

PRESS RELEASE**For Immediate Release: August 17, 2026****Media Contact:**

Jonathan White

jwhite@childrenstheatre.org

612.872.5110

**Children's Theatre Company Announces Complete Cast and Creative Team for
The First of Two World Premiere Musicals in the 2026-2027 Season**

***Twelve Kinds of Ice*
Book, Music, and Lyrics by Ben Steinfeld
Directed by Rick Dildine**

October 13-November 22, 2026

Minneapolis—August 17, 2026 — Children's Theatre Company (CTC) is pleased to announce the complete cast and creative team for the world premiere musical *Twelve Kinds of Ice*, based on the book by Ellen Bryan Obed. Featuring a book, music, and lyrics by Ben Steinfeld, *Twelve Kinds of Ice* will be directed by CTC Artistic Director Rick Dildine†. *Twelve Kinds of Ice* will run from October 13-November 22, 2026, on the Cargill Stage. Opening night is Friday, October 16, 2026, at 7pm. Justin D. Cook will serve as music director.

"*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."

"I couldn't be more thrilled that *Twelve Kinds of Ice* will have its premier at CTC," said writer Ben Steinfeld. "It is the perfect theater for this show, and I'm so grateful that my old friend, Rick Dildine, will be at the helm. I can't wait for audiences to experience the gentle journey and musical magic of this story."

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.

Twelve Kinds of Ice is a world premiere musical, the first of two in CTC's upcoming 2026-2027 season. It will be followed by *Princess Kay of the Milky Way* (February 23-April 4, 2027). Over 200 new plays and musicals have been developed at CTC, including *A Year with Frog and Toad*, which premiered at CTC before transferring to Broadway and receiving 3 Tony Award nominations. Following its world premiere engagement in Minneapolis, *Twelve Kinds of Ice* will play at Seattle Children's Theatre (January 28-February 14, 2027). New works such as *Twelve Kinds of Ice* are

crafted from the ground up through a rigorous process of readings, workshops, revisions, and - finally - a full production onstage at CTC.

CTC's world premiere production of *Twelve Kinds of Ice* features multiple artists making their CTC debut, including Ben Steinfeld (book, music, and lyrics), and Katherine Fried* (Ellen/Young Ellen). Melanie Chen Cole^ (sound designer) returns to CTC and has recently joined CTC's new Core Company.

CTC is at the forefront of the development of new works such as *Twelve Kinds of Ice*. Over 90 original CTC plays are currently available for licensing through Plays for New Audiences (PNA), the script licensing division for Children's Theatre Company.

CTC's commitment to expanding the canon of plays and musicals for young people contributes greatly to its standing as North America's flagship theatre for multigenerational audiences, and as one of the largest and most prestigious arts organizations in the United States.

CTC's production of *Twelve Kinds of Ice* is recommended for ages 7 and up. Tickets may be purchased at childrenstheatre.org/twelve or by calling the Ticket Office at 612.874.0400. Ticket prices start at \$25.

The cast of *Twelve Kinds of Ice* includes **Katherine Fried*** as Ellen/Young Ellen and **John-Michael Zuerlein*** as Dad.

The understudies for *Twelve Kinds of Ice* are **Anna Schloerb** (Ellen/Young Ellen) and **Neal Beckman** (Dad).

In addition to Mr. Steinfeld, Mr. Dildine†, and Mr. Cook, the creative team and production staff for *Twelve Kinds of Ice* includes Michael McGarty (scenic designer), Sarah Bahr^ (costume designer), Marcus Dilliard^ (lighting designer), Melanie Chen Cole^ (sound designer, member of CTC Core Company), Ellie Simonett (assistant lighting designer), Lori Lundquist* (stage manager), Meghan Gaffney* (assistant stage manager/stage manager), Katie Phillips (assistant scenic designer), Austin Schoenfelder* (assistant stage manager), and Jada B. Smith (stage management fellow).

**Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.*

†Member of SDC, the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

^Member of the United Scenic Artists, Local 829.

Ticket Information

Tickets may be purchased at childrenstheatre.org/twelve or by calling the Ticket Office at 612.874.0400. Ticket prices start at \$25.

School groups interested in attending *Twelve Kinds of Ice* can contact schools@childrenstheatre.org for more information.

Twelve Kinds of Ice is proudly sponsored by Piper Sandler Companies.

Twelve Kinds of Ice has a run time of 1 hour with no intermission.

This production is recommended for ages 7 and up. Lap passes are available for children 3 years and younger.

Twelve Kinds of Ice

Book, Music and Lyrics by Ben Steinfeld

Music Direction by Justin D. Cook

Directed by Rick Dildine†

October 13-November 22, 2026

Cargill Stage

Creative Team and Production Staff

Scenic Designer | Michael McGarty

Costume Designer | Sarah Bahr^

Lighting Designer | Marcus Dilliard^

Sound Designer (Member of CTC Core Company) | Melanie Chen Cole^

Assistant Lighting Designer | Ellie Simonett

Assistant Scenic Designer | Katie Phillips

Stage Manager | Lori Lundquist*

Assistant Stage Manager/Stage Manager | Meghan Gaffney*

Assistant Stage Manager | Austin Schoenfelder*

Stage Management Fellow | Jada B. Smith

Cast

Ellen/Young Ellen | Katherine Fried*

Dad | John-Michael Zuerlein*

Understudies

Ellen/Young Ellen | Anna Schloerb

Dad | Neal Beckman

**Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.*

†Member of SDC, the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

^Member of the United Scenic Artists, Local 829.

CAST

Ellen/Young Ellen

Katherine Fried*

Children's Theatre Company: Debut. Theatre: Ten Thousand Things Theater: *The Spitfire Grill*, *Iphigenia* at Aulis, Ten Thousand Voices; Guthrie Theater: *The Parchman Hour*, *A Midsummer*

Night's Dream, A Christmas Carol, King Lear; Theater Latté Da: *Scotland, PA*; Illinois Shakespeare Festival; Montana Shakespeare in the Parks; The Playwrights' Center; The Jungle Theater; Illusion Theater; L'Homme Dieu; Virginia Repertory Theatre Company; Kansas Repertory Theater; Fulton Opera; Opera Montana among others. Katherine is happy to call both Minnesota and the East Coast her artistic homes. In addition to performing, Katherine is a musician and composer - she recently composed music for *The Hatmaker's Wife* with Ten Thousand Things Theater and performs regionally as a singer/songwriter. TRAINING: University of Minnesota / Guthrie Theater B.F.A. Actor Training Program.

Dad

John-Michael Zuerlein*

CTC: *Frog in A Year with Frog and Toad*. Broadway Tour: *Mamma Mia!*, Off-Broadway: *Plaid Tidings*, Regional: *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Kiss Me*, *Kate*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Falsettos*, among others. Dedicated to my dad, with love to my amazing husband Jeff, and our little monster Pop-Pop. Proud AEA Member since 1999. Instagram: @therealjmz

UNDERSTUDIES

Ellen/Young Ellen

Anna M. Schloerb is overjoyed to be back at CTC! Local credits include: The Moving Company, Ten Thousand Things, Nautilus Music-Theater, Illusion Theater, Wonderlust Productions, Theater Latté Da, and Open Eye Figure Theatre. Anna has studied at Dell'arte International and the Wesley Balk Opera/Music-Theater Institute, and was a member of the Acting Cohort at Children's Theater Company for their 2025-2026 season.

Dad

Neal Beckman (he/him) played the King of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland*, and has gone on as both Old Max and Papa Who in *Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* at Children's Theatre Company. He has worked with many Twin Cities theatre companies including Guthrie Theater, Jungle Theater, Theater Mu, Six Points Theatre, Walking Shadow Theatre Company, Old Log Theatre, Park Square Theatre, Artistry, and History Theatre. He holds a B.A in Theatre Performance from Fordham University, and was a proud member of The Actor's Workout with Guthrie Theater.

CREATIVE TEAM

Book, Music, and Lyrics

Ben Steinfeld's working life blends acting, directing, writing, teaching, and music-making. He has acted on stages from Broadway to London, directed numerous Off-Broadway and regional productions, written the book for the new musical *Diamond Alice*, taught at leading universities, and is co-artistic director of the award-winning Fiasco Theater in NYC.

Director

Rick Dildine† is the artistic director of Children's Theatre Company. Previously, Rick led Alabama Shakespeare Festival (artistic director), St. Louis Shakespeare Festival (artistic director), Shakespeare & Company (president), and About Face Theatre (managing director). Rick is a graduate of Brown University, a member of the Stage Directors & Choreographers Society, and serves on the Board of Directors of Theatre for Young Audiences/USA.

Music Director

Justin D. Cook (he/him) is a Minneapolis-based composer and music director, with original work being seen at Circle in the Square Theater School, UCLA, Syracuse University, Illusion Theater, and Nautilus Music-Theater. As a music director, he has worked with Children's Theatre Company, Illusion Theater, and Nautilus Music-Theater, among others.

Scenic Designer

Michael McGarty is a scenic designer and teacher. His theatre and opera projects have taken him throughout the United States and to Europe. He has been a resident designer at Trinity Repertory Company since 2000.

Costume Designer

Sarah Bahr^(she/her)

Previous CTC credits include Associate Costume Design for *Alice in Wonderland* in 2024. She has designed costumes and scenery with various companies including Minnesota Opera, Theater Latté Da, History Theatre, Trademark Theater, Ten Thousand Things, Jungle Theater, Artistry, Theater Mu, BRKFST Dance Company, and Vail Dance Festival. Sarah holds an M.F.A. in Design and Technical Theatre from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities.

Lighting Designer

Marcus Dilliard^ has designed for theatre and opera across North America. Here at home, his work was most recently seen at Mixed Blood, Penumbra, and Theater Latté Da. Previous designs for Children's Theatre Company include *Locomotion*, *Pinocchio*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Iqbal*, *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins*, and *Bert and Ernie, Goodnight!*

Sound Designer (Member of CTC Core Company)

Melanie Chen Cole^ (she/her) is a San Diego-based freelance sound designer. Earlier this year, she was at The Old Globe, Alley Theatre, Denver Center, PlayMakers Repertory Company, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, The Huntington, and South Coast Rep. She holds a B.F.A. and M.F.A. from UC San Diego.

Assistant Lighting Designer

Ellie Simonett (She/Her) worked on *The Wizard of Oz*, *An American Tail The Musical*, *Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* ('22-'25), *Bina's Six Apples*, and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Musical* at Children's Theatre Company, and is excited to return. She has also worked with the Guthrie Theater, the Minnesota Opera, The Ordway, and other organizations around the Twin Cities.

Assistant Scenic Designer

Katie Phillips (she/her) is celebrating her CTC debut. She has designed over 120 productions as a scenic and props designer. Katie is the Director of Production at Artistry Theater & Visual Arts, and formerly the Paint/Props Master at Bread Loaf School of English in Vermont. She holds her BFA in Theatre Design/Technology.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager

Lori Lundquist*

In the Twin Cities, Lori has worked with Children's Theatre Company, Guthrie Theater, The

Ordway, Theater Latté Da, and Minnesota Opera. Her 40-year career includes productions on Broadway, National Tours, Off-Broadway, Opera, Events, and over 60 productions at Regional Theaters across the country. She received her B.A. and B.S. from Bemidji State University.

Assistant Stage Manager/Stage Manager

Meghan Gaffney* is excited to be back at CTC! Her recent work includes *Come From Away*, *The Nacirema Society* (Guthrie Theater), *Gutenberg! The Musical!*, *Yoko's Husband's Killer's Japanese Wife*, *Gloria* (Theater Latté Da), *Purple Rain* (State Theatre), *Once* (The Hive Collaborative), and *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* (Children's Theatre Company).

Assistant Stage Manager

Austin Schoenfelder* (he/him) is excited to be joining this stage management team for his first show with CTC! He has worked with a number of Twin Cities companies including Theater Latté Da, Mixed Blood, Artistry, Sod House, Park Square, and Chanhassen Dinner Theatres. Austin holds a B.F.A. from the University of Minnesota Duluth, and is a proud member of Actors' Equity.

Stage Management Fellow

Jada B. Smith is a stage manager and theatre technician from Raleigh, N.C. Recent credits include *Come From Away* (ASM, Theatre Raleigh), *Once On This Island* (ASM/A2, Theatre Raleigh), and *Mad Libs Live!* (PSM, Raleigh Little Theatre). She holds a B.A. Stage Management and B.S. Broadcast Communication from Western Carolina University.

**Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.*

†Member of SDC, the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

^Member of the United Scenic Artists, Local 829.

Children's Theatre Company (CTC) activates the creative lives of children and families—strengthening imagination, connection, and belonging to help young people thrive and communities grow stronger. Participating in year-round programming, theatre attendees and arts learners represent diverse racial, cultural, socioeconomic, neurocognitive, and geographic backgrounds. 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.

For 200,000 people annually, CTC aims to be a destination where families create lasting memories and grow together through the power of story and play. We seek to build emotional connections and position CTC as essential to family life and childhood development. Every year, thousands of children experience theatre for the first time at CTC. Our innovative education programs demonstrably benefit the community, from the resilience-based Creative Play program for early learners to the pre-professional skill-building in our Theatre Arts Training. 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

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**WHAT:*****Twelve Kinds of Ice***

Book, Music and Lyrics by Ben Steinfeld

Music Direction by Justin D. Cook

Directed by Rick Dildine

WHEN: October 13-November 22, 2026 (Opening Night is Friday, October 16, 2026 at 7pm)

WHERE: CTC's Cargill Stage (2400 Third Avenue South Minneapolis MN 55404)

AGE RECOMMENDATION: This production is recommended for ages 7 and up. Lap passes are available for children 3 years and younger.

RUNNING TIME: 1 hour with no intermission.

TICKETS: Starting at \$25 and may be purchased at childrenstheatre.org/twelve or by calling the Ticket Office at 612.874.0400. Ticket prices start at \$25.

#