



**SEATTLE
SHAKESPEARE**

ACT Contemporary Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company Announce Historic Merger, Effective July 2025

*Uniting two iconic organizations to create the premier destination
for Shakespeare, contemporary and classic work, and theatre
engagement in the Pacific Northwest*

SEATTLE, WA (January 30, 2025) – Two beloved Seattle theatre companies, **ACT Contemporary Theatre (ACT)** and **Seattle Shakespeare Company (SSC)**, today announced the approval and next steps of their historic merger with an effective date of July 1, 2025. This strategic union positions 700 Union Street (ACT's current home) to become the preeminent home for Shakespeare, classic and contemporary plays, and theater education in the Pacific Northwest. The joining of resources and opportunities ensures the newly merged entity is positioned to expand its artistic reach, enhance community collaboration, and move forward with greater strength and resilience.

This landmark decision, approved by both companies' Boards of Trustees, comes after an extensive deliberation and planning process led by merger consultants JLS and Associates. This process included incorporating valuable input throughout from staff, donors, community members, and empowered working committees. Under the terms of the agreement, the two organizations will merge under the legal name of "Union Arts Center." The merged organization, whose public-facing name will be determined at a later date, will present plays and programs representing both the ACT Theatre and Seattle Shakespeare artistic brands.

Current SSC **Executive Director John Bradshaw** will join as Managing Director of the merged company. An initial Board of Trustees - comprising seven members of each organization's current board - in collaboration with Bradshaw and **ACT Interim Producing Artistic Director Elisabeth Farwell-Moreland**, will continue to meet and engage with stakeholders as they deepen their planning for the combined culture of the new organization. In the coming months, the new Board will be tasked with creating the Mission, Vision, and Values statements, creating a staff structure, finalizing a board executive structure, and beginning the nationwide search for an Artistic Director.

“Seattle Shakespeare Company is thrilled to engage in this dynamic collaboration with ACT Contemporary Theatre,” **Ariel Rosemond, Seattle Shakespeare Company Board President**, said. “The boards and staffs of both organizations have dedicated themselves to thoughtfully shaping this partnership, ensuring that our core values, missions, and shared commitment to artistic excellence will not only be preserved, but strengthened. We are excited to build on this extraordinary foundation, working alongside some of the most talented artists and storytellers in our region, in the iconic and historic spaces within 700 Union Street.”

“We are honored and inspired to embark upon this future with Seattle's most prestigious classic theatre organization,” said **Cynthia Huffman, Chair of ACT Contemporary Theatre’s Board of Trustees**. “Merging the legacies of these two extraordinary theatres will create more opportunities for artists, maximize usage of the landmark Eagles Auditorium, and ensure quality productions of both classic and contemporary plays at 7th and Union in Seattle for years to come. We are grateful for the deep analysis and thoughtful collaboration of the staff and boards that resulted in the recommendation to merge, and we look forward to the next steps of this exciting venture.”

Kathy Hsieh, Cultural Investments Strategist for Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, said of the merger: “I applaud ACT Contemporary Theatre and Seattle Shakespeare Company for seeking a new possibility through the merging of their two companies. One of the core concepts that came out of the pandemic was the need for more collaboration and partnership – that we are stronger together. This merger is a solutions-oriented demonstration of two organizations thinking outside of the status quo box to ensure both of their futures in creating sustainable jobs for their staffs and opportunities for local artists.”

The inaugural 2025/26 Season of the newly merged theatres will be announced in April 2025. Theatergoers can experience the first collaboration between the two organizations with the production of William Shakespeare’s [Twelfth Night](#), opening in ACT’s Falls Theatre on June 7.

This bold and innovative step marks an exciting new chapter for ACT Contemporary Theatre and Seattle Shakespeare Company, and both organizations look forward to celebrating soon with the community.

ABOUT ACT CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

Steadfast in its dedication to producing work that sparks an authentic curiosity about the human condition, ACT produces bold, audacious works of contemporary theatre from its home in Seattle. Over the last 59 years, ACT remains the voice of contemporary theatre in the Pacific Northwest, presenting necessary and relevant works on current themes

and producing more than 300 plays and musicals, including 48 world premieres. Currently led by Interim Producing Artistic Director [Elisabeth Farwell-Moreland](#), ACT nurtures theatre-makers of the next generation, with a mission to be a contemporary theatre where artistic ambition and civic engagement unite.

ACT is here to challenge how stories are told. For more information on ACT Contemporary Theatre please visit acttheatre.org.

ABOUT SEATTLE SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

With the plays of William Shakespeare at our core, Seattle Shakespeare Company engages our audiences, our artists, and our community in the universal human experience inherent in classic drama. SSC is committed to “Shakespeare for everybody.” As the Puget Sound region’s year-round, professional, classical theatre, the company’s growing success stems from a deep belief in the power and vibrancy of the time-tested words and ideas of Shakespeare and other classical playwrights. SSC is committed to artistic excellence on stage, and accessibility through education outreach programs, state-wide touring, and free Wooden O performances in regional parks. The results have been provocative performances that both challenge and delight audiences while fostering an appreciation for great stage works. For more information on Seattle Shakespeare Company, please visit seattleshakespeare.org.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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