



CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

IMPACT REPORT 2024/25



Paulita A. Pike* *Chair*
 Ray Whitacre* *Treasurer*
 Brayton B. Alley*
 Dheera Anand
 Ayodeji Ayodele
 Frank D. Ballantine
 Kate Blomgren
 Stephen A. Brodsky
 Thomas L. Brown
 Allan E. Bulley III
 Clive Christison
 Patrick R. Daley
 Donald Delves
 Brian W. Duwe
 John Edelman
 Philip L. Engel°
 Gregory S. Gallopoulos
 C. Gary Gerst**
 Edward Hall
 M. Hill Hammock**
 Tim Hannahs
 Kathryn J. Hayley*
 Aaron Hoffman
 Stewart S. Hudnut
 William R. Jentes*
 John P. Keller°
 Richard A. Kent
 Chase Collins Levey
 Judy Loseff
 Renetta McCann*
 Raymond F. McCaskey**
 Jess E. Merten
 Kimberly Motes
 Linda K. Myers*
 Christopher O'Brien
 Jennifer O'Neill
 Mark S. Ouweleen**
 Sheila Penrose
 Nazneen Razi*
 Neal J. Reenan
 Lance Richards*
 Sheli Z. Rosenberg**
 Robert Ryan
 Carole Segal
 Richard L. Sevcik
 Steven J. Solomon**
 Jim Stadler
 Jamie Stone O'Brien
 Harvey J. Struthers, Jr.
 Sheila G. Talton
 Marilyn J. Thoma*
 Gayle R. Tilles
 Priscilla A. (Pam) Walter**
 Donna Welch

*Executive Committee
Members

°Former Board Chairs

A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP



As we look back at our inaugural season as leaders of this storied institution, we are tremendously grateful for all of you who participate in this theater through your attendance, your gifts, and your shared belief that live theater is powerful and yes, transformative. Despite a challenging environment, Chicago Shakespeare Theater remains a vibrant, multidimensional, wonderfully creative institution, and—because of your partnership—we are truly optimistic as we look forward to what the future holds for the art on our stages. We believe discipline and innovation are two sides of the same coin and as we continue to evolve and create, we remain as committed as ever to our mission and the communities we serve.

Edward Hall
Artistic Director
Carl and Marilyn Thoma Chair

Kimberly Motes
Executive Director



When I began my tenure as Chair of CST's Board of Directors, I made a commitment to advance all we do at our theater: the production of Shakespeare, the activation of the Yard, the education of young people and the engagement of our surrounding communities. As I reflect on this past season, I have had the privilege to witness the talent and energy that Edward Hall and Kimberly Motes have brought since they took over the reins of CST. The buzz and excitement about CST is everywhere. Our Board of Directors is deeply committed to stewarding this important cultural asset into its vigorous future. Thank you to our donors, subscribers, first-time ticket buyers, students, teachers, and of course our incredible community of talented theater artists and professionals: Thank you for all you do for Chicago Shakespeare.

Paulita A. Pike
Chair, Board of Directors



In September of 2024, the Board of Directors adopted and approved new mission and vision statements for the next era of Chicago Shakespeare Theater:

OUR MISSION

To create vivid, entertaining theatrical experiences that invigorate and engage people of all ages and identities by illuminating the complexity, ambiguity, and wonder of our world. Shared humanity and unforgettable stories—now THIS is Chicago Shakespeare.

OUR VISION

We deliver excellent, powerful, life-changing theater that challenges our preconceptions of everything. We are an open and inspiring destination to meet, talk, and share experience through community and live performance that is available to everyone. We build a better future with those who watch, work, create, and participate.

GIVING NEW LIFE TO SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare is at the heart of our mission. This season's five productions displayed Shakespeare as we know him to be: a contemporary and radical writer in his own time, whose compelling and original voice continues to inspire us today. His works teach us empathy, entertain us, challenge our ways of thinking and constantly remind us of the wonder of our world. Out of his humanity and his artistry, our work this season highlighted the breadth and depth of his genius, a powerful reminder of the Bard's relevance in the modern world.

Shakespeare Productions in the 2024/25 Season

Shakes in the City: Twelfth Night

directed by Tyrone Phillips

Henry V

directed by Edward Hall

Royal Shakespeare Company's *Pericles*

directed by Tamara Harvey

FROM THE UK

Short Shakespeare!

A Midsummer Night's Dream

adapted and directed by Edward Hall

Teatro La Plaza's *Hamlet*

adapted and directed by Chela De Ferrari

FROM PERU

“Chicago has the well-deserved international reputation of being the American City of choice for theater. I want CST to be the place audiences come to see the very best Shakespeare in the world.”

—Edward Hall, Artistic Director

Carl and Marilyn Thoma Chair

30% of Shakespeare attendees were new to CST in each of the last two seasons



CONNECTING VETERANS WITH SHAKESPEARE

Our “In Service” veterans post-show conversation series explored themes of honor, valor, leadership, and the repercussions of war in *Henry V*.

Bringing together veterans affairs leaders from the public and private sectors, these discussions served as an example of how CST provides powerful and thoughtful points of entry to the art on our stage, enjoying another lens through which to understand Shakespeare. Partners included Chicago Veterans, Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, The Brigade, Warrior-Scholar Project, Duchossois Family Foundation, and John Edelman, member of the CST Board of Directors.



SHAKES IN THE CITY FOR CHICAGO

With free performances across north, west, and south side Chicago neighborhoods, the reenvisioned Shakes in the City program joined community activations and programming to bring Shakespeare to new audiences.

25 free pop-up performances in parks large and small

15 free dance workshops

21 neighborhoods

356.4 miles traveled

2,000+ community members engaging



CROSSING BORDERS & MAKING CONNECTIONS

By providing an opportunity for a multitude of voices to be heard, Teatro La Plaza's *Hamlet* from Peru opened the door for audiences and actors to come together and remember our shared humanity.

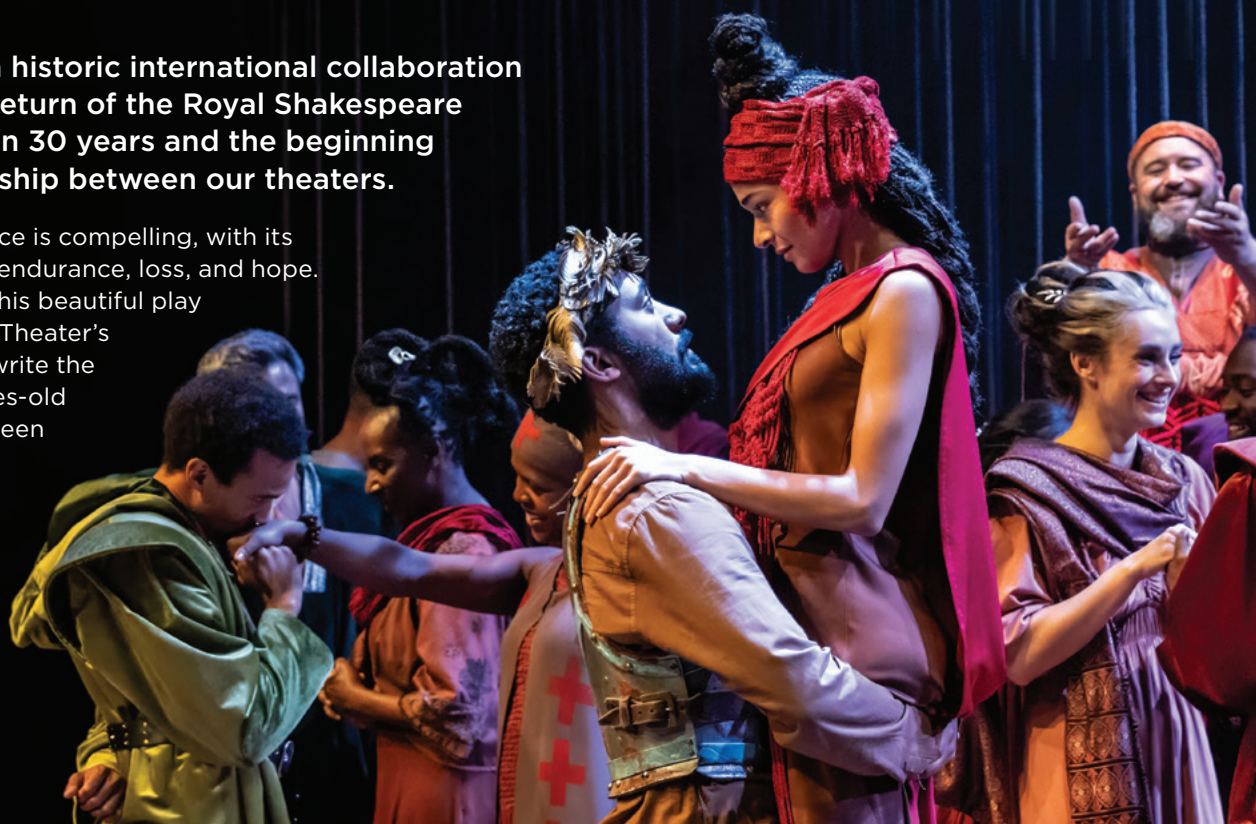
"Traditionally, Hamlet is played by an iconic actor, a master of the craft, but what if the role was given to actors historically excluded from artistic and intellectual spaces? This was more than a casting choice—it was a provocation, inviting us to experience Hamlet's most famous question in a deeply personal and contemporary way."

—Chela De Ferrari, *Hamlet* Director
as quoted in the *CHICAGO TRIBUNE*

Pericles represented a historic international collaboration as it marked the first return of the Royal Shakespeare Company to Chicago in 30 years and the beginning of an ongoing partnership between our theaters.

"*Pericles*' perennial relevance is compelling, with its examination of leadership, endurance, loss, and hope. We couldn't wait to share this beautiful play with Chicago Shakespeare Theater's audiences as together we write the next chapter in the centuries-old story of collaboration between our two nations."

—Tamara Harvey
Pericles Director &
RSC co-Artistic Director
as quoted in
THE NEW YORK TIMES



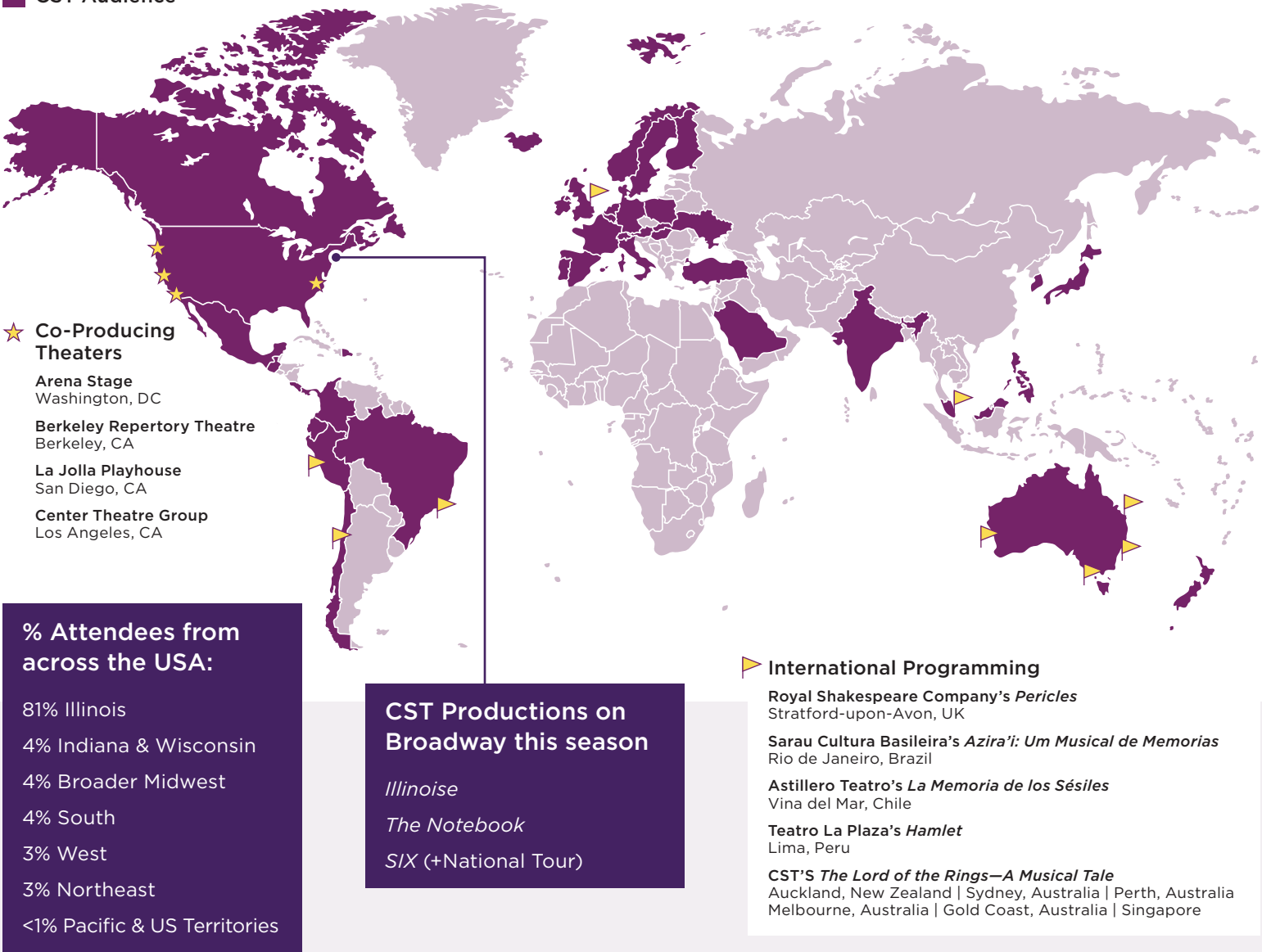
BRINGING THE WORLD TO CHICAGO & SENDING CHICAGO TO THE WORLD

Unforgettable theatrical experiences start here

In the 2024/25 Season, we created a host of large-scale North American premiere productions that activated The Yard as never before—from the sensational *The Lord of the Rings—A Musical Tale* and The Kinks' rocking *Sunny Afternoon* to the exuberant world of *Jaja's African Hair Braiding* and the soaringly original *42 Balloons*. Innovative new producing models united CST's artistic expertise with commercial presenting partners and non-profit co-producers to expand our impact through increasingly ambitious projects with a future life on stages around the world. **CST is THE place to see the world's most exciting theater—first.**

This season, we welcomed **145,000 audience members from all 50 states and 56 countries**, engaged dozens of international artists, and shared our artistry with co-producing partners nationwide and in tours around the globe.

CST Audience



Our profile was raised through international and national coverage:

DEEPENING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Chicago Shakespeare Theater strives to reflect the broad shoulders of our city's 77 neighborhoods by forging mutually beneficial partnerships with community organizations. Global in scale and local in impact, our programming brings people of all ages and identities together to meet, talk, and share experiences. A few highlights from our 2024/25 Season include:



Inspired by the entrepreneurial characters of ***Jaja's African Hair Braiding***, CST embarked on an extensive engagement campaign to celebrate cultural creativity. We invited 30 local salon owners to a kick-off event with the show's Tony Award-winning wig designer Nikiya Mathis and partnered with them to support the show as official Ambassadors. The Yard lobby was transformed with an immersive installation of hair art showcasing Chicago artists, and several performances featured a market of Black-owned small businesses.



This season featured our 8th collaboration with **A.B.L.E.—Artists Breaking Limits & Expectations—** a Chicago-based nonprofit that creates theater and film with individuals with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities. Their punk-inspired re-telling of *Frankenstein* rocked the Upstairs Studio. CST brought together A.B.L.E. performers and the cast of Teatro La Plaza's *Hamlet* to share in community on World Down Syndrome Day.



For the 7th year, CST continued its partnership with the Chicago Latino Theater Alliance's **Destinos: Chicago International Latino Theater Festival** to present two North American premieres: *La Memoria de los Sésiles* from Chile and *Azira'i* from Brazil. A workshop on building and developing theater for families was led in Spanish by director Gabriel Contreras Hernández, playwright and actor Nicolás Cancino Said, and Astillero Teatro for budding creatives to engage more deeply.

A LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP WITH SHAKESPEARE FOR STUDENTS

Chicago Shakespeare Theater believes that theater is for everyone and can transform lives. At a time when arts and education funding is being challenged, CST serves more students and teachers than any theater in Chicago. These programs support the development of young people's crucial skills, including social-emotional competencies, critical literacy, and meaningful collaboration in classrooms and in life. No matter where an individual is on their learning journey, CST fosters a space to explore, absorb, create, and build community through our lifelong learning programs.

83% of students attending a student matinee experienced Shakespeare live for the first time

18,000+ students and teachers, a 43% increase from last season

40 student matinees offered at deeply subsidized rate

473 teachers engaged **22** schools participated in SLAM

“In our digital world, it’s critical for young people to explore their creativity and build their capacity for empathy, understanding, and a broader perspective.”

—Nora Carroll, Director of
Lifelong Learning & Education
Ray and Judy McCaskey
Education Chair



HEAR FROM A CPS TEACHER

“I can teach Shakespeare all I want...put it up on its feet in the classroom, but until my students see it in the theater, it’s not real to them. It’s getting harder and harder to have field trips. A lot of schools don’t have the budget. This year with the bus scholarship, we were able to get one bus picked up by the theater. It was such a relief. My kids get to come to almost all the shows and that’s only because the theater makes it affordable.

”



—Robin Russo

Teacher at Steinmetz College Prep

Scan QR Code to hear from Robin



1,500 students received subsidized transportation to matinee performances through our bus scholarships

46 educators attended a free teacher workshop

12 were selected to participate in Bard Core, an intensive training program to enhance classroom teaching techniques for getting Shakespeare on its feet in classrooms

12 Pre-Amblés and **23** post-show discussions were offered to audiences to further engage with the work they see on stage

60 attendees joined us to immerse themselves in the behind-the-scenes elements of making theater through backstage tours or technical workshops

OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE

145,000+ people saw a performance—a 17% increase from last season

420 performances across all 3 venues

669 job opportunities created

46% ↑ increase in first time attendees

21% of last season's single ticket buyers returned for 2+ shows

20,000+ students and teachers served through education programming

8,500 young adults participated in \$30 Under 30—an increase of 89%

42% ↑ increase in student groups

2,351 individual donors

LIVE PERFORMANCES BUILD A BETTER FUTURE BEYOND THE STAGE

CST believes that theater and the arts are imperative to a healthy, vibrant community.

The performing arts expand tourism, lower crime, attract talent to employers, drive revenue and economic benefit, and build social-emotional skills, such as empathy and creative problem solving that are critical for our shared humanity.



AUDIENCE TESTIMONIALS

“As is always the case for me with a memorable performance... I felt ‘dropped into’ a world I’m not particularly familiar with and was led to care about it. It was more than entertainment but **moved me to feel my own connection to life and humanity with intelligence, pain and wit, insight and compassion.**”

“Thank you for continuing to bring **thought-provoking, diverse works** to Chicago.”

“CST is **my go-to theater** in Chicago!”

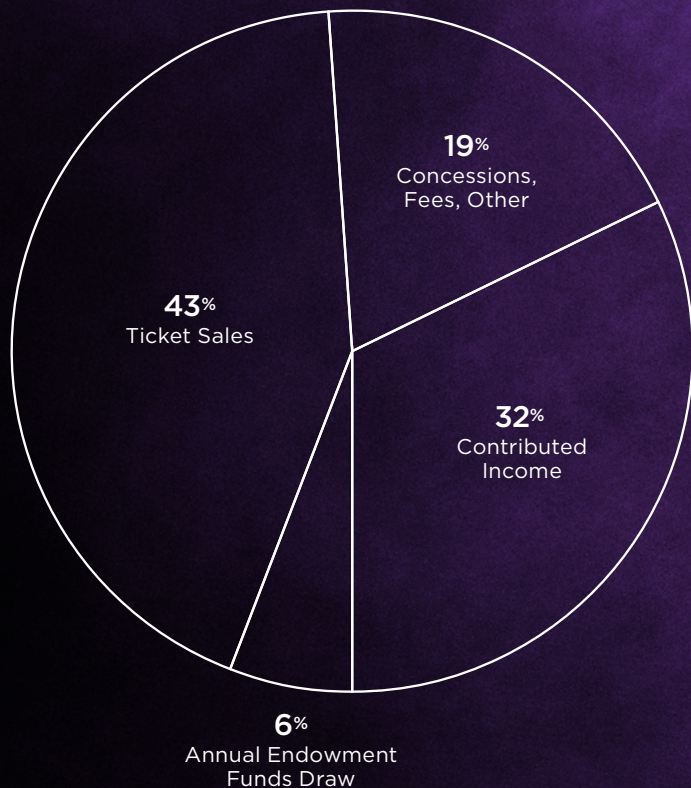
“**It was a production that answered the question ‘Why do you go to the theater?’** I talked about it the whole way home. I am still thinking about it... it connected me to others and maybe a bit more to myself.”

“We need **more reminders of our shared humanity.** The music, dancing and humor were a delight. Thank you for a memorable night.”

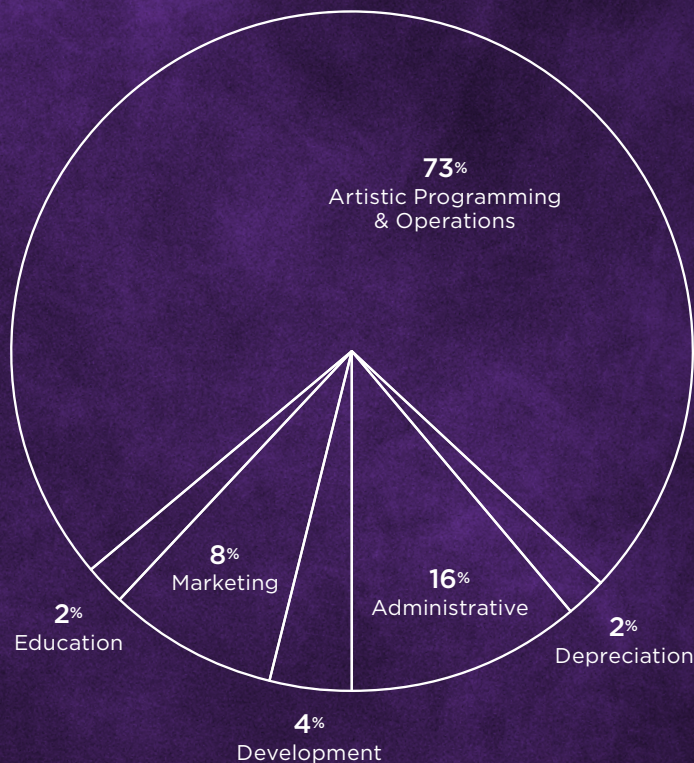
“**Stunning work.** It is a gift to have access to such high-quality theater here in Chicago.”

INVESTMENT IN OUR MISSION

REVENUE



EXPENSES



Your investment in our mission is the reason these invaluable accomplishments have been achieved. Thank you: for trusting us with your support; for your steadfast commitment to Chicago Shakespeare; and for believing with us that shared humanity through live storytelling changes lives. We could not do this meaningful work without you.

For a full donor listing, please visit www.chicagoshakes.com/donate/supporters



**DONATE
TODAY**

