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Alabama Shakespeare Festival
The State Theatre of Alabama

**ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL appoints
RICK DILDINE as new ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Dildine is 4th Artistic Director in ASF's 45-year history**

MONTGOMERY, AL (June 29, 2017)

After a year-long national search process, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival Board of Directors has appointed Arkansas-native Rick Dildine as ASF's new Artistic Director.

ASF Board Chairman Dr. Laurie Weil states "A son of the South, Rick Dildine understands and appreciates what a unique treasure the Alabama Shakespeare Festival is to Montgomery, to the River Region, to Alabama and to the Southeast. He came to the search interviews having carefully studied the challenges and opportunities of our professional, producing theatre. He has compelling ideas - many of which have succeeded under his leadership of Shakespeare Festival St. Louis- about how to grow audiences and how to make theatre accessible and relevant to our entire public. With his vision and innovative spirit, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival is well-positioned to take a dynamic leap forward in the years ahead."

Currently, Rick Dildine is the Artistic Director/Executive Director at Shakespeare Festival St. Louis. Under Dildine's leadership over the past eight years, the organization has grown attendance by 55% and contributed revenue by 38%. Dildine's work has been recognized annually with critics' top honors as well as community recognition; under his leadership Shakespeare Festival St. Louis has garnered awards including Arts Organization of the Year (2017) by the Missouri Arts Council, Excellence in the Arts Award (2015) from the Arts & Education Council of Greater St. Louis and the Exemplary Community Achievement Award (2012) by the Missouri Humanities Council.

Dildine's "Shakespeare in the Streets" program has received national attention for its distinctive storytelling style that uses Shakespeare and the words of everyday St. Louisans to create original plays that are performed in the streets – a model so successful the concept has been replicated at theatres in Germany and South Africa. He has developed numerous educational and community initiatives, including an exceptional partnership developed with Monsanto to provide a "Rural Education Tour" to perform across Missouri and Illinois for communities with little to no arts programming.

Kevin Moriarty, who serves as Artistic Director of Dallas Theater Center and Chairman of the Board of Theatre Communications Group (the national service organization for the American Theatre) shares, "Rick has the ability to tell a story with clarity, energy and creativity. His work is theatrically entertaining, smart, original and engaging for broad audiences. His body of work ranges from popular musicals to extensive Shakespearean productions. He has the unique ability to create productions of classics that respect the text while also speaking powerfully to contemporary audiences."

Dildine replaces Geoffrey Sherman, who retires as of July 14 after serving as Producing Artistic Director of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival for the past twelve years.

Rick Dildine will assume duties beginning August 1, 2017. He inherits the 2017-18 programmed season which celebrates Alabama's Bicentennial through several Alabama-themed plays including ***Fly*** (a chronicle of the Tuskegee Airmen), ***The Miracle Worker*** (the story of Tuscumbia native Helen Keller) and ***Bear Country*** (celebrating University of Alabama Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant.) The season also includes Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, Tennessee Williams *The Glass Menagerie*, a theatre for young audiences presentation of *The Snow Queen*, the Broadway musical *Annie* and a Southern Writers' Project world premiere, *Starstruck*, by Lucile Lichtblau.

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The Alabama Shakespeare Festival is among the largest Shakespeare theatres in the world. Designated as the State Theatre of Alabama, ASF has been located in Montgomery since 1985 when it moved from Anniston as a result of Mr. and Mrs. Wynton Blount's gift of a 100,000 square foot performing arts complex in the 250-acre Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park.