



Shakespeare Set Free Institutes Held at ESU Branches Nationwide in Summer 2011

As fall begins again, teachers across the country go back to their classrooms. This year, thanks to dedicated ESU Branches, approximately 200 teachers are headed back to school equipped with new tools for teaching Shakespeare to their students. They learned these at the **Shakespeare Set Free Institutes**, a two-day professional development opportunity for middle school and high school English and drama teachers. These low-cost and non-residential Institutes around the country are the outcome of an ongoing collaboration between The English-Speaking Union and world-renowned **Folger Shakespeare Library**, a leader in Shakespeare education in America and home to the world's largest collection of Shakespeare materials. The program focuses on performance-based approaches to teaching Shakespeare. Performance-based education, an on-your-feet interactive study of Shakespeare's plays and poems, creates meaningful and memorable experiences and connections to the Bard's works. And it compliments another beloved ESU program, the **English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition**, which also gets students up on their feet performing Shakespeare.

Each Institute consists of three complementary components: scholarship, performance and pedagogy. During this two-day program, teachers listened to thought-provoking **lectures** and discussed their ideas in intimate seminars with Shakespeare scholars. They also learned effective, engaging methods of teaching Shakespeare in **curriculum sessions** with a Folger Master Teacher. Alongside their fellow English and drama teachers, they actively participated in interactive **performance classes** with a teaching artist. The combination created a well-rounded program for our eager educators. In addition to all these wonderful sessions, teachers received a copy of the **Folger's Shakespeare Set Free Toolkit**, which includes teaching materials for use back in the classroom. The Institutes each culminated in a performance of short scenes from some of the Bard's most famous works. To view some of these scenes online visit: www.YouTube.com/EnglishSpeakingUnion.



A scholarship session at the Fort Lauderdale Institute.



English-Speaking Union organizers and Institute instructors at the Central Florida Institute.

Inspired by a similar two-day program at the ESU Oklahoma City and Tulsa Branches, a pilot Shakespeare Set Free Institute was held at ESU National Headquarters in New York City in Summer 2010. Following that success, Branches nationwide were offered the opportunity to host a Shakespeare Set Free Institute in their own communities. Seven Branches (Central Florida, Fort Lauderdale, Greensboro, Kentucky, Nashville, Oklahoma City and Tulsa) and National Headquarters participated in the program. These committed ESU Branches and their volunteers, who locally organized the Institutes, are to be heartily praised for their extraordinary work of turning a pilot education program into a successful,

national offering for teachers. The Branches used their local resources and existing partnerships to make this program uniquely their own. The Greensboro Branch showed teachers some southern hospitality with a reception at the home of ESU members and Greensboro Treasurer George and Kitty Robinson. Teachers at the Nashville and National Headquarters Institutes were treated to performances by the Nashville Shakespeare Festival and Royal Shakespeare Company. Kentucky teamed up with the Actors Theatre of Louisville who offered use of their facilities.

June The first Shakespeare Set Free Institutes took place in Florida and Kentucky. Teachers were treated to sun and Shakespeare at the ESU's Fort Lauderdale and Central Florida (Winter Park) Branches. The Fort Lauderdale Institute at Pompano Beach High School was organized and led by local teacher and former BUSS scholar, Julia Perlowski. She was joined by teaching artist Michelle Terl and Shakespeare scholar Peggy O'Brien (formerly of the Folger Shakespeare Library). The Central Florida Institute at the University Club of Winter Park was headed by Janice McClure and Julia Rankin, both retired teachers who attended the pilot SSF Institute last summer. Instructors at this program included Folger Master Teacher Michael LoMonico, Shakespeare scholar and ESU member Maurice O'Sullivan (Rollins College), teaching artist Heather Lester (The Shakespeare Society in New York City) and Anne Hering (Orlando Shakespeare Theater). The program was fully funded by the Drey Endowment. Mr. LoMonico, Senior Consultant on National Education at the Folger, went from this Institute to the one held at the Actors Theater of Louisville. Andy Perry, the Kentucky Branch's Shakespeare Competition Coordinator and a former BUSS scholar, organized the program. He enlisted teaching artist Megan Burnett (Alice Lloyd College) as well as Shakespeare scholars Matthew Biberman (University of Louisville) and ESU member Kathleen Lyons (formerly of Bellarmine University).



Teachers at the Kentucky Institute.



A performance session at the New York Institute.

July The Institutes continued with programs at Oklahoma City and ESU National Headquarters in New York City on the same days. While Oklahoma teachers gathered at Heritage Hall School to discuss Shakespeare's timeless tragedy, *Hamlet*, almost 1500 miles away teachers in Manhattan were rehearsing scenes from the Bard's famous comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Paul Stevenson, an Oklahoma teacher and Folger Master Teacher, coordinated the Oklahoma program with assistance from Oklahoma City Treasurer John Francis. He was joined by Shakespeare scholar Dr. James Yoch (Oklahoma University), teaching artist Amber Harrington (Edison Preparatory School) and director Steve Knight (Oklahoma University). Read more about the Institute at:

<http://www.edmondsun.com/local/x1452092972/Heritage-Hall-hosts-Shakespeare-Institute>. In New York City, the instructors included Sid Ray (Pace University) as well as Mr. LoMonico, Ms. Lester and Dr. O'Brien. Among the attendees were Karen Jeff Scholars, five teachers from public schools in New York City who were awarded full scholarships to attend the program. The scholarship is named after the late Director of Education at ESU National Headquarters, who conceived of a partnership program with the Folger years ago. Two scholarship recipients from the Monmouth County Branch also attended the program.

August The end of summer brought teachers to programs in Greensboro, Nashville and Tulsa. The Greensboro program was hosted at the University of North Carolina—Greensboro in partnership with the university and the Atlantic World Research Network. This Institute served all Region IV teachers and was spearheaded by Region IV Chair, Alice Irby. Konnie Dee from Greensboro locally organized the program. Instructors included Mr. LoMonico, teaching artist John Gulley (UNCG) and Shakespeare scholars Ann Cook Calhoun (Vanderbilt University and Shakespeare Birthplace Trust) and Christopher Hodgkins (UNCG). Dr. Calhoun, former ESU Interim Chairman and Nashville Branch Shakespeare Coordinator, went right from presenting in Greensboro to running her own Shakespeare Set Free Institute at Harpeth Hall School with assistance from Nashville Branch Treasurer Lynne Siesser. Her fellow instructors included Mr. LoMonico, teaching artist Denice Hicks (Nashville Shakespeare Festival) and Shakespeare scholar Leah Marcus (Vanderbilt University). Paul Stevenson, assisted by Ruth Ann Willsey, also did double duty by organizing an Institute at the University of Tulsa focused on Shakespeare's comedy *The Taming of the Shrew*. He was again joined by Ms. Harrington and Shakespeare scholars Lars Engle and Jennifer Airey (University of Tulsa).



A curriculum session at the Greensboro Institute.



Teachers at the Tulsa Institute.

Teachers from all over the country universally lauded the Institutes as one of the best professional development experiences they had ever received and thanked the hardworking Branches. Many also showed interest in participating in their local ESU National Shakespeare Competitions, British Universities Summer School program and other ESU educational offerings. All they went home refreshed and motivated with easily-adapted methods and materials for setting Shakespeare free among their students. If your Branch is interested in hosting a **Shakespeare Set Free Institute** next summer, please contact Carol Losos or

Katharine Moran in the Education Department at 212-818-1200 or shakespeare@esuus.org.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

144 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016

Tel: 212-818-1200 Fax: 212-867-4177 email: info@esuus.org website: www.esuus.org