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Shakespeare comes to Harlem, and Harlem comes to Shakespeare!

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Central Park's Delacorte Theater no longer the only game in town for Shakespeare in the Park as The Classical Theatre of Harlem launches yearly professional summer production uptown with Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream

NEW YORK - The Classical Theatre of Harlem (CTH) (Producing Artistic Director, Ty Jones), presents the Shakespeare classic A Midsummer Night's Dream directed by Artistic Associate Justin Emeka this summer in



Michael Early

Justin Emeka

Zainab Jah

Harlem's Richard Rodgers Amphitheater in Marcus Garvey Park. Performances of the free play, which ran July 13-30, are made possible by the Ford Foundation.

For the past 50 years, the Central Park's Delacorte (The Public) has been the "only game in town," offering a summer season of professional theatre in an outdoor space. The multi-million dollar rehabilitation of the thousand-seat amphitheater in Marcus Garvey Park presents a unique opportunity to create an "Uptown" Shakespeare in the Park program, thereby enriching the residents of Harlem and drawing the theatre-going public uptown; the move is a potentially game-changing benefit to local merchants and restaurants. As the only year-round theatre company in Harlem on an Actor's Equity Association League of Resident Theaters (LORT) contract, The Classical Theatre of Harlem seeks to make its production a yearly cultural event in Harlem.

Continuing its groundbreaking tradition of weaving the rich cultural legacy of Harlem into classical text, The Classical Theatre of Harlem will illuminate A Midsummer Night's Dream with music, dance, and various traditions from the African Diaspora, to present an enchanted concrete jungle inhabited by spirits who revel in the magical nature of summer love. Theseus, the Duke of Harlem, prepares to unite two hemispheres with his marriage to Hippolyta, the African queen. Meanwhile, four Harlem lovers pursue forbidden romance by escaping to the woods, where a group of Harlem's working class—AKA the "rude mechanicals"—rehearse a "classic" performance to entertain the Duke on his wedding night in hopes of fame and fortune. Colorful West African and Capoeira dance elements will be woven throughout the production.



Director Justin Emeka is a professor of Theater and Africana Studies at Oberlin College, who specializes in creating new approaches to classical theatre. At the University of Washington, he

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developed and directed a production of *Macbeth* set during Reconstruction, as the U.S. struggled to heal from the scars of slavery and the Civil War. Later, at Oberlin College, he directed Avery Brooks as Willy Loman in a multi-racial casting of *Death of a Salesman* and, at Karamu Theater in Cleveland, he directed *Julius X*, which integrated the stories of Julius Caesar and Malcolm X.

The unprecedented 18-day run at the amphitheater comes after a campaign by Jones to engage city park officials, local business owners and city council members to support CTH's vision of the production. "It's time to look at Harlem through a lens that acknowledges the economic impact of its cultural treasures," said Jones. "As we celebrate the creative spirit of the community with this engaging show, our long-term goal is to stimulate artistic, economic and institutional development in Harlem."

Veteran actors Michael Early, as Oberon, and Zainab Jah, as Titania, lead the talented cast. Lakai Worell is choreographer, Anka Lupes is set designer and Rachel Dozier is costume designer. Music is by Michael Wimberly.

The Richard Rodgers Amphitheater is located in Marcus Garvey Park at 18 M. Morris Park West and 122nd Street. The venue opens for seating for the free show at 7:00 pm nightly. For more information, call 347-688-6304 or visit

<http://www.classicaltheatreofharlem.org>.

CTH and this performance are supported by Councilmember Inez E. Dickens, Councilmember Robert Jackson, Doug and Paige Armentrout, Luther and Deborah Ragin, Zead Ramadan, Fund for the City of New York, the Casement Fund, the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ), New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Columbus Foundation, the Jarvis and Constance Doctorow Family Foundation, West Harlem Local Development Corporation, Time Warner, the Dramatists Guild, the Ave-Houghton Foundation.

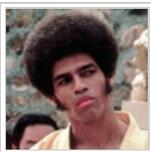
About The Classical Theatre of Harlem

The Classical Theatre of Harlem (CTH), www.classicaltheatreofharlem.org, combines non-traditional casting, original adaptations, music and dance in ways that foster a new experience of world classics as well as producing contemporary works that will stand the test of time. It is CTH's vision to create the 21st century theatre company, whose value to its community is inherent and essential, a company that is engaged in producing theatre that has the capacity to change lives and truly reflects the diversity of ideas and racial tapestry that is America—both on stage and backstage. Since its founding in 1999, CTH has presented nearly forty productions, including works by Anton Chekhov, Samuel Beckett, Euripides, Jean Genet, Langston Hughes, Adrienne Kennedy, William Shakespeare, Derek Walcott and August Wilson, among many others.

Most recently, the company co-produced Dominique Morrisseau's *Detroit '67* in conjunction with The Public Theater. The show ran for three weeks to sold-out houses downtown at the Public, before continuing its record-breaking success uptown at the National Black Theatre.




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