



# CONTINUING SUCCESS AND BRIGHT FUTURE for St Lawrence Shakespeare Festival

By Tanya Shukalova

Ingrid Bjornson has set her hopes in the weather for this summer -- and with good reason. The 13th annual St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival kicks off on July 18th through August 22nd. "The biggest factor in that is the weather. We're an outdoor festival, so that affects us," Ingrid commented. The Kinsmen amphitheatre is located on the banks of the St. Lawrence River and that creates the perfect, serene backdrop for the festival.

After leaving her home in Nova Scotia working in concerting lighting, Ingrid feels fortunate to have found a second career at the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival. She is now on her third season of being the General Manager, and says the best thing about her job is the audience's reactions to each play. She loves sitting in the

audience and watching people's faces. "From five year olds, all the way up to ninety-five year olds, it's quite something. Everybody seems to be able to take something away from Shakespeare," Ingrid said enthusiastically.

The two plays being presented at the amphitheatre this summer will be the ever historical *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Janet Irwin and *The Comedy of Errors*.

Growth, that is what Ingrid wishes for in the future. Starting out back in 2002 as a tiny, self-produced, touring production of *Romeo and Juliet*, till now, having a couple hundred people on staff, (actors, volunteers, managers, etc.) the show has come a long way. A huge accomplishment for Ingrid and the festival itself, was hosting the only Canadian stop for the *Globe to Globe Hamlet* show last summer. The *Globe to Globe* project is a 2 year tour of *Hamlet* being performed in every country across the world. "There's a lot of logistical work in arranging that, so that's probably one of our biggest accomplishments."

Ingrid would love for the festival to add a third show on top of the two a year they currently do, and making those shows last even longer than 5 weeks. A larger audience, more community involvement, and artistic development are all in the future for the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival.

This will be the new artistic director, Rona Waddington's first season partaking in the

festival. Coming from such an experienced background as working with the Port Stanley Festival Theatre, Lunchbox Theatre in Calgary, and Artistic Associate at Drayton Entertainment, she is sure to be a huge benefit to the creativity of the plays. She will also be directing *Comedy of Errors*.

The volunteers are also a tremendous factor in making sure the shows run smoothly. "We have wonderful volunteers who definitely help make my job easier. We have over 165 active volunteers. They do everything from billeting the actors, front of house during the show themselves, and promotion. We couldn't run the festival without them," Ingrid said.

There is no other professional outdoor theatre in the St. Lawrence Seaway area like the Shakespeare Festival at the Kinsmen theatre. This annual event brings lively culture, festive music and a lesson to be taken away by everyone. Over the past twelve years, there has been a 600% increase in attendance and that number is sure to keep rising thanks to the hard work and devotion put into each show.

With actors coming from across the country to participate and give the best performance possible, the Shakespeare Festival is the perfect event for families, couples, and all Shakespeare lovers. The timeless lessons of Shakespeare mixed with talented musical performances and modern comedic twists, all in front of the dazzling views of the St. Lawrence River; you couldn't ask for a better scene than that. **LH**

For more information on tickets and event dates, please visit <http://www.stlawrenceshakespeare.ca/home.aspx> or call 613-925-5788

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** If you have not been to a performance at the St Lawrence Shakespeare Festival you are missing out on one of the area's true jewels of summertime events. The outdoor theatre on the waterfront in Prescott is truly unique and to be experienced watching a performance.