



The Colonial Theatre

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Contact: Alexander Berardo
Operations Manager, Colonial Theatre
(401) 596-7909
info@colonialtheaterart.org

Colonial Theatre Announces Virtual Arts Programming

WESTERLY, Rhode Island – In place of its annual Shakespeare in the Park festival, the Colonial Theatre of Rhode Island will be offering an in-depth, “Virtual Audition Workshop” to high school-aged students from July 6-10, 2020.

This workshop, presented in partnership with The United and with generous grants from the Lattner Family Foundation and the Sculco Foundation, will be led by longtime Colonial actor Marion Markham, who will draw upon her 40-year career on stage to instruct students in creating filmed audition tapes. Students will work with Marc Antony’s immortal “Friends, Romans, Countrymen” speech, featured in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, as the focus text for the workshop.

High school-aged students in Westerly, Stonington, North Stonington, and Chariho are eligible to participate in the five-day workshop, which will be conducted entirely online through group as well as individualized instruction. Markham will select a group of 12 to 15 students to study framing, lighting, and speech techniques to employ in auditions.

“Given the current COVID-19 environment, many actors are submitting pre-recorded auditions instead of appearing in-person for their initial, Stage 1 auditions,” Markham said. “I believe this trend will continue and presenting online will become an essential skill for the acting industry as it already is in many other fields.”

Under Markham’s instruction, students will work on memorization and presentation of their lines, and in doing so build an virtual stage presence. At the conclusion of the workshop, each student will have a professionally-developed audition tape to add to his or her acting portfolio.

Like many other annual Westerly events, the 2020 edition of Shakespeare in the Park was canceled in light of Gov. Gina Raimondo’s public health guidelines restricting crowd sizes to contain the spread of COVID-19.

While the Colonial was disappointed to delay its production of *Julius Caesar* to Summer 2021, Board President Dawn J. Robinson views the virtual auditioning workshop as a safe, responsible means of keeping arts programming active in the community. The workshop further builds on the theater’s successful youth education programs in Westerly High School as well as last year’s production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Robinson, a financial planner with Barnum Financial Group, says the audition workshop is structured to teach and reinforce skills that give young adults the confidence they need to master virtual interviews and introductions in the working world.

“Our goal is to help these students cultivate a professional virtual presence, both individually and as part of a group, through this workshop,” Robinson said.

“This will be a skill that really helps them in their professional lives, and to teach it through Shakespeare’s work makes this program ideal for us to offer,” she added.

Students interested in applying should submit a Google Form and a short video expressing their interest in the workshop no later than June 17th (full details are available on the Colonial’s website, www.colonialtheaterart.org). Enrollment in the workshop is \$40; this fee may be subsidized upon request.

ABOUT THE COLONIAL: Founded in 1985, the Colonial Theatre of Rhode Island is committed to producing professional theatre of the highest quality and to establishing a series of educational programs and training opportunities for both children and adults designed to enhance both knowledge and appreciation of Theatre Arts. Its annual Shakespeare in the Park festival has entertained tens of thousands each summer in Westerly’s Wilcox Park free of charge.