

Downstage Center

Go behind the scenes with Kevin Selwyn



“All the world’s a stage.” Unfortunately, Shakespeare was right. A well-rounded, cultured individual should experience as much art as possible to keep well informed of changing trends and maintain a deep pool of experiences from which to draw. But, the world is a big place, and even though Shenandoah presents wonderful works of theatre, there are other sources just a stone’s throw away from our university.

The first place to look for some high-quality theatre is our nation’s capital, Washington, D.C. There is so much theatre in D.C., one can find a different show every weekend and usually for pretty modest prices.

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (www.KennedyCenter.org) is a wonderful destination for theatre, music and dance just about an hour and a half from Winchester by car.

Tennessee Williams’s “A Streetcar Named Desire” is currently playing, starring Cate Blanchett. The recent 2008 Pulitzer Prize winning play “August: Osage County” will be at the Kennedy Center at the end of November, and in the middle of December, Mel Brooks’s musical “Young Frankenstein” begins its run.

Not only does the Kennedy Center host wonderful performances of award-winning plays and musicals, but the tickets go for as low as \$25 to \$37.

So on average, a night of theatre at the Kennedy Center might be \$10 to \$15 for gas, \$15 for dinner and \$25 to \$37 for a ticket. Total cost \$50 to \$67. Less expensive if you pack a sandwich, but more expensive if you pay for parking.

There is a lot of quality Shakespeare around our area as well. One destination is the Shakespeare Theatre Company (www.ShakespeareTheatre.org) in D.C.; also a 90-minute drive.

The company is committed to presenting “classic theatre in an accessible, skillful, imaginative, American style.”

“The Alchemist” by Ben Jonson, a contemporary of Shakespeare, is currently playing. It will be followed by Shakespeare’s “As You Like It,” “Richard II” and “Henry V.”

Ticket prices for the Shakespeare

Theatre Company range from \$20 to \$45 for the cheapest seats.

If you decide to go see one of their plays, be careful you are going to the correct theatre. The company performs out of two theatres in downtown D.C., so make sure you know where you’re going before you leave campus.

Another Shakespeare destination is an hour and a half south in Staunton, Va., at the American Shakespeare Center (www.AmericanShakespeareCenter.com).

Performances take place in the American Shakespeare Center’s Blackfriars Playhouse, a recreation of the “first indoor theatre in the English-speaking world, which William Shakespeare and his colleagues built on part of London’s Blackfriars Monastery.”

Playing now at the American Shakespeare Center is “Henry IV, Part I,” “The Rehearsal” (a bit of Restoration theatre), “Much Ado About Nothing,” “The Merry Wives of Windsor” and “Titus Andronicus.”

All the plays are played in rotation throughout the week, so there’s a different play every night. Plan accordingly. All tickets for plays at the American Shakespeare Center range from \$18 to \$37 for students.

Another good way to search for a performance of a particular musical is to search on Music Theatre International’s Web site (www.MTIShows.com).

You can search the site for a musical and if MTI licenses the musical, you can click on “upcoming” to view the performances of that show. MTI shows all the theatres that will be performing the musical and the dates of the shows. Types of theatres range from middle and high school to colleges and universities to professional theatres.

Other popular D.C. theatres are Arena Stage, Folger Theatre, Ford’s Theatre, the National Theatre, Studio Theatre, the Warner Theatre and Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company. Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts is in Virginia, but close to D.C.

Two theatres close to SU are Wayside Theatre just down Rt. 11 in Middletown (www.waysidetheatre.org) and the Winchester Little Theatre (www.wltonline.org).

Nearby theatres in Maryland include Lyric Theatre, Merriweather Post Pavilion, Olney Theatre, Round House Theatre, Toby’s Dinner Theatre and the Weinberg Center for the Arts.

Whatever your tastes, there are many venues within two hours of Winchester offering entertaining, high-quality theatre. Use the Internet to map the trip and get the best deals.

Yes, “All the world’s a stage.” But, our limited cash flow and the high price of gas can only take us so far.