



# Shore Shakespeare Company

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CHRIS ROGERS

(1959 – 2020)

Chris Rogers founded Shore Shakespeare Company in 2012, together with his friend and theatre colleague Avra Sullivan, with the aim of bringing free outdoor performances of Shakespeare's plays to audiences on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Chris felt strongly that the issues Shakespeare explored four hundred years ago were timeless and that a committed group of actors could make his plays understandable and relevant to modern audiences.

Over the next seven years, under Chris and Avra's leadership, Shore Shakespeare Company produced touring productions of *Twelfth Night* (2013), *Romeo & Juliet* (2014), *The Comedy of Errors* (2015), *Macbeth* (2016), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2017), *As You Like It* (2018), and *The Merchant of Venice* (2019) in parks and other public spaces in Eastern Shore towns all the way from Chestertown to Cambridge. Without Chris's talent and dedication, this could not have been accomplished.

He directed several productions himself and appeared as an actor in many productions. His contribution to the success of Shore Shakespeare went far beyond directing and acting. He designed the sets, designed the sound and lighting, transported the sets to the performance locations, led the building and strike of sets at the venues, arranged for rehearsal space or provided it himself at his home outside Centreville, handled public relations and dealt with town officials and permits. He was brilliant, funny and verbal. He turned people with little serious acting experience into credible performers who could

make audiences laugh and also make them think.

Chris understood that theatre, at its best, can be transformative and magical. He lived for those moments and, on nights when the stars aligned just right, he pulled it off.

One Friday afternoon in late June, Chris had lunch on the outdoor deck behind his house with an actor friend who had appeared in many plays with Shore Shakespeare and other local theatre groups. The friend said he was getting a bit burned out and planned to step away from theatre for an indefinite period. He hoped Chris wouldn't take this news badly. Chris thanked his friend for everything he had done for Shore Shakespeare over the years, and then said: "Well, it's like the old saying: *How can we miss you if you never leave?*" Chris died unexpectedly later that same day.

It's hard to top that exit line.

As Orsino in *12<sup>th</sup> Night*. Our first Butshow in 2013.



As Antonio in *Merchant of Venice*. The last show in 2019.

*How can we miss you if you never leave?*