

Media Contact Only:  
John Western, Marketing Director  
San Francisco Shakespeare Festival  
415-865-4422  
[jwestern@sfsakes.org](mailto:jwestern@sfsakes.org)



For immediate release  
December 12, 2025

## **San Francisco Shakespeare Festival Secures Two Leadership Gifts representing \$100,000 in new funding**

### **Announces 1:1 Match to Prospective Supporters to Double their Donation in December**

In conjunction with San Francisco Shakespeare Festival's [announcement of its 2026 season of "Empire"](#) - featuring Shakespeare on Tour's *Julius Caesar* and Free Shakespeare in the Park's *Antony and Cleopatra* - SF Shakes is announcing it has secured two \$50,000 lead gifts and that donations to SF Shakes by December 31 will be matched 1:1.

The two lead donors are choosing to remain anonymous, and are hoping to inspire not only current donors to SF Shakes, but also new donors to the performing arts in the Bay Area in the face of rapid erosion of government and foundation support. Neither lead donor routinely prioritizes support for the performing arts, yet both find SF Shakes worthy of their philanthropic leadership. Says SF Shakes Executive Director Toby Leavitt: "We hope these gifts inspire interest and confidence, and attract additional new theater supporters. Just as Free Shakespeare in the Park attracts new theater goers, inspiring them to seek out additional local performances, so too we're hoping to motivate new performing arts donors. We hope to connect with donors who want Free Shakespeare in the Park and our extensive education programs to be available not just for themselves, but also for their families, their neighbors, and their community.

These leadership gifts provide an exciting opportunity for donors to double the impact of their year-end giving, and to join these two lead donors in investing in SF Shakes. "We hope media coverage of these extraordinary gifts and the available match will reach more potential supporters - including people who saw a performance in a public park or a school or a library, or went to Shakespeare Camp as a kid," says Leavitt. Individual giving is on an upward trajectory, with individual donors and the Board of SF Shakes stepping up to address recent dramatic shifts in the funding landscape, according to Leavitt. Given the number of theater closures recently, Leavitt also clarifies that this is not an emergency campaign, but rather an attempt to broaden the base of support for the organization, whose annual budget is around \$1.2 million. "We're thrilled to have received these two gifts, and are looking to double the impact of these donors' generosity," Leavitt continues.

SF Shakes is an important employer of local Bay Area artists, whose creativity is needed now more than ever. SF Shakes' mission to make Shakespeare available to all remains vital, and its programs are popular:

- o [Free Shakespeare in the Park](#) has reached over 2 million; its new Sue Bierman locale activates downtown

- o [Shakespeare Camp](#) encourages creative play and teamwork; 50% of campers attend at reduced rates
- o [Shakespeare on Tour](#) visits more than 70 schools & libraries statewide with a Shakespeare play
- o [Shakespeare's Heartbeat](#) develops the social and emotional learning of children on the autism spectrum
- o [Shakespeare for all Neighbors](#) empowers the creative voices of our neighbors experiencing homelessness

“With your support, we can show up for our communities at this critical moment”, says Artistic Director Carla Pantoja, adding, “At a time when the arts are under attack, SF Shakes demonstrates that the arts are for everyone. At a time when communities are polarized, SF Shakes brings people together. As youth are feeling disengaged, SF Shakes welcomes their creative voices. As the arts are being censored, SF Shakes is speaking up. In these times - which can leave us feeling discouraged and disempowered - SF Shakes brings hope.”

Visit [sfshakes.org/donate](https://sfshakes.org/donate) to support the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival. Donations received by midnight on 12/31/2025 will be matched 1:1.



San Francisco Shakespeare Festival 2026 Season logo

[Download full size image](#)

Image by Neal Ormond

####

Note to Editor: To schedule an interview with the directors or artists of SF Shakes, please email [sfshakes@sfshakes.org](mailto:sfshakes@sfshakes.org) or call 415-865-4422.

The mission of the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival is to make the words and themes of Shakespeare accessible to everyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, financial status, or level of education.