

Children's Theatre Company

BEHIND THE CURTAIN BEYOND THE STAGE

SPRING | 2023



From Page to Stage

The journey of *An American Tail the Musical*

At CTC, we are committed to expanding the theatre canon for young audiences by developing new works and bringing new stories to stage. Over the course of our history, CTC has created over 200 new plays and musicals; these projects are often years in the making, and require thoughtful collaboration and a long-term vision for how each new work could come to life.

This spring, CTC is proudly hosting the world premiere of *An American Tail the Musical*, the first ever stage adaptation of this classic animated film and just one example of a new work's journey at CTC. Read along with us and discover what it takes to go from page to stage!



**SPRING
2016**

CTC Artistic Director **Peter Brosius** meets with **Universal Studios** to discuss potential projects. The idea for *An American Tail the Musical* is born.

**SUMMER/
FALL 2017**

CTC secures preliminary rights for the stage adaptation. A creative team starts to come together.

**WINTER
2018**

Playwright **Itamar Moses** (Tony Award®-winner for *The Band's Visit*) and composers **Michael Mahler** and **Alan Schmuckler** (*Diary of a Wimpy Kid the Musical*) begin work on the first draft.

**SUMMER
2019**

The team gathers in New York City for a first reading and to workshop ideas.

Matthew Woody

**SPRING
2020**

The COVID-19 pandemic derails life as we know it. As with many other projects, plans for *An American Tail the Musical* are adjusted.

**SPRING/
SUMMER
2022**

Auditions are held at CTC for *An American Tail the Musical*. A fully local cast is assembled.

**SUMMER
2022**

A workshop is held at CTC. The creative team tests out new songs and dialogue and the cast performs a complete table read. The script is reworked based on what they learn.

**SPRING
2022**

Scenic, costume, lighting, and sound designers join the creative team. Each addition brings new ideas and depth to the production.

**SUMMER
2021**

Drafts continue to be worked and reworked. New songs are added and expanded.

**WINTER
2020**

Universal Studios gives permission for the full adaptation to move ahead. **Taibi Magar** joins as director.

**FALL
2022**

Talvin Wilks joins the team as a dramaturg, whose job is to contextualize the settings of theatrical work. The story expands to reflect the wide variety of communities that made up turn-of-the-century New York City.

**WINTER
2023**

The final workshop takes place at CTC. Choreographer Katie Spelman experiments with movement and staging while the cast is on-site together. The team continues to work and rework the script and music.

**SPRING
2023**

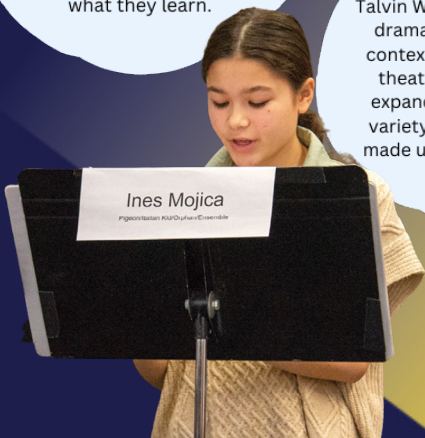
Rehearsals officially begin. The creative team spends six weeks in residency at CTC working with the cast and crew to bring the musical to life.

**APRIL 29,
2023**

An American Tail the Musical takes to the stage for its world premiere.



Learn more about the production and get your tickets today by visiting childrenstheatre.org/americanail.



Meeting Students Where They Are

How accessibility resources for student matinees are expanding the reach of CTC productions

Every year, tens of thousands of students attend weekday matinee performances at Children's Theatre Company. For many students, it is their first time attending a play—their first taste of the magic that live theatre creates.

But for one group of students from a Twin Cities area school*, one matinee performance held on a sunny October day was particularly special. This school's program focuses on serving students with varying abilities at a range of developmental stages; as a multi-age, high-needs program, attending a theatre performance that would meet the needs of their students had always felt like a stretch. But thanks to collaboration between school educators and CTC staff, a group of 11 K-8 students was able to take their first field trip to CTC to see *Carmela Full of Wishes*.

As a part of the student matinee experience, CTC Resident Teaching Artist Johanna Gorman-Baer joined the students in their classroom on the day before the field trip. They started by talking about what to expect when they came to the theatre: where their bus would drop them off, what the theatre space looks like, and that there would be other students also watching the show. They discussed what it means when audiences applaud and practiced clapping and taking bows. And then they explored Carmela's story—reading the book together, sharing their thoughts and reactions, and preparing to see the story come alive on stage.

When the students arrived at CTC the next day, Gorman-Baer was ready to greet them. There were still questions about how the students would navigate the new experience—and, as Gorman-Baer notes, some anxiety about how unexpected behavior might be received by staff and other attendees.

"From my first inquiry about tickets to our final thank you notes, CTC was incredible at meeting and accommodating the needs of our students."

- Colleen, Twin Cities School Teacher



To offer different sensory entrances to the theatre experience, students practiced tactile activities in the classroom before attending the show, including shaking plastic bangles like Carmela.

"Carmela Full of Wishes was amazing, and our students were completely captivated by it. I saw our students watching, laughing and interacting with the performance."

- Colleen, Twin Cities School Teacher



Students made dandelions with CTC staff and were encouraged to bring their craft with them as a transition object, which can be a helpful resource when entering a new space.

"This was the first time these students had done something like this, so we didn't know what to expect," she explains. "We knew these students weren't going to be totally silent, totally still, or totally predictable. **All we could do was make sure that they had what they needed to do their best, and to help them get as much out of the experience as they could.**

But when the lights dropped and the show began, we were floored. Every child in that group sat in their seats, totally engaged by the story, for the entire show. We expected that at least one student would need to leave the space for one reason or another, but every single child was entranced. **It was one of the most powerful experiences of my career."**

Gorman-Baer hopes that this field trip will serve as a foundation for future visits to CTC, so that these students can benefit from the same experiences as their peers—deepening literacy skills, sharpening critical thinking, and expanding social-emotional development.

"This is what it means to have a theatre that is truly accessible. It's more than wheelchair ramps and mobility aids, it's more than adapted light and sound cues—**it's about creating a culture that says, 'you are welcome exactly as you are.'**"

Thanks to your support, CTC helps to ensure that the transformative power of live theatre is accessible to all. Our Concierge and Accessibility Services Desk offers fidgets, ear plugs, noise cancelling headphones, assisted listening devices, and other resources at every performance; designated ASL-interpreted, audio-described, and sensory-friendly performances are available for every CTC production. Visit childrenstheatre.org/sensory to learn more.

**School name redacted to protect student and educator privacy.*

Photos of *Carmela Full of Wishes* props by Kaitlin Randolph

“Are You the One Who Makes the Music Magic?”

A Conversation with Victor Zupanc, CTC’s Resident Music Director

“Do you have a racecar?” “Do you know everyone in the audience?” “Are you the one who makes the music magic?”

These are just a few of the questions posed to Victor Zupanc, CTC’s Resident Music Director, during our recent production of *Dr. Seuss’s How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* For those of you who joined us for the show, you may remember him—a smiling face leaning over the orchestra pit, cheerfully chatting with CTC’s youngest patrons during intermission. We sat down with him recently to talk all things music at CTC, and to confirm, once and for all, whether or not he has a racecar.

Tell us about your CTC journey.

I came to CTC in 1989. I started working in theatre while I was studying music composition at UC San Diego, and I just fell in love with it. It’s an all-encompassing art form—every piece of the experience is considered and chosen. I traveled the country freelancing after graduation, and when I decided that it was time to settle in one place, this listing at CTC happened to cross my desk. I had a few phone calls, accepted the job, and I have been here ever since.

How would you explain your job to someone who has no idea what you do?

My job is to oversee everything that has to do with music and sound. The position of a resident music director at a theatre is rare, but we have it at CTC because every one of our shows has such a prominent music and sound element. I compose music for shows, do sound design, conduct the orchestra, support our musicians and other creative staff—everything related to what you hear after the lights drop.

What does a typical day look like for you?

Every day in this job is different because every show is different. It’s one of the reasons I like working in the theatre—it’s fun to make room for the unexpected.



Photo of Victor Zupanc by Dan Norman



Photo of Victor Zupanc by Alton Accola

Every time I start working on a show, I’m always looking for something that I have never done before, something new that I can learn. I play over 20 instruments, and a fair number of them are ones that I learned because we needed that particular sound to make a moment perfect.

We just announced our 2023–2024 Season. What shows are you most excited about?

I love our production of *Alice in Wonderland*. I’m the only musician for the whole show, and I get to run around and play a lot of different instruments. My favorite productions are the ones where I get to really be in the thick of it all, sharing the stage with actors and helping to create their world. And of course, *Dr. Seuss’s How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* is always fun—that time of year is so magical, it’s a joy every time we stage it.

You have worked on hundreds of productions, here at CTC and across the country. What does it mean for you to create and craft in a space that serves young people?

Making and sharing theatre with kids is special. I treasure it because I know the effect that it’s having—that this experience will be with them for the rest of their lives. I remember when my parents took me to concerts when I was young; I would go look at the instruments during intermission and get butterflies and goosebumps. These kids are watching everything, absorbing everything, and their experiences here will enrich everything they do in life. More than anything, the chance to watch these kids grow and to share in these moments with them is the thing that keeps me coming back for more.

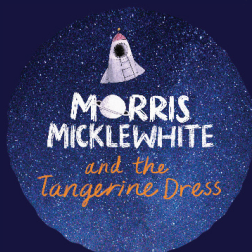
Victor does not own a racecar, but enjoys gardening and baseball in his spare time. Learn more about Victor and hear some of his work by visiting his website at victorzupanc.com.

Thanks to your generous partnership, we are proud to present seven phenomenal shows that will entertain, engage, and create lifelong memories that will be cherished forever!

The 2023-2024 Season



Sept. 12-
Oct. 22, 2023



Oct. 10-
Nov. 19, 2023



Nov. 7, 2023-
Jan. 7, 2024



Jan. 16-
Feb. 18, 2024



Feb. 13-
Mar. 31, 2024



Mar. 9-
Apr. 14, 2024



Apr. 23-
Jun. 16, 2024

EVERYONE's going to want to get in on this! You can help make that happen by sharing our season information with those you know or buying subscriptions and gifting tickets show by show to those you think would love CTC as much as you do.

Renew, Subscribe, or Learn More by visiting our website at

childrenstheatre.org