

SUMMER CULTURE PREVIEW: TAKE IT OUTSIDE!

# Theater alfresco

## CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

19 parks throughout the city  
"Romeo & Juliet"  
July 26-Aug. 27

Every summer, Chicago Shakes turns a Shakespeare play into the theatrical version of a beach book: short, engrossing and not requiring any taxing cerebral effort. This year, they've honed "Romeo & Juliet" to a lean, mean 75 minutes—and cast women in two key roles (the prince of Verona and Romeo's best friend) usually played by men. The schedule hadn't been announced yet, so check [ChicagoShakes.com](http://ChicagoShakes.com) for particulars.

**Pro tip:** Arrive early for these free performances. Before each show, local arts groups perform. Past years have seen everything from ethnic dancers to neighborhood bands to spoken-word artists.



Actress Lillian Castillo interacts with the audience at Navy Pier during a performance of the Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks tour.

## FIRST FOLIO THEATRE

Mayslake Peabody Estate, Oak Brook  
"As You Like It"  
July 12-Aug. 20

The sylvan setting of Mayslake surrounds First Folio's stage with built-in Arden—the forest where the unlucky-in-love lords and ladies of "As You Like It" get in touch with their wild sides and unleash a bit of pagan magic.

**Pro tip:** Come early. The grounds are open for picnics, and the reportedly haunted Benedictine chapel is sometimes open pre-show. After you dine, you can nose around the elaborately painted interior.

## OAK PARK FESTIVAL THEATRE

Austin Gardens, Oak Park  
"Macbeth"  
June 15-July 22

Oak Park's shadowy Austin Gardens, where centuries-old trees loom near Oak Park Festival Theatre's stage, is a fine fit for the inherent spookiness of "Macbeth," which has more ghosts and supernatural witchery than any other Shakespeare play. The bloody story is ideal for a place where the natural lighting design can include blood-red sunsets and gathering darkness.

"The Fair Maid of the West"  
July 27-Sept. 2

Oak Park's Kevin Theis scored the Off-Loop Hit of the Year in 1994, when his swash-buckling epic set sail and then sold out. Since then, Theis' adaptation of Thomas Heywood's 17th-century adventure has been performed in schools all over the country. Now it's finally back in Chicago, complete with shipwrecks, sea storms, scurvy villains and feisty tavern wenches.

**Pro tip:** The second preview of each show is free, thanks to corporate sponsorship. Also: This is the only theater in the Chicago area where you can bring your dog. Dog admission is always free.



## Alley oop

**ACTIVATE**, a series of free site-specific happenings in various alleys in the Loop with art, performances, music and refreshment, allows visitors to rethink these often overlooked byways while having an utterly good time. First up on June 15: Body-painted table tennis players stand ready to take on all comers, a pop-up barber shop and music curated by Powerstyle Radio. Sponsored by the Chicago Loop Alliance. Check [LoopChicago.com/activate](http://LoopChicago.com/activate) for details.

June 15, July 20, Aug. 24, Sept. 28

