



**Stratford Shakespeare Festival
MEDIA RELEASE**

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Stratford Shakespeare Festival posts surplus for '09 citing spectacular turnaround in ticket sales

March 6, 2010... The Stratford Shakespeare Festival's 57th season was hailed as an artistic and financial success at the annual general meeting held in the Festival Theatre on Saturday, March 6. Under the leadership of General Director **Antoni Cimolino** and Artistic Director **Des McAnuff**, the critically acclaimed 2009 season attracted more than half a million patrons and achieved a surplus of \$172,367.

"Once again, this Festival faced a year of daunting economic challenge. Once again, we rose to that challenge and surmounted it. Our 2009 season was a resounding success by any measure: artistic, critical and financial," said Board Chair Richard Rooney.

"We owe this triumph to the inspired leadership of Antoni Cimolino and Des McAnuff; to the superb creative imaginations of our artists and artisans; and to the no less extraordinary talent, skill, dedication and hard work of everyone else who contributed to the season.

"Mr. McAnuff married the finest artists with some of the greatest works of the dramatic imagination, resulting in electrifying and moving experiences on stage. At the same time Mr. Cimolino expertly managed the operations of the Festival in a challenging economic environment."

Total revenues for 2009 amounted to \$59 million. Expenses totaled \$58.8 million. This positive position was the result of a number of factors, including an enhanced marketing campaign that was supported by significant contributions from government, generous donations and sponsorships, in-year reductions to operating expenses, and most important, the remarkable work on stage.

By year-end, box office and other earned revenue remained the largest contributor to the bottom line at 63%. However, corporate and individual donors contributed a record-setting \$12.1 million, representing 21% of revenue. The annual contribution from the Endowment Foundation contributed 3% to revenue and 2% was derived from the amortization of deferred capital contributions.

At \$6.6 million, government grants made up an unprecedented 11% of total revenue in 2009, thanks to the \$3 million received through the newly created Marquee Tourism Events Program and an additional \$500,000 from the province of Ontario, which together doubled previous government contributions. These contributions funded an incremental marketing campaign that expanded the Festival's promotional efforts in both Canada and the United States.

“The infusion of government funds was directed towards our marketing efforts and yielded immediate and incredible results,” said Mr. Cimolino. “This dynamic season caught the imagination not only of our audiences, but also of our donors, who contributed in record amounts. Our turnaround at the box office was spectacular, with more tickets sold between April and October of 2009 than in any year, aside from our 50th season in 2002.”

The Festival commissioned studies by the Strategic Counsel and by the Conference Board of Canada to assess the Festival's economic impact and the impact of the MTEP grant. The studies made the following conclusions:

- The Festival's economic impact is estimated at \$135.4 million for 2009.
- The Festival generated \$70.8 million in taxes to all levels of government in 2009.
- The Festival supported an estimated 3,019 jobs in 2009, with a combined payroll of \$115.7 million.
- 89% of tourists visiting Stratford have been drawn to the area by the Festival.
- Marquee Tourism Events Program funding drove the sale of 75,000 additional tickets.
 - 83% of these were sold to domestic and international visitors who live more than 80 km away.
 - These additional sales generated \$23.4 million in economic activity and \$12.1 million in taxes.

Putting on great theatre is at the heart of the Festival's mission, but in order to do so well, and well into the future, it is important to develop audiences by reaching out to young people, helping them to understand and enjoy Shakespeare and the classics. The Festival's education programs reached out to 70,000 students and their teachers in 2009, through such programs as Shakespeare on Wheels, the Shakespeare School, Shakespeare After School, the annual Teachers' Conference and Teaching Shakespeare School, as well as through pre-show presentations, post-show chats, workshops, residencies, teaching materials and designated student performances.

In 2009 the Festival set a new goal: that by 2017 every student in Ontario will have had the opportunity to attend at least one performance at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival during their academic career.

“To capture the imaginations of young people; to introduce them to a place where they will find insight, illumination and inspiration; to open the doors of their hearts and minds

and souls to possibilities they might not otherwise perceive – this is one of our very highest priorities,” said Mr. McAnuff.

In 2009, the Festival also expanded upon its mission to provide training to upcoming theatrical artists by launching the Michael Langham Workshop for Classical Direction, a formal director training program focusing on classical text. Six talented young actors were welcomed to the 12th session of the Birmingham Conservatory. The playwright residency program, launched in 2008, continued successfully. In addition, eight Canadian playwrights attended the second annual Playwrights’ Retreat. Together these two programs have allowed 31 Canadian playwrights to serve residencies at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival since 2008.

During the 2009 season, the Festival welcomed a slate of internationally renowned directors, as well as a group of accomplished actors, who are among the finest in the world.

“I cannot say enough about the strength of our actors,” said Mr. McAnuff. “And my pride in them is matched by my pride in the rest of the creative team we assembled in 2009 – the extraordinary new directors we attracted, the first-class directing talent from within our own ranks, as well as the exceptional designers and the supremely talented artisans who fulfilled their vision.”

The season’s offerings attracted the attention of major national and international media as well as a number of producers from leading theatrical organizations who sought out the Festival’s work with an eye to transferring our productions to their venues. This interest turned to action when Mirvish Productions announced that Mr. McAnuff’s production of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* would be presented as part of its 2010-11 season in Toronto. The 2009 production of *Phèdre* played at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco earlier this year. The double-bill of *Krapp’s Last Tape* and *Hughie*, starring Brian Dennehy, which was a huge hit during the 2008 season, played at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago this year, accompanied by buzz that it will move to Broadway. Also Broadway-bound is *The Importance of Being Earnest*, directed by Brian Bedford. Furthermore, after successful screenings and broadcasts here in Canada, the film of Mr. McAnuff’s 2008 production of *Caesar and Cleopatra* aired in Australia and is being distributed around the world.

In 2010, the Festival once again welcomes a slate of internationally renowned directors and actors, including **Christopher Plummer**, who will return to play Prospero in *The Tempest*.

The 2010 season, beginning on April 10, features *As You Like It*; *Kiss Me, Kate*; *The Tempest*; *Dangerous Liaisons*; *Evita*; *Peter Pan*; *The Winter’s Tale*; *Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*; *For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again*; *Do Not Go Gentle*; *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; and *King of Thieves*.

Photos of Antoni Cimolino and Des McAnuff:

<http://www.stratfordfestival.ca/imagegallery/imagegallery.aspx?id=3334>

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2010 Season | As You Like It | Kiss Me, Kate | The Tempest | Dangerous Liaisons | Evita | Peter Pan | The Winter's Tale | Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris | For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again | Do Not Go Gentle | The Two Gentlemen of Verona | King of Thieves