



CHANCE THEATER
Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center
5522 E La Palma Ave
Anaheim, CA 92807
www.ChanceTheater.com/press-room

January 5, 2026

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FOR PHOTOS OF THE CAST: www.ChanceTheater.com/press-room

WINNER OF EIGHT TONY AWARDS INCLUDING BEST MUSICAL

Once

ANAHEIM, CA — Chance Theater, Anaheim's official resident theater company, is thrilled to announce the first show of Chance's 2026 Season, *Once*, featuring book by **Enda Walsh**, music and lyrics by **Glen Hansard & Markéta Irglová**, based on the movie written & directed by **John Carney**, directed and choreographed by **James Michael McHale** (*Scrooge! The Musical*, Chance Resident Artist & Literary Manager), with music direction by **Lex Leigh** (*Scrooge! The Musical*, Chance Resident Artist).

This intimate musical, based on the Academy Award-winning film, tells the story of a Dublin street musician and a Czech immigrant whose chance encounter sparks a week-long collaboration full of music, dreams, and unexpected connection. He's trying to move on from heartbreak, she's a bit of a mystery, and both are a bit stuck as they deal with their own pain and loss. But together, they create songs that capture the joy, struggle, and beauty of life, music that has the power to speak to their souls and offer some healing. This unlikely friendship blossoms into something powerful, complicated, and brings the possibility of something more.

An ensemble of actors play the hilarious and eclectic characters around them – parents, immigrants, a struggling shopowner, and more – *Once* shows how music can create unlikely community out of disparate people. Scored with evocative, emotionally charged music and performed live by the ensemble of actors themselves, *Once* is a raw, heartfelt, and joyous musical journey. It's a must-see for anyone who has ever been swept away by stories of hope,

connection, the transformative magic of music, and love. Don't miss the chance to experience this celebrated, Tony Award-winning musical in a whole new way!

Director McHale notes, "This is a show that is very dear to me. Having performed in four productions, I'm honored to now direct it. At its core, it's a story about two people who are stuck—and who help each other find inspiration, hope, and the courage to take the next step.."

He adds, "It's also a story about community—how people who seem extremely different form connection through music. The grounded, gorgeous score, performed live by an entire cast with incredible musicianship, humor, and heart, is something truly special to behold. I hope this show reminds audiences of people who came into their lives, even briefly, and left a lasting mark."

Joining McHale and Leigh on the design team for *Once* is scenic designer **Bradley Kaye** (*Spring Awakening*), costume designer **Sara Egger**, lighting designer **Jacqueline Malenke** (*Spring Awakening*), sound designer and engineer **James Markoski** (*Scrooge! The Musical*), projection designer **Nick Santiago** (*Scrooge! The Musical*), stage manager **Cynthia C. Espinoza** (*What the Constitution Means to Me*, Chance Resident Artist), dramaturg **Sophie Hall Cripe** (*Spring Awakening*), casting director **Lindsay Brooks** (*Spring Awakening*), and associate scenic designer **Kylie Baumbusch** (*Hedwig and the Angry Inch*).

The multitalented cast of *Once* will feature a mix of newcomers and returning actors: **Morgan Hollingsworth** (*Call Your Mother*) plays Guy, **Emma Laird** (*Gloria*) plays Girl, **Will Huse** (Chance debut) plays Billy, **Leota Rhodes** (Chance debut) plays Reza and Ex-Gf, **Jennifer Richardson** (*Tiny Beautiful Things*) plays Baruska, **Mike Bradecich** (Chance debut) plays Bank Manager, **Lex Leigh** (*Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, Chance Resident Artist) plays Da, **Austin Ledger** (Chance debut) plays Svec, **Jonah Meyer** (Chance debut) plays Andrej, and **Joseph Dailey** (Chance debut) plays Eamon and Emcee.

Tickets for *Once* are now on sale, and can be purchased online at <https://chancetheater.com/once/> or by calling the box office at (888) 455-4212. Early booking is recommended due to already high demand.

Our 2026 Season Producers are **Bette & Wylie Aitken**, with Associate Season Producers the **Family of Mary Kay Fyda-Mar**. The Executive Producers of this production are **Gus & Mary Chabre**, **Myrna Hamid**, **Louise & Steven Koch**, and **Samuel & Tammy Tang**. The Corporate

Sponsor is **The Prepared Performer**. The Associate Producer is **Laurie Smits Staude**. The Supporting Producer is **Chris & Steve Sumpter**.

For press inquiries, interviews, press comps, or photos, please contact Producing Associate Shinshin Tsai at (949) 346-2374 or Shinshin@chancetheater.com.

ABOUT CHANCE THEATER

Proud to be one of the leading ensemble-driven theatre companies in Southern California, Chance Theater has received the National Theatre Company grant from American Theatre Wing for “nurturing a community of artists in ways that strengthen and demonstrate the quality, diversity, and dynamism of American theatre.” The Chance won 31 OCTG Theatre Awards, including two for Outstanding Production of a Musical (“Next to Normal” and “Fun Home”) and one for Outstanding Production of a Play (“Cry It Out”). Previously, Chance Theater won eight Ovation Awards, including four for Best Production of a Musical (Intimate Theatre), and four LADCC Awards, including the Polly Warfield Award for Outstanding Season. The Anaheim City Council named Chance Theater “the Official Resident Theater Company of Anaheim” in 2014, and Arts Orange County has twice named the Chance as “Outstanding Arts Organization.” Known for using bold and personal storytelling to promote dialogue and connection within the Southern California theatrical landscape, the Chance is committed to contributing to a more compassionate, connected, and creative community. As a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group, The Theatrical Producers League of Los Angeles, and OC Theatre Guild, Chance Theater continues to bring national attention to the Southern California and Orange County theater scenes.

CALENDAR LISTING

WHAT: *Once*

This intimate musical, based on the Academy Award-winning film, tells the story of a Dublin street musician and a Czech immigrant whose chance encounter sparks a week-long collaboration full of music, dreams, and unexpected connection. He’s trying to move on from heartbreak, she’s a bit of a mystery, and both are a bit stuck as they deal with their own pain and loss. But together, they create songs that capture the joy, struggle, and beauty of life, music that has the power to speak to their souls and offer some healing. This unlikely friendship

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WHEN:

Previews: January 23 - 30, 2026; Fridays at 8PM, Saturday at 8PM, and Sunday at 7PM

Opening Night: Saturday January 31, 2026 at 8PM

Remaining Performances: February 1 - March 1, 2026

Select Thursdays at 7:30PM, Fridays at 8PM, Saturdays at 3PM & 8PM, and Sundays at 3PM

FULL PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE:

- Fri, Jan 23 @ 8:00 pm - PREVIEW
- Sat, Jan 24 @ 8:00 pm - PREVIEW
- Sun, Jan 25 @ 7:00 pm - PREVIEW
- Fri, Jan 30 @ 8:00 pm - PREVIEW
- Sat, Jan 31 @ 8:00 pm - OPENING
- Sun, Feb 1 @ 3:00 pm
- Thu, Feb 5 @ 7:30 pm
- Sun, Feb 8 @ 3:00 pm
- Thu, Feb 12 @ 7:30 pm
- Fri, Feb 13 @ 8:00 pm
- Sat, Feb 14 @ 3:00 pm
- Sat, Feb 14 @ 8:00 pm
- Sun, Feb 15 @ 3:00 pm
- Thu, Feb 19 @ 7:30 pm
- Fri, Feb 20 @ 8:00 pm
- Sat, Feb 21 @ 3:00 pm
- Sat, Feb 21 @ 8:00 pm
- Sun, Feb 22 @ 3:00 pm
- Thu, Feb 26 @ 7:30 pm - (Public Sale for closing weekend begins Jan 23)
- Fri, Feb 27 @ 8:00 pm
- Sat, Feb 28 @ 3:00 pm
- Sat, Feb 28 @ 8:00 pm
- Sun, Mar 1 @ 3:00 pm - CLOSING

RUNNING TIME: 2 hours, 15 minutes with intermission

TICKETS: \$12-\$58, with discounts for educators, veterans, seniors, and students.

Pay-What-You-Can preview performances and SaverTix are also available to ensure that live theater is accessible to everyone.

WHERE: Chance Theater @ Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center on the Cripe Stage
5522 E. La Palma Ave., Anaheim, CA 92807

DRIVING DIRECTIONS: Chance Theater @ Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center is located at 5522 E. La Palma Avenue in Anaheim Hills. Going west on La Palma from Imperial Highway, we are on the left in the front of the industrial park just past the In & Out. There is plenty of free convenient parking in front of the theater.

MORE INFO: www.ChanceTheater.com or call (888) 455-4212

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