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## BARD ON THE BEACH ANNOUNCES 2008 ATTENDANCE & 2009 SEASON PLAYBILL

VANCOUVER, B.C..... Artistic Director **Christopher Gaze** is delighted to announce that Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival again achieved exceptional attendance in 2008. Despite the coldest June in decades and unseasonably poor weather in July and August, attendance exceeded **87,000**, representing more than **96% of capacity**. This just shy of the all time record of 87,271 achieved during last summer's sold out run. In 2008 additional capacity was added by extending the season by six days, allowing for 8 more performances including more Student Matinees. *Twelfth Night* broke Bard records for the most seats for any single production; it was seen by over 40,000 patrons, surpassing the 2006 *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at 38,954.

The 2008 programming paired a light-hearted comedy with a serious tragedy in each of the performance tents. On the Mainstage, director **David Mackay** gave the fun-filled comedy *Twelfth Night* extra sparkle by dropping it into the 1920s while **James Fagan Tait**'s *King Lear* heightened the vulnerability of the aging monarch by placing a contemporary Lear in a wheelchair and by integrating music composed by **Joelysa Pankanea**. In the intimate Studio Stage, **Meg Roe**'s colourful Elizabethan production of *The Tempest* was so popular it sold out for the run by mid August, while the bloody but powerfully staged *Titus Andronicus* directed by **Kim Collier** attracted near-capacity houses. Close to 10,000 students attended the Festival's **Student Matinee Series** or came to evening performances when the school matinees quickly filled up. Both the **Bard-B-Q & Fireworks** evenings and **Celebrating Red & White** wine tasting again sold out well in advance. The popular **Opera & Arias** concerts featuring UBC's Opera Ensemble and members of Vancouver Opera Orchestra this year presented four in-concert performances of *Don Giovanni*, delighting more than 2,000 patrons.

This has been another exceptional season, enthused Christopher Gaze. Despite the unseasonably cold June and rainy July and August, our audience continued enthusiastically to fill the tents night after night. We are also pleased to have earned our patrons' trust so that we can successfully program the lesser know plays such as *Titus* and offer fresh approaches to the familiar Shakespeare classics. Thank you Vancouver for your ongoing support.

In keeping with Bard tradition, Christopher Gaze announced the line up for next summer on closing night. Celebrating its **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** from **May 28 to September 26, 2009**, Bard on the Beach will both delight and challenge. In the 520-seat Mainstage tent, *Othello* will get its very first Festival viewing, directed by Vancouver's celebrated director **Dean Paul Gibson**. Playing in rep on the Mainstage will be *The Comedy of Errors* which will be given an Elizabethan staging by Bard's long-time comedic talent, **David Mackay**. In the intimate 240-seat Studio Stage, Bard will present *All's Well That Ends Well* with Vancouver director **Rachel Ditor** making her Festival debut and, most excitingly, Bard will launch a three year plan to showcase the History Plays. The Kings series will begin next summer with *Richard II*, directed by Bard Artistic Associate **Christopher Weddell**. In 2010 Bard will offer a blending of the *Henry IVs* as the *Falstaff* story paired with *Henry V*; in 2011, a compilation of the *Henry VI* plays will be staged as *The Wars of the Roses* and will play in rep with *Richard III*.

Christopher Gaze explains. We have wanted to present the History Cycle for years. The plays are mesmerizing and compelling as they dramatize tumultuous times . the story of kings, rebellions, struggles, catastrophe and triumph. We shall melt his eight into five and present them over three seasons in our Douglas Campbell studio theatre.

Updates on Bard on Beach's upcoming Festival will be posted regularly at [www.bardonthebeach.org](http://www.bardonthebeach.org). Tickets will go on sale **March 16, 2009** through the website or by calling 604-739-0559.

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