



Hip To Hip Theatre Company to Open 19th Season of Free Shakespeare Performances

By: Chloe Rabinowitz July 30, 2025

Hip to Hip Theatre Company's summer tour of Free Shakespeare in the Park will feature two of Shakespeare's masterpieces: *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*. The shows will tour in repertory, together with an interactive children's workshop, to seven parks throughout Queens, with additional performances in Jersey City and Southampton, from August 5-23.



From the beginning, Hip to Hip's co-founders, husband-and-wife team Jason and Joy Marr have run the company in the actor-manager tradition: producing, directing, acting and mentoring. "It has been a wonderfully fruitful creative partnership," said Jason, with Joy adding, "We combine our skills and talents and our passion for Shakespeare to achieve our goal of bringing professional theatre to a wide audience."

The couple went on to say that what they offer is a gateway experience because there is no cost. By removing financial barriers and by bringing their shows to easily accessible public spaces, they hope to expand audiences for theatre as a whole.

In addition to co-directing both productions this year, the Marrs will lead the cast of twelve, with Joy as the title character in *Hamlet* and Jason as the protagonist Prospero in *The Tempest*.

The overall theme of the repertory season is forgiveness versus revenge. Jason said, "We always try to pair plays that complement one another, but this season feels extra special because the pairing perfectly speaks to the current national and global conversation—how should we respond to someone that we believe has wronged us?"

About Hamlet, Joy said, "It's widely considered the greatest play of all time, so it can be a challenge to mount. I was inspired by Oscar Wilde's quote 'there is no such thing as Shakespeare's Hamlet'—meaning that each actor presents Hamlet from their own perspective and sensibility. I find this is true more for Hamlet than any other role because it is so complex, it sustains many interpretations. Hamlet is known for his thoughtfulness and sensitivity and delving deep into his playful intelligence has been a challenge and a joy."

Joy went on to say, "There is a long history of women playing Hamlet. Many current productions now center female actors in roles formerly played by only men. We often have female Lears, Prosperos and Richards. It feels to me that our audiences are excited to embrace different casting choices."

About The Tempest, Jason said, "It's Shakespeare's last and most imaginative comedy. It has it all—a sorcerer, a shipwreck, fairies, monsters, music and political intrigue. Shakespeare was at the height of his power as a dramatist. He uses this seemingly fantastical world to explore the complexities of colonialism, the human condition, and the unique power of forgiveness."

Thirty minutes before each performance, Hip to Hip offers "Kids & the Classics," an interactive workshop for children ages 5 and up. It gives children a chance to interact with the text by previewing the story, and by creating links between the text and their own lives through theatre games and close reading.

Audience members are encouraged to bring a blanket or low chair and picnic fare, and enjoy Shakespeare in the open air. No tickets are necessary. Seating is first come, first served.

The repertory cast includes Addie Atkins, Anna Belden, Katie Braden, Anzi DeBenedetto, Truman Gaudoin*, Erick González*, Jeremy Lavarello, Wangai Maina, Bree Marr, Jason Marr*, Joy Marr* and Julia Witcher (*appears courtesy of Actors' Equity Association).

The production team includes Costume Designers: Nancy Nichols and Mikayla Carleo; Production Stage Manager: Railee Scott; Assistant Director: Joli Flynn; Sound Designer: Terry Chun; Costume Assistant: Roseanna Medlock.

Performance Schedule

Tuesday, August 5 @ 7:30 pm – The Tempest
Queens College, on the Quad (65-30 Kissena Blvd, Flushing)

Wednesday, August 6 @ 7:30 pm – Hamlet
Sunnyside Gardens Park (48-21 39th Ave, Sunnyside)

Thursday, August 7 @ 7:30 pm – The Tempest
Cunningham Park (Union Turnpike & 196th St, Fresh Meadows)

Friday, August 8 @ 7:30 pm – Hamlet
Voelker Orth Museum (149-19 38th Ave, Flushing)

Saturday, August 9 @ 7:30 pm – The Tempest
Gantry Plaza State Park (4-09 47th Rd, Long Island City)

Sunday, August 10 @ 5:00 pm – Hamlet
Socrates Sculpture Park (32-01 Vernon Blvd, Astoria)

Tuesday, August 12 @ 7:30 pm – Hamlet
Queens College, on the Quad (65-30 Kissena Blvd, Flushing)

Wednesday, August 13 @ 7:00 pm – The Tempest (Rain date: 8/19)
Newport on the Green (14th St & River Drive S., Jersey City)

Thursday, August 14 @ 7:30 pm – Hamlet
Crocheron Park (35th Avenue & Corbett Rd, Bayside)

Friday, August 15 @ 7:30 pm – The Tempest
Voelker Orth Museum, Flushing (149-19 38th Avenue, Flushing)

Saturday, August 16 @ 7:30 pm – Hamlet
Gantry Plaza State Park (4-09 47th Rd, Long Island City)

Sunday, August 17 @ 5:00 pm – The Tempest
Socrates Sculpture Park (32-01 Vernon Blvd, Astoria)

Wednesday, August 20 @ 7:30 pm – The Tempest

Sunnyside Gardens Park (48-21 39th Ave, Sunnyside)

Thursday, August 21 @ 7:30 pm – Hamlet

Cunningham Park (Union Turnpike & 196th St, Fresh Meadows)

Friday, August 22 @ 7:30 pm – Hamlet

Agawam Park (25 Pond Lane, Southampton)

Saturday, August 23 @ 7:30 pm – The Tempest

Agawam Park (25 Pond Lane, Southampton)