



The English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition

April 18, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Photo available upon request



AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS COMPETE IN 33rd ANNUAL ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION NATIONAL SHAKESPEARE COMPETITION AT LINCOLN CENTER

New York: On May 2, 2016, more than 50 high school students from throughout the United States will converge at New York City's Lincoln Center to compete in the 33rd Annual English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition. With the competition, the ESU celebrates the legacy of William Shakespeare as part of Shakespeare400, the international yearlong celebration of Shakespeare's works in 2016. This year, the ESU National Shakespeare Competition marks the milestone of exceeding 300,000 student participants since its inception in 1983. Among the winners and finalists of the Competition who have gone on to national acclaim are actor and director Joe Sofranko, whose Hulu series *Complete Works* is, in fact, based on the National Shakespeare Competition; actors Emily Bergl (*Desperate Housewives*, *Southland*); Tyler Hilton (*Walk the Line*, *One Tree Hill*); Heather Lind (*Boardwalk Empire*, *Turn: Washington's Spies*); Bronwyn Reed (*Law and Order: SVU*); as well as Broadway's Matt Harrington (*Twelfth Night*, *Matilda*) and Adam Wesley Brown (*Once the Musical*).

All competitors are winners of regional and local competitions throughout the country. Each will perform an excerpt of a Shakespeare monologue and then recite one of his sonnets. First prize is a full scholarship to attend the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art's Young Actors Summer School in London. Second prize is a full scholarship to the American Shakespeare Center's Theatre Camp, and third prize is \$500 from The Shakespeare Society. This year, actress Dana Ivey will serve as a judge, joining an illustrious roster of former judges that includes such luminaries as Sarah Jessica Parker, Sam Waterston, Phylicia Rashad, Blythe Danner, Jesse L. Martin, Cynthia Nixon, Richard Thomas, Courtney B. Vance, Dianne Wiest, and Helen Hayes.

ESU Shakespeare Teacher Programs, in partnership with the Folger Shakespeare Library, host dynamic up-on-your-feet workshops throughout the country to educate teachers about Shakespeare's language, the First Folio, and how to engage all students in the Bard's texts. Teachers also vie for coveted ESU British University Summer School Scholarships (BUSS), the nation's only scholarship program for teachers to study in the summer – on and off the stage – at Shakespeare's Globe in London.

Founded in 1920, the ESU is a nonprofit, nonpolitical organization that promotes English as a shared language to foster global understanding and good will by providing educational and cultural opportunities for students, educators and members.

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