

Conservatory gets funding for outdoor Shakespeare

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The FSU/Asolo Conservatory has received two grants to help fund a planned outdoor production of Shakespeare’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” at Selby Botanical Gardens next spring.

The Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation provided a \$10,000 grant, which represents more than 25 percent of the additional funds needed to produce the show. The Jarrett Family Fund of Gulf Coast Community Foundation added a \$7,500 grant for the production. The conservatory also raised funds for the production through this year’s Giving Challenge, which generated \$5,980 in individual donations plus a \$8,510 match from the Patterson Foundation.

The production was planned in part because of renovations to the Ringling Museum’s Historic Asolo Theater, which usually hosts a spring production by Asolo Repertory Theatre, which will now use the conservatory’s usual home in the Cook Theatre. To make room for Asolo Rep, the conservatory decided to try staging the play outdoors.

Director Jonathan Epstein notes that the play “takes place ‘in the palace wood, a mile without the town.’ So it’s really pleasing to be performing in Selby Gardens, in a place within the town but protected, precious, sacred and distinct.” He said that “only in nature, amid nature’s unmatched foundation of creation, can our imaginations leap unleashed to the soaring truth of the play’s poetry.”

Conservatory director Greg Leaming said the gifts “will allow us to produce the kind of event that will not only raise the level of training we provide at the conservatory but also allow us to partner with one of Sarasota’s most beloved institutions and offer this community a unique theatrical experience.

Teri A. Hansen, president and CEO of the Barancik Foundation said in a statement that, “We are pleased to support this performance, which blends the talents of the conservatory’s students and the beautiful surrounding of Selby Gardens. We hope many families attend and enjoy Shakespeare in its intended outdoor setting.

Veronica Brady, senior vice president for philanthropy at Gulf Coast Community Foundation, said that Martha and Jerry Jarrett “valued the arts as a vehicle for education.”

The production is scheduled for April 11-29. Ticket information: 941-351-8000; asolorep.org