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PRESS RELEASE

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Shakespeare couture hits the catwalk

Stratford Shakespeare Festival is featured designer for opening of Toronto's Fashion Week

October 13, 2009... The Stratford Shakespeare Festival is the featured designer for the opening fashion show at Toronto's LG Fashion Week beauty by L'Oreal Paris on October 19.

"We are absolutely delighted to be part of this important fashion event," says Artistic Director **Des McAnuff**. "Since 1953, the finest costume designers in the world have come to work at the Stratford Festival. In collaboration with our skilled wardrobe department, they bring fashion, both ancient and modern, to our stages and to more than half a million theatre-goers each year. It is a fascinating concept to feature these costumes in a runway show, offering new insight into the cross-over of theatrical and couture design."

"The Festival's incredible costumes have allowed us to create one of the most spectacular opening shows ever," says **Robin Kay**, president of the Fashion Design Council of Canada and executive director of LG Fashion Week.

A creative production team, consisting of **Erika Larva**, **Liz Walsh** and **Alexis Honce**, visited the Festival's vast costume warehouse – one of the three largest in the world – to select period costumes that evoke the latest haute couture looks but also show the emergence of various fashion trends.

"Stratford creates costume pieces that work so beautifully with today's looks," says Ms Larva. "We have teamed a number of items from Festival designers with the current looks from the fall 2009 collections to create images that reflect what is being seen on the catwalks of Paris and around the world. We also selected four period costumes to illustrate the historical influence on the designs we are seeing today."

The production team promises an unforgettable show featuring not only the designs of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival but also music composed for Festival productions – and an appearance by the Festival's iconic Fanfares musicians to kick the show off.

“The entire show will be spectacular, but the finale promises to be absolutely breathtaking,” Ms Larva said, keeping her lips sealed on the content. “We needed a finale that would have a huge impact, and we found exactly what we were after in the Festival’s warehouse.”

The Stratford Shakespeare Festival’s Costume Warehouse holds more than 50,000 costumes and 1,000 pairs of boots and shoes. Fulfilling more than 400 rental requests each year, it is a resource to schools, theatres and other groups throughout North America.

“Our Costume Warehouse showcases the talents of the best theatrical costume designers in the world and the craftsmanship of one of the most extensive wardrobe departments,” says **Antoni Cimolino**, the Festival’s General Director. “Each year the Festival’s designers plumb 2,000 years of history for fashion inspiration, and our incredibly talented artisans create as many as 500 one-of-a-kind couture-quality costumes, as well as roughly 400 hats and dozens of boots and shoes.”

The 110-person wardrobe team goes through thousands of metres of fabric, 10,000 spools of thread and 1,500 needles each season. The Bijoux department maintains an inventory of more than 50,000 beads and findings for the hand-crafted jewelry that complements the many costumes. And surprisingly, the wardrobe department goes through 100 bottles of vodka every year – not because of their painstaking work, but because it is used to spray down and deodorize sweat-drenched costumes at the end of each performance.

Tours of the Festival’s Costume Warehouse are given Wednesday through Saturday, from early May until the end of October. Tickets are \$8 per person, \$6 for students and seniors and can be reserved by calling 1.800.567.1600 or visiting stratfordshakespearefestival.com. Special arrangements can be made for groups.

LG Fashion Week beauty by L’Oreal Paris, featuring the spring 2010 collections, runs from October 19 to 24 at 1030 King Street West in Toronto. For information on media registration visit: <https://fdcc.base2.ca/>.

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For more information contact:
Ann Swerdfager
Media Manager
Stratford Shakespeare Festival
519-271-0055 x2297
aswerdfager@stratfordshakespearefestival.com