

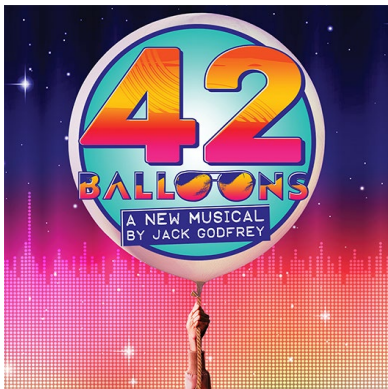
Chicago Shakespeare Theater announces
addition to 2024/2025 Season

NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE of a new musical
from the producers of *SIX*

42 Balloons

A soaring original musical inspired by an unbelievable true story

May 24–June 29 in The Yard



Chicago—January 9, 2025—[Chicago Shakespeare Theater](#) (CST) announces today an exciting addition to the 2024/25 season: the North American premiere of the new musical *42 Balloons*. From the multi-award-winning producers **Kevin McCollum** (*Oh, Mary!*, *Rent*), **Andy Barnes** and **Wendy Barnes** (*SIX*), and **Sonia Friedman Productions** (*Merrily We Roll Along*), *42 Balloons* is an '80s-inspired musical based on the unbelievable true story of Larry Walters' daring lawn chair flight. The show is produced by Chicago Shakespeare Theater after an acclaimed UK run at The Lowry where it garnered audience and critical acclaim, including a five-star review from *The Times* which proclaimed the show as “whip-smart, funny, and unexpectedly but exceptionally touching.” The musical features a book, music, and lyrics by **Jack Godfrey**, direction by **Ellie Coote**, and will run **May 24–June 29, 2025**, in The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare Theater.

With a lawn chair and approximately 42 helium-filled weather balloons, truck driver Larry Walters defied all odds (and FAA airspace regulations) to achieve his lifelong dream: soaring 16,000 feet above Los Angeles. No, seriously—in a chair. Inspired by the unbelievable true story of how Larry and his partner Carol Van Deusen rallied their friends and family to help them reach new heights, this heartwarming and hilarious new musical features an irresistible '80s-inspired pop score and asks: How far would you go to make your dreams take flight? Is the sky really the limit...and what happens when things don't go as planned?

42 Balloons won *The Stage* Debut Award and is currently nominated for the *WhatsOnStage* Award for Best Regional Production.

“It's such a pleasure to be producing this truly life-affirming and original piece of musical theater at CST,” shared Chicago Shakespeare's artistic director **Edward Hall**. “A story full of hope, an uplifting and infectious score, and a world shot through with '80s color. We're thrilled to be partnering with Kevin, Andy, Wendy, and Sonia to celebrate Larry Walters—one of America's greatest dreamers.”

Creator **Jack Godfrey** said, “I'm unbelievably excited that *42 Balloons* will be coming to Chicago Shakespeare Theater this year, particularly with its brilliant recent history of supporting, developing, and producing new musicals! I'm thrilled that we will have this amazing opportunity to take our show about big balloons and big dreams to the land where Larry Walters actually flew 42 years ago. I cannot wait to share this musical and this story with American audiences very soon.”

“I instantly connected with Larry and his desire to fly beyond his own limitations,” shared producer **Kevin McCollum**. “One of my favorite aspects of being a producer is being able to help shepherd work by new voices, and I was inspired by Jack Godfrey's ability to capture the specificity of this real-life story and transform it into a universal journey that soars to the heavens.”

Creator **Jack Godfrey** is a musical theater composer, lyricist, and writer. His other projects include *This Is A Love Story* (music and lyrics, commissioned by Vicky Graham Productions, selected for BEAM2021, workshop at Birmingham Hippodrome in January 2024) and *Babies* (music and lyrics, winner of the BYMT New Music Theatre Award 2021, run at The Other Palace in 2024), which is currently nominated for the *WhatsOnStage* Award for Best New Musical.

Director and dramaturg **Ellie Coote** is the co-founder of Chalk Musical Theatre Dramaturgy. Additional credits include *The Way Way Deep* (Underbelly, The Edinburgh Festival Fringe) and *Mario: A Super Musical* (The Cockpit, Union Theatre). Workshop credits include *Train On Fire* (MT Fest), *Bluff* (Pint Of Wine), and *Busk* (Dare Festival). Coote is currently writing *This Is A Love Story* with Jack Godfrey (Vicky Graham Productions), and adapting a translation of Korean musical *Red Book* (IM Culture).

The production also features orchestrations, arrangements, and musical supervision by **Joe Beighton** (*SIX*), choreography by **Alexzandra Sarmiento** (*How to Succeed In Business Without Really Trying*), scenic design by **Milla Clarke** (*Mates in Chelsea*), costume design by **Natalie Pryce** (*VANYA*), video design by Tony and Olivier Award winner **Andrzej Goulding** (*Life of Pi*), lighting design by Tony and Olivier Award nominee **Bruno Poet** (*Tina - The Tina Turner Musical*), and sound design by Grammy and Tony Award nominee **Paul Gatehouse** (*SIX*).

42 Balloons is produced by special arrangement with **Kevin McCollum, Andy Barnes and Wendy Barnes**, and **Sonia Friedman Productions** in association with **Debbie Hicks, Sam Levy, S&Co, Kenny Wax, and The Lowry**.

More information at www.chicagoshakes.com/42balloons or on social media at [@chicagoshakes](https://www.instagram.com/chicagoshakes).

42 Balloons

Book, music, and lyrics by Jack Godfrey
Directed by Ellie Coote
May 24 - June 29, 2025
The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare Theater

PERFORMANCE LISTING

- Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. (except May 27 and June 3)
- Wednesdays at 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.
- Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.
- Fridays at 7:00 p.m. (except June 6)
- Saturdays at 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.
- Sundays at 2:00 p.m.

CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER (CST)

A Regional Tony Award recipient, Chicago Shakespeare Theater produces a bold and innovative year-round season that includes Shakespeare, original plays, musicals, family programming, and international theatrical events. CST is committed to serving as a cultural center across its three stages—the 700+ seat Yard, 500 seat Jentes Family Courtyard Theater, and the 200 seat Carl and Marilyn Thoma Theater Upstairs as well as in classrooms, neighborhoods, and venues around the world. CST has a deep commitment to education and lifelong learning with robust programming for students, teachers, and lifelong learners, and engagement with communities across the city. Onstage, in classrooms and neighborhoods across the city, and in venues around the world, Chicago Shakespeare is a multifaceted theater—inviting audiences, artists, and community members to share powerful stories that illuminate the complexities, ambiguities, and wonders of our world.

www.chicagoshakes.com

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