# Arts appreciation

## Theater artistic director receives fellowship from council

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**Rebekah Scallet, producing artistic director for the Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre and a lecturer at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, has received an individual artist fellowship award from the Arkansas Arts Council. Shown here in her office at UCA, Scallet teaches a class in Shakespeare and one in theater appreciation.**

**SUBMITTED**

**Joy Pennington, executive director of the Arkansas Arts Council, left, presents Rebekah Scallet with a $4,000 fellowship award Oct. 3 at the Historic Arkansas Museum in Little Rock. Scallet is the producing artistic director for the Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre.**

Rebekah Scallet has been around William Shakespeare most of her life.

She grew up in Little Rock and studied theater at Parkview High School, where she was first introduced to the Bard and his many works. She went away to college only to return home during her sophomore year to become involved in the now-defunct Shakespeare Festival of Arts that was based in Little Rock. Her father, the late Andrew Scallet, served on the board of directors for that festival, which was held at MacArthur Park in Little Rock. She was stage manager for the festival's 1998 production of Twelfth Night.

Scallet, who is now the producing artistic director of the Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre and a lecturer in the University of Central Arkansas'

theater program, has been honored for directing Twelfth Night at the AST festival in 2012. She is one of nine artists from across the state to receive a $4,000 individual artist fellowship award from the Arkansas Arts Council.

Scallet joined the other eight recipients Oct. 3 at the awards ceremony at the Historic Arkansas Museum in Little Rock.

“These fellowships enable artists to set aside time for creating their art and improving their skills,” said Joy Pennington, executive director of the Arkansas Arts Council. “Three artistic disciplines are selected each year as categories for the awards.”

Scallet was honored in the category of performing arts: director of theater. The other two disciplines for this year’s awards were literary arts: short story writing; and visual arts: works on paper.

“I am so excited about this award,” Scallet said prior to the awards ceremony. “I am so honored to receive it and to have my work recognized, as so much of my work is behind the scene. To get this award for my directing is so special.

“I hope to use the money to travel to London and Stratford (Stratford-upon-Avon, the birthplace of Shakespeare). I was in London once, during college, but for only two days. I didn’t get to Stratford.”

She said she plans to att e n d pro du c t i ons at t h e Globe Theatre in London and the Royal Shakespeare The atre in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Scallet’s trip to England will have to wait for a while, as she and her husband, Joseph Stafford, are expecting their second child in December. They already have a 2-year-old son, Andrew.

“This trip would be a real pilgrimage for me,” Scallet said. “I am really

excited about it."

Scallet thanked the Arts Council as she addressed the audience at the awards ceremony.

"It's so special to be in a state that acknowledges artistic endeavors in this way," she said.

"How special this is. I grew up in Little Rock and was involved in Shakespeare productions at MacArthur Park, which is just down the street from here (the Historic Arkansas Museum). I've come full circle."

Twelfth Night was the first show Scallet directed as producing artistic director of the Arkansas Shakespeare Festival.

"It's full of romance, wit and humor. And the text is of the utmost. Everyone can understand it," she said.

"We wanted the audience to follow along with us, so we presented it outside," she said, noting that it was presented at The Village at Hendrix in Conway, as well at Wildwood Park for the Arts in Little Rock. "Viola (one of the play's characters) is always stopping to talk to the audience.

"In the final scene, we have the entire cast come out and speak to the audience. We say, 'We come together as our play is done, we strive to please you every day.'

"That pretty much sums up what I try to do as a director."

In addition to directing Twelfth Night in 2012, Scallet also directed it for the Illinois Shakespeare Festival, which she served as assistant to the artistic director.

Scallet earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in theater and English from

Brandeis University and a Master of Fine Arts degree in directing from Illinois State University. She lived and worked in Chicago for 10 years before moving to Conway in 2011.

In addition to being the producing artistic director of the Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre, Scallet teaches a course in Shakespeare and one in theater appreciation at UCA.

Scallet is already making plans for the 2015 season of the Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre. She said the new season will include The Merchant of Venice, which will be presented at the Donald W. Reynolds Performance Hall at UCA; The Merry Wives of Windsor, which will be the outdoor performance; Fiddler on the Roof, which will be the musical; and As You Like It, which will be the production for children. She will conduct auditions within the next several weeks, both in Conway and Chicago, and, perhaps, in other venues.

In addition to Twelfth Night, Scallet directed King Lear and The Two Gentlemen of Verona for the Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre. She also directed The Caucasian Chalk Circle and A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur at UCA.