

Hip to Hip Theatre Company brings Shakespeare to Queens

By Ronald B. Hellman

William Shakespeare died some 400 years ago, but his plays are more popular than ever – he’s the most produced playwright in America, by far. And unlike all contemporary works, no royalties are due and no permission is required to make any changes in the texts.

The Hip to Hip Theatre Company has been around since 2007 and has presented 20 of Shakespeare’s plays to date, all free and in the parks of the five boroughs. Coming up from July 26 to Aug. 26 are two more,

“King Lear” and “All’s Well That Ends Well,” mainly performed by professional actors, and mainly in Queens. The local venues include LeFrak City, Sunnyside Gardens Park, Crocheron Park, Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Cunningham Park, Voelker Orth Museum, Gantry Plaza State Park, and Socrates Sculpture Park.



Husband and wife Jason and Joy Marr, both classically-trained actors, founded Hip to Hip “for lovers of Shakespeare and for those experiencing Shakespeare for the first time.” Like many who live in our diverse borough, the Marrs are from faraway places — Jason is from Ohio and Joy is from Maryland. They now reside in Woodside.

Each family-friendly production is trimmed to about 90 minutes, perhaps in recognition of the short attention span of today’s audiences and their compulsion to frequently access their smartphones, but the poetry and story remain largely intact. Audience members are encouraged to bring a blanket or chair and picnic food as they enjoy a Shakespeare play in the open air.

Thirty minutes prior to every performance, Hip to Hip offers its popular “Kids & the Classics,” designed for children ages 5 to 12. Through theater games and instruction, children get the chance to preview the story and to interact with it. And again, it’s all free.

Hip to Hip has flourished in its 12 seasons and now draws an annual audience of more than 8,000. The plays are performed in rotating repertory in the evenings. To get the dates for performances in a nearby park, visit www.hiptohip.org or call (718) 729-8567.