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Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 40th Anniversary Gala raises \$1.3 million fueling CST's artistry, education, and community engagement

Celebrating Spirit of Shakespeare Award Honorees
Kevin Gudahl, Gary Gerst, William R. Jentes, Raymond F. McCaskey, and Pam Walter

Featuring remarks by Governor JB Pritzker



Chicago—June 30, 2026—[Chicago Shakespeare Theater \(CST\)](#) celebrated the company's 40th Anniversary with the **Revel in Ruby Gala** on **Friday, June 12, 2026**. The evening raised **\$1.3 million**, honoring four decades of powerful theatermaking and fueling the artistry, education, and community engagement that have come to define CST. 350 attendees from Chicago's civic and cultural community gathered for a lively cocktail hour and seated dinner with a program in The Yard, followed by desserts and dancing in the Jentes Family Courtyard Theater lobby.

Artistic Director Edward Hall and **Executive Director Kimberly Motes** shared "This is an especially meaningful Gala as we celebrate four decades of inspiring theatrical experiences and launch the next 40 years of this shining jewel in the crown of Chicago arts and culture."

"For 40 years, Chicago Shakespeare Theater has shaped artistic life in Chicago, educated and engaged young people, and contributed to the economic and creative vitality of Illinois," shared **Governor JB Pritzker**, who surprised attendees with remarks during the program. "This theater has become a global destination for ambitious storytelling, and it stands as a powerful example of what a cultural institution can accomplish when art, education, and civic engagement come together."

The 2026 Gala was co-chaired by CST Board Members **Steve Brodsky** and **Carole Segal**, and the committee included **Brayton Alley, Jillisa Brittan, Kate Blomgren, Liz Brodsky, Aaron Hoffman, Judith Loseff, Richard W. Porter, Lance Richards, Steve Solomon, Jamie Stone O'Brien, and Donna Welch**.

During the event, CST presented the **Spirit of Shakespeare Awards**, honoring those who embody Shakespeare's spirit through community engagement and artistic leadership, to five new recipients:

Artistic Honoree **Kevin Gudahl** is an award-winning Chicago actor. He holds the record for appearing in 65 CST productions, including 53 as an actor and 12 as verse coach or director. Memorable roles include Dromio in *The Comedy of Errors* (2008 & 2023), Duke Senior/Duke Frederick in *As You Like It* (2021), Winston Churchill in *The King's Speech* (2019), multiple roles in the two-part history cycle *Tug of War: Foreign Fire & Civil Strife* (2016), William Shakespeare in *Elizabeth Rex* (2011), Buckingham in *Richard III* (2009), Fredrik in *A Little Night Music* (2003), Brutus in *Julius Caesar* (2002)—as well as the title roles in *Anthony and Cleopatra* (CST's inaugural Navy Pier production in 1999), *Romeo and Juliet* (1993 in Grant Park), and *Macbeth* (1992).

This year's Civic Award recognized **Gary Gerst, William R. Jentes, Raymond F. McCaskey, and Pam Walter** for 30 years of continuous service to Chicago Shakespeare's Board of Directors. **Gary Gerst** is a founding partner and former Co-Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of LaSalle Partners (now JLL – Jones Lang LaSalle Incorporated). During his tenure as Chair from 2008–2010, the theater was honored with the Regional Theater Tony Award and made its Edinburgh Festival Fringe debut. **William R. Jentes** was a principal litigating partner at Kirkland & Ellis for close to 30 years. Jentes played an active role in bringing CST to Navy Pier as co-chairman of the Facilities Committee (along with Gerst) and was particularly proud to lend his family's name to the Jentes Family Courtyard Theater. The Award was presented to Jentes in memoriam and accepted by his

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daughter Justine Jentes. **Raymond F. McCaskey** was formerly the Chief Executive Officer of Health Care Service Corporation, better known in Chicago as Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois. As Chair from 2010–2013, McCaskey oversaw CST’s 25th Anniversary Season and Silver Jubilee Gala, featuring the inaugural Spirit of Shakespeare Awards. **Pam Walter**’s legal career began at Gardner Carton & Douglas, where she worked for decades, through two firm mergers and changes of name, until she retired from Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath in 2021. During Walter’s tenure as Chair from 2004-2006, the Theater celebrated its landmark 20th Anniversary Season and increased its institutional profile around the world with its Off-Broadway debut and Royal Shakespeare Company debut.

During the cocktail reception in the Theater’s lobbies, artists in lavish costumes from past CST productions mingled and posed for photos with guests, alongside lush floral arrangements from **Pollen**. Guests then transitioned into CST’s largest venue The Yard, decked with grand spectacle and floating chandeliers, for a seated dinner and program. The program included remarks from CST founding Artistic Director **Barbara Gaines**, and performances from actors **Bruce A. Young** (who spoke the first lines in CST’s inaugural production of *Henry V* at the Red Lion Pub in 1986), **Katy Sullivan** (Tony Award nominee who played the title role in CST’s 2024 production of *Richard III*), **Jaylon Muchison** (acclaimed Chicago actor who played the title role in this year’s *Short Shakespeare! Hamlet*), and **Kevin Gudahl** (Spirit of Shakespeare Artistic Award recipient). The evening also included a performance of “It Don’t Mean a Thing” from CST’s upcoming production of *Play On!*, with vocals by **Lorenzo Rush Jr.** and accompaniment by **Beckie Menzie**, and a performance from by **Chicago Public Schools’ Senn Arts High School** of a scene from *Hamlet*, which won this year’s Chicago Shakespeare SLAM.

Attendees enjoyed a three-course dinner from **Catering by Michaels** paired with wines generously donated by **Flickinger Wines**. To cap the night, guests pledged direct support to Chicago Shakespeare’s education initiatives during a paddle raise.

Revel in Ruby was generously supported by Ruby Sponsors: **Brodsky Family Foundation; Virginia and Gary Gerst; Ray and Judy McCaskey; Burton X. and Sheli Z. Rosenberg;** and the **Segal Family Foundation;** Emerald Sponsors: **Brayton and Pim Alley; Allstate; Bulley & Andrews; Jillisa Brittan, Jeffrey Smith, and the Brittan Family Trust; Henry Crown and Company; General Dynamics; BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois; Jenner & Block; Judy and John Keller; Kirkland & Ellis LLP; Sheila Penrose; Richard W. Porter and Lydia S. Marti; Ropes & Gray; Skadden; Pam and Doug Walter;** and **The Welch Family;** Sapphire Sponsors: **Ms. Ellen Alberding and Mr. Kelly Welsh; Dheera Anand; Cboe Global Markets; ComEd; Paul Dykstra and Spark Cremin; John Edelman and Suzanne Krohn; Aaron and Julie Hoffman; JLL; Chris and Erin O’Brien; Old National Bank; Peoples Gas; Perkins Coie; Neal and Jennifer Reenan; Harvey and Mary Struthers; Carl and Marilyn Thoma; TransUnion;** and **Ray and Donna Whitacre;** Opal Sponsors: **Carey and Brett August; Joyce Chelberg; EP Wealth Advisors; Larry Levy; Mesirow; Nazneen and Sal Razi; Stephan and Laurette Petersen; Lance Richards; Sipi; Steve and Robin Solomon; TTSG;** and **WEX.**

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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