



## Shakespeare-in-the-Park: All the world is a stage

### Description

# Repercussion Theatre is back with live performances of *All Shall Be Well*

By Irwin Rapoport

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To paraphrase **William Shakespeare**, cry havoc and let slip the words of Shakespeare and this is exactly what is happening with the return of live performances via [Repercussion Theatre](#)'s 2022 season of **Shakespeare-in-the-Park**, which has the company presenting ***All Shall Be Well*** at parks in **Westmount**, and other municipalities, boroughs in **Montreal**, **Hudson**, and **Stanstead**.

*All Shall Be Well* is being performed at **Westmount Park on July 23 and 24** and **August 3 and 4**. The first show was on July 14, and the **season finale** takes place on **August 6** at **Parc Jeanne-Mance** (Fletcher's Field) off of Parc Avenue. The performances begin at 7 pm, so get there early to secure a good spot.

Performing Shakespeare-in-the-Park is an annual tradition in cities across the globe and, due to COVID-19, Montrealers were deprived of the opportunity in 2020 and 2021. But that has all changed and, like many, I am thrilled. As they say, "there is always time for philosophy," and that also applies to Shakespeare whose works thoroughly examine the human condition and are timeless. *Macbeth* may be set in Scotland, but the themes examined in the play are universal.

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**Repercussion Theatre**'s press release for this summer's performances expresses the joy of live theatre returning to a park near you. "We are back! Repercussion Theatre is thrilled to announce our return to parks this summer, with a new, original creation to be presented in the timeless Shakespeare-in-the-Park format! *All Shall Be Well* makes its world premiere in the parks of Montreal and beyond!"



All Shall Be Well preview

The theme of the play, written by Shakespeare and the company, is timely in light of the pandemic we have all experienced.

“Locked down by Plague in London, Shakespeare writes King Lear... Over 400 years later, actors living through a pandemic of their own hear of this feat and decide to perform a compilation of Shakespeare’s plague-related scenes,” states the press release. “What could possibly go wrong? This playful show poignantly samples some of Shakespeare’s most beloved plays, songs, and sonnets. The hunt begins! Let’s find traces of the plague in the Bard’s work, reflecting on our own lives along the way. This original approach to Shakespeare’s timeless works has been devised by artistic director **Amanda Kellock** with the creative input of the entire company.”

“One reason people keep going back to Shakespeare is that his words, even 400 years later,” explains Kellock, “seem to offer such poignant insight into what feels like completely contemporary experiences. His works seem to say, ‘You think tyranny is new? Corruption, conspiracy, loss, love, war... pandemic? Think again.’”

**Rebecca Gibian**, a Shaw festival alum, actor of stage and screen, and one of the new artistic directors of **Persephone Productions** is directing the play. Gibian served as the assistant director for Repercussion’s 2019 production of *Measure for Measure* and she appeared as Princess Katherine in 2014’s *Harry the King*, which abridged Shakespeare’s several King Henry plays into “a park-perfect period-piece.”

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The costumes were designed by **Erika Parra Bernal**, with the wardrobe managed by **Sonya Vallis**. **Diana Uribe** designed the set. Another new face at the company is projection designer **Chris Wardell** who is working alongside lighting designer **Adam Walters**. **Heather Ellen Strain** is doing double duty as the sound designer

and stage manager, assisted by **Annalise Peterson-Perry**.

All five **actors** have appeared in previous Repercussion Theatre plays. This year's cast consists of **AJ Richardson, Anton May, Thomas Vallières, Tiernan Cornford, and Samantha Bitonti**.

"This is the most delving into Shakespeare's work I've done, from plays to sonnets to epic poems, and much research!" said Bitonti, who performed in *Measure for Measure*. "I fully believe in delivering a hilarious, informative, endearing, and full o' the Bard performance to audiences this summer."

Ensuring that Shakespeare is accessible to all is crucial for the company.

"Returning to the tour to aid accessibility to Shakespeare's English is our **live-subtitling en français** with the web-app Plank!" noted the press release. "The script can be accessed, in English and French, via all mobile devices..."

I saw the performance of *Measure for Measure* at Westmount Park with friends and was impressed. On July 19, I did the same at Trenholme Park in NDG, and we all had an excellent time. We made a night of it and enjoyed a picnic before the show. What I love about the shows, aside from the performance, is watching a play outdoors as the sun is setting and the transition to the night sky with stars.



All Shall Be Well preview

## Artistic Director Amanda Kellock discusses this year's presentation and the importance of The Bard

A very busy Amanda Kellock, just days before the performance, was gracious to reply to some questions from Westmount Magazine regarding her passion for Shakespeare and the theatre.



**WM:** *Many people are extremely pleased to see the return of Shakespeare-in-the-Park this summer to the Greater Montreal Area. This season's play and theme are spot on in terms of our COVID-19 experience. Could you tell us about the effort to bring this season's play to life?*

**Kellock:** I spent much of 2020 and 2021 re-reading all of Shakespeare's plays and thinking about how he lived and wrote during an ongoing pandemic (in his case, it was plague). I knew early on that I wanted our return to Shakespeare-in-the-Park to somehow address and explore this connection. This play is the culmination of many months of research, many conversations and several exploratory workshops. And bringing the tour to life is the work of many people over many weeks and months – this year has been particularly challenging for all the reasons others are struggling (staff shortages, increased costs without increased revenues, supply chain delays, and of course having to pivot when team members get sick or need to isolate...) As I always say, this tour requires a Herculean effort and that is especially true this year!

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– Amanda Kellock, Repercussion Theatre Artistic Director

**WM:** *Why does Shakespeare still matter, and how would you describe the impact of his plays and sonnets?*

**Kellock:** I find it very thought-provoking to look to the past as a way of gleaning insight into our present and future. Shakespeare's works are remarkable in the way they ask profound questions without necessarily providing answers. He was writing at a moment when the English language was really coming into its own, so in many ways his ideas and turns of phrase are embedded in our linguistic DNA.

There are other writers with vital things to say and I'm a big proponent of encouraging contemporary playwrights to speak to our moment in time but there's no doubt Shakespeare is an extremely generative part of our social and theatrical ecosystem.

**WM:** *When was the Repercussion Theatre founded, and what are its goals and successes?*

**Kellock:** Founded in 1988, Montreal's Repercussion Theatre is best known for its annual Shakespeare-in-the-Park summer tour. As a professional theatre company and non-profit arts organization, our core values are artistic excellence, social relevance and accessibility. Our mission is to deliver professional, classically based, visually dynamic theatre that is accessible to all, regardless of income, culture, language, age or education.

**WM:** *Which plays has the theatre company presented, and which ones are you keen to present?*

**Kellock:** Our production history can be viewed at [repercussiontheatre.com/production-history](https://repercussiontheatre.com/production-history)



Geordie Theatre School collaboration

**WM:** Can you tell us more about the Geordie Theatre School pre-show initiative?

**Kellock:** We've been partnering with **Geordie Theatre School** for several years now, to offer workshops for youth in tandem with our summer tour. The workshops connect to our show thematically, so each year is a bit different, depending on what show we're doing.

We obviously had to take a break during the pandemic (though we did offer several workshops during our Summer of Sonnets in 2021) but we're reigniting our collaboration this year, which is exciting. For more information visit [geordie.ca/geordie-theatre-school](https://geordie.ca/geordie-theatre-school)

'... we spend much of the year planning for the summer tour!... It's a surprising amount of work! What people see in the park is just the tip of the iceberg...'

– Amanda Kellock, Repercussion Theatre Artistic Director

**WM:** The summer plays are a highlight of Repercussion Theatre's activities and are very well attended. Can you tell me more about what the company does for the rest of the year?

**Kellock:** Well, honestly we spend much of the year planning for the summer tour! It takes a lot of preparation and coordination, plus a lot of time to raise the funds to be able to put on a show and bring it to as many parks as we do. Not to mention the planning for the production itself (choosing the play, holding auditions, hiring the creative team, etc.).

It's a surprising amount of work! What people see in the park is just the tip of the iceberg...



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To learn more about *All Shall Be Well* and see the schedule, visit [repercussiontheatre.com](http://repercussiontheatre.com)

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*Images: courtesy of Repercussion Theatre*

*Feature image: All Shall Be Well preview*

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*Irwin Rapoport is a freelance journalist.*

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