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Chicago Shakespeare Theater Celebrates 40th Anniversary on Monday, August 3

FREE Open House featuring events, activities, and more across the Theater's spaces
4:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

Chicago—July 28, 2026—[Chicago Shakespeare Theater](#) (CST) celebrates the Theater's **40th Anniversary on August 3, 2026**, marking four decades since CST's first performance on August 3, 1986. The Theater is hosting a **FREE** event open to the general public across its campus, including all three performance spaces, on **Monday, August 3, from 4:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.**

Attendees will enjoy a variety of activities and events, including backstage tours and theatrical design displays, a verse reading session with Artistic Director **Edward Hall**, a silent auction featuring books signed by **Sir Ian McKellen**, exciting photo opportunities on the Courtyard Stage, and birthday cake. The evening will cap off at 7:00 p.m. in the Yard with an exclusive first look at the unforgettable productions in our [40th Anniversary Season](#).

Activities include:

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| 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m. | Guided behind-the-scenes tours of the theater's backstage and workshop areas
Explore props and costumes from past CST productions
Photo opportunities on the Courtyard Stage
Silent auction benefiting CST, including books signed by Sir Ian McKellen |
| 5:30 p.m.-6:15 p.m. | Immersive verse-reading seminar with Artistic Director Edward Hall |
| 7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. | Season preview with Artistic Director Edward Hall, Executive Director Kimberly Motes and special guests |

CST's inaugural production of William Shakespeare's *Henry V* debuted on the rooftop of the Red Lion Pub in Lincoln Park on August 3, 1986, directed by founding Artistic Director **Barbara Gaines**. In the four decades since, CST has become a leading international theater company and the nation's largest year-round theater dedicated to the works of Shakespeare, distinguishing itself with a spirit of innovation, dynamism, and ambitious vision.

"We're thrilled to celebrate this milestone anniversary by opening our doors and giving audiences a backstage preview experience into how we make theater productions come to life," shared **Edward Hall**, Artistic Director. "From a behind-the-scenes look at the craft of our production team to a session that demystifies the language of Shakespeare, it's an opportunity to peek behind the curtain at the real magic that has made CST the incredible theater it is and will continue to be for decades to come."

"From the moment that the first words 'O for a Muse of Fire...' were spoken on the roof of the Red Lion Pub in Barbara Gaines' debut production of *Henry V*, a destiny for Chicago Shakespeare Theater was born," shared **Kimberly Motes**, Executive Director. "Now forty years later, CST has grown beyond what anyone might have imagined—and the sky is the limit as we dream ahead to the Theater's next 40 years and beyond. This open house is a perfect way to celebrate with the community who has brought us to this point and invite everyone to the party."

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. 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. www.chicagoshakes.com

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