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Cultural Production in Chicago: Making History Interviews with Barbara Gaines, Criss Henderson, and Carlos Tortolero

TIMOTHY J. GILFOYLE

Barbara Gaines, Criss Henderson, and Carlos Tortolero authored a cultural renaissance in turn-of-the-millennium Chicago. Gaines is the founder and current artistic director of the Chicago Shakespeare Theater, where she has directed nearly sixty productions, including more than thirty by William Shakespeare.¹ Henderson, as executive director since 1990, transformed the Chicago Shakespeare Theater into one of the city's major cultural attractions. Tortolero is the cofounder and president of the National Museum of Mexican Art, the largest Latinx cultural institution in the United States.²

The two institutions have attracted worldwide attention. Founded to display the beauty and depth of Mexican culture, to develop a Mexican art collection, and to cultivate Mexican artists, the National Museum of Mexican Art is home to one of the country's largest Mexican art collections, including more than ten thousand seminal pieces from ancient Mexico to the present and was the first Latinx museum accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.³ Henderson and Gaines guided the development of the Chicago Shakespeare Theater's \$25 million purpose-built venue on Navy Pier, where

From left: Barbara Gaines and Criss Henderson received the Theodore Thomas Making History Award for Distinction in the Performing Arts in 2019. Carlos Tortolero received the Harold Washington Making History Award for Distinction in Public Service in 2018.





Maurice Jones plays Hamlet in the Chicago Shakespeare Theater's production of Hamlet, directed by Barbara Gaines, in the Courtyard Theater, 2019. Photograph by Liz Lauren

the company moved in 1999 and evolved into a three-theater campus composed of the Courtyard Theater, Upstairs at Chicago Shakespeare, and The Yard.⁴ In 2016 they spearheaded the citywide, yearlong *Shakespeare 400 Chicago* commemorating the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death with an unprecedented mobilization of the city's cultural and administrative resources, which was referred to as "the Olympics of Shakespeare."⁵

Barbara Gaines was born to Mickey Schwarz and Rhoda Selinka Schwarz in Los Angeles. The family moved to Manhattan when Gaines was a small child, lived briefly in Rockville Center on Long Island, and finally settled in the towns of Rye and Port Chester when she was twelve years old. Mickey Schwarz was a director of television commercials, and her grandfather was an editor and producer.⁶ Consequently, "the arts were treasured in my family," Gaines explains. "It wasn't like I had to worry about telling my parents that I was going to go into the theater and they would go, 'Oh, my God.'" In addition, "my maternal grandmother—her name was Sadie Rieger—was a great patron of the arts," adds Gaines. "She would drag me to every opera, ballet, Carnegie Hall, and the old Metropolitan Opera as a child."⁷

Family friend Joe Cohn was a New York movie director who exposed Gaines to Shakespeare. "Joe gave me my first book of Shakespeare sonnets when I was eleven or twelve. And I opened it up and it was Sonnet 29," she recollects. "It was the first time I realized that Shakespeare understood who I was. It started out 'when in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes.'"⁸ The rest is history.

Gaines first came to Chicago for Northwestern University's National High School Institute, an intensive study experience for students whose attendees are nicknamed "cherubs." "Between junior and senior years, I went to the Cherub Program at Northwestern, which was for high school kids," Gaines explains. "And I met wonderful people there, had a great time, and fell in love with Lake Michigan." The experience convinced Gaines to matriculate to

Northwestern for college. “At Northwestern I really learned to appreciate liberal arts,” taking a wide range of classes, “with absolutely spectacular professors I use every day,” she remembers. The most important of these was Dr. Wallace Bacon, who taught an introductory Shakespeare class. “Senior year I discovered Dr. Bacon, and for the whole year we studied all of Shakespeare’s plays.” Fortunately for her, and Chicago, “he was the only person who saw something in me and said yes.”⁹

After college, Gaines moved to New York City to pursue a career in acting. “I worked a lot and I made very good money because I was successful in commercials.” But New York frustrated her. “I found it very difficult to make friends there, and I realized after three years that Chicago was calling me. I had made my money, I had conquered my fears.” More importantly, “the biggest gift of New York was to realize how I did not want to live my life. I did not want to feel like a stranger in a strange land.”¹⁰ In 1980, Gaines returned to Chicago.¹¹

Carlos Tortolero was born in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, and immigrated to the United States in 1957. “We came from Guadalajara to Chicago,” Tortolero explains. “Guadalajara is probably the place you would say is the heart of our family because we had people coming from different places. My father Rodolfo was born in Mazatlán, Sinaloa, on the western coast. My mother Olga was born in Tepic, Nayarit.”¹² Tortolero’s extended family quickly followed. “After my father came, everybody on my mom’s side and his side came to the United States, including their parents,” he recounts. “So I only wound up with first cousins in Mexico, that’s it.”¹³

Guests view a sculpture at the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, which would later be renamed the National Museum of Mexican Art. In addition to sculptures, its collection includes textiles, folk art, prints and drawings, photography, and paintings.



When asked why his family moved to Chicago, Tortolero responds with one word: “Jobs.” “My parents had both gone to college. They were accountants.” He adds, “My father wound up working at Hotpoint Electric [Heating] Company in Cicero, which was bought out by GE [General Electric Corp.] eventually. He made refrigerators and worked the assembly line.” Tortolero himself spent one summer working at the plant.¹⁴

The Tortolero family moved to the largely Italian Near West Side. “We were at 1437 West Taylor, at Bishop Street, right where the Joe DiMaggio statue is and almost next to the [National] Italian [American] Sports Hall of Fame,” remembers Tortolero. “The building is still there.” Tortolero attended nearby Thomas Jefferson Elementary School near Taylor and Laflin Streets, then Our Lady of Pompeii School for seventh and eighth grades, and finally Lane Technical College Prep High School on the North Side at 2501 West Addison Street. “My big brothers both went there, and hardly anybody went from the neighborhood,” Tortolero explains. “In terms of the Mexicanos, we were the first ones who went to Lane Tech from there.”¹⁵

Lane Tech was a challenging environment for minority students. “I had this teacher assistant who wore a George Wallace [for President] button in ’68,” remembers Tortolero. “And then the teacher was calling me Paco and Pancho.” Tortolero found a refuge in the library. “The library was my get-away,” he explains. “I would be the library’s aide and just run to the library.” Tortolero felt so alienated that he never even bothered to sit for his class picture. “I was in the library picture, but not as a graduating senior,” he points out. Simply put, “I just hated the school.”¹⁶

The birth of the Chicago Shakespeare Theater was accidental, more specifically the result of an accident. Barbara Gaines injured her knee after moving back to Chicago. To make a living, she began offering acting classes in her Lincoln Park West apartment. “I was really in a panic. I was on crutches, and it was winter. So, I started coaching for twenty-five bucks an hour.”¹⁷

In short time, Gaines began offering a Shakespeare class, recruiting twelve actors to the first class in 1983. “The first thing I said [to the class] was Chicago does not have a Shakespeare theater, and as a group we should just start one,” recounts Gaines. “Until that moment, I had never, ever considered starting a theater. But it popped out.”¹⁸

In 1986, Gaines staged her first major public production on the outdoor terrace of the Red Lion Pub at 2446 North Lincoln Avenue. The first performance, *King Henry V*, cost \$3,000 and no one was paid.¹⁹ “They were all professional



In contrast to the early days, today the museum has approximately 10,000 objects in its permanent collection, making it one of the largest collections of Mexican art in the country.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater artistic director Barbara Gaines speaks at the Making History Awards in 2019, where she and executive director Criss Henderson were recognized for their work in redefining what a great American Shakespeare theater can be.



actors who sacrificed two weeks of pay for something else they could have been doing,” Gaines emphasizes. “They worked hard to give Chicago a Shakespeare theater. It was about nothing else.”²⁰

Gaines’s *King Henry V* was more than an artistic success. Shortly after the production closed, she received a telephone call from a Chase Manhattan Bank official. “One of our staff saw your *Henry V* and believes it can become a Shakespeare theater for Chicago,” recounts Gaines, “so Chase is going to give you \$25,000 to help—seed money for you.”²¹ That was the first major donation to what became the Chicago Shakespeare Theater.

Despite the prejudice and xenophobia Tortolero confronted at Lane Tech, he elected to become a secondary school teacher. “I had such a bad experience, I knew I could do better than that,” he explains laughing. “Why not be a high school teacher?” Tortolero attended the University of Illinois at Chicago where he majored in history and education. There he fell under the tutelage of Chicago historian Dominic Pacyga his senior year. “No offense to Studs Terkel, but nobody knows Chicago like Dominic Pacyga,” Tortolero declares. “He knows Chicago.”²²

From 1975 to 1987, Tortolero worked as a teacher, counselor, and administrator in the Chicago Public Schools.²³ His first appointment was at James H. Bowen High School in southeast Chicago, where he proved to be a popular teacher with students. In 1981, he was named the Chicago Metro History Fair Teacher of the Year.²⁴

Tortolero’s teaching experience at Bowen proved instrumental in a more significant and unexpected way. In 1982, Tortolero and a group of fellow Bowen High School teachers founded the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum. With only \$900, Tortolero was joined by Marty Carroll, Luis Guadarrama, Rich Kaleta, Helen Valdez, and Tortolero’s sister Olga Tortolero Kasper. They staged a series art exhibitions and cultural events in temporary spaces, envisioning a museum and cultural center that would address issues of accessibility, education, and social justice in Chicago’s Mexican and Latinx communities.²⁵ Tortolero admits that “we all knew that the museum couldn’t happen there [in southeast Chicago], it had to happen in Pilsen.”²⁶

And in 1987, it happened. The Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum found a permanent home in a refitted Chicago Park District boat repair facility in Harrison Park in Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood.²⁷ “It was a mess,” remembers Tortolero. “There was so much sawdust.” And sometimes the sawdust moved. “Rats,” proclaims Tortolero. “It would be like a movie. The place was a mess.”²⁸

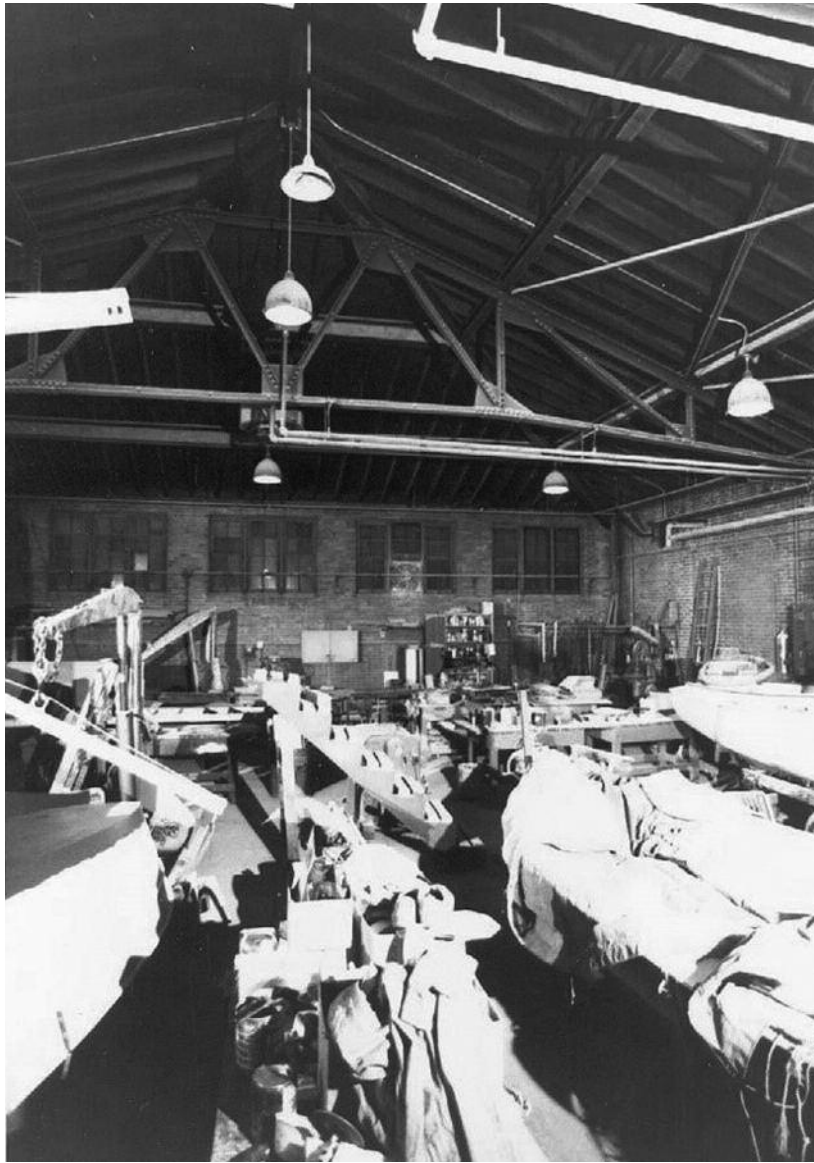
Tortolero, by his own admission, confronted more significant challenges than rats. First, “very few people in the arts world and the museum world thought



Hamlet (played by Maurice Jones) spars with Laertes (played by Paul Deo Jr.) as the court of Denmark looks on in Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s production of Hamlet, directed by Barbara Gaines, 2019. Photograph by Liz Lauren

Before it was renamed the National Museum of Mexican Art, this was the façade of the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum.





The building that today houses the National Museum of Mexican art was a Chicago Park District's boat repair facility in Harrison Park.

that we could do it," he admits. Why? Because "we were teachers," answers Tortolero. "Nothing I've faced in my life can tell you why education is in poor shape than the way people view teachers." The second obstacle was the location of a museum in a working-class neighborhood. Tortolero rhetorically asks: "How do you do an art museum in a working-class neighborhood?"²⁹ His one-sentence response is: "Working-class people have a right to the arts."³⁰ Finally, few thought Tortolero would succeed in creating a free museum. "People to this day ask me "How are you free?," admits Tortolero. "I made it happen."³¹

In 1987, the same year that the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum opened in Pilsen, Barbara Gaines moved her renamed Chicago Shakespeare Repertory Company to the Ruth Page Theater at 1016 North Dearborn Street.³² "Chicago" in "Chicago Shakespeare Repertory Company" was deemed unwieldy and soon dropped. Gaines faced skepticism similar to what Tortolero encountered. She adopted an unusual strategy to build an audience. Most Shakespeare promoters begin with the better-known tragedies:

Romeo and Juliet, *King Lear*, or *Hamlet*. By contrast, the first productions Gaines produced were *Troilus and Cressida*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Cymbeline*. “I’m an instinctive person, and I have always been haunted by war and the waste of war, the horror of it all,” explains Gaines. “*Troilus* was the first because I had to show the world that war was wrong.” Since 1987, Gaines has directed and produced *Troilus and Cressida* three times. “I hope to do it a fourth time,” she concedes. “We’re still in that horrible war, aren’t we?”³³

In 1990, Gaines hired Criss Henderson as executive director. When asked why she hired him, Gaines’s response is short and simple: “Huge intelligence and passion.” Gaines recognized she needed administrative help. “I don’t know a ledger sheet, even now,” she confesses. “He was the one who turned the theater around from just a devoted and talented group of actors and director to a real theater and an institution.”³⁴

Criss Henderson was an unlikely choice. The son of Edward and Donna Zinser Henderson, he was born in Monterey, California, where his father was stationed in the navy. He lived in California and the Philippines in his early childhood and finally moved to Deerfield, Illinois, when he was seven after his father took a job at Underwriter Laboratories.³⁵

Deerfield was instrumental in stimulating Henderson’s interest in the arts. Deerfield Children’s Theater, he remembers, “was a pretty important organization back then for a lot of young people, led by Eileen Boevers, who was a famous North Shore cultural maven, and they provided a lot of opportunity.”³⁶

Henderson attended Bradley University in downstate Peoria for one year before electing to transfer to a conservatory with a more theatrically-focused program in Chicago: the Goodman School of Drama. At that time, it was in the process of merging with DePaul University and was subsequently renamed The Theatre School at DePaul University. Henderson soon realized he did not want to be an actor. He proceeded to convince The Theatre School faculty to “let me create my own program,” he explains. “I was able to because it was a small conservatory.” The result was “an incredible undergraduate education in the theater.”³⁷

Henderson exploited the Chicago theater scene upon graduation. “The great thing is that the entire ecology of Chicago theater is built on the fact that any kid like me can get out of college and come to Chicago and find a way to bring together actors and put on a show.” Henderson and several Deerfield friends had founded a small theater group, the Seahorse Theater Company, while in college. “It was named that because in high school we had this plastic seahorse urn that became a recurring prop in all of the shows,” he explains. In the 1980s, they rented spaces and staged productions. “We did shows at Sheffield’s Bar and in a cabaret space called Boombala. There were plenty of places to put on shows,” reminisces Henderson. “While I was directing most of these shows, I think it was at that point that I was really getting a sense that I was also producing and leading the company.”³⁸



Chicago Shakespeare Theater executive director Criss Henderson speaks at the Making History Awards in 2019.



In 1988, Henderson formed a production company with Meredith Banta and Alan Salzenstein and produced Cynthia Heimel's *A Girl's Guide to Chaos* at the Royal George Theatre.³⁹ The three-person company went on to produce the musical *Personals* and the one-man show *Intimacies*, the latter being "a really powerful piece looking at the impact of AIDS," according to Henderson.⁴⁰ These productions attracted the interest of Barbara Gaines and the board members of the Chicago Shakespeare Repertory Company.

Henderson vividly remembers his interview with Gaines. "I had one suit, the suit I graduated from college in, so I put it on and went and met Barbara with Richard Cohn, who was the chairman of the board at that time. And I still fear that nobody else applied for the job. It was a really little company."⁴¹

He also remembers his first day of work. "We had a one-bedroom apartment at 2939 North Broadway up on the third floor." The furnishings were modest. "In the drawer of this giant desk in this one-bedroom apartment [were] two checkbooks, a payroll checkbook, and a general operating account checkbook," Henderson explains. "The yellow checks were the payroll checks, and the blue checks were the general operating. That was pretty much the extent of what was there."⁴²

The Ruth Page Theater was only marginally better. "The space was in a little bit of disrepair back then with an eighty-year-old cooling system," remembers Henderson. "Many of the seats that we set up in the theater I had purchased at the Ace Hardware Store, so we were seating audiences on aluminum folding chairs in a room that had very little air conditioning." And Ruth Page was primarily a dance school, Henderson points out. "Ballet was going on all around us. In the early '90s, if you went to a Chicago Shakespeare production at 7:30 at night, for the first twenty minutes of most shows you would hear thumping—it was the dance master's staff hitting the dance floor above until the class ended

The Chicago Shakespeare Theatre's marquee can be seen in front of the Ferris wheel at Navy Pier at dusk, 2019. Photograph by Gautam Krishnan



*Patrons linger outside the Chicago Shakespeare Theater on Navy Pier.
Photograph by Ali Ibrahim*

at ten minutes to 8:00, and then it would stop. And the little ballerinas would run around and be hanging out in the lobby with their parents.”⁴³

The 1993 season was pivotal for the Chicago Shakespeare Repertory Company. Suffering from debt, the company was forced to stage a single production. *Cymbeline* “was the miracle,” according to Gaines. “It saved us from extinction. I rented all our costumes from the Stratford Festival in Canada because we couldn’t afford to make anything.”⁴⁴ In addition, *King Lear* in 1993 proved to be equally important because it won a Joseph Jefferson Award, whose committee recognizes both equity and nonequity theater talent in the Chicago area.⁴⁵ In 1994, the company offered a three-play season, which stimulated attendance and subscriptions. By 1996, the company had an annual budget of \$3.2 million, a huge leap from the \$3,000 production of *Henry V* a decade earlier.⁴⁶

Gaines and Henderson were convinced their Shakespeare Company needed a larger space.⁴⁷ Henderson remembers James Riley and John Schmidt of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority were leading the Navy Pier renovation. “They appreciated the power of culture in Chicago and understood that bringing a cultural attraction to the pier would enhance it.”⁴⁸ Furthermore, adds Gaines, “Mayor Daley really wanted us because he had liked what he saw at Ruth Page, and we started having a series of meetings.”⁴⁹

Henderson, Gaines, and the Shakespeare board initially balked at the idea of moving to Navy Pier. “Things sort of changed from our unanimous vote not to go to the pier,” remembers Henderson. Trips to the National Theatre in London and the Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon (Shakespeare’s birth-place), however, generated new ideas and possibilities. “We had a four-month period where suddenly it felt right.”⁵⁰

In 1997, the company agreed to a public-private partnership with the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority, which constructed the core of a 550-seat, \$25 million venue and the Shakespeare Company finished and furnished the theater in exchange for a ninety-year lease on Navy Pier. The new Chicago Shakespeare Theater opened in 1999.⁵¹ “Shakespeare loves his new home,” proclaimed Gaines.⁵²

While Gaines and Henderson were leading the physical and artistic expansion of the Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Tortolero was doing much the same with the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum. “We slowly began building the collection,” Tortolero explains. He and his cofounders considered the collection to be “a trust.” While much of the collection was donated, Tortolero acknowledges “we’re going to take care of these things for future generations.”⁵³

The museum’s success was demonstrated when it tripled its physical footprint and expanded to its current 48,000-square-foot space in 2001.⁵⁴ The \$7 million expansion not only added exhibition space, but included new offices and on-site storage for the growing collection.⁵⁵ Tortolero quickly utilized the new space. “In 2001 we had our first permanent collection exhibit,” he recounts. “We were the first organization in the country to ever do that.”⁵⁶

That same year, the museum staged *Frida Kahlo Unmasked*, a photography exhibition celebrating the life of the famous Mexican artist.⁵⁷ That show paved the way for the museum’s breakthrough exhibition *Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and 20th Century Mexican Art: The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection* in 2003. The museum not only displayed the excitement, impact, and contradictions of Kahlo and Rivera, but also modernism itself in Mexican art. Attracting an unprecedented audience of more than 85,000 visitors, the event demonstrated that the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum was not just a relevant Chicago institution, but one with an international impact.⁵⁸ Tortolero admits that the Frida Kahlo exhibitions were a watershed moment. Visitors and potential donors alike “figured if they can take care of Frida Kahlo, they can take care of my stuff,” Tortolero explains. “That was a big turning point for us.”⁵⁹

In 2006, *The African Presence in Mexico: From Yanga to the Present* exhibition examined racial identity in Mexico. Unprecedented in multiple ways, Tortolero notes, the show was one of the earliest to acknowledge the diverse and sometimes unrecognized indigenous, European, African, Asian, and Jewish influences in Mexican art. The museum’s reputation was further broadened when the exhibition toured cities in both the United States and Mexico and attracted more than 100,000 visitors.⁶⁰ And in 2006 the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum adopted a new name: The National Museum of Mexican Art.⁶¹

Just as the opening of the enlarged National Museum of Mexican Art transformed that institution, the Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s move to Navy Pier



Carlos Tortolero tours the museum with then Senator Barack Obama (above). Two members of the Yollocalli Arts Reach staff, the award-winning youth initiative of the National Museum of Mexican Art, with Michelle Obama (below).



did much the same. “We became the fastest growing nonprofit theater in America for those first five seasons,” Henderson points out. “Our programming expanded. Up until that moment we had never produced anything other than a play by Shakespeare.” Henderson believed that “if we’re going to sit here and look out over the whole city as we do, we should have programming that welcomes and serves audiences from across the city.”⁶² By 2002, the Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST) had more than 23,000 subscribers and was the largest employer of actors in Chicago.⁶³

Henderson and Gaines worked like flip sides of a coin. “I thought about how we were going to evolve, how we were going to engage an audience, what we were going to do, that we were going to avoid an experience with Shakespeare live on stage as being an academic experience,” explains Henderson. “I wanted to make it another great night out at the theater.” Gaines, by contrast, was interested in the classical Shakespeare. “Barbara’s aim had always been and still is to bring light into the world, to bring light to the universe through her directing of these plays; that is her life’s work,” admits Henderson. “In order to enhance that and engage a city at the level that this organization wanted to, that would always be at the center and the name of the company.”⁶⁴

The result was a synergistic growth. “The big move was at the end of the first season on the Pier where we had only done Shakespeare plays until that point,” explains Henderson. Then in the 1999–2000 season, the CST staged *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. “That was a pretty clear sign that things were changing,” admits Henderson. Combined with the launching of the WorldStage Series, the CST has “brought in hundreds and hundreds of artists, and most of the great theaters in the world have now played at Chicago Shakespeare,” even as Shakespeare has remained the “standard of excellence.”⁶⁵

Shakespeare 400 Chicago revealed the theater’s international reach. According to Michael Witmore, director of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, *Shakespeare 400 Chicago* in 2016 was “a commemoration of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death like no other in the world.” The Chicago Shakespeare Theater incorporated sixty cultural partners (including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the Newberry Library), 863 events, one thousand-plus artists, 1.1 million participants, and thirty-eight restaurants and chefs (representing Shakespeare’s thirty-eight plays).⁶⁶ The cornerstone event was a world premiere of Shakespeare’s history cycle, *Tug of War*, a two-part series based on his history plays that included the rarely staged *Edward III*, all of which was created and directed by Gaines.⁶⁷

In 2017, the Chicago Shakespeare Theater opened The Yard, one of the most versatile theater venues in the world, with audience capacities ranging from 150 to 850.⁶⁸ Even before *Shakespeare 400 Chicago*,

Phoebe Pryce (as Jessica) and Jonathan Pryce (as Shylock) in the Shakespeare’s Globe production of *The Merchant of Venice*, directed by Jonathan Munby, featured at Chicago Shakespeare Theater as part of *Shakespeare 400 Chicago*, August 2016. Photograph by Manuel Harlan



Henderson and Gaines recognized “if we were going to evolve into one of the venerable theater centers of the world, that most of those theater centers of the world have three distinct platforms, and one of them is of a larger capacity.” Henderson praises architect Gordon Gill, who designed “the beautiful curved lobby and made the pop-up nature of it so brilliantly artful, navigating the footprint.”⁶⁹

The creation of the Chicago Shakespeare Theater and the National Museum of Mexican Art as local and international cultural forces has been recognized by numerous awards. Tortolero received the Bright New City Award from Mayor Harold Washington, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund Special Cultural Award, *Chicago Magazine*’s Chicagoan of the Year, the *Chicago Tribune* Arts Person of the Year, the University of Illinois at Chicago Alumni of the Year, the Illinois Humanities Council Public Humanities Award, and the Alumni Achievement Award from the University of Illinois. Most recently, he received an honorary degree from his alma mater, the University of Illinois at Chicago. In 2006, *Poder* named Tortolero one of the 100 Most Important Mexicans in the US.⁷⁰

Henderson has garnered the Cultural Innovation Award, the Arts Administrator of the Year by *Arts Management Magazine* at the Kennedy Center, the Chevalier de L’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the Minister of Culture of France, a Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre, as well as multiple Laurence Olivier and Joseph Jefferson Awards.⁷¹ Gaines’s productions have reaped similar success: more than thirty-five Joseph Jefferson Awards (three times for Gaines personally as Best Director for *Cymbeline*, *King Lear*, and *The Comedy of Errors*) and three Laurence Olivier Awards. In 2008, Chicago Shakespeare Theater was awarded the prestigious Regional Theatre Tony Award. Gaines has been named an honorary and Honorary Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in recognition of her contributions strengthening British-American cultural relations. Her other honors include honorary degrees from the University of Birmingham (UK), Dominican University, and Lake Forest College, as well as the Spirit of Loyola Award from Loyola University Chicago, the University Club of Chicago’s Cultural Award, and the Public Humanities Award from the Illinois Humanities Council.⁷²

Gaines, Henderson, and Tortolero consider their civic contributions far more significant than their many awards. “I know we contributed to this period of the city’s cultural life,” Henderson asserts. “The number of classrooms where there are teachers that have trained with us and worked with us over the years and are engaging students in new ways, that is lasting.”⁷³ Tortolero similarly takes great pride in the museum’s educational programs. “One third of our staff and one fourth of our budget is for youth programs and educational programs,” he says with pride. “No other museum in the United States is above ten percent.”⁷⁴ For Gaines, what is “the most mean-



Tortolero receives his Making History Award from Chicago History Museum president Gary T. Johnson (above). Henderson and Gaines pose with their Making History Awards (below).



ingful is just making as many people, whether they be students, or people in the parks, or people who buy subscriptions, and introducing them to Shakespeare.” After all, “a little touch of Shakespeare in the night can soften and cushion the slings and arrows that are in all of our lives.”⁷⁵

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A nighttime view of the Chicago Shakespeare Theater on Navy Pier. Photograph by Vito Palmisano

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FURTHER READING | Carlos Tortolero has written on the Mexican American experience in Chicago. See Rita Arias Jirasek and Carlos Tortolero, *Mexican Chicago* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing 2001). Insightful articles include Steve Johnson, “National Museum of Mexican Art: A vibrant scene in Pilsen,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 21, 2015, accessed February 11, 2018, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/museums/ct-ent-0122-national-museum-mexican-art-20150121-column.html>; and Kerry Cardoza, “Trump can’t stop the National Museum of Mexican Art,” *Chicago Reader*, April 5, 2017, accessed February 11, 2018, <https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/national-museum-mexican-art-nmma-memoria-presente/Content?oid=26120386>. Carlos Tortolero interviews can be found at “Museum Faces: Carlos Tortolero,” Great Museums Television, 2018, http://greatmuseums.org/explore/more/museum_faces_carlos_tortolero; and Franky and José Guzmán, *Carlos Tortolero: Art, Power, and Leadership*, El Béisman FILMs, April 10, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbKLOjXBOxA>; Michael Lipkin and Phil Ponce, “A Milestone for Mexican Art Museum,” *Chicago Tonight*, March 28, 2018, <https://chicagotonight.wttw.com/2012/03/28/milestone-mexican-art-museum>. On the early life and career of Barbara Gaines, begin with Chris Jones, “Navy Pier provides the perfect setting for Barbara Gaines to serve up Shakespeare, Chicago-style,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 1, 2002, accessed April 18, 2019, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/chi-cst-tony-navy-pier-setting-story-story.html>. For an insightful interview on the impact of *Shakespeare 400 Chicago*, see Barbara Bogaev, “*Shakespeare 400 Chicago*: Barbara Gaines,” *Folger Shakespeare Library*, April 18, 2017, accessed February 10, 2019, <https://www.folger.edu/shakespeare-unlimited/shakespeare-400-chicago-barbara-gaines>. On Criss Henderson’s early career, see Jeff Borden, “Criss Henderson, 34: Executive director, Shakespeare Repertory Theater,” *Crain’s Chicago Business*, 1996, accessed February 11, 2019, <https://www.chicagobusiness.com/node/782981>; and “Barbara Gaines and Criss Henderson,” *Talk Theatre in Chicago*, 2011, accessed February 10, 2019, <https://www.theatreinchicago.com/talk/interior.php?podshowID=337>

ENDNOTES

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