



Facts & Figures

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Mission:

The mission of the American Shakespeare Center (ASC) is to recover the joys and accessibility of Shakespeare's theatre, language, and humanity by exploring the English Renaissance stage and its practices through performance and education.

- Jim Warren and Ralph Alan Cohen founded Shenandoah Shakespeare Express in 1988. They changed the name to Shenandoah Shakespeare when they moved the company to Staunton in 1999. In 2005, Shenandoah Shakespeare changed its name to the American Shakespeare Center to reflect its focus on being a national center for performance and research.
- The ASC is home to the Blackfriars Playhouse – the world's only re-creation of Shakespeare's indoor theatre. An architectural team led by Tom McLaughlin designed and built the Playhouse in 2001 for \$3.7 million. Many scholars believe that the original Blackfriars was the first purpose-built indoor theatre in England. Shakespeare's company staged plays there until 1642. It was torn down in 1655.
- The ASC uses [Shakespeare's Staging Conditions](#) to explore the work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries and to highlight and create new, modern plays.
- The ASC presents 12 months of programming with four seasons of titles in rotating repertory. The 2016/17 Artistic Year features over 360 performances of 16 titles.
- The Artistic Year includes the Summer/Fall Season, Holiday Season, Actors' Renaissance Season, and Spring Season.
- Tourism expenditures in the City of Staunton have grown by 91% (\$24.6M) since the Playhouse opened in 2001.
- ASC on Tour is one of the nation's most prolific Shakespeare tours. It has performed in 47 states, 1 U.S. territory, the District of Columbia, and 5 other countries.
- The ASC offers robust educational programming including corporate leadership development training, teacher seminars, college prep and adult summer theatre camps, and multiple public lectures and seminars throughout the year. The ASC hosts classes and productions of the Mary Baldwin University graduate program in Shakespeare in Performance.
- The ASC hosts the Blackfriars Conference, a biennial international conference for Shakespeare scholars and practitioners.
- The ASC received the 2001 Virginia Humanities Award from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities.
- Co-founders Jim Warren, Artistic Director, and Ralph Alan Cohen, Director of Mission, received the Governor's Award in the Arts from Virginia Governor Tim Kaine in 2008.
- The ASC received the 2013 Folger Shakespeare Library Shakespeare Steward Award for outstanding contribution to the innovative teach of Shakespeare. (Co-awarded to Co-Founder Dr. Ralph Alan Cohen)