

PRESS RELEASE

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**Children's Theatre Company Announces 2026-2027 Season
Including a Magical Classic;
Two World Premiere Musicals;
A Beloved Holiday Tradition;
A Playful Adaptation of a Childhood Favorite;
A Broadway Smash Hit;
And a New Discovery Series**

Minneapolis, Minn.— Children's Theatre Company (CTC) is thrilled to announce the 2026-2027 Season. The 2026-2027 Season will feature *Pinocchio*; two world premiere musicals, *Twelve Kinds of Ice* and *Princess Kay of the Milky Way*; the return of the beloved holiday tradition *Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*; the playful adaptation *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom: The Musical*; and the Broadway smash hit *School of Rock The Musical*, based on the popular film.

The 2026-2027 Season will also feature a new Discovery Series, including three exciting shows in limited engagements at CTC: *Havana Hop*, *Mr. Messado's School of Magic for the Young and Young at Heart*, and *Joseph Kekuku and the Voice of the Steel Guitar*.

"This season at Children's Theatre Company is about becoming—about the moment when a young person realizes they have agency in shaping who they are and how they move through the world," said CTC Artistic Director Rick Dildine. "Across beloved stories, bold new work, and music-driven theatrical events, we're inviting audiences to experience joy, grapple with big emotions, and see themselves reflected onstage. As a company, we're proud to be part of a national conversation about what theatre for young people can be, and this season reflects our ongoing commitment to developing new work while honoring the stories that have shaped generations."

The season begins with *Pinocchio*, a classic tale built before your eyes. Using only the tools of their trade—paint brushes, scaffolding, wallpaper rolls—five theatre painters inventively stage a spontaneous retelling of Pinocchio's quest to become a "real boy." Get real answers to burning questions, like: How do he and Geppetto end up inside a whale? Will the good fairy actually fly? And what's up with Pinocchio's nose anyway? Discover the truth, amidst a few lies, in this music-filled play where Pinocchio learns empathy and accountability, things that truly bring a person to life. Adapted and directed by Greg Banks, *Pinocchio* runs September 8-October 18, 2026, on the UnitedHealth Group Stage. This production is recommended for ages 5 to 10.

"I am thrilled to find myself back at the Children's Theatre, and even more thrilled to be remounting our production of *Pinocchio*, a fabulously fast-moving show full of fun," said playwright and director Greg Banks. "I am lucky enough to be getting the chance to work once more with some of our favorite actors from the Theatre, as well as a couple of fresh new faces, and, of course, the wonderful composer/musician Victor Zupanc. I hope you enjoy the show as much as I am looking forward to directing it!"

Next, the world premiere musical *Twelve Kinds of Ice* takes the stage at CTC. Glide through the ever-shifting magic of winter as Ellen recalls childhood memories of icy adventures with her loving father. In this

world premiere musical, cold temperatures and warm hearts unite to tell a tender story that takes us from spotting the first glaze of ice to building an ice rink and hosting skating shows, hockey games, and moonlit solos. Watch in awe as ice freezes before your very eyes, then melts your heart. Directed by CTC Artistic Director Rick Dildine, *Twelve Kinds of Ice* features book, music, and lyrics by Ben Steinfeld. *Twelve Kinds of Ice* runs October 13-November 22, 2026, on the Cargill Stage, and is best for ages 10 and up.

"*Twelve Kinds of Ice* trusts young audiences with emotional depth in a way that feels both rare and necessary," said director Rick Dildine. "It's a story about grief, friendship, and the quiet ways we find our way back to one another. At CTC, we believe young people deserve work that meets them with honesty and artistry, and this piece is a powerful example of how intimate, human storytelling can resonate on a national stage."

Up next, CTC's beloved holiday tradition ***Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*** returns after last year's sold-out run. In this hit musical spectacular, the grumpy green Grinch hatches a plan to steal Christmas from the cheerful Whos of Whoville—snatching trees, swiping stockings, and sneaking away with every last present. But when one small voice and a spark of holiday spirit shine through, the Grinch begins to discover the true meaning of Christmas. Filled with music, mischief, and Seussian charm, this joyful production sparkles with laughs, warmth, and a little holiday magic your family will love. Directed by CTC Acting Company member Dean Holt, *Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* runs November 3, 2026-January 3, 2027, on the UnitedHealth Group Stage. This production is best enjoyed by ages 5 and up.

"It is an absolute pleasure to, once again, spend the holidays in Whoville," said director Dean Holt. "My goal always is to create a room of joy, curiosity, and wonder that extends into the audience as well. This show belongs to all of us, young and old; it represents our collective heart that grows three sizes each holiday season as we gather in the glow of family, friends, and loved ones. I am honored to share this tradition, this tender story, and the unmatched experience of live theatre with all of you."

The new year begins with ***Chicka Chicka Boom Boom: The Musical***, a playful adaptation of every kid's favorite alphabet book! From adventurous A, B, and C to the lonely balladeer Z, little letters take on big personalities as they're puppeteered up the coconut tree to a mixtape of musical styles. And look who's coming—LMNOP, an inseparable boy band with a chart-topping bop! Sing, dance, and skit skat skoodle doot in this joyful celebration of music and literacy—perfect for younger audiences and their families, with plenty of chances to clap and join the fun. Written and directed by Nina Meehan, with music and lyrics by Austin Zumbro, *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom: The Musical* runs January 12-February 7, 2027, on the UnitedHealth Group Stage. This show is recommended for ages 4 to 7.

"I am absolutely thrilled to bring *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* to the Children's Theatre Company for the 2026-2027 Season," said playwright and director Nina Meehan. "Seattle Children's Theatre's adaptation transforms the iconic alphabet story into a dynamic theatrical adventure that is bursting with music, movement, and audience engagement. It's a celebration of language, learning, and the magic that happens when stories leap off the page and onto the stage."

Next is the world premiere musical, ***Princess Kay of the Milky Way***. Who will be crowned dairy queen in 1980? Find out in this world premiere musical celebrating Minnesota's state fair. Join the Berglund family as they navigate farm chores, Mom's frozen butterhead, and teenage aspirations ranging from 4H contests and country music stardom to adventures in outer space (wait, what?). Experience the crowds, the foods, and a plot-turning ride on the Space Tower. The Petersons, Petersens, and Peterssens will all be there, plus a mysterious visitor who drinks an unbelievable amount of milk at the fair. Oh yeah, you betcha! Directed by Addie Gorlin-Han, *Princess Kay of the Milky Way* features book, music, and lyrics by Christopher Anselmo and Jared Corak. *Princess Kay of the Milky Way* runs February 23-April 4, 2027, on the UnitedHealth Group Stage, and is best for ages 7 and up.

"I am absolutely over-the-galaxy to have the *Princess Kay* world premiere at Children's Theatre Company," said director Addie Gorlin-Han. "As a theatre kid growing up in the Twin Cities, CTC undoubtedly shaped who I am today. I'm thrilled to channel my love for all things Minnesota and bring together audiences of all ages to celebrate what unifies us and makes this great state unique."

The 2026-2027 Season concludes with ***School of Rock The Musical***. Based on the hit movie, the Broadway musical *School of Rock* is a high-voltage musical comedy about finding your voice. When struggling rocker Dewey Finn poses as a substitute teacher at a prestigious prep school, he transforms a class of straight-A students into a guitar-shredding, bass-slapping rock band with roof-raising energy. What begins as a wild plan to win a cash prize becomes an unforgettable journey of confidence, creativity, and rock 'n' roll. With an electrifying score and infectious spirit, this feel-good hit celebrates music, individuality, and staying true to yourself. Based on the Paramount movie by Mike White, *School of Rock The Musical* will be directed by CTC Artistic Director Rick Dildine, and features book by Julia Fellowes, lyrics by Glenn Slater, and new music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. *School of Rock The Musical* runs May 4-June 27, 2027, on the UnitedHealth Group Stage, and is best for ages 10 and up.

"*School of Rock* is a celebration of young people discovering their voice and realizing their power," said director Rick Dildine. "Beneath the energy and humor is a story about creativity, collaboration, and the importance of being seen for who you truly are. At CTC, we're committed to building seasons that balance new work with culturally iconic titles, and this piece is a thrilling reminder of how theatre can inspire confidence, joy, and a sense of possibility in the next generation."

CTC is pleased to introduce the Discovery Series for 2026-2027—limited engagement performances that transform CTC's Cargill Stage into a portal for culturally vibrant storytelling, where every production invites audiences to experience the world through fresh eyes.

In ***Havana Hop***, Young Yeila dreams of being a superstar, but her stage fright keeps getting in the way. When she visits her grandmother in Cuba, she discovers a whole new rhythm—adding a salsa spark to her hip-hop style. In this lively, audience-participation play, one dynamic actress brings three generations of spirited women to life. As Yeila learns about her roots, she finds the confidence to shine. Filled with music, movement, and plenty of chances to dance along, this joyful story celebrates culture, family, and the power of believing in yourself. Directed by Danielle Drake, *Havana Hop* is written, choreographed, and performed by Paige Hernandez. *Havana Hop* features original music by Nick "Nick tha 1da" Hernandez and Kris Funn, and will run January 22-31, 2027, on the Cargill Stage. *Havana Hop* is best for ages 2 to 6.

"It has always been a bucket list goal of mine to bring my original work, *Havana Hop*, to Children's Theatre Company," said writer and performer Paige Hernandez. "As the nation's largest children's theatre, CTC exceeds all expectations, particularly with a multi-generational focus that encourages audiences to stay curious and to engage in cultural authenticity. For these reasons and many more, *Havana Hop* is a perfect fit for CTC and its audiences. I cannot wait to dig in and be in community with you all. See you soon, Minneapolis!"

Up next is ***Mr. Messado's School of Magic for the Young and Young at Heart***. Prepare to be amazed as the wildly entertaining Mr. Messado dazzles audiences with astonishing tricks, clean comedy, and plenty of surprises. In this interactive spectacle, you'll shout the magic words from your seat—or even join him on stage as a magical assistant! Inspired by childhood dreams sparked by legends like David Copperfield, this hilarious and heartfelt show blends storytelling, mischief, and a few life lessons into a joyful, unforgettable experience. Created and performed by Joshua Messado, *Mr. Messado's School of Magic* will run March 12-21, 2027, on the Cargill Stage. This show is best for ages 5 to 12.

"I am beyond excited to bring the *School of Magic* to the Children's Theatre Company," said Joshua Messado. "There is nothing more rewarding than seeing the spark of wonder in a young person's eyes, and

I can't wait to share this journey of mystery and imagination with the CTC community. Get ready to discover that the real magic is within you!"

The Discovery Series concludes with ***Joseph Kekuku and the Voice of the Steel Guitar***. In the late 1800s, a young Native Hawaiian student named Joseph Kekuku made a discovery that would change music forever. Sliding a piece of steel across his guitar strings, he unlocked a brand-new sound. From Hawai'i to stages around the world, Joseph's "Hawaiian sound" inspired generations of musicians and helped shape blues, country, and rock and roll. Featuring thrilling live Hawaiian slide guitar, stunning projections, and a powerful true story, *Joseph Kekuku and the Voice of the Steel Guitar* celebrates curiosity, innovation, and the global journey of a sound that began with one young inventor's spark of discovery. Directed by Eric Johnson, *Joseph Kekuku and the Voice of the Steel Guitar* is by Moses Goods in collaboration with Kealakai Center for Pacific Strings. *Joseph Kekuku and the Voice of the Steel Guitar* will run from May 14-23, 2027, on the Cargill Stage, and is best for ages 7 and up.

"When I first heard Joseph's story," said playwright Moses Goods, "I was filled with inspiration learning about how the audacity of a little Hawaiian boy impacted the entire world and I am so excited to share his story with CTC."

Full season subscriptions and renewals for the 2026-2027 Season are now on sale and can be purchased online at <https://childrenstheatre.org/shows-and-tickets/subscribe-and-save/> or by calling the ticket office at 612.874.0400.

5-Play Full Season Subscriptions range from \$171-\$270 for adults and \$131-\$234 for children. 5-Play Preview Subscriptions (the first Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday before Friday's Opening Night) are \$150 for adults and \$100 for children. *Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* can be added on to any 5-Play subscription for \$25-\$81 (\$15-\$60 for Previews.)

Havana Hop, *Mr. Messado's School of Magic for the Young and Young at Heart*, and *Joseph Kekuku and the Voice of the Steel Guitar* can be added on to any 5-Play subscription for \$25-\$65.

Full Season Subscription prices reflect a 25% discount off of the lowest ticket price—one of the benefits of subscription at CTC.

CTC's 2026-2027 Season of artistic and educational programming is supported by The Shubert Foundation, Inc. and the Minnesota State Arts Board.

2026-2027 Season

5-Play Subscription Series

Pinocchio

By Carlo Collodi

Adapted and Directed by Greg Banks

September 8-October 18, 2026

UnitedHealth Group Stage

Best for Ages 5 to 10!

Twelve Kinds of Ice

Book, Music and Lyrics by Ben Steinfeld
Directed by Rick Dildine

October 13-November 22, 2026
Cargill Stage
Best for Ages 10 and Up!

Third Wish Productions present
The Seattle Children's Theatre's Production of
Chicka Chicka Boom Boom: The Musical
Written and Directed by Nina Meehan
Music and Lyrics by Austin Zumbro

January 12-February 7, 2027
UnitedHealth Group Stage
Best for Ages 4 to 7!

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Princess Kay of the Milky Way

Book, Music, and Lyrics by Christopher Anselmo and Jared Corak
Developed and Directed by Addie Gorlin-Han

February 23-April 4, 2027
UnitedHealth Group Stage
Best for Ages 7 and Up!

School of Rock The Musical

Based on the Paramount Movie by Mike White
Book by Julian Fellowes
Lyrics by Glenn Slater
New Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber
Directed by Rick Dildine

May 4-June 27, 2027
UnitedHealth Group Stage
Best for Ages 10 and Up!

Holiday Spectacular

Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!

Based on the Book *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* by Dr. Seuss

Book and Lyrics by Timothy Mason

Music by Mel Marvin

Music Direction by Jason Hansen and Victor Zupanc

Choreography by Karla Grotting

Directed by Dean Holt

A Children's Theatre Company Original Production

November 3, 2026-January 3, 2027

UnitedHealth Group Stage

Best for Ages 5 and Up!

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Discovery Series

Havana Hop

Written, Choreographed and Performed by Paige Hernandez

With Original Music by Nick "Nick tha 1da" Hernandez and Kris Funn

Directed by Danielle Drakes

January 22-31, 2027

Cargill Stage

Best for Ages 2 to 6!

Commissioned by Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning, VA

Developed by Playhouse Square, OH

Mr. Messado's School of Magic for the Young and Young at Heart

Created and Performed by Joshua Messado

March 12-21, 2027

Cargill Stage

Best for Ages 5 to 12!

Joseph Kekuku and the Voice of the Steel Guitar

By Moses Goods in Collaboration with Kealakai Center for Pacific Strings

Directed by Eric Johnson

May 14-23, 2027

Cargill Stage

Best for Ages 7 and Up!

Produced by Honolulu Theatre for Youth

Children's Theatre Company (CTC) is the nation's largest and most acclaimed theatre for young people and serves a multigenerational audience. It creates theatre experiences that educate, challenge, and inspire more than 200,000 people annually. CTC is the only theatre focused on young audiences to win the Special Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre and is the only theatre in Minnesota to receive three Tony nominations (for its production of *A Year With Frog and Toad*). CTC is committed to creating world-class productions at the highest level and to developing new works, more than 200 to date, dramatically changing the canon of work for young audiences.

CTC is the most significant provider of theatre education opportunities in the region. Every year, thousands of children experience theatre for the first time at CTC. Our student matinees and education programs demonstrably benefit the community, from the intergenerational conversations sparked by our world premieres, to the sequential skill-building that happens in our Theatre Arts Training, to the pre-K focus of our Early Childhood Initiative. ACT One is CTC's comprehensive platform for access, diversity, and inclusion in our audiences, programs, staff, and board that strives to ensure the theatre is a home for all people, all families, reflective of our community. childrenstheatre.org

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