Dear Friends of Montana Shakespeare in the Parks,

What an incredible honor it is for me to address you as the new Artistic Director of Montana Shakespeare in the Parks. Having spent the past twelve years working with this amazing company as an actor, fight director, instructor, and director, I never would have thought it possible to be in this position — a position that for the past 37 years has been held by a man that created a tradition of excellence in producing professional theatre for the people of Montana and beyond. To step into the shoes worn by Joel Jahnke is a humbling experience. I look forward to embracing the challenge of forwarding his legacy into the future, and building upon this strong foundation of community engagement and outreach.

It’s thrilling to be in the process of producing MSIP’s 42nd summer season. Working through all of the details of production including design conferences, casting, marketing, and collaborating with our staff has been a learning experience to say the least. As an actor or fight director, I was unaware of this process, not fully cognizant of the complexities of managing a summer season. This is a testament to Joel’s ability to provide his artists with a level of comfort and ease, allowing for the most optimal creative experience which ultimately has inspired so many of us to return year after year.

Over the course of my twelve years with MSIP, I have built some of the most amazing friendships. The bond that we all share has been solidified through our experience of touring through all of your remarkable towns. Every day an actor in Chicago, New York, Seattle, or LA shares a story of speaking Shakespeare on top of a butte in eastern Montana or describes the experience of engaging some of the most receptive audience members that they’ve ever performed for. There are countless stories shared every day of driving thousands of miles across the rocky mountain region, enacting the wonderful world of Shakespeare under the big sky for communities that are unparalleled in their beauty and friendliness.

I learned much from Joel as an artist, collaborator, and educator. His ability to uncover the intricacies of humanity and humor in Shakespeare’s stories allowed for a stimulating rehearsal process that ultimately paved the way for an endless journey of creative discovery while on tour. Much of that sense of discovery, or newness, was created as a direct result of the uniqueness of each community. Every town dramatically informed the overall interpretation of our stories. I believe that this is what makes MSIP so inspiring for all involved. I am very much looking forward to the opportunity of getting to know you all, the audience, the volunteers, and the supporters, without whom this company would not exist.

Sincerely,

Kevin Asselin
Executive Artistic Director, Montana Shakespeare in the Parks
Kevin Asselin As You Like It

What inspired you to choose As You Like It?
As with all Shakespeare plays, thematically, in As You Like It, there's a strong relevance to what is happening in our contemporary world, what has happened throughout history, and what will be relevant to us.

What are the themes in As You Like It?  You'll have to draw out and how are they relevant?
There's a duality in As You Like It — the struggle between an urban and rural lifestyle. It's the idea of leaving the corruption, the conglomeration, the overwhelming feeling of a capitolistic society — for nature, which is more balanced and therapeutic. In As You Like It, one of the themes is that by choosing to live within a natural environment, we can be restored to a sense of balance and righteousness through the conversation with the uncorrupted world of nature.

What inspired you to choose As You Like It?  It's important to me when I choose a play to find ways to make it accessible to our immediate audiences. When I was trying to figure out what play I wanted to direct, I came across the documentary, Bute, America, and watched it several times. I realized as I watched there was a strong correlation to As You Like It and the world Shakespeare presents. Is that for me to think that relevancy that's specific to the population of Montana and according. As You Like It is a new and interesting way that would exploit Shakespeare's most prevalent theme, I thought the concept of marrying As You Like It with Butte, America — or Butte, Montana, in 1917, would be a great way to write our audiences into the world of the play.

What are the themes in As You Like It?  You'll have to draw out and how are they relevant?
That he will only choose material that will work for the final production. He sits in every rehearsal with no choice an hour and a half to feature, Davis will write much more than he needs with the understanding being at every rehearsal. As I work with the actors to try things that may or may not work, he composes themes: up-tempo, urban sounds in contrast to the more traditional folk songs, folk themes that would experience many of the rural and urban landscapes in Montana, and as Shakespeare accentuates the need for balance, I feel a connection with that need for balance between urban and rural, too. I've experienced many of the rural and urban landscapes in Montana, and as Shakespeare gives them language that shows them existing in a place of excitement, too — all the while fear coupled with an incredible sense of curiosity, excitement, and adventure. What's interesting about As You Like It, as well for that matter, all of Shakespeare's plays.

How will this be represented on stage?  We will take that duality, through the drenched quality of the lesser class in juxtaposition with the polish of the upper class. I'm also interested in the character of Jaques in As You Like It and, for me, I imagine that being Frank Little.

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Who is Frank Little?
In 1917, Frank Little was hung for being an outspoken, radical union leader for the Industrial Workers of the World union, the IWW. I like to imagine that Jaques represents what Frank Little might have become had he not been murdered.

How will you represent northwest Montana on stage?
By relying on VanTuinen's scenic design elements, we hope to display a contrast between a corporate world and that of a more serene world of the northwest pines. Musically too — we'll be incorporating jazz from one world to the next. And as music can help to unite us and provide us with a sense of balance, music helps to alleviate our sense of angst and dismay, providing us with a sense of release and openness, which is why Shakespeare incorporated so many songs into the play.

YOU PLAYED OLIVER AND LBEAU IN THE 2003 PRODUCTION OF AS YOU LIKE IT WITH MSIP AND YOU'VE ALSO PERFORMED IN TWO OTHER PRODUCTIONS OF AS YOU LIKE IT, INCLUDING BILL BROWN'S 2008 PRODUCTION AT WRITER'S THEATER IN CHICAGO. HOW WILL THOSE EXPERIENCES COME TO BEAR ON DIRECTING THE PLAY IN 2014?
I take great pride in my overall theater education, most especially the influence of working with strong-minded directors like Bill Brown and [sic] I think I've had the experience of working on this play in two different productions with both of those directors, I feel that I have a great sense of the overall movement of the play, the qualities and themes, and the relationships between the characters. Both experiences have helped to guide me to understand the importance of finding relevancy with a play like As You Like It, as well for that matter, all of Shakespeare's plays.

In As You Like It, Rosalind, Celia, and Touchstone have to find a new world for themselves. You have just picked up your life and made a new world for yourself here in Montana. Do you feel any affinity for these characters because of this?
As by kind of big move or drastic shift in life, it's always accompanied by a sense of apprehension and fear coupled with an incredible sense of curiosity, excitement, and adventure. What's interesting about Celia, Rosalind, and Touchstone, even though they're being forced to retreat to an unknown place, that Shakespeare gives them language that shows them existing in a place of excitement, too — all the while dealing with a sense of loss. I can relate because every move I've made in my life has always had a great deal of curiosity and excitement, but had also included a sense of loss. And as an actor for six years, I've experienced many of the rural and urban landscapes in Montana, and as Shakespeare accentuates the need for balance, I feel a connection with that need for balance between urban and rural, too.

ONE OF THE GREATNESS OF SHAKESPEARE IS THE MUSIC. WHAT MUSIC WILL BE FEATURED IN AS YOU LIKE IT?  MUSIC WILL BE FEATURED IN AS YOU LIKE IT?
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WE'RE ON SOCIAL MEDIA. JOIN THE CONVERSATION. #MSIP2014
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NEWSLETTER: CLARION
www.clariononline.org/issue/fall2013
INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTORS

FROM THE DEAN
Shakespeare in the Parks has been a part of Montana's DNA since 1973, and I am honored to welcome you to another season of Shakespeare under the Big Sky. This season is particularly special as we welcome Kevin Asselin as our new Executive Artistic Director. He's a familiar face to all of you, having worked with MSIP for the past 12 years while also performing in two other productions of As You Like It at both Writer's Theater in Chicago. How will those experiences come to bear on directing the play in 2014?

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What were some qualities you were looking for in your leads?

I'll start with Romeo. Some of his language is nearly impossible to say honestly and with a straight face.

Like what?

"But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks?" It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. To be able to say that honestly and genuinely in a way that doesn't make you less attractive than you were before you started speaking is not an easy thing to do. So I was very lucky to find an actor who had already worked for us, who I suspected might actually be able to carry it off. The first time he read those lines I thought, "Pretty! I don't know how you do it, but perfect."

What about Juliet?

Juliet is particularly difficult because she has to be both very young, very young, but at the same time, more sophisticated than Romeo. I think if you spend any time with the play, one thing becomes evident: Juliet does a lot forward the dramatic action. She has to have a very deep well of strength and determination. It's difficult to find both of those things someone who at the beginning of the play looks very, very young, and yet, by the end of the play, I have to believe that she has the strength of purpose to rebel against her father and mother, like her own death, and finally take her own life.

How are you going to indicate the structure of the world that Juliet lives in?

Some of it is done for you. Romeo's allowed to roam the streets and crash parties. He has all these friends that he's to hang out with. And Juliet — we've only ever seen her in the context of her mother, her nurse, and her father. She's got the same kind of freedoms that Romeo has. There's only one time that she gets to socialize and it's within a very formal and structured dance. So the story lends itself to that. And so we're talking about how to differentiate between the freedom of men in this very masculine, male-dominated society and the constraints that are put upon the women.

Where are you setting it and why?

We are definitely trying to create a world that is not realistic, that loves something in the past — where we believe there would be things like swords and sword-fights and princes who would banish you. When Shakespeare set this play in "fair Verona" it isn't likely that those audiences would have had a clear, realistic concept of Verona. It was really like. It would have suggested to them a place full of passion, a place that was warmer than where they live, and a place where they were family blood relatives. So, for our purposes, we're going to do it much in the way Shakespeare did. We have our beautiful stage and we're going to place things on the stage that suggest the passage of time, and to give a sense of another place — a place that has ancient grudges, and where there can be heightened passions of love and violence.

It is hard to distort the costume design, but I can make two promises: no big, gorgeous gowns.

The play takes place in the course of a week. You've used a beautiful Prague astronomical clock as inspiration and possibly as a centerpiece of your set. Why is it so important to indicate the passage of time?

I think Shakespeare is very deliberately reminds you of the constant, inevitable march of time towards these two beautiful young people's deaths. It makes for extraordinary dramatic tension. Frankly, I think some productions of this play lose sight of that dramatic tension — they rely instead on the fight scenes. I mean, you see them so that we're almost almost having to stage the bacchanal scene, but what's compelling about that scene is the underlying sense of dread. I think it should be like watching a beautiful disaster. Conflict is there from the start. Juliet says from the top, "I wish you had another name. I wish you weren't who you are."

What other themes will you try to draw out of this production?

As I mentioned earlier, I'm very interested in the Friar's story. I've recognized something familiar in the story even then. It's iconic to me in the same way it's iconic to everyone else. I'm interested in moving past that and finding the story of Romeo and Juliet that will play best for our audiences in Montana.

Do you prepare yourself directly to play a role before the first day of rehearsal? How much do you know going in? How much do you pre-plan going in?

A lot of the preparation is in reading the play and reading what critics and others have said about the play. I digest that, and then I read through the play and talk to the actors to figure out what we're going to do in order to make it playable for 10 actors and in order to make sure that it'll be clear and playable in two houses. That editing process allows me to also highlight the themes that I think are most valuable for the production that I'm interested in staging. From there, I talk to my designers, work with them, and they help me begin to visualize what the play will be. And then I do a week until the actors arrive. When I finally hear their voices, from that point until opening night is a heady, collaborative whirlwind. It's very much a collaborative work.

People often ask if the director goes on tour with the actors. Why don't you?

I do have the luxury of living in Montana, so I do get to go out and see them in some of my favorite places on tour. I guess the really true and short answer is that I have a family that needs me and the actors don't need me any more.

Why don't the actors need you anymore?

Once the show opens up, there are opportunities for me to give notes or make suggestions, but really at that point, it is understood that this show belongs to these actors. They do learn a lot on the road about what works and what doesn't work, and on tour, they have time to make more discoveries about what the motivation of their characters might be.

You first met Kevin, the new Artistic Director, when you were both actors in The Two Gentlemen of Verona at Chicago Shakespeare Theater in 2003. You're working together again in a much different capacity for far away from Illinois. What's that like?

I think you do your best work when you feel that you are trusted and respected, it gives you permission to do things that you might not otherwise do. I finally hear their voices, from that point until opening night is a heady, collaborative whirlwind. It's very much a collaborative work.
I love the process of starting with words in a script and working with a costume designer to bring those words to life on stage. That's what we do. It's about bringing the text to life through visual and tactile means.

Rosalind's costumes in *As You Like It* were created in collaboration with the costume designer Claudia Boddy. These costumes allowed Rosalind to embody her character's identity and her love for the natural world. The costumes were designed to be practical and comfortable, with a focus on the character's physicality and the demands of the role.

**Casualties of War**

The character of Rosalind in *As You Like It* is a Cascadal character, and her costumes were designed to reflect this. The costumes were designed to be practical and comfortable, with a focus on the character's physicality and the demands of the role.

**Changing the Scene**

The costumes in *As You Like It* were designed to reflect the changing scene of the play. The costumes were designed to change as the setting changed, with a focus on the character's identity and the demands of the role.

**The Role of the Costume Designer**

The costume designer plays a crucial role in bringing a character to life. The costumes are the first thing that the audience sees, and they play an important role in helping the actor to embody the character. The costumes are also an important part of the production, as they help to set the scene and create the atmosphere.

**The Costumes of Rosalind**

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What They Are Saying About Montana Shakes!

I was very impressed with Montana Shakes. It was great having someone who could develop and wonderful! Thank you!

— Teacher, Darby Elementary School, Darby, MT

The kids look forward to Montana Shakes every year! The plays are great and the workshops are developed and wonderful! Thank you!

— Teacher, Darby Elementary School, Darby, MT

We Do Wander Everywhere!

2014 Shakespeare in the Schools (SIS) program, under the direction of new Executive Artistic Director Kevin Ansell, brings A Midsummer Night’s Dream to middle and high schools across the region. With its fine balance of comedy, drama, and fantasy, Midsummer highlight themes of forgiveness, faithfulness, identity, and the universality of love and nature. The production will be set in modern day Greecian romance, magic and plenty of live music are sure to captivate the interest and imagination of our young audience. The 75 minute production will tour October 10 through December 19, 2014, and will be accompanied by 4 new and exciting workshops.

Booking begins May 1, reserve YOUR spot now! SIS booking begins in early spring before the end of the school year. If you are interested in bringing A Midsummer Night’s Dream with accompanying workshops to your school in fall of 2014, give us a call now to reserve a spot. Call Lila Michael at (406) 994-3310 or email her at lila.michael@montana.edu

We Tour to Serve

The educational tours of MSIP Montana Shakes! and Shakespeare in the Schools, are unique in the nation. We travel an elementary school tour with 3 seasoned actor-educators who perform in 55 schools to over 9,000 students. Our Shakespeare in the Schools tour, for high school and middle school students, brings eight actor-educators who perform a Shakespearean play and teach on your first educational workshops almost every day for almost three months. Last year, SIS reached 49 schools and played to over 12,000 young people.

MSIP’s educational outreach programs bring live, beautifully costumed, professionally acted productions into rural communities that might otherwise not have the opportunity. This could not be done without the generous support of individuals and grantors.

Many thanks to the Montana Arts Council: Artists In Schools and Communities, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Foundation, the Homer A. and Mildred S. Scott Foundation, The Brown Foundation, and The Sidney E. Frank Foundation, The Charles A. Weyerhaeuser and individuals like you for your generous support.

Montana Shakes!

Shakes! introduces kids K-6 to Shakespeare in a delightful and accessible way, blending Bard with a boisterous 30-minute play and talk-back. The 2014 program featured scenes from As You Like It, with accompanying workshops to your school in fall of 2014, give us a call now to reserve a spot. Call Lila Michael at (406) 994-3310 or email her at lila.michael@montana.edu
The Robben Island Bible

In celebration of the 450th birthday of Shakespeare and the 20th anniversary of the election of Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa, Shakespeare in the Parks, in collaboration with MSU Honors College and the College of Arts and Architecture, presented a staged reading of The Robben Island Bible between April 15-17. Performances were free and open to the public. A special performance dedicated to local schoolchildren, was also held on Thursday, April 17.

The "Robben Island Bible" was the name given to a volume of "The Complete Works of Shakespeare" surreptitiously distributed among the prisoners of the now infamous Robben Island Prison, including the late Nelson Mandela who was held there for 19 years before the fall of apartheid. The play is based on selected texts from South African Sookey Venkatrathnam's copy of "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare," as well as interviews with former political prisoners held on the island prison.

A cast of four actors selected from top-tier American regional theaters was brought in to perform in the play, directed by Kevin Asselin. About 500 people attended the performances in all.

THE ELISE EVENT

What do supporter Elise Donohue, gossip journalist Manuela Marcuso, and a loveable old dog named Crab all have in common? They were all present for the 2013 Elise Event in Bozeman! The evening was a wild success, full of the excellent comedy of Kevin Asselin's production of The Two Gentlemen of Verona, tangling just and plenty of delicious food and wine. Elise Donohue, the event's namesake, has been generously supporting this special night for 12 years. Her patronage has helped make it possible for Shakespeare in the Parks to roar.

The 2014 Elise Event will feature a magical Midsummer Night's Dream set in modern day Greece. Luxuriou costume designer Montgomery Shakespeare in the Parks resident costume Claudia Keddy and Bay Area fashion folk music insurer that this production will be a feast for the eyes and the ears. Following the performance there will be a talk back with the actors, designers and director. A catered party featuring tasty hors d'oeuvres and beverages will follow. The 2014 Elise Event is scheduled for November 1st at MSU Black Box Theater in Bozeman, tickets are limited and go quickly. For more information call (406) 994-3303 or visit our website at www.shakespeareintheparks.org

SHAKESPEARE ON THE ROAD

Between August 1 and 4 this summer, Shakespeare in the Parks will be part of a British invasion. Paul Edmonson from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford upon Avon and Paul Prescott from The University of Warwick along with media partners, Misfit-Inc., will stop in Montana as part of their Shakespeare on the Road project, celebrating Shakespeare's 400th birthday in 2014. Visiting 14 North American Shakespeare festivals from The Oregon Shakespeare Festival to the Stratford Festival in Canada to the Harlem Shakespeare Festival in New York, this crew will interview and film actors, directors, and audience members to help discover why Shakespeare thrives as he does here ‘across the pond’. 450 years after his birth. A website, documentary, and book are all being created in conjunction with this project, celebrating Shakespeare's 450th birthday in 2014. Visiting 14 North American Shakespeare festivals from The Oregon Shakespeare Festival to the Stratford Festival in Canada to the Harlem Shakespeare Festival in New York, this crew will interview and film actors, directors, and audience members to help discover why Shakespeare thrives as he does here ‘across the pond’.

SOME OF THE CAST OF THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA TAKE A BOW AT THE 2013 ELISE EVENT.

The centerpiece of the event was a lecture/performance, Fathers and Son. Led by Dr. Gretchen Minton, Architecture, presented a staged reading of The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, “as well as interviews with former political prisoners held on the island prison. A cast of four actors selected from top-tier American regional theaters was brought in to perform in the play, directed by Kevin Asselin. About 500 people attended the performances in all.

SOME OF THE CAST OF THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA TAKE A BOW AT THE 2013 ELISE EVENT.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona, swinging jazz and plenty of delicious food and wine.

A MIDWINTER NIGHT’S DREAM

On February 15, a new gala event made a glittering debut in the Black Box Theater. A Midwinter Night’s Dream brought together music, theatre, dance, good food and drink all in support of Shakespeare in the Parks. Sponsored by Michael and Sharon Boddy, the event exceeded its fundraising goal by 10% through ticket sales, sponsorships, and live and silent auction sales. The centerpiece of the event was a lecture/performance, Falstaff and Son. Led by Dr. Gretchen Minton, Fathers and Son presented scenes from Henry IV parts 1 and 2 in two contrasting performances. The scenes were directed by new Executive Artistic Director, Kevin Asselin, and the event also served as his introduction to the Shakespeare in the Parks community. A fantastic time was had by all in support of a wonderful cause.

COLTER LAMAN AND KEVIN ASSELIN DEMONSTRATES STAGE COMBAT TECHNIQUE DURING THE LIVE AUCTION.

PLAYWRIGHT MATTHEW HAHN

MINTA SINGH

TRAVIS KIGHT

KEITH BOLDREN

ADAM POSS

PROMOTIONAL POSTER FOR THE 2014 ELISE EVENT.
- **June**
  - 18 Bozeman ATLI 8:00pm MSU-Grove
  - 19 Bozeman ATLI 8:00pm MSU-Grove
  - 20 Bozeman ATLI 8:00pm MSU-Grove
  - 21 Bozeman ATLI 8:00pm MSU-Grove
  - 22 Bozeman ATLI 8:00pm MSU-Grove
  - 23 Bozeman ATLI 8:00pm MSU-Grove
  - 24 Bozeman ATLI 8:00pm MSU-Grove
  - 28 Bozeman ATLI 8:00pm MSU-Grove
  - 30 Big Timber ATLI 6:30pm Lites Club Park

- **July**
  - 1 Big Sky ATLI 6:30pm Town Center Park
  - 2 Hobson-Utica ATLI 6:30pm Utica Clubhouse Lawn
  - 3 Lewistown ATLI 6:30pm Elks Clubhouse at the Pine Meadows Golf Course
  - 4 Havre ATLI 6:00pm Pepper Park
  - 5 Sidney ATLI 6:30pm Veteran’s Park
  - 6 Wolf Point ATLI 6:30pm Faith Home Park
  - 7 Malta ATLI 6:00pm PC Courthouse Lawn
  - 8 Glendive ATLI 6:00pm Malekshik Amphitheater
  - 9 Beach, ND ATLI 6:00pm Beach Swimming Pool Park
  - 10 Miles City ATLI 6:30pm Pumping Plant Park
  - 11 Fortzy ATLI 6:00pm Rosbud County Courthouse East Lawn
  - 12 Hardin ATLI 6:00pm South Park (Center of Town and Division)
  - 13 Cooke City / Silver Gate ATLI 6:00pm Silver Gate Park
  - 14 Chico Hot Springs ATLI 6:30pm Main Lawn
  - 15 Red Lodge ATLI 6:30pm Lites Park
  - 17 Warland, WY ATLI 6:30pm Sanders Park

- **August**
  - 1 Sweet Pea Bozeman ATLI 6:00pm Kendrick Park
  - 2 Sweet Pea Bozeman ATLI 6:00pm Kendrick Park
  - 3 Sweet Pea Bozeman ATLI 6:30pm Lindley Park
  - 4 Missoula ATLI 6:00pm Mission Hill Park
  - 5 Kalispell ATLI 6:00pm Flathead Valley Community College
  - 6 Cut Bank ATLI 6:00pm Cut Bank City Park
  - 7 Ft. Benton ATLI 6:00pm Ft. Benton City Park
  - 8 Great Falls ATLI 6:00pm University of Great Falls
  - 9 Great Falls ATLI 6:00pm University of Great Falls
  - 10 Anaconda ATLI 6:00pm Pioneer Park (next to L&C Library)
  - 11 Helena ATLI 6:00pm Pioneer Park (next to L&C Library)
  - 12 Helena ATLI 6:00pm Parkway to the Park (next to L&C Library)

- **September**
  - 1 Laurel ATLI 6:00pm Laurel Practice Football Field
  - 2 Columbia ATLI 6:00pm Columbia Park
  - 3 Roundup ATLI 6:00pm Roundup City Park
  - 4 Whitehall ATLI 6:00pm 2556 Yellowstone Road
  - 5 Livingston ATLI 6:00pm Shave Center
  - 6 West Yellowstone ATLI 6:00pm Town Park
  - 7 Butte ATLI 6:00pm Original Mineyard