

Lake County goes big for the bard

Discovery Museum,
partners celebrate \$6M
Shakespeare collection

BY SHERYL DEVORE
Pioneer Press

When Jon Lynn learned that the First Folio, a collection of Shakespeare works published in 1623, would be exhibited at the Lake County Discovery Museum in February, he knew exactly what he had to do — resurrect and produce a play he wrote decades ago called “Sounds and Sweet Aires.”

Lynn, president of the Kirk Players of Mundelein, wrote the patchwork of romantic and comical scenes from the bards’ famous plays and taught it to students at Mundelein and Barrington high schools, where he was a drama teacher before recently retiring.

He’s directing the Kirk Players in two free performances of “Sounds and Sweet Aires: A Shakespearean Collage,” Feb. 6 at the Lake County Discovery Museum and Feb. 20 at Mundelein High School, to celebrate, along with other institutions, the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death in 1616 and the “First Folio! The Book that Gave Us Shakespeare” exhibit, which opens Feb. 3 at the museum.

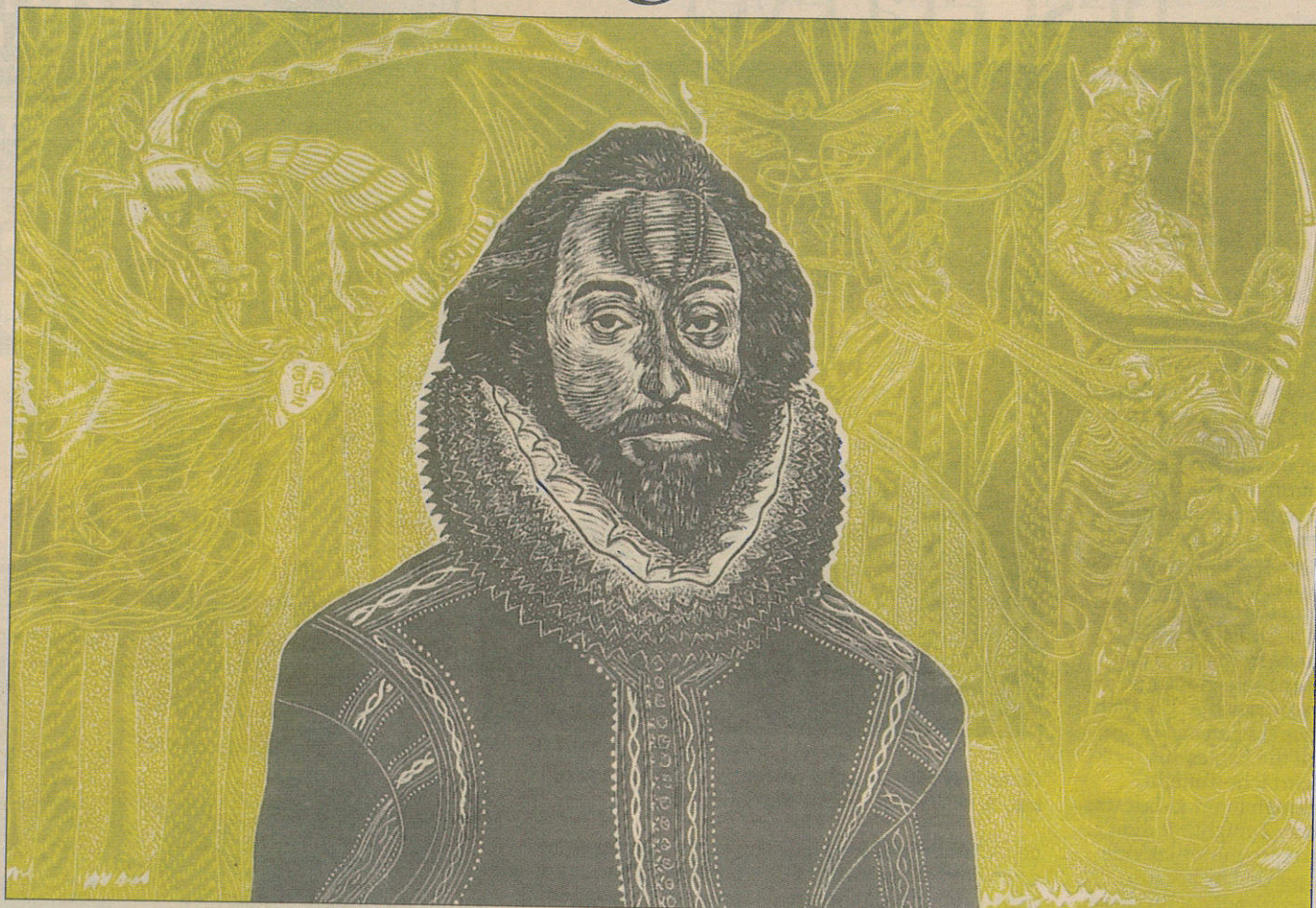
Throughout February, a variety of events — a paint party, art exhibition, lectures, performances of Shakespeare’s works — will take place at venues throughout Lake County.

“It’s just the happiest time,” said Katherine Hamilton-Smith, director of cultural resources for the Lake County Forest Preserves, which owns the Discovery Museum. “Everything regarding Shakespeare in February at the museum is free. Everyone statewide, in the suburbs, in Lake County, in Chicago, are joining together to get everyone out to celebrate Shakespeare.”

The celebration started when the Washington D.C.-based Folger Shakespeare Library announced it would be bringing an original First Folio of Shakespeare’s works, estimated to be worth at least \$6 million, to Lake County as part of a traveling exhibition. A National Endowment for the Humanities grant is helping fund the traveling museum.

First Folio significance

The Folger Shakespeare Library holds 82 of the 233 known copies in the world of the First Folio, the collection of Shakespeare’s plays published seven years after his death by two of his friends.



Artist Rene Arceo's work is among the pieces included in the “Brush Up with Shakespeare,” exhibit at the David Adler Music and Arts Center in Libertyville.

‘First Folio! The Book that Gave Us Shakespeare’ exhibit and events

When: Feb. 3-Feb. 28; opening reception and lecture 5-7 p.m. Feb. 3. Additional events throughout February.

Where: Lake County Discovery Museum, 27277 N. Forest Preserve Road, Wauconda

Tickets: All museum events are free. Some require registration. Events at other venues are free or have nominal fees.

Information: 847-968-3400; www.lcfdp.org/museum/first-folio

Fifteen famous plays, including “Macbeth,” “Julius Caesar,” “Twelfth Night” and “The Tempest,” would probably have been lost without the First Folio, according to Hamilton-Smith.

“What’s so exciting is the idea that if Shakespeare’s friends had never gotten

together in 1623 and decided now that Shakespeare has passed someone needs to put these plays into print, we would not have these plays,” Lynn said.

The Discovery Museum competed against hundreds of applicants to be the sole institution in Illinois to receive the traveling exhibit, which will stop in all 50 states and Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico, said Hamilton-Smith.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see one of the most important printed books in the world,” she said.

When the First Folio arrives at the museum, the book will be open to one of the most quoted lines in the English language, “to be or not to be,” from “Hamlet.”

Accompanying the rare book will be a multi-panel exhibition exploring the significance of Shakespeare, then and now, with additional digital content and interactive displays.

The grand opening held Feb. 3 will include a lecture about the folio. More lec-

tures, music and dancing performed by Bristol Renaissance Faire members and others, are scheduled at the museum throughout the month.

One of the reasons the museum was chosen, said Hamilton-Smith, is because so many local institutions including the College of Lake County, the David Adler Music and Arts Center, Lake Forest College, Bristol Renaissance Faire and Kirk Players were willing to partner with the museum to present Shakespeare-related events both at the museum and in other places in the suburbs and Chicago.

Even a small local business is involved, she said. This Old Book in Grayslake will host Shakespeare readings and a related window display.

The College of Lake County will perform “The Tempest” at the end of February as part of the celebration, Hamilton-Smith added.

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