



MEDIA CONTACT:

Jean Steck
314-489-6211
Email: Jean@varietystl.org

**TENTH ANNIVERSARY PRODUCTION BY VARIETY THEATRE TO FEATURE
“DISNEY’S THE LITTLE MERMAID” AT TOUHILL IN OCTOBER**

St. Louis (Aug 1) – Prepare to be inspired when you join us under the sea for Variety Theatre’s 2018 production of *Disney’s The Little Mermaid*. Sing, dance and swim along as we follow Ariel’s journey to walk on land and find true love. Prepare to be inspired by our Variety kids who will perform with Ariel.

Now in its 10th year, Variety Theatre is the country’s only production of its kind. Featuring an inclusive children’s ensemble performing alongside a professional adult cast, this Broadway classic is a must-see event. In 2018, Variety Theatre was awarded the "Special Award for a Body of Work" by the St. Louis Theater Circle, an honor that is not an annual award, but is only presented when it is felt it is truly deserved. Variety Theatre attracts St. Louis’ best professional actors, designers and directors.

Yet again under the direction of Tony Award nominee, Lara Teeter, Variety’s production of *Disney’s The Little Mermaid* will feature Variety children with disabilities in the children’s ensemble, along with St Louis’ most talented children, as well as Adult Actors’ Equity Association performers.

“But one theater here defies a particularly persistent stereotype: the assumption that only able-bodied people can perform in musical theater. In recognition of their eye-opening, audience delighting productions, we are very happy to present our special award for a body of work to Variety Theatre”. Judith Newmark, Post-Dispatch

Bringing together children of all abilities with professional adults in one of the city's top performance venues to create an unforgettable experience for theatergoers cast and crew alike. Variety Theater (VT) is an inclusive theater program for children with and without disabilities, age 10 through 21, to learn on-stage and backstage theater craft from experienced performing arts professionals. Directors, designers and actors teach children all aspects of theater arts while preparing for a classic musical theater performance (the 2017 production was *Wizard of Oz*). The objective of VT is to help children with disabilities achieve their full potential, opening up to them what is possible with the nurturing encouragement of others who share their passion for creative expression and the arts.

The 2018 cast of *Disney's The Little Mermaid* will include 16 children with a disability, including cerebral palsy, spina bifida, Down's syndrome, autism, brittle bone disease, muscular dystrophy, hearing impairment, and blindness. They will all be singing and dancing their way into your heart. Behind the scenes, 10 children with disabilities including cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, hearing loss and neuro-muscular disorder, will be working as interns with the designers and directors.

About Variety the Children's Charity of St. Louis

Variety empowers children with physical and developmental disabilities, also referred to as children with special needs, and improves their quality of life. Our programs highlight ability rather than disability. This holistic approach gives access to critical medical equipment and therapies, along with innovative Camp and Performing Arts programs, which provide opportunities for recreation, socialization, and artistic expression. Children gain or maintain independence, boost socialization among their friends and family, demonstrate belief in themselves, and increase skills they need to engage their world as fully as possible. www.varietystl.org

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