

Children's Theatre Company

BEHIND THE CURTAIN BEYOND THE STAGE

FALL | 2021



Photo of Autumn Ness and Reed Sigmund in *Annie* by Dan Norman

Jumping into the Deep End

Meet CTC's new education leadership, fresh from a triumphant summer camp season

Starting a new job can be difficult. Add a pandemic and responsibility for the safety of hundreds of young children, and most people would have run in the opposite direction. But CTC's new education department leaders Ann Joseph Douglas and Amanda Espinoza were up to the task.



Ann Joseph Douglas

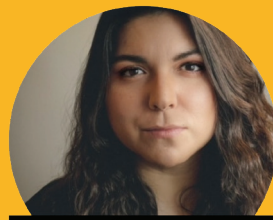
Ann Joseph Douglas, CTC's new Director of Education, came to Minneapolis from Chicago, where for over twenty years, she acted and taught. Ann is a founding member of Congo Square Theatre Company, the premiere African American theatre in the country, and she ran the Cherubs program at Northwestern University, where 140 high school juniors

live on campus for five weeks and experience an immersive theatre program.

When Ann's husband was offered the role of Director of the BFA Acting Program at the University of Minnesota, the family packed their bags and made the move to the Twin Cities in May 2020. Once they were settled and her daughters were set up with virtual learning, Ann reflected on her career and what would make her happy. She wanted to be in service to young people because she had seen firsthand how art could transform a young person's life. This is what led her to join CTC in April 2021.

Planning for summer camp was well underway when Ann arrived at CTC. The team had worked tirelessly to create a meticulous COVID-19 safety plan for the students, teachers, and families, and Ann was ready to put it into action. Between creating student pods, masking requirements, staggered starts, separate entrances, and a stringent testing regimen, CTC was eager to invite students back into the building after a long pandemic pause.

The launch of summer camps went off without a hitch, and in July 2021, the education department welcomed Amanda Espinoza as Theatre Arts Training (TAT) Manager. Amanda grew up as an only child



Amanda Espinoza



Photo of CTC summer camp by Kaitlin Randolph

on a farm in Lubbock, Texas. As soon as she was old enough, she joined theatre programs to make friends. These early experiences led her to a career in theatre, after earning her Undergraduate and Masters degrees in performance and pedagogy at Texas Tech University of Theatre and Dance. Immediately following graduate school, Amanda moved to Red Bank, New Jersey to be the Education and Community Engagement Manager at the Two River Theater, working with all ages, from little kids to lifelong learners. But she found she really enjoyed working with younger audiences, which led her to Children's Theatre Company, smack dab in the middle of the organized chaos that is CTC's summer camp.

Our summer camp students were thrilled to be meeting in person, and very willing to mask, distance, and do whatever necessary to be able to stay, play, and learn. In total, CTC welcomed more than 800 students and reported zero cases of Covid-19, a statistic CTC is immensely proud of.

With summer camp behind them, Ann and Amanda are excited for the future of education at CTC. Newly structured TAT classes that offer greater flexibility, the Triple Threat program focusing on singing, dancing, and acting, diversifying the canon of work by integrating more Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) artists, creating more pre-professional training opportunities, and launching an immersive enrichment program with Bethune Community School — these are just a few of the exciting initiatives ahead!

Expanding Inclusive Theatre

Generous grant will help CTC and four other theatres commission and develop new plays by BIPOC artists

Five nationally respected theatres, including Children's Theatre Company, announced this summer that their landmark partnership has received a generous \$1.5 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to create Generation Now. This partnership with Penumbra (Saint Paul, MN), Ma-Yi Theater Company (New York City, NY), Latino Theater Company (Los Angeles, CA), Native Voices at the Autry (Los Angeles, CA), and Children's Theatre Company (Minneapolis, MN), will commission and develop 16 new plays by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American Pacific Islander writers for multigenerational audiences. The output of Generation Now promises to radically expand the inclusiveness of each theatre, expand the canon of work produced for multigenerational audiences, and create a model of transformative partnership for the theatre field.

Generation Now is expected to bring a richer cultural context to the work and to collectively amplify each communities' voices and is guided by a deep respect and advocacy for the intelligence and agency of younger audiences. The consortium also strongly believes that if we are to have an extraordinary theatre culture in this country, we must start young, and it must be inter-generational, inclusive, inspiring, transformative, and lifelong.

"Children's Theatre Company is grounded in the deep respect we have for our audiences, our partner theatres, and the desire to create powerful new work," states CTC Artistic Director Peter C. Brosius. "We look forward to continuing to learn from each other with Generation Now. We know that our distinctive work and practices will profoundly inform and inspire us as we move these plays from conception, through commission and development, and into production for our audiences."

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is the nation's largest supporter of the arts and humanities. Through their grants, they seek to build just communities enriched by meaning and empowered by critical thinking, where ideas and imagination can thrive.

Rabinowitz, Chloe. "Five-Theatre Partnership Receives \$1.5 Million Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Grant to Create Generation Now." *BroadwayWorld.com*, 28 June 2021, www.broadwayworld.com/off-broadway/article/Five-Theatre-Partnership-Receives-15-Million-Andrew-W-Mellon-Foundation-Grant-To-Create-GENERATION-NOW-20210628.



Photo of Ayssette Muñoz and Luca La Hoz Calassara / *I Come From Arizona* by Dan Norman

Round of A-Paws!

Meet the fetching canine stars of *Annie*

This October, handler Tyler Garstka of Bill Berloni's Theatrical Animals, will pack up the car and chauffeur canine celebrities, Bailey and Sunny, from their 90-acre farm in Higganum, Connecticut to Children's Theatre Company. Bailey and Sunny are both set to play Sandy for CTC's musical production of *Annie* this fall. We can't wait to see these lovable, scruffy mutts accompany Annie on all of her shenanigans!

Upon arrival, Bailey and Sunny will settle in at CTC and get straight to business: bonding with their Annies, played by Audrey Mojica and Lola Mae Ronning. Garstka will watch closely as the four interact, and take note of who works best together. From there, each Annie will be coupled with her Sandy, and the pairs will work together to form a trusting relationship.

Each day, time is dedicated to rehearsing with Bailey and Sunny, so that by opening night, both dogs are fully prepared to take over the stage and bow-wow the crowd! Sure, people may be trained to think that dogs are inherently naughty (think *Beethoven*), but trainer Bill Berloni, who trained the dog that played Sandy in the original production of *Annie*, insists that the animals he trains are far more well-behaved than their human counterparts. "They are much more consistent than actors," says Bill. "They don't have marital problems, they don't come in hungover, they're not worrying about the next job. They just come in every night looking for the cookie."¹



Meet Bailey!

From: Puppy Love Rescue in Louisiana

Background: Bailey, who will be "Sandy" in this production of *Annie*, was rescued by Bill Berloni from Puppy Love Rescue in Louisiana. He is a Poodle mixed with another large breed. Bailey has starred as "Porthos" in the theatrical rendition of *Finding Neverland*, "Nana" on the national tour of *Peter Pan*, and was the "Winn Dixie" understudy in *Because of Winn Dixie*. This marks his debut as "Sandy".

Bailey's biography provided by William Berloni Theatrical Animals

But not just any cookie. Everyone in the cast and crew has to be in on the training. Against their heart's desires, anyone who interacts with or even sees the dogs, must not treat them as household pets, but as professional colleagues. This means: no petting, no baby talk, no table scraps or special treats. It may sound "ruff," but the pups require these restrictions in order to perform at their best!

We hope you will join us this fall to watch these celebrity pups take the stage in *Annie*, from November 7, 2021 to January 9, 2022 on the UnitedHealth Group Stage!



Photo of Megan Fischer in *Annie* by Dan Norman

BE A PART OF CTC'S TRIUMPHANT RETURN!

Donors like you supported CTC while COVID-19 prevented us from gathering. Because of your generosity, we are able to welcome you back to a season that shares the joy, laughter, and togetherness of live theatre.

Today, your support is more important than ever, as we continue to navigate uncertainty and bring you a season that fully celebrates the vibrancy and energy of live performances.

DONATE TODAY!
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