

Shakesperience: NJ 2026

THINGS TO KNOW AS YOU PREPARE FOR THE FESTIVAL

Your Presentation

- Each group performs one or more scenes from any of Shakespeare's works. Your whole performance must be between 15 and 25 minutes. *Really.* If you run over time, we will have to cut off your performance to ensure we stay on schedule.
- Cuts are permitted; modern language adaptations are not. Double check any script that you have not prepared yourself. The words should be Shakespeare's own (kids don't need "watered down" Shakespeare). Short—we mean *short*—modern English "bridges" are permitted between scenes or as introductions. **At least 90% of your presentation must consist of Shakespeare's language.**
- Pieces **MUST** be memorized. Scripts will not be permitted on stage, except in the case of emergency/last-minute replacements.
- Music may accompany performances. Recorded music or sound effects should be played on a portable music player (i.e. bluetooth speaker). Live music must be performed by student cast members.

Tech

- Each group should include a student stage manager.
- The Shakespeare Theatre will provide basic furniture for everyone's use—chairs, benches—which you can view at an orientation and walk-through after your school is accepted into the Festival. Do not bring additional furniture.
- You may bring whatever other small props you are going to use in a single *roadbox* labeled with your school's name. The roadbox should be approximately 3 feet x 3 feet x 3 feet (about the size of a large Rubbermaid tub). *Do not plan to bring 1000 shopping bags.* Things get lost, crushed, stepped on; people get upset and frustrated. *Please do not bring valuables*, either for stage or personal use.
- The following props are prohibited: liquids, glass or other breakables, real food (even if not consumed), fire, stage blood, non-stage weapons, guns of any kind, dry ice, fog machines, confetti, dancing elephants, etc.
- *We strongly encourage you to arrive already in your costumes and make-up.* Performances will take place in the afternoon following lunch. If it is impossible to arrive in costumes and make-up, groups may change during lunch. Space is limited in dressing and make-up areas and lunch is only 30-minutes. Please keep costumes and make-up simple.
- Basic stage lighting (general illumination) will be the same for all performances. No blackouts, no projectors.

- No microphones or amplification of any kind will be allowed, even if it is battery-powered. (Shakespeare's actors didn't need microphones; neither do yours!)
- Schools ***must*** attend a walk-through prior to the Festival. Dates for walk-throughs to be announced.

Logistics

- All Festival participants—including *teachers and adult chaperones*—are expected to stay the entire day at the theatre and to be a spirited audience for all performances. The Festival day begins at about 8:00 a.m. and concludes by about 3:30 p.m. Your official arrival time will be determined by the time of your walk-through.
- This event lasts *all day*. We expect that for this one day, students will make other arrangements concerning jobs, rehearsals, sports practices, etc., in order to remain for the entire Festival. If this requirement proves impossible for any of your cast members, please indicate so on your registration form.
- *Please limit the size of your entire student group (cast and crew combined) to 30.* Our performance space is small and intimate.
- Each student group must be accompanied by the directing teacher and between one and three other adults. Adults will be seated with the students.
- We may be able to seat “groundlings”—additional students from your school who want to watch the entire Festival but not participate—but we won't know if we have space for them until after all participating schools have given us a head count. Groundlings must have their own adult chaperones. *We cannot confirm groundling seats until mid-April.*
- We invite parents and school administrators to attend the afternoon performances. We will provide space in the balcony for them to “drop in” and slip out without disruption.

The Festival

- Commentators will present awards of many kinds for excellence in all aspects of performance and production, e.g., ensemble acting, best birdsong, demonstrated understanding, diction, or general foolishness.
- Each student will receive a tangible token of their participation in the Festival.
- After the awards ceremony, commentators will offer critiques to interested casts. Commentaries are optional, and you don't have to decide until the last moment if you would like the commentators to give your cast 5-10 minutes of concentrated feedback. Casts staying to hear their own critique will stay to hear the critiques of all—and the whole cast must stay.
- Students will be treated to lots of great Shakespeare, additional first-class educational experiences, and careful, positive attention by extraordinary professional commentators.