



COMMONWEALTH  
SHAKESPEARE  
COMPANY

# “As Merry as the Day is Long”

2022  
YEAR IN  
REVIEW





## OUR VISION

As in Shakespeare's time, when most people could afford to see his plays, we seek to democratize theater by breaking down barriers for audiences, students, and artists. At CSC, we believe theater is a powerful force of inclusion and cohesion.

## OUR MISSION

Commonwealth Shakespeare Company (CSC) is dedicated to artistic excellence, accessibility, and education. We present plays at the highest artistic level, and eliminate barriers — physical, economic, and cultural — to bring live theater to audiences throughout Greater Boston. We cultivate in young artists the value of community engagement and collaborate with educators to bring literature to life in the classroom.

### FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

## Successes and Challenges in a Changing World

CSC had a great deal to celebrate in 2022. Our Free Shakespeare on the Common featured an exuberant *Much Ado About Nothing*, directed by Megan Sandberg-Zakian. Audiences returned to nearly pre-pandemic levels, and the production was an unqualified success with both critics and audiences. Our education and training programs resumed in person, with thousands of students attending our Stage2 matinees at the Strand Theatre in Dorchester and unprecedented enrollment in our training programs.

But there were significant challenges. Inflation took its toll on our already stretched budgets; costs for everything increased sharply, from crew salaries to rehearsal space to fuel for the generators on the Common. The worst of the COVID pandemic appeared to be easing, but we were still feeling its reverberations. COVID cases among the cast at our Stage2 performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* required juggling of people and roles — including several on-stage appearances by Associate Artistic Director Bryn Boice filling in for sidelined cast members.

Through it all we have never lost sight of our mission. Given the relentless increases in the cost of living, especially in Greater Boston, we believe our work is more essential than ever. Many of our neighbors are simply priced out of participating in the cultural riches of our community and miss the opportunity to share stories and experience the power of live performance.

The past year has been a period of great introspection and analysis: why and how we do our work, who we serve, how we might better engage audiences and the community. Our Board helped steer us toward an understanding of the "new normal" by undertaking a planning process to guide our vision over the next five years. We are deeply grateful to them, and to the foundations, companies, and individuals who supported us this year. Since we can't rely on ticket sales as other theater companies do, we are heavily dependent on this generosity.

We look forward to continuing progress in 2023 to building a sustainable organization, rooted in service to our community, delighting audiences on the Common, and inspiring the next generation of theater artists and audiences.



**Steven Maler**  
Founding Artistic Director



## FREE SHAKESPEARE ON THE COMMON

# Much Ado About Nothing

CSC's beloved summer tradition continued for the 26th year with a sparkling production of one of Shakespeare's most engaging comedies, *Much Ado About Nothing* on Boston Common. The play is a joyful romp, filled with plot twists and snappy dialogue. Directed by Megan Sandberg-Zakian, our production set Shakespeare's quintessential battle of wits in the colorful and vibrant 1990's and reimagined Benedick and Beatrice as two women, bringing a fresh new perspective to the issues the play raises.

The audience for our free Shakespeare productions has always included a cross-section of the community, and this year the 17 performances were seen by more than 25,000 audience members. We employ more than 150 theater professionals during the run, including actors, designers, production staff, audience services staff, and more. Our company and our audience support not only CSC but also many businesses around the Common.



**"It was a thrill and an honor to direct *Much Ado* on Boston Common. I was brought to tears nearly every night, when the audience would applaud at the women's first kiss — and then, when the two came together for an even more passionate smooch, thousands of people would break out into spontaneous cheers! Truly magical and, for me, transformative public theater."**

— Megan Sandberg-Zakian,  
Director of *Much Ado About Nothing*

**"The lives of two couples, one vying for love and the other scoffing at it...are at the center of Commonwealth Shakespeare Company's hilariously refreshing production of *Much Ado About Nothing*." — WBUR**



**"*Much Ado About Nothing* adheres to Maler's populist mission of presenting productions with high standards that remain accessible even to the Shakespeare-averse." — *The Boston Globe***



Regular attendees will have noticed a new look to our site on the Common. Taking advantage of funding from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocated by the Massachusetts legislature, we were able to invest in more modern facilities and equipment for the production. We acquired three spacious trailers for backstage and sound/lighting technicians, improving the conditions for our actors and staff. We also acquired CSC-branded signage and two small trailers for audience amenities, which provided a better experience for attendees as well.

To give audiences a preview of the production, we offered a free online series called "Much Ado About Much Ado." The series, hosted by Associate Artistic Director Bryn Boice, featured talks with the director, designers, and actors, and also included a virtual backstage tour, hosted by Production Manager Jenna Worden.

**"Great adaptation for this era! You make me aware that Shakespeare will always be relevant."**

— Audience Member

**"Absolutely brilliant and delightful... a spectacular gift to the City of Boston! Many thanks to the energy and vision and wonderful talent of everyone involved."**

— Audience Member

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

## Preparing the Next Generation of Artists and Audiences

In 2022 CSC returned to in-person education and training programs after two years of virtual offerings. The highlight of our education efforts this year was our return to the historic Strand Theatre in Dorchester for a Stage2 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Stage2 is aimed at students in middle and high schools, and features fully-staged professional performances, workshops, and classroom support materials. This year's school matinees drew nearly 3,000 young people to the Strand from 47 schools.

Stage2 performers are drawn from our CSC2 company of 12 emerging actors. CSC2 participants develop their skills in classical acting through performance, artistic and professional development, and different educational and coaching settings. In addition to their Stage2 performances, CSC2 actors frequently fill smaller roles in the Boston Common productions, and many go on to perform in more major roles as their careers develop.

The Apprentice Program for early-career actors expanded to 46 participants in 2022. Apprentices take classes, receive coaching and feedback, and work with CSC staff in various roles on the

Common. The program culminates in Apprentice Showcase performances at Suffolk University's Modern Theatre, professionally directed and open to the public. This year marked the beginning of an important relationship with Suffolk as the official partner for our Apprentice Program. The university provided classrooms, rehearsal spaces, and housing for Apprentices on their campus near the Common.

"None of my students had ever seen a live production before. One of my students was just in awe to be in the theater and said she had 'never seen a theater like this before.' A great experience!"

— English teacher



"I loved the talk-back. You could tell from the way the actors talked that they were all very passionate about theater and truly love what they do. The energy in the room even after the show ended was that of just pure joy."

— Student, 11th grade



"It was great to be back in person after two years of remote activities. Bringing young people from Boston area schools to the beautiful, historic Strand Theatre, conducting workshops in classrooms, having our Apprentices on-site to experience the full range of CSC's training and performance ... these opportunities are truly transformative for so many."

— Bryn Boice,  
Associate Artistic  
Director and Director of  
Education & Training

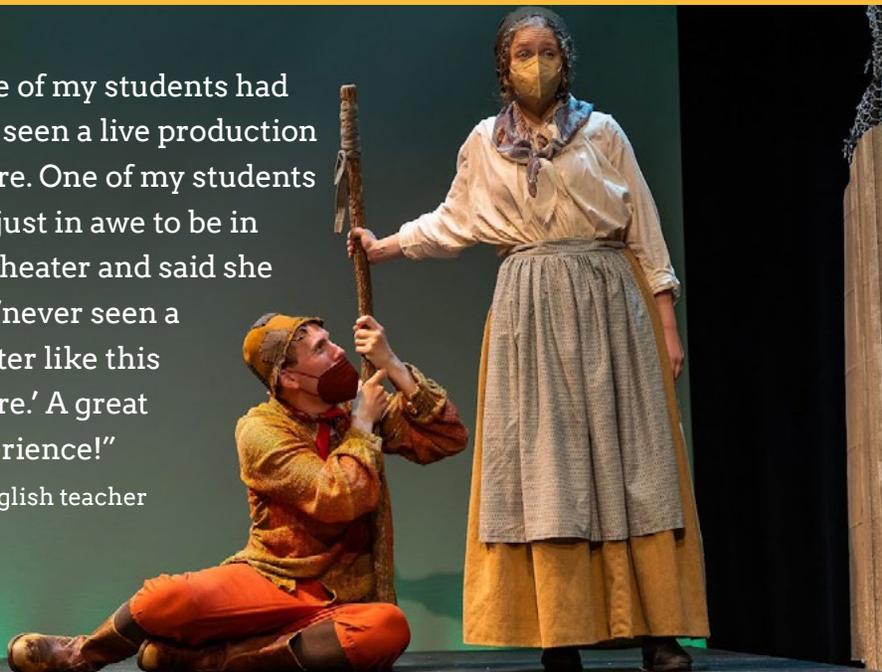


"The environment was truly caring and supportive, and the community that was created went beyond any of my expectations."

— Apprentice

(Facing page) Top: CSC2's Jaime José Hernandez (Lysander) in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Bottom: Apprentices Matt Fama (Silvius) and Melinda Kalanzis (Corin) in *As You Like It*. Photos by Nile Scott Studios

(This page) Top: Cast of Stage2's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Bottom: Apprentices Anna Kate Gossett (Juliet) and Joshua T. Crockett (Romeo) in *Romeo & Juliet*. Photos by Nile Scott Studios





“Our accessibility work is much more than the presenting of accessible content to be passively consumed by patrons with varying disabilities. Our work is internal and active. We are constantly working to create and sustain a place for everyone to participate in our company's story making/telling work.”



— Christopher Robinson, CSC Access Advocate and Director of HandShakes

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESS

### Ensuring That All Are Welcome

CSC was founded on the principle that Shakespeare's timeless stories should be available and accessible, to be enjoyed by all — as they largely were in Shakespeare's own time. From the very start, we have ensured diversity in our casts, so that people from all communities could see people like themselves on the stage. For our 2022 production on Boston Common, approximately half of the cast and creative team identified as individuals of color.

Many of the audiences we strive to include at CSC can feel unwelcome at traditional theatrical events. In 2022 we ramped up our efforts to connect with diverse audiences through our Community Ambassador program. We engaged with nine organizations from various communities in the area, offering them free access to our “Friends” seating section at *Much Ado*; 330 individuals attended.

Two initiatives have helped our staff deepen their commitment to DEIA in 2022. The Wellspring Consulting Group, a diversity consultant, provided an in-depth assessment of our practices and workplace culture, plus three all-staff training sessions. Also, in partnership with StageSource and IMPACT Boston, CSC joined ten other area theater companies to participate in the pilot year of the Line Drawn Initiative, a program aimed at preventing harassment and abuse.

**“Shakespeare's plays have been translated and interpreted into a number of languages. That this work is being done with ASL should not be considered unique, but rather necessary as a means to include the whole of linguistic expression.”**

— WBUR

Access for people with disabilities has long been a key element of our mission, and we have included ASL interpretation, open captioning, and audio description at selected performances on the Common every year. We also provide wheelchair-accessible sections, assistive listening devices, and large print programs at every performance. Off the Common, we provided open captioning for all performances and talkbacks for our Stage2 production of *Midsummer* at the Strand, as well as at a staged reading of *Measure for Measure* that was held in the spring.

This year CSC piloted a new training program for Deaf and hearing ASL-English interpreters called HandShakes. This intensive program is intended to help interpreters enhance their skills around translating the heightened language of Shakespeare, so that audiences understand not just the meaning of the words but also can appreciate the beauty of the language. At the conclusion of the program, participants utilized their new skills to provide ASL interpretation at three of CSC's Apprentice Showcase performances.



### History of Boston Common

The land now known as Boston Common is on the traditional lands of the Pawtucket and Massachusetts tribes, as well as the historic lands of the Wampanoag nation. The Common has a violent history toward Indigenous peoples that is seldom discussed. We wish to express our sorrow for this history and extend our gratitude for the use of this space.

For more information, visit [commshakes.org/la](https://commshakes.org/la).

## DEVELOPMENT

## Challenging Times, Extraordinary Generosity

Our work would not be possible without the support of a community of institutional and individual donors, and that community stepped up this year with unprecedented generosity.

Amazon became a lead sponsor of *Much Ado About Nothing* in 2022, joining other major sponsors such as GBH, Ovation, Xfinity, and many others in support of the production. We appreciate the opportunity to work with these companies who believe in our mission.

CSC also benefited this year from pandemic-related funding from both the federal and state governments. The largest single donation in CSC history came through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). This grant

enabled us to begin investing in infrastructure for our productions on Boston Common, including five trailers from Flexetail, a Massachusetts-based company. These equipment purchases enhanced our operations on the Common, reduced the amount we will need to spend on equipment rental, and will generate revenue in the future as we rent our equipment to others when we aren't using it.



Finally, we were delighted to begin our 2022 season with the launch of The Prospero Society, a community of CSC's most devoted and enthusiastic supporters who donate \$1,000 or more to CSC annually. Members enjoyed several special events during the year, including a holiday party with the lead actors from 2021's *The Tempest* and a reception with the actor Christian Coulson, who also performed in a staged reading of *Measure for Measure* in the spring. The Prospero Society now has more than 75 members, and we are looking forward to growing their numbers in the years to come.

The generosity of these important institutions and individuals has enabled CSC to improve our operations, support our artists and staff with better wages and working conditions, and invest in DEIA and access initiatives. We are grateful for the continued support of our long-time contributors at all levels and are very happy to welcome newcomers to the community.



“After emerging from two years of the pandemic, it was deeply gratifying that so many supporters stepped forward to help us through that challenging time and to provide resources to position us for the future. New corporate sponsors like Amazon, programs of the federal and state governments, and hundreds of generous individuals — we are grateful to them all.”

— Erin Coffey, Director of Development





## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

### CSC and the Boston Arts Community

Our investment in infrastructure on Boston Common enabled us to offer our stage to two local arts organizations after the conclusion of our *Much Ado About Nothing* performances in the summer. Boston Lyric Opera presented Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*, with Conductor David Angus and stage direction by Steve Maler, to enthusiastic audiences. We also hosted Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción for the final performance of their annual Tito Puente concert series.



For the second season — and for the first time in person — we offered the “Shakespeare Reimagined” series in collaboration with the Coolidge Corner Theatre. This year’s offerings were well attended and included the 2022 *Macbeth* with Denzel Washington, Ernst Lubitsch’s 1942 classic *To Be or Not to Be*, and the

1993 *Much Ado About Nothing* with Kenneth Branagh and Emma Thompson. Each event included a screening of the film followed by panel discussions with voices from both the film and theater worlds.

“In collaboration with our friends at CSC, we are creating something completely unique for our city, something neither company could make on its own.”

— Bradley Vernatter, General Director and CEO, Boston Lyric Opera

## CSC Directors and Advisors

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(Facing page): Ricardo Garcia and Vanessa Becerra in Boston Lyric Opera's *Romeo & Juliet*. Photo by Nile Scott Studios. (This page): Steve Maler and CSC Board Chair Dave Friedman



## Prospero Society

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### \$25,000 - \$49,999

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### \$10,000 - \$24,999

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Rob Hagen, Susan Poduska, and John Douglas Thompson.  
Photo by Julia Zhoniga

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**We gratefully acknowledge  
 the hundreds of donors at  
 levels below \$250. Thank you!**

Lists reflect gifts and pledges to support our 2022 fiscal year (October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022). To learn more about how you can help support CSC, please visit our website, commshakes.org. If your name was inadvertently omitted or misspelled, we apologize and ask that you contact us so that we may correct your listing for the future.

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**Special thanks to Flexetail, High Output, and McCoy Audio Systems**

\* Gift made as part of a matching gift program

\*\* In-Kind



## PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL RESULTS

## Year Ending September 30, 2022

Following two seasons of reduced expenses due to the pandemic, we saw a return to more typical spending in 2022. We made a significant investment in improving the compensation for our staff and artists across the company through a planned deficit of \$160,000 that was funded by our fiscal 2021 surplus. With inflation affecting supply chains and material costs plus the ongoing safety protocols required for in-person work, we faced unanticipated overages in the final quarter of the year. Thanks to the extraordinary support of our donors, we were able to exceed our contributed revenue goals to offset most of the expense overages and end the year with only \$12,000 in unplanned deficit, which was fully funded with cash on hand.

**COMMONWEALTH SHAKESPEARE COMPANY**  
**STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENSE (UNAUDITED)**  
 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED SEPTEMBER 30, 2022

## Revenue

Contributed Revenue: Individual Giving	\$549,744
Contributed Revenue: Corporate and Foundation	\$253,036
Contributed Revenue: Government*	\$490,584
Earned Revenue: Performance and Administration	\$74,565
Earned Revenue: Education and Training	\$165,862
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,533,791</b>

## Expenses

Production Salaries and Expenses	\$893,170
Education and Training Salaries and Expenses	\$288,481
Administrative Salaries and Expenses	\$290,972
Fundraising Salaries and Expenses	\$233,907
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,706,530</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>-\$172,739</b>

\*Contributed Revenue: Government does not include the multi-year infrastructure funding of \$1.32 million through ARPA.

## Thanks to these generous supporters of Free Shakespeare on the Common






## CSC Staff

Steven Maler, Founding Artistic Director

Bryn Boice, Associate Artistic Director and Director of Education and Training

Janet Bailey, Marketing and Management Advisor

Corey Cadigan, Marketing and Communications Manager

Erin Coffey, Director of Development

Chantelle Escobar-Leswell, Development Manager

Alicia Hartz, Management and Programming Coordinator

Brittney Holland, General Manager

Katalin Mitchell, Press and Media Representative

Linda O'Brien, ARPA Project Manager

Christopher Robinson, Access Advocate

Mark W. Soucy, Grants Manager

Victoria Townsend, Artistic Programs Manager

Jenna Worden, Production Manager

**Legal Representation:** Jeffrey Clevon and David Santeusano, Holland & Knight LLP

**Accountant:** Julian Friedman, Friedman Hurwitz & Aliber

**Bookkeeper:** Leslie Holmquist, RMD Studios

**Graphic Design:** *Year in Review:* Labor Day Creative

**Graphic Design:** *Much Ado About Nothing:* Soe Lin Post



COMMONWEALTH  
SHAKESPEARE  
COMPANY

101 Arch Street, 8th Floor  
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**“As Merry  
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**2022 YEAR IN REVIEW**