



The English-Speaking Union
National Shakespeare Competition

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ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE
For teen from Nashville

New York City, April 27th, 2015 – With a performance of a sonnet and monologue from Shakespeare, **Jacob Huff** from Brentwood, TN, a student of Kara Kindall at Nashville School of the Arts in Nashville, placed as a semi-finalist in the 32nd annual English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition. The Competition was held on April 27th at Lincoln Center Theater in New York City for 57 winners of ESU Branch competitions nationwide. Jacob had previously won the ESU Nashville Branch regional competition.

This year's winner of the English-Speaking Union Hawaii Branch competition, **Sarah Spalding**, won first prize in the ESU National Shakespeare Competition, winning a full Scholarship to attend the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art's *Young Actors Summer School* in London, England. Second place winner, **Evelyn Johnson**, representing the Philadelphia Branch, won a scholarship to attend the American Shakespeare Center Theatre Camp. Third place winner, **Elizabeth Mears**, representing the Boston Branch of the ESU, won \$500 from The Shakespeare Society.

The English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition is a school-based program designed to help students develop their speaking and critical thinking skills and their appreciation of literature as they explore the beauty of the language and timeless themes in Shakespeare's works. In three progressive competition levels, students memorize, interpret, and perform monologues and sonnets in their own schools, at ESU Branch-sponsored community competitions and at the National Shakespeare Competition. The program has engaged more than 250,000 young people since its inception. Citing its 32nd season this year, the Honorable Bill De Blasio, Mayor of the City of New York, proclaimed April 27th as William Shakespeare Day. Nick Astbury, the British Deputy Consul-General in New York, read the proclamation, and Josiah Bunting III, Chairman of the English-Speaking Union, awarded certificates to the competitors.

The ESU provided the Branch winners with two full days of educational and cultural activities in New York City, including an exclusive acting workshop at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University and a performance of the *Something Rotten!* on Broadway. Perhaps best of all for these teenagers was the opportunity to spend a weekend in New York City with other students from across the country who share a love of theater, language and, particularly, Shakespeare.

The semi-finals competition judges were distinguished actors and educators: **Miriam Hyman** is a 2012 graduate of Yale School of Drama where she earned her MFA in Acting. Most recently, Hyman portrayed Miranda in La Mama Experimental Theater's World Premiere new musical adaptation of *Tempest* (2014 NYT Critics' Pick). Prior to Miranda, Hyman closed a "Brilliant Performance" of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* as the heroine Rosalind. T.V. and Film credits include: *The Blacklist*, *Hostages*, *30 Rock*, *The Wire*, *Law & Order* and more. **Michael LoMonico**, Senior Consultant on National Education for the Folger Shakespeare Library, has taught Shakespeare courses and workshops for teachers and students in 36 states as well as in Canada and England. This summer he is working with the English-Speaking Union to create Folger Professional Learning Days for teachers at ESU Branches across the country. **Alexandra López**, Associate Director of Education at Lincoln Center Theater, has worked as a theater director, producer and educator. She has directed for the Creative Arts Team Youth Theatre, Henry Street Settlement/Abrons Arts Center, and has produced theater performances at the University of Pennsylvania, Hamptons Shakespeare Festival, and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Alexandra has a Bachelor of Arts in English and Theatre from the University of Pennsylvania. **Dr. Sid Ray** is a professor of English and Women's and Gender Studies at Pace University in New York City, where she serves as Associate Chair

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of the English Department. Her research and teaching interests range from Shakespeare and early modern drama to early modern women writers and performative identities. Dr. Ray is the author of numerous works, including *Mother Queens and Princely Sons: Rogue Madonnas in the Age of Shakespeare*, and *Holy Estates: Marriage and Monarchy in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*. She is currently editing a collection of essays on Shakespeare in performance titled “Shaping Shakespeare for Performance: The Bear Stage”, forthcoming for the fall of 2015. **Michael Sexton**, Artistic Director of The Shakespeare Society in New York City, recently directed *As You Like It* at The Two River Theater, *Henry V* at the Two River Theater and *Titus Andronicus* with Jay O. Sanders at the Public Theater. He is a regular guest artist at NYU’s Graduate Acting Program, the Juilliard School, and Columbia University.

The English-Speaking Union of the United States is a non-profit, non-political educational organization whose mission is to celebrate English as a shared language to foster global understanding and good will by providing educational and cultural opportunities for students, educators and members. The ESU carries out its work through a network of Branches across the country, sponsoring a variety of language and international education programs.



Jacob Huff, semi-finalist in the 2015 English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition at Lincoln Center Theater in New York City.



The 57 semi-finalists onstage at the 2015 English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition at Lincoln Center in New York City.

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