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Shakespeare Outdoors returns to Brushwood Center

Brushwood Center submission

Brushwood Center announces the return of Shakespeare Outdoors at 7 p.m. July 23-26 with the Bard's "As You Like It," performed by Citadel Theatre. This summertime event will be performed in Ryerson Woods, in Riverwoods, near Deerfield.

"Our mission is to connect people to nature through the arts and environmental programs," said John Barrett, executive director of Brushwood Center, a nonprofit organization. "Shakespeare Outdoors is a chance for us to connect the community to nature in a unique way."

Shakespeare's "As You Like It" is a favorite of audiences everywhere. The pastoral comedy is perhaps known as much for the famed soliloquy "All the World's a Stage" or "The Seven Ages of Man" as for its storyline.

In the play, a duke's court is usurped by his brother and he and his followers flee to the nearby forest. There, his supporters -- including his jester, other courtiers, his daughter Rosalind and her friends -- camp out among the country folk and make do with their banishment.

In hiding, Rosalind has adopted the visage of a young man, and a new name, Ganymede, and this new appearance leads to a comedy of mistaken identities as a country girl falls for her.

"The show has a little bit of everything: comedy, love and romance, mistaken identity, and even chase scenes. It will be fun to watch," said Scott Phelps, artistic director of the Citadel Theatre.

The most musical of Shakespeare's plays, "As You Like It" features a number of songs that highlight the pastoral atmosphere and the changing of the seasons.

"As You Like It" is directed by Frank Farrell, who performed as an actor in Goodman Theatre's production of the play years ago and directed Citadel's outdoor "A Midsummer Night's Dream" last summer.

Sitting outside and listening to Shakespeare's words in a wooded setting hearkens to the early days of theater. Phelps said his performers are really looking forward to returning to Brushwood.

"They love the intimate connection they can make with the audience," he said.

Last year was their first year at Brushwood and it was so successful that they are added a fourth performance this

year.

"As You Like It" is a 90-minute performance, including guitar, violin and vocals. Barrett suggests arriving early for a hike on one of the many trails of Ryerson Woods, or to take a tour of Brushwood Center to view the art gallery before finding a spot of the lawn.

Brushwood Center is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Through innovative arts programs presented against a backdrop of stately woods where pre-settlement flora and fauna still linger, Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods seeks to build an environmental ethic in the region by offering multiple points of entry for the public to connect with nature.

Tickets are available for all four shows. Tickets are \$15 for general admission, \$10 for Brushwood members. Register at www.BrushwoodCenter.org (<http://www.BrushwoodCenter.org>) or call (847) 968-3344. Brushwood Center is at 21850 N. Riverwoods Road, Riverwoods.