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Folger Shakespeare Library presents *Searching for Shakespeare*, a month-long, city-wide celebration of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's First Folio

Special exhibition, world-premiere play, scavenger hunt, family programs,
and more April 1 – 30, in partnership with DC Public Library

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(Washington, DC) – The Folger Shakespeare Library is celebrating Shakespeare—and the 400th anniversary of the printing of the First Folio—the entire month of April 2023, with ***Searching for Shakespeare: Celebrating 400 Years of Shakespeare's First Folio*** in partnership with DC Public Library. Beginning April 1, 2023, ***Searching for Shakespeare*** includes an exhibition, a world premiere play, a city-wide scavenger hunt, Shakespeare's Birthday Lecture, family programs, workshops, and more at Library locations in all eight wards of Washington, DC. All events and programs are free and open to the public.

"The next Shakespeare is out there, perhaps in Washington DC," says Folger Director **Michael Witmore**. "We want to take the story of the First Folio—a memory capsule for Shakespeare—and meet DC residents whose stories need to be discovered, told, and remembered."

"The DC Public Library is thrilled to partner with the Folger Shakespeare Library to offer this amazing opportunity to District residents," says **Richard Reyes-Gavilan**, executive director of the DC Public Library. "Shakespeare has had an immeasurable impact on the love of reading and the power of stories. This partnership brings one of Shakespeare's First Folios to the Library and allows District residents to discover the wonder, joy and relevance of his work in every ward of the District."

Published in 1623 by two of his friends and former colleagues seven years after his death, the Shakespeare First Folio is an extraordinary book. About half of Shakespeare's plays had never previously appeared in print, including *As You Like It*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, and many more. Without the First Folio, 18 plays might have been lost forever. The Folger's 82 Shakespeare First Folios are the largest collection in the world (235 copies are currently known to survive). All 82 of the Folger's First Folios will be displayed together for the first time when the Folger building re-opens in late 2023.

The Folger is exhibiting one of its First Folios at DC's Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library. Looking at how some stories are preserved while others are lost, ***Pass the Story On: Shakespeare's First Folio at 400*** looks beyond Shakespeare's 400-year legacy as one of the world's best-known writers to also explore two iconic DC music forms, Go-Go and Punk, and the stories found in DC Public Library's People's Archive.

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Participating DC Public Library branch libraries representing all eight wards will feature **Searching for Shakespeare** kiosks with information about the First Folio and neighborhood Scavenger Hunt activity stations.

The world premiere of ***Our Verse in Time to Come***, a new play commissioned by the Folger, will perform at nine DC Public Library locations. Past and present collide in this thought-provoking work written by **Malik Work** and **Karen Ann Daniels**, in collaboration with **Devin E. Haqq**. Inspired by the works and words of Shakespeare, ***Our Verse in Time to Come*** bridges past with present and asks the important questions about which stories are preserved and which are lost to history.

Directed by **Vernice Miller**, ***Our Verse in Time to Come*** incorporates original music integrating hip-hop and Shakespeare, a live DJ, and an interactive collaboration with the audience. The dynamic ensemble of actors features **Regina Aquino**, **Renea S. Brown**, **Jonathan Del Palmer**, **John Floyd**, **Kaiyla Gross**, **Equiano Mosieri**, alongside DJ, **Nick tha 1da Hernandez**.

“As we planned to mark the 400th anniversary of the First Folio, it felt most prescient to bring the best of the Folger to our DC friends and neighbors,” states Folger Director of Programming and Folger Theatre Artistic Director **Karen Ann Daniels**. “If folks can’t come to the Folger, then we will go to them. We’ll work with our DC Public Library partners to develop a slate of programs that invite people of all ages to get to know what a Folio is, how it came to be, and why we still celebrate it today. At the heart of ***Searching for Shakespeare*** is the question: *How will you pass your stories on?* That’s the invitation. Come experience the Folio and think about what stories in our own lives and communities should be heard, saved, and carried forward for future generations to come.”

Other **Searching for Shakespeare** highlights celebrating the First Folio’s milestone anniversary include:

- A **Searching for Shakespeare Scavenger Hunt**, developed with **Game Genius**. Spanning the District, the scavenger hunt sends participants to nine DC Public Library locations and various Little Free Libraries searching for the 18 Shakespeare plays that were first preserved with the printing of the First Folio.
- The **Folger Institute’s** annual **Shakespeare’s Birthday Lecture**, with celebrated scholar **Dr. Ian Smith** (Lafayette College), author of *Black Shakespeare: Reading and Misreading Race* (Cambridge University Press), on **Saturday, April 22 at 5:30pm** at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library. Dr. Smith’s talk, “Making Blackness,” examines early modern methods of manufacturing blackness onstage, using the royal entertainments of Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labor’s Lost* as a dramatic point of departure to expand our knowledge of early modern race.
- **Family Programs and Hands-On Workshops** at DC Public Library locations, including a **Folio Making Workshop** where participants learn how to fold a Folio, and a **Story-Making Workshop** hosted by comic book maker and illustrator **Evan Keeling**.

Searching for Shakespeare is presented with special thanks to **Share Fund**. For more information, including a full schedule of events, please visit the Folger website at www.folger.edu/searching.



Searching for Shakespeare is part of the Folger “On the Road” programs launched in 2020 to stay connected with the community during our multi-year **Renovation Project**. The Folger re-opens its historic building to the public in late 2023.

About DC Public Library:

The **District of Columbia Public Library** is a dynamic source of information, programs, books and other library materials and services that improve the quality of life for District residents of all ages that, when combined with expert staff, helps build a thriving city. The Library provides environments that invite reading, community conversation, creative inspiration and exploration, lectures, films, computer access and use, workforce and economic development, storytimes for children, and much more. DC Public Library includes the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library and 25 neighborhood libraries and also provides services in nontraditional settings outside of the library buildings. DC Public Library enriches and nourishes the lives and minds of all District residents, provides them with the services and tools needed to transform lives, and builds and supports community throughout the District of Columbia.

About Folger Shakespeare Library and Folger Theatre:

Folger Shakespeare Library is the world’s largest Shakespeare collection, the ultimate resource for exploring Shakespeare and his world. The Folger welcomes millions of visitors online and in person. It provides unparalleled access to a huge array of resources, from original sources to modern interpretations. With the Folger, you can experience the power of performance, the wonder of exhibitions, and the excitement of path-breaking research. The Folger offers the opportunity to see and even work with early modern sources, driving discovery and transforming education for students of all ages.

The award-winning **Folger Theatre** in our nation’s capital bridges the arts and humanities through transformational performances and programming that speak inclusively to the human experience. Now under the leadership of Artistic Director Karen Ann Daniels, Folger Theatre continues its legacy through exciting interpretations and adaptations of Shakespeare and expands the classical canon through cultivating today’s artists and commissioning new work that is in dialogue with the concerns and issues of our time. Folger Theatre thrives both on its historical stage and in the community, engaging audiences wherever they happen to be.

During a multiyear building renovation, join the Folger online and on the road. Learn more at folger.edu.

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