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54th Season of Montana Shakespeare in the Parks Set to Open with Performances of Shakespeare's
Much Ado About Nothing and *The Merchant of Venice*

Bozeman, Mont., April 1, 2026 – Montana Shakespeare in the Parks (MSIP) kicks off its 54th season with free performances of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, June 10-13, and *The Merchant of Venice*, June 17-20. Performances are open to the public and held at 8 pm in the MSU Duck Pond Grove, with special pre-show performances beginning at 7 pm. Following the Bozeman performances, the company of 11 actors embarks on a 12-week tour across the West, visiting 64 communities. All ages are welcome to attend and enjoy these free performances.

Much Ado About Nothing speaks to the joy and uncertainty of love, reputation, and the ways that community shapes our understanding of one another. This lively comedy unfolds in the aftermath of war, where returning soldiers and welcoming hosts find themselves drawn into courtship, clever schemes, and shifting perceptions. Among a vibrant cast of characters, Shakespeare explores how easily we can be misled, and how resilience, honesty, and grace can restore both trust and connection.

"In a moment when many communities feel polarized or fatigued, *Much Ado About Nothing* insists on laughter, music, and communal celebration," says director Johamy Morales. "The play ends not in division, but in dance. That theatrical act, gathering together, witnessing conflict, and choosing reconciliation models a kind of collective resilience."

The Merchant of Venice explores justice, mercy, prejudice, and the longing to belong in a divided world. As Bassanio seeks Portia's hand and Antonio enters a dangerous bond with Shylock, the young Jessica risks everything to leave her father's house in search of love and freedom. Through romance and courtroom drama, Shakespeare examines the cost of exclusion and the transformative power of mercy.

"The Merchant of Venice is one of the most complete plays in Shakespeare's canon," says director Kevin Asselin. "It offers so much for audiences: the young people in the play have a fascinating journey, but it's the deeper questions that Shylock, Antonio, and Portia navigate on a truly human level that I find most compelling as a director."

As with many of MSIP's productions, audiences will experience a world-class theatrical experience that transports them beyond the ordinary.

This summer, the company performs in 64 communities across five states including Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, North Dakota, and Washington, serving over 20,000 audience members annually with free performances.

As part of MSIP's Share Our Stage program, most events will feature pre-show performances by local artists. Audiences are encouraged to come early, bring a picnic, and enjoy an evening together under the Big Sky among friends and neighbors.

Ushering Shakespeare's immortal stories of life, love, and folly into a modern era, MSIP is dedicated to preserving the cultural traditions of theatre and literature through live, professional performances that are free for all people, for all time.

For more information and the full tour schedule, visit ShakespeareInTheParks.org.