

Production photos and video now available for the
US PREMIERE

The Lord of the Rings - A Musical Tale

Journey to the magical realms of Middle-earth
as J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy of books is brought to the stage

July 19–September 1, 2024

Chicago—July 26, 2024—[Chicago Shakespeare Theater](#) (CST) presents the highly anticipated [The Lord of the Rings - A Musical Tale](#). Based on the books by J.R.R. Tolkien, this production comes to the stage in a US premiere directed by Paul Hart, July 19–September 1, 2024 in The Yard.

This adventure through the epic realm of Middle-earth has been beloved by generations of readers. With book and lyrics by **Shaun McKenna** and **Matthew Warchus** and original music by Academy Award winner **A.R. Rahman** (*Bombay Dreams*, *Slumdog Millionaire*), Finnish folk band **Värttinä**, and Tony Award winner **Christopher Nightingale** (*Matilda the Musical*), this theatrical event celebrates the greatest accomplishment in Middle-earth, making for an unforgettable experience for longtime fans and newcomers alike.

The Lord of the Rings - A Musical Tale features a 24-member ensemble cast that includes **Justin Albinder**, **Tom Amandes**, **Tony Bozzuto**, **Eileen Doan**, **Joey Faggion**, **Rick Hall**, **Suzanne Hannau**, **Mia Hilt**, **Will James Jr.**, **Michael Kurowski**, **Ian Maryfield**, **Ben Mathew**, **Spencer Davis Milford**, **James Mueller**, **Jarais Musgrove**, **Hannah Novak**, **Jeff Parker**, **Adam Qutaishat**, **Laura Savage**, **Bernadette Santos Schwegel**, **Alina Jenine Taber**, **Arik Vega**, **Matthew C. Yee**, and **Lauren Zakrin**.

As the Hobbits celebrate Bilbo Baggins' eleventy-first birthday in the Shire, he gifts his nephew Frodo his most precious belonging—a gold ring. This fateful moment launches Frodo on a legendary and perilous quest across Middle-earth to the darkest realms of Mordor, to vanquish evil with his loyal Fellowship. The folk-inspired score is performed live by the company onstage, weaving together original music with storytelling. The US Premiere run this summer coincides with the 70th anniversary of the publication of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the first book in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy which debuted July 29, 1954.

“Chicago Shakespeare Theater is delighted to create the US premiere of Paul Hart's magical and inspiring vision of *The Lord of the Rings*, said Artistic Director Edward Hall. “The Chicago-based ensemble that Paul and our team have put together promises to take us on an extraordinary adventure through Middle-earth. Launching our summer program in The Yard with this thrilling production promises an unforgettable night in the theater.”

“Sharing the Watermill's wonderful expression of *The Lord of the Rings* on stage with audiences from across the globe, beginning this summer in Chicago, with the US premiere of Paul Hart's and Chicago Shakespeare Theater's collaborative re-imagining, is a dream come true for all of us at MEE and our colleagues at Kevin Wallace Productions,” noted Fredrica Drotos, of Middle-earth Enterprises.

Director Paul Hart originated this new staging at the Watermill Theatre in West Berkshire, Newbury, UK in Summer 2023. He shared, “I can't wait for this next step in the epic journey of *The Lord of the Rings* as we craft this new staging for the US premiere production with CST for Chicago audiences. We loved creating this version which was retold from the perspective of the Hobbits at The Watermill and will now be expanded far beyond those horizons. It will be thrilling to share with new audiences internationally as part of this next stage.”

As Frodo Baggins, the young and kind-hearted Hobbit tasked with returning the all-powerful One Ring to Mordor, **Spencer Davis Milford** makes his Chicago Shakespeare debut. Milford was seen on Broadway in *The Winslow Boy* and in the first national tours of *Billy Elliot* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. He has performed at The Muny many times, including in



Beautiful: The Carole King Musical, *Camelot*, Disney's *Newsies*, and *42nd Street*. Recent Chicago credits include *Hello, Dolly!* at Marriott Theatre, *Billy Elliot* at Paramount Theatre, and *Guys and Dolls* at Drury Lane Theatre.

Tom Amandes plays Gandalf, the wise and powerful mentor to Frodo and his Fellowship on their quest. With an extensive film and television career, Amandes is best known for his recurring roles as Dr. Harold Abbott on WB's *Everwood*, Dr. Pelikan on NBC's *Parenthood*, Governor Samuel Reston on ABC's *Scandal*, and Noah Kuttler on CW's *Arrow*. He notably played President Abraham Lincoln in the film *Saving Lincoln*, as well as appearances in *Lucky*, *Live from Baghdad*, *Brokedown Palace*, and *The Long Kiss Goodnight*. His theater credits include productions at IAMA Theatre Company in Los Angeles, *Cynical Weathers* and *At Home at the Zoo* at Victory Gardens, and *Othello* and *Candida* at Court Theatre. **Lauren Zakrin** plays Galadriel, an Elven queen who offers aid to the Fellowship. Zakrin's Broadway credits include *Once Upon a One More Time*, *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812*, and *Rock of Ages*, and she has been seen in national tours of *Wicked*, *Grease*, and *Legally Blonde*.

In the role of Frodo's uncle Bilbo Baggins is **Rick Hall**. Hall is a founding member of Chicago's Improv Institute and an alumnus of The Second City who returns to Chicago Shakespeare after appearing in *The People vs. Friar Laurence*, *The Man Who Killed Romeo and Juliet* and *A Flea In Her Ear*. **Tony Bozzuto** plays Gollum, a cunning adversary to the Fellowship in their quest to destroy the One Ring. Bozzuto's Chicago credits include *The Internationalist* at Steppenwolf Theatre, *Cat's Cradle*, *Whose Body*, and *The Island of Dr. Moreau* at Lifeline Theatre, and *On An Average Day* with BackStage Theatre, for which he received a Jeff Award nomination.

Playing the Hobbits who join Frodo's quest are **Michael Kurowski** (Samwise Gamgee), who returns to Chicago Shakespeare after *Peter Pan – A Musical Adventure*, and whose additional credits include national tours of *Once* and *The Play That Goes Wrong*, and work at Drury Lane Theatre, Marriott Theatre, and Paramount Theatre; **Ben Mathew** (Pippin), who was recently seen in *Emmett Otter's Jug Band Christmas* at Studebaker Theatre and whose additional credits include *Once* at Writers Theatre and *Campaigns Inc.* at TimeLine Theatre; and **Eileen Doan** (Merry) whose credits include *Lucy and Charlie's Honeymoon* at Lookingglass Theatre Company, *Describe the Night* at Steppenwolf Theatre, and *Cambodian Rock Band* at Victory Gardens Theater.

Portraying the other members of the Fellowship of the Ring are **Justin Albinder** (Legolas) who was recently seen in the second national tour of *Jersey Boys* and whose Chicago credits include *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* at Marriott Theatre; **Will James Jr.** (Strider/ Aragorn), who appeared in the national tour of Disney's *The Lion King*; **Ian Maryfield** (Gimli), who recently appeared as Tybalt in *Short Shakespeare! Romeo and Juliet* and whose additional credits include work at Court Theatre, Red Theater, Windy City Playhouse, and more; and **Matthew C. Yee** (Boromir), who wrote and starred in *Lucy and Charlie's Honeymoon* at Lookingglass Theatre last year, and other recent credits include *Antigone* at Court Theatre and *Almost Famous* on Broadway.

Jeff Parker plays two characters: Saruman, a Wizard who is tempted by evil and works against the Fellowship, and the Half-elven, Elrond. Parker's many CST credits include *Measure for Measure*, *As You Like It*, *The King's Speech*, and *King Charles III*, and other recent credits include *Fiddler on the Roof* and Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* at Drury Lane Theatre and *Proximity* at Lyric Opera. **Alina Jenine Taber** plays Elven princess Arwen. Taber is known for her recurring role as Lexi Olinsky on *Chicago PD* and has performed extensively around Chicago as a vocalist and songwriter. Her recent theater credits include *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* at Marriott Theatre, *Grease* at Drury Lane Theatre, and *Once* at Writers Theatre. Samwise's wife Rosie is played by **Suzanne Hannau**, whose recent credits include *The Matchbox Magic Flute* at Goodman Theatre and work with the Chicago Wind Symphony, Highland Park Strings, and Chicago Folks Operetta.

The ensemble includes **Joey Faggion**, **Mia Hilt**, **James Mueller**, **Jarais Musgrove**, **Hannah Novak**, **Adam Qutaishat**, **Laura Savage**, **Bernadette Santos Schwegel**, and **Arik Vega**. Understudies include **Andrew Bosworth**, **Luke Nowakowski**, **Ty Shay**, **Carter Rose Sherman**, **Kelan Smith**, and **Tommy Thurston**.

Director **Paul Hart** is the Artistic Director and Joint CEO of Watermill Theatre in the UK, which just received *The Stage's* 2024 Award for Theatre of the Year. His previous production of *The Lord of the Rings – A Musical Tale* at Watermill last summer was awarded the WhatsOnStage Award for Best Regional Production and the BroadwayWorld UK Award for Best Direction of a Musical. His other Watermill credits include *Notes From A Small Island* (BroadwayWorld UK Award for Best Direction of a New Production), *Spike*, *Kiss Me, Kate*, *Sweet Charity*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Borrowers*, *Romeo and Juliet*, among many others. Other credits include multiple UK tours and work with Donmar Warehouse, Propeller Shakespeare Company, National Youth Theatre, and serving as the associate director for the Broadway production of *Red*.

The creative team also includes Production Designer **Simon Kenny**, Choreographer and Movement Director **Anjali Mehra**, Music Supervisor **Mark Aspinall**, Music Director and Keyboard Programmer **Michael McBride**, Lighting Designer **Rory Beaton**, Original Sound Designer **Adam Fisher**, Chicago Sound Designer **Nicholas Pope**, Projection Designer **George Reeve**, Puppet Designer **Charlie Tymms**, Chicago Fight Director and Intimacy Director **Rachel Flesher**, Chicago Puppet Director **Lindsey Noel Whiting**, Dialect and Vocal Coach **Susan Gosdick**, Associate Director **Christa Harris**, Associate Lighting Designer **Will Elphinstone**, Associate Projection Designer **Iain Syme**, Costume Design Assistant **Janelle Smith**, Original Fight Director **Dani McCallum**, Original Puppetry Designer **Ashleigh Cheadle**, Casting Director **Bob Mason**, Production Stage Manager **David Castellanos**, Assistant Stage Managers **Drew Donnelly**, **Michael George**, and **Shannon Golden-Starr**, and Production Assistant **Tuesday Thacker**.

Additional credits: Kevin Wallace & William Bennett for Kevin Wallace Productions, Middle-earth Enterprises, GWB Entertainment, Tim McFarlane, People Entertainment Group, The Watermill Theatre

The press opening for *The Lord of the Rings – A Musical Tale* is scheduled for **Friday, July 26 at 7:00 p.m.**

More information at www.chicagoshakes.com/lordoftherings or on social media at [@chicagoshakes](https://twitter.com/chicagoshakes).

Based upon the Books by J.R.R. Tolkien.

Written and produced under license from Middle-earth Enterprises, LLC (MEE).

The Lord of the Rings logo, The Lord of the Rings and the names of characters, events, items and places therein are trademarks or registered trademarks of MEE and are used under license.

All rights reserved. ©2024 Kevin Wallace Limited and Middle-earth Enterprises.

The Lord of the Rings – A Musical Tale

Based on the books by J.R.R. Tolkien

Book and lyrics by Shaun McKenna and Matthew Warchus

Music by A.R. Rahman, Värttinä, and Christopher Nightingale

Directed by Paul Hart

July 14–September 1, 2024

The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare

Tickets start at \$41

Special discounts available for groups of 10 or more

Box Office: 312.595.5600 | Group Sales: 312.595.5678

www.chicagoshakes.com/lordoftherings

PERFORMANCE LISTING

- Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesdays at 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.
- Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.
- Fridays at 7:00 p.m.
- Saturdays at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.
- Sundays at 2:00 p.m.

Chicago Shakespeare strives to make its facility and performances accessible to all patrons. Accessible seating, assistive listening devices, large-print and Braille programs, and sensory tools are available at every performance. Enhanced performances include:

- **Open captioning – Wednesday, August 21, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.**
A text display of the words and sounds heard during a play, synced live with the action onstage.
- **ASL interpreted performance – Friday, August 23, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.**
All dialogue and lyrics are translated into American Sign Language by two certified interpreters.
- **Audio-described performance with optional touch tour – Sunday, August 25, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.**
A program that provides spoken narration of a play's key visual elements for patrons who are blind or have low vision. Touch Tours provide patrons the opportunity to experience, firsthand, a production's design elements.

Creative Team

Shaun McKenna and Matthew Warchus - Book & Lyrics
A.R. Rahman, Värttinä & Christopher Nightingale - Music
Christopher Nightingale, A.R. Rahman & Värttinä - Original
Orchestrations
Paul Hart - Director
Simon Kenny - Production Designer
Anjali Mehra - Choreographer & Movement Director
Mark Aspinall - Music Supervisor & Orchestrations
Michael McBride - Music Director & Music Programming
Rory Beaton - Lighting Designer
Adam Fisher - Original Sound Designer
Nicholas Pope - Chicago Sound Designer
George Reeve - Projection Designer
Charlie Tymms - Puppet Designer
Rachel Flesher - Chicago Fight Director & Intimacy Director
Lindsey Noel Whiting - Chicago Puppetry Director
Susan Gosdick - Dialect and Vocal Coach
Christa Harris - Associate Director
Will Elphingstone - Associate Lighting Designer
Iain Syme - Associate Projection Designer
Janelle Smith - Costume Design Assistant
Dani McCallum - Original Fight Director
Ashleigh Cheadle - Original Puppetry Director
Bob Mason - Casting Director
David Castellanos - Production Stage Manager
Drew Donnelly - Assistant Stage Manager
Michael George - Assistant Stage Manager
Shannon Golden-Starr - Assistant Stage Manager
Tuesday Thacker - Production Assistant

Cast

Justin Albinder - Legolas
Tom Amandes - Gandalf
Tony Bozzuto - Gollum
Eileen Doan - Merry
Joey Faggion - Ensemble
Rick Hall - Bilbo Baggins
Suzanne Hannau - Rosie Cotton
Mia Hilt - Ensemble
Will James Jr. - Strider/Aragorn
Michael Kurowski - Samwise Gamgee
Ian Maryfield - Gimli
Ben Mathew - Pippin
Spencer Davis Milford - Frodo Baggins
James Mueller - Ensemble
Jarais Musgrove - Ensemble
Hannah Novak - Ensemble
Jeff Parker - Saruman/Elrond
Adam Qutaishat - Ensemble
Laura Savage - Ensemble
Bernadette Santos Schwegel - Ensemble
Alina Jenine Taber - Arwen
Arik Vega - Ensemble
Matthew C. Yee - Boromir
Lauren Zakrin - Galadriel
Andrew Bosworth - Understudy
Luke Nowakowski - Understudy
Ty Shay - Understudy
Carter Rose Sherman - Understudy
Kelan Smith - Understudy
Tommy Thurston - Understudy

ABOUT CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

A Regional Tony Award recipient, Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST) produces a bold and innovative year-round season—plays, musicals, world premieres, family productions, and theatrical presentations from around the globe—alongside education programming for students, teachers, and lifelong learners, and engagement with communities across the city. Located on Chicago's iconic Navy Pier, CST's campus features the Jentes Family Courtyard Theater, The Yard, and the Carl and Marilyn Thoma Theater Upstairs. Onstage, in classrooms and neighborhoods across the city, and in venues around the world, Chicago Shakespeare is a multifaceted cultural center—inviting audiences, artists, and community members to share powerful stories that connect and inspire.

###