

Chicago Shakespeare Theater announces  
*One Knight Only!*  
Sir Ian McKellen  
Onstage with Gandalf, Shakespeare, and YOU!  
The legendary actor shares his illustrious career and reprises  
some of his most famous performances in a one-night-only event  
benefiting the Theater's commitment to Shakespeare and young people  
January 30, 2026 in The Yard



Chicago—December 11, 2025—**Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST)** announces today a unique benefit event: *One Knight Only! Sir Ian McKellen Onstage with Gandalf, Shakespeare, and YOU!* on Friday, January 30, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. The esteemed actor takes the stage in **The Yard** to share his illustrious 60-year career and reprise some of his most iconic roles. In addition to the public event, McKellen will present a **free performance of *One Knight Only*** for more than 600 Chicago-area students and teachers.

Gandalf. Macbeth. Magneto. Lear. Hamlet and more. Widely regarded as this generation's greatest stage and screen actor, **Sir Ian McKellen** offers a solo tour de force that is a wholehearted love letter to Shakespeare and the art of live performance, creating a truly once-in-a-lifetime theatrical event.

This benefit, which McKellen is generously gifting to CST, recognizes the Theater's commitment to Shakespeare and young people. CST serves more students and teachers than any theater in Chicago, annually providing more than 20,000 students with deeply subsidized tickets to performances and free learning

programs. CST is a leader in introducing the next generation to Shakespeare's work, with 83% of student participants reporting that they are experiencing Shakespeare for the first time. CST believes that theater is for everyone and can transform lives, with programs that 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 lifelong learning programs.

With two performances of *Short Shakespeare! Hamlet* running concurrently in the Courtyard Theater alongside the *One Knight Only!* student performance, CST is on track to welcome nearly 2,000 students in a single day to experience Shakespeare live onstage.

"I am immensely grateful to Ian for giving Chicagoans such a unique opportunity to spend an evening in his company, which expresses his and our deep commitment to Shakespeare and to future audiences," shared CST Artistic Director **Edward Hall**. "He shares our belief that it is every young person's right to have access to Shakespeare and to the shared experience of theater."

This performance marks McKellen's first return to Chicago in 40 years.

Pre-sale tickets are available today to Chicago Shakespeare donors, and will be made available to Chicago Shakespeare subscribers tomorrow, December 12. **Remaining tickets will be made available to members of the CST mailing list on Saturday, December 13.** Visit [www.chicagoshakes.com](http://www.chicagoshakes.com) to sign up for the mailing list and get access to this highly anticipated event.

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## ABOUT CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER (CST)

CST is a leading international theater company and the nation's largest year-round theater dedicated to the works of Shakespeare. Under the visionary leadership of Artistic Director Edward Hall and Executive Director Kimberly Motes, the Regional Tony Award recipient is committed to creating vivid, entertaining theatrical experiences that invigorate and engage people of all ages and identities by illuminating the complexity, ambiguity, and wonder of our world. Each year, nearly a quarter of a million people experience CST's artistry through more than 12 productions. With Shakespeare at the heart of the artistic work, CST also produces compelling, contemporary stories from fresh voices of today. CST brings the world to Chicago and sends Chicago out into the world as Chicago's foremost presenter of international theater, and consistent producer of North American and world premieres. Serving more students and teachers than any theater in the city, CST annually welcomes more than 20,000 students to performances and programs like Chicago Shakespeare SLAM, alongside professional development opportunities for teachers. CST activates its campus with three venues: 700-seat The Yard; the 500-seat Jentes Family Courtyard Theater; and the 200-seat Carl and Marilyn Thoma Upstairs Studio. Free programs like Shakes in the City bring performances to parks and community spaces across Chicago's 77 neighborhoods. Shared humanity and unforgettable stories—now THIS is Chicago Shakespeare.

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