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**The Hopkins Center for the Arts hosts the US Premiere of the Stratford Festival's "must-see" Shakespeare production Coriolanus as an educational springboard for exploring issues of political power, mass media and 21st-century theatrical storytelling**

HANOVER, NH—This fall, the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College launches a partnership with North America's preeminent Shakespeare company, the **Stratford Festival**, involving the US premiere of historic and critically acclaimed production of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, directed by genre-defying theatermaker Robert Lepage.

*Coriolanus* will be presented at Dartmouth on Thursday, November 29, through Sunday, December 2, in The Moore Theater of the Hop, in four public performances and two school matinee shows (which will be seen by hundreds of Upper Valley secondary school students).

However, these performances are just the tip of the programmatic iceberg: Throughout 2018-19, the Hop will build on the Stratford Festival residency with rich programming for both the campus and community at large. This will include screenings of high-definition films of other Shakespeare plays, including those of the Stratford Festival; workshops on classical acting and multi-media production design, and public discussions on the political themes running throughout the Bard's works. Some of these will be part of a specially curated week of elective, intensive, experiential learning opportunities for Dartmouth students offered between fall and winter terms.

This package of experiences related to the Stratford production builds on the Hop's presentation this past June of Compagnia de' Colombari's innovative outdoor production of *The Merchant of Venice* in collaboration with the Jewish Studies department--a project also built around a major work of classical theater that provided a platform for rich discussions of timely political and social issues.

In the Stratford production, which opened at the festival on June 20, this late Shakespeare tragedy becomes a "riveting, invigorating and smart" (*Globe and Mail*) critique of leadership and our media-obsessed present, with Lepage's signature high-tech storytelling underscoring powerful performances by a top-flight cast, led by André Sills in the title role. Praising the "thrilling stagecraft," *The New York Times* described the production as "essentially a live film" with innovative effects "used so incessantly here, with such technical skill and in such striking combinations, as to render them newly expressive." The raging masses are virtual: "By resetting dialogue-heavy scenes as talk radio gabfests, and representing the

uninformed mob as anonymous voices on social media, Mr. Lepage helps clarify Shakespeare's portrait of a world, like ours, overwhelmed with insincerity."

"The transfer of this production from Stratford to Hanover is a watershed moment for the Hop," says Hop Director Mary Lou Aleskie. "We hope to transform the way we think about theater and education. We want to use this cutting-edge work as an opportunity for year-long conversation about the political themes of the play, about how technology can enhance theatrical storytelling, and how classical theater is relevant today."

The Dartmouth presentation of *Coriolanus* is thanks to the generosity of Dartmouth alumnus Dan Bernstein, immediate past chair of the Stratford Festival's Board of Governors, and Bernstein's wife, Claire Foerster. Bernstein's father, Raphael, organized a similar Stratford Festival transfer in 1990. Both Stratford and the Hop regard this adventurous production as an opportunity to take much further a rich creative and educational connection made a generation ago between the two organizations.

The Stratford Festival's production, created in collaboration with Lepage's company, Ex Machina, marked Lepage's directorial debut with the Stratford Festival, North America's leading classical theatre company, described by *The Globe and Mail* as "an international mecca for Shakespeare."

Lepage takes this story about the rise and fall of a legendary general who faces the angry Roman mob and infuses it with the energy of Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring, setting it in our media-obsessed present. Employing technologically sophisticated stagecraft to frame superb acting by a veteran Stratford cast, the production evokes an epic film, with projections and an iris effect enhancing the cinematic feel. The innovative staging and design underscore the text's emotional complexities.

"This production has been carefully crafted using advanced technology in terms of scene changes, projections and the marrying of images on moving scenery," says Artistic Director Antoni Cimolino. "While it is imbued with a leading-edge, contemporary style, it never loses touch with its Shakespearean roots."

Critics have raved. This "electric world premiere Stratford Festival production makes [*Coriolanus*] seem like an essential part of the canon," writes the Ontario arts weekly **NOW**. "In an era in which public figures can be brought down by a tweet, this production is timely and urgent. Don't miss one of the best shows of the year."

Writes the *Toronto Star*: "Rarely has Lepage's reputation as a cinematic theatremaker been more earned: The action moves cleanly between locations, thanks to textual cuts and edits, and the world-class design and production team delivers effects that should be impossible in a stage context."

The *Globe and Mail* called the show "a landmark production for the Stratford Festival. Maybe for William Shakespeare, too. [Lepage] takes this complex Roman tragedy and refuses to simplify it—instead, rendering a clear and cinematic version that's riveting, invigorating and smart."

## **MORE ABOUT...**

### **Shakespeare's *Coriolanus***

According to background material from the Stratford Festival, *Coriolanus* is the story of a Roman general, Caius Martius Coriolanus, given the name "Corionalus" after almost singlehandedly conquering the city of Corioles. The Roman upper classes want to make him a consul—the highest office in the Roman republic. Their choice is bitterly opposed, however, by the representatives of the common people, who take advantage of Coriolanus's evident contempt for the concerns of ordinary citizens to stir up resentment

against him. So well do they succeed that the enraged mob denounces Coriolanus as a traitor and he is banished from the city. Joining forces with former enemy Aufidius, Coriolanus prepares to attack his former homeland. Entreated by his mother, wife and young son, Coriolanus agrees to a peace treaty with Rome, whereupon Aufidius, who has come to distrust his new ally, declares Coriolanus a traitor and kills him.

*Coriolanus* is believed to have been written between 1605 and 1608, one of Shakespeare's last two tragedies, and to have been based heavily on "Life of Coriolanus" in Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*. While Plutarch, who lived in the 1st century BCE, wrote about Coriolanus as an actual historical individual who lived in the 5th Century BCE, scholars now feel Coriolanus is legendary.

There is no record of the play being presented during Shakespeare's lifetime. The first known performance was at Drury Lane in 1682. *Coriolanus* has the distinction of being among the few Shakespeare plays banned in a democracy in modern times. It was briefly suppressed in France in the late 1930s because of its use by the fascist element and was prohibited in post-WWII Germany due to its intense militarism.

### **Shakespeare and the Hop**

The Hop presented the Stratford Festival once before—in 1990, when the company brought productions of Congreve's *Love for Love*, Racine's *Phaedra* and actor Brian Bedford's one-man show of Shakespeare sonnets, *The Lunatic, the Lover & the Poet*. The 2018 Stratford residency follows a summer 2018 residency by Compagnia de' Colombari, of New York and Orvieto, Italy, presenting its groundbreaking interpretation of *The Merchant of Venice*. Other international productions of Shakespeare have come to the Hop in recent years through high-definition broadcasts from the UK's National Theatre and Globe Theatre. These are joined in the 2018-19 season by screenings of Stratford Festival HD films of a number of its Shakespeare productions. In addition, the Dartmouth Department of Theater regularly mounts Shakespeare productions as part of a curriculum that includes classical theater—most recently *Romeo and Juliet* in 2015.

### **Stratford Festival**

The Stratford Festival has been setting the standard for classical theater in North America for 65 years. It presents a seven-month season of a dozen or more plays in four venues, along with a Forum of events to enrich the play-going experience. With the works of Shakespeare at its core, this acclaimed repertory theater produces classics, contemporary dramas, musical theater and new plays. It presented its first season in 1953, using an innovative thrust stage that revolutionized Shakespearean performance in our time and inspired the design of several major venues worldwide. Since then, it has welcomed more than 28 million theatergoers from around the world, people who flock to this small Canadian town for one reason: an unparalleled quality of performance.

In 2018, along with *Coriolanus*, the Stratford Festival presents Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, *The Tempest* and *The Comedy of Errors*, stage adaptations of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (a world premiere) and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, musicals *The Music Man* and *The Rocky Horror Show*, newly commissioned biographical drama *Brontë: The World Without*, Eugene O'Neill *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* and Eduardo De Filippo's dark comedy *Napoli Millionaria!*

### **The Hopkins Center for the Arts**

Founded in 1962, "the Hop" is a multi-disciplinary academic, visual and performing arts center dedicated to uncovering insights, igniting passions, and nurturing talents to help Dartmouth and the surrounding Upper Valley community engage imaginatively and contribute creatively to our world. Each year the Hop presents more than 300 live events and films by visiting artists as well as Dartmouth students and the Dartmouth community, and reaches more than 22,000 Upper Valley residents and students with outreach and arts

education programs. After a celebratory 50<sup>th</sup>-anniversary season in 2012-13, the Hop enters its second half-century with renewed passion for mentoring young artists, supporting the development of new work, and providing a laboratory for participation and experimentation in the arts.

## CALENDAR LISTING

### ***Coriolanus*, a production of the Stratford Festival**

A great warrior-turned-politician is despised by his people—and the feeling is mutual. This new production by North America’s preeminent Shakespeare company explores the age-old tensions that still tear at the heart of democracy. Director Robert Lepage’s signature high-tech, cinematic storytelling underscores powerful performances by a top-flight cast, led by André Sills in the title role. Employing the visual and technological effects that have won Lepage international acclaim in theater, opera, circus and more, the production is a “riveting, invigorating and smart” (*Globe and Mail*) critique of leadership and our media-obsessed present.

*School Matinee performances:*

Thursday & Friday, November 29 & 30, 10 am,

*Performances for the general public:*

Friday, November 30, 8 pm

Saturday, December 1, 2 pm & 8 pm

Sunday, December 2, 2 pm

The Moore Theater, Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College, Hanover NH

\$40/65/80, 18 & under \$25, Dartmouth students \$10

Information: [hop.dartmouth.edu](http://hop.dartmouth.edu) or 603.646.2422

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