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Clive Worsley: From Town Hall Theatre to Cal Shakes

By Sophie Braccini



Clive Worsley Photo Sophie Braccini

Even before becoming artistic director of Town Hall Theatre, Clive Worsley was associated with California Shakespeare Theater as a teaching artist. Now he is leaving his more than full-time job at THT to take direction of Cal Shakes' Artistic Learning program, which offers in-school residencies, after-school classes, and summer Shakespeare conservatories. There he will develop one of his passions, teaching through the arts, with a special focus on increasing the diversity and reach of an already successful program.

Worsley confesses to mixed emotions about leaving the artistic director's seat at THT. With his team, Worsley created a strong program and theater aficionados who liked his choices and appreciated his efforts to make THT productions first rate. He directed THT for five full seasons with many successful productions such as "The Importance of Being Earnest" and "The Glass Menagerie," as well as Shakespeare plays including "Twelfth Night" and "Measure for Measure." More innovative productions included Yasmina Reza's "Art," and Lisa Loomer's "Distracted," and of course no one will forget holiday classics such as "Scrooge" and "It's A Wonderful Life."

Under his leadership and that of Joel Roster, the education program flourished and in spite of some hardship (a devastating flood), the financial situation of the company improved dramatically.

"I am extremely proud the work we have done," he says. "THT has an excellent staff, passionate and dedicated board and supportive community. I am grateful to the board

that took a chance with me, and to Lamorinda residents who opened their arms to me and made THT the success that it is."

Betsy Streeter, THT board president, states: "Town Hall Theatre Company has the unique privilege of being a vortex of developing talent. ... Clive Worsley is no exception to this rule."

Worsley has worked with Cal Shakes as a teaching artist since 2002 and Cal Shakes Artistic Director Jonathan Moscone says that, from the start, "we felt he was a part of our company. We needed someone of his caliber to guide our education effort." Cal Shakes' mission is defined as striving "for everyone, regardless of age, circumstance, or background, to discover the relevance of theater in his or her lives."

Moscone describes the education portion of that mission as a yearlong effort that includes school residencies, student matinees, teacher development programs and, of course, summer camps. "We'd like to deepen our work in schools," says the director, "invite in more diverse teaching artists, and Clive will be excellent at training a new cadre of teaching artists coming from diverse backgrounds."

Worsley is passionate about art education. "So many programs are being slashed," he says, "and there is so much that can be done." And he has seen how an artist in classroom residency can help teachers develop art curriculum.

"Theater can be used for writing, movement, storytelling, and enlivening historic topics," he says. "During a residency in Orinda Intermediate School, we put on a classroom presentation of 'Henry the Eighth,'" remembers Worsley. "The students were studying medieval history, and the play brought history to life." Cal Shakes works in schools throughout Contra Costa, Alameda and San Francisco counties.

Cal Shakes is funded by individual donors, associations, corporations and government. In his new position, Worsley will also participate in the fundraising efforts of the non-profit. "Clive will be the primary advocate for our work in education," says Moscone. "His position is a top leadership role of a core program. He is the right person for the job; he has all the right tools. The entire board is very enthusiastic with his hiring."

Town Hall Theatre has not yet named a replacement.

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