

Children's Theatre Company

# BEHIND THE CURTAIN BEYOND THE STAGE

WINTER | 2020







# The Power of Imagination

**A trauma-sensitive program helps children to play creatively, and imagine possibilities.**

At CTC, we seek to inspire young people and their communities, but we often find that inspiration for our work comes from young people themselves! That's exactly what happened when we brought our original preschool production *The Biggest Little House In The Forest* to the Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery. The play tells the story of a butterfly who opens her home to other forest creatures without a place to stay. During a scene when an animal was searching for a home, staff watched one boy stand and exclaim, "You can come to the Nursery!" This moment displayed how theatre can help trauma-sensitive children build empathy, and ultimately became the inspiration for our Creative Play program.

CTC's Creative Play curriculum uses the power of stories and trauma-sensitive best practices to meet the needs of children ages 2 - 5 who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs can include experiences like abuse, divorce of parents, or incarceration of a family member, and can have powerful consequences on a person's lifelong health, well-being, and childhood development.

In some ways, Creative Play sessions are like CTC's Theatre Arts Training classes, but there are key differences. The Creative Play curriculum utilizes trauma-sensitive best practices, and focuses primarily on encouraging students to exercise their imagination. Creative Play teaching artists are uniquely trained to work with early learners experiencing trauma or toxic stress. Strategies like opportunity for choice and mind-body practices, paired with storytelling and theatre movement activities, allow children to take control within a story, to understand and express their own feelings, and to use movements and breathing tactics to regain calm and focus.

For many children experiencing trauma, the freedom to imagine and have control is absent. Creative Play seeks to help them engage with their imagination, allowing them to picture circumstances beyond their current situation. Imagination helps children set goals for the future, envision alternative outcomes, and build empathy.

Currently, CTC partners with five organizations to bring Creative Play directly to their sites: People Serving People, Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery, Way to Grow, Wilder Center of Child Development, and Center for Excellence.

CTC donors help expand the reach of this unique program that uses theatre arts and storytelling practices to build imagination, confidence, and empathy. Thank you for your generosity!



# A Local Story With National Reach

***Spamtown, USA* explores a Minnesota story—in a way only CTC can!**

There's no denying that the iconic canned lunch meat SPAM® has a storied Minnesota history. Did you know that SPAM® was invented by Hormel Foods in the rural community of Austin, Minnesota? Austin had been known as the birthplace of SPAM® since the product was introduced in 1937, but in 1985, the town became known for a gripping labor dispute that captured the attention of a nation in recession.

This season, our production of *Spamtown, USA* will tell one chapter of this story in a way that only Children's Theatre Company can: through the eyes of young people.

In August 1985, union workers at Hormel voted—by an overwhelming 1,261 to 96 margin—to reject the company's latest contract offer and go on strike after cuts were made to hourly wages and benefits. What resulted was a bitter, drawn-out labor dispute that drastically impacted the community, from workers who lost jobs, to families and friendships that were torn apart by picket lines.

This is the backdrop for *Spamtown, USA*, a Minnesota history with national reach, told from the perspective of children and families. Veteran playwright Philip Dawkins paints a moving portrait of families divided, where confrontation is the new normal, and where children's dreams are interrupted by arguments and ethical questions. This is the story of having the strength to stand up for what you believe in, the challenge that comes in disagreeing with those you love, and the humor that helps keep friendships alive.

*Spamtown, USA* is what CTC does best—honoring and centering the lived experiences of young people—and we couldn't do it without your support. Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, CTC develops and produces more new plays designed for multigenerational audiences than any other theatre in the United States. What's more, we premiere 90% of the work we commission, and the new works on our stages address complex social issues, speak to the rich diversity of our nation, and seek to challenge and delight our audiences.

Get your tickets here: [childrenstheatre.org/spamtown](https://childrenstheatre.org/spamtown)





# Theatre Beyond the Stage

**Children's Theatre Company's Institute students reflect on how theatre programs prepare them for life outside of CTC.**

Children's Theatre Company's Institute is an audition-based, four-year program for highly talented and motivated high school actors. Theatre helps build character for life's different stages, and Institute students show that the benefits are evident outside the classroom. During Institute they enjoy training from local professional artists, including CTC Acting Company members Autumn Ness and Reed Sigmund, in a demanding and supportive environment. As the first class of Institute students prepares to graduate this spring, they agree that the confidence and professionalism they learned at CTC has equipped them for what's to come.

Audrey and Maddie (Class of 2020) plan to pursue careers in theatre, and they know the hard and soft skills they gained in Institute will help them achieve their goals. Both Audrey and Maddie say they draw upon the confidence they gained through their Institute training when they participate in the rigorous audition processes of higher education programs and professional productions.

Celia (Class of 2020) has learned that professionalism doesn't mean losing your authentic self. At her first job in the food industry, she noticed a key difference between herself and her colleagues that she credits to Institute. "People who've never done theatre don't realize that it's okay to still be you and still be professional, that it's okay to show emotion," she says, "and that's a big part of theatre."

Even more, Celia says the confidence she developed in Institute has helped her express her ideas and opinions. For her senior project in Fall 2019, Celia visited high schools around Minneapolis to present on the importance of voting and help fellow 18+ students register to vote. "[Theatre] has helped me speak my mind and to say confidently how I feel about something," says Celia. She plans to minor in Political Science when she begins college next year.

With your support, the impact of this important theatre arts program extends beyond the walls of the classroom. Students are learning to speak their minds and express their authentic selves with confidence and professionalism—characteristics that people of all ages deserve to build. Because of you, it can start right here at CTC.



# Upcoming Donor Events

Don't miss out on the fun! Mark your calendars today!

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## **Annie Technical Rehearsal**

**For donors \$100+**

Saturday, April 18, 2020 | 3:30 – 5pm

**Renew by March 31, 2020**

## **Annie Opening Night Dinner**

**For donors \$1,000+**

Friday, April 24, 2020 | 5:30 – 7pm

**Renew by March 15, 2020**

## **Acting Company Lunch**

**For donors \$500+**

Thursday, June 4, 2020 | 12:30 – 2pm

**Renew by April 19, 2020**

## **Early Access! 2020 – 2021 Single Tickets**

**For donors \$100+**

June 2020 — Stay tuned for more details!

**Renew by May 15, 2020**

Learn more at  
**[childrenstheatre.org/donors](https://childrenstheatre.org/donors)**



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