Camp Shakespeare ’15

Camp Shakespeare is a two-week University of Texas residential summer camp for young people, ages 11-16,* dedicated to exploring Shakespeare through performance. “Exploring” and “performance” are key words here. They suggest that we are finding our way not through rehearsals but performances. Every moment is performance. Campers are challenged to play out their interpretative discoveries on stage. At Camp Shakespeare, we celebrate the creative process in everything we do.

(*The younger applicants must have reached 11 by January 1, 2015. )

Camp Shakespeare seeks kids who work well with others, who are inventive, elastic, eager to play, explore and take risks, and are ready to rumble when they arrive.

Camp Shakespeare accepts applications from candidates anywhere, in public, private, or home schools. Experience with theater or with Shakespeare is not necessary. Commitment to working long hours daily at play with others is. Each session will be composed of 14 students. Applications are available on the shakespeare-winedale.org website for both prospective campers and former campers.

CAMP SITE

The site of Camp Shakespeare ’15 is Briarfield B & B Retreat & Conference Center, near Round Top, Texas. The Inn provides a comfortable country and historical setting for the experience: students enjoy the privilege of using and the responsibility of caring for these beautifully-restored 19th century Texas buildings which serve as dormitories, dining, and gathering spaces. See briarfieldatroundtop.com.

CAMP DATES

Camp Shakespeare will offer two sessions for Summer 2014

   Session #1: Sunday, June 7 -- Saturday, June 20
   Session #2: Sunday, June 28 – Saturday, July 11

CAMP FEE

The cost of Camp Shakespeare ’15 is $1,000.00. Some scholarship monies are available.
THE PLAYS

Session 1: A Midsummer Night’s Dream
Session 2: As You Like It

STAFF

Director: Professor Jim (Doc) Ayres, Founding Director of Shakespeare at Winedale, Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus of The University of Texas.

Executive Assistant and Co-Director: Robin Grace Thompson. Now in her 8th Camp year, Robin assists Doc in all planning, administrative, scheduling, teaching and directing activities and is coordinator of staff. Robin holds a B.A. in Theater from St. Edward’s University and is a graduate of the Actors Theatre of Louisville apprentice program. Robin is also a full-time teacher for ACE Academy in Austin.

Doc and Robin will be assisted by three other staff each session.

DAILY SCHEDULE AND ACTIVITY

Campers begin their day quite early, at 6:30 with cabin-cleaning and other assigned duties before meeting in groups or one-on-one with the staff to work on lines, characterization, or a scene at 7:00. A brief period of physical and vocal exercise follows. Then breakfast. Morning and afternoon work/play sessions (from 8:15-4:00) take place in the Theater Barn at Winedale and the air-conditioned Henkel Hall in Round Top. Every lunch is a picnic, prepared and set out by campers. Late afternoon sessions (4:00-6:00) are busy with Journal writing, relaxation exercises, quiet time, painting, mask-making, lines, and preparing for the evening. Improvised “problem-solving” exercises, singing, dancing, and free improvisational play follow supper. The day concludes with film sequences of Shakespeare’s plays and Cabin Time, wherein campers “unwind” and exchange responses to accomplishments of the day. Lights out: 9:15 p.m.

CAMP POLICIES

At Camp Shakespeare, we hope to create together a highly original, extraordinary learning experience. We have a country setting for that, much like Shakespeare’s forest of Arden or the wood outside Athens. There is a different clock here. This world is filled with magic, wonder, song, and words and we do it without cell phones, computers, ipods, radios, or electronic games. The only TV game show here is Shakespeare. We do encourage campers to bring
musical instruments of any kind. Upon acceptance into the program, campers are notified of what items to bring and not to bring.

TELEPHONE CONTACT AND VISITATION

Camp staff members notify parents of a camper's illness and/or problems with following the daily schedule or working with others, explaining how we are addressing those difficulties. Parents wishing to contact campers for any reason should call any of the three staff members at any time.

PREPARATION FOR CAMP

Upon acceptance, campers will be sent a text of the play chosen (with plenty of space for questions and annotation), role assignments, information about what to bring to Camp, a Release and Indemnification form and a Medical History report (to be returned by mail before arrival). Campers prepare by reading and re-reading the play and by working toward understanding language and characterization. Campers are expected to have memorized all of their assigned lines by the arrival date. Campers may at any time e-mail any of the staff for assistance, advice, suggestions, or answers to questions arising during this period of preparation.

Campers who arrive at Camp without the preparation noted above may be dismissed from Camp.

PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

Public performances of the plays will be held for Session 1 on Thursday, June 18, at the Crystal Theater in Gonzales, Tx; on Friday, June 19, at Henkel Hall in Round Top, Tx; and on Saturday, June 20, at the Winedale Historical Center's Theater Barn; and for Session 2, on Thursday, July 9, at the Crystal Theater in Gonzales, Tx; on Friday, July 10, at Henkel Hall in Round Top, Tx; and on Saturday, July 11, at The Winedale Historical Center's Theater Barn.

APPLICATION

We hope that applicants will apply to Camp Shakespeare for the opportunities it offers for play, for playing with others and for playing Shakespeare.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

The completed file should be sent to Professor Jim Ayres, P.O. Box 202, Round Top, Tx, 78954, before April 15, 2015.
SELECTION PROCESS

We do not audition applicants. We do interview new applicants and give serious consideration to letters of recommendation.

All applications are reviewed by a committee composed of the director and the counselors/associate directors. We will select equal numbers of boys and girls, a balance of new and former campers and a fair representation of all ages (11-16). We attempt to honor the applicant’s first choice for session but often we have to take the second choice because of the balances we seek in gender, age, and between new and former camper experience. Often we cannot select candidates who select only one session, for the same reasons.

As we read applications, we give major consideration to the applicant’s ability to live, work, and play cooperatively and generously with others; to a desire for shared and disciplined play experience; a willingness to try new things, risk, and explore; and to a firm commitment to the ensemble approach.

Applicants are therefore applying for a play experience, not a specific Shakespearean play or part. After notification of selection, campers will receive role (character) assignments and suggestions about preparation.

NOTIFICATION OF ACCEPTANCE

Candidates will be notified of acceptance by April 20, '15 and are expected to acknowledge acceptance by e-mail. To secure registration, parents of Campers selected should send the full ($1,000.00) fee payment to Professor Ayres, Camp Shakespeare, P.O. Box 202, Round Top, Tx, 78954. Checks should be made “TO” The University of Texas and marked “FOR” Camp Shakespeare.

A SUMMARY

Camp Shakespeare seeks kids who:

- work well with others

- are ready and eager to speak up, make observations and respond to others from the beginning

- are inventive, elastic, eager to explore and take risks

- are ready to rumble (get involved, assist others, take initiative) when they arrive

- desire to live, work, and play cooperatively and generously with
others

- have a desire for shared and disciplined play experience
- have a willingness to try new things, risk, and explore and do those
- have a firm commitment to the ensemble approach

FURTHER INFORMATION

Our website, shakespeare-winedale.org, carries up-to-date information about the summer camp. Parents and candidates are urged to check the site weekly for new information and possible changes. Questions of any kind about Camp Shakespeare '15 should be directed to Doc Ayres at jayres@cvctx.com.

The following observations by a former (1980) Shakespeare at Winedale student whose daughter (age 12) attended Camp Shakespeare, and the parent of a recent camper (age 16), say quite a bit about what happens at Camp Shakespeare:

Their accomplishment [at Camp] is the more remarkable when we consider that none of these students are theater or drama students but only kids interested in working together to explore a play through performance. In the process, their play becomes a vehicle for their exploration of language, of social encounter and problem-solving, for developing self-confidence and self-esteem, verbal and written expression, and, through Shakespeare, for gaining insight into the human condition.

Looking in from the outside, it’s a pretty risky thing that Camp Shakespeare is doing. I actually think that’s why it works. It creates the right community for those kids – it’s not about me, it’s about us; it’s about the play. The kids realize what amazing stuff they can accomplish in just two weeks’ time by letting go. The camp empowers kids to be themselves and use what they’ve got, and puts faith in them that they can do it. Believing they can do it, they do!