overcame weekly COVID tests, masked and socially distanced rehearsals, and even a snow-storm of the century and still managed to put together two beautiful productions of *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Thanks to the joint efforts of Kilgore College, the TSF Foundation and Guild, Odessa Arts, Odessa College and numerous foundations and funding agencies, we made it through this project safely without any COVID infections! The company was deeply grateful for all the

work done to ensure their safety and departed for their respective homes on Friday, February 26th. The staff was exhausted, especially after the challenges brought on by the winter storm, but extremely proud of how the artists were cared for and the quality of the productions themselves. The edited productions are available to distribute to schools for free, and on www.texasshakespeare.com. In addition to the performances, we are scheduling virtual and in-person workshops with numerous schools throughout the region.

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!

• **Green Group** — 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.*

To join the Green Group, send an email to LEKhouse2020@outlook.com. Please be sure to include your name. Sometimes it is difficult to identify you by your email address.



2020—2021 Executive Board

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

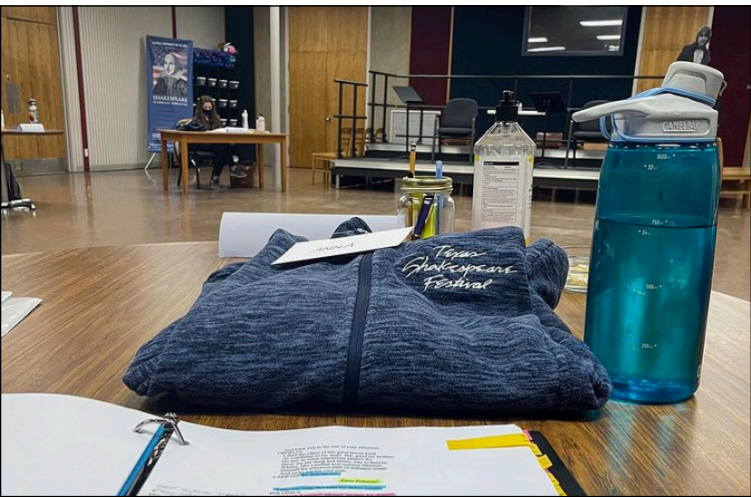
ROADSHOW HOSPITALITY



ROADSHOW RECEIVES TSF SOCIALLY DISTANCED WELCOME



2021 TSF ROADSHOW





Big THANK YOU to the TSF Guild for providing dinner for the roadshow company. ❤️

