

Children's Theatre Company

BEHIND THE CURTAIN BEYOND THE STAGE

WINTER 2024



Photo of Scout Groshong and De'Anthony Jackson in *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Glen Stubbe Photography

Meet Hannah Bakke

Introducing the playwright behind this summer's Triple Threat world premiere production

CTC's Triple Threat summer intensive—a five-week, audition-based program that offers high school students the chance to work in a pre-professional setting—specializes in offering new opportunities to the next generation of theatre makers. This summer, the program will be taking on an additional challenge: staging the world-premiere production of *The Garden*, a brand-new musical written by local multi-hyphenate actor-singer-writer Hannah Bakke (she/her). We caught up with Hannah to learn more about her artistic journey and what she hopes the Triple Threat students will bring to this brand-new production.



Headshot of Hannah Bakke by
Madeline Miller Photo

Tell us a little about yourself and your connection to CTC.

When I was growing up, I wanted to be a teacher, an author, and a singer, in that order. My childhood was permeated with music and storytelling; my aunt and uncle sing in a folk band (which I'm actually now a part of), played Peter, Paul and Mary on repeat, and I was lucky to have great teachers that encouraged me to write and be creative. I did my undergraduate at Concordia College, and while I started off as an education major, theatre kept calling to me in a way I couldn't ignore. So, I changed my major, and set myself on a path to blend the things that made me the happiest—theatre, music, and working with kids!

These days, I balance my own artistic work with being a teaching artist here at CTC. As a member of the education team, I work in our residency programs—teaching Creative Play in pre-schools and integrative arts education at Bethune Arts Elementary—and teach in our after-school programs and summer camps. CTC is the place to be for this work, and I'm grateful to be sharing these experiences with young people all over the Twin Cities.

Tell us a little about *The Garden*. How did this project come to be?

At its core, *The Garden* is a reimagining of the garden of Eden story from Genesis—except Adam, Eve, and Lucifer are all in a folk band, and *The Garden* is the name of the dive bar where they play. Everyone in this story is obsessed with perfection, with being in this pristine place and playing perfect music in perfect synchrony. But then Eve finds out a secret that shows *The Garden* isn't really what it seems, and she breaks out of her role, shattering the illusion and finding her voice in the process.

I began writing *The Garden* in 2020 when, like so many other people, I found myself with some unexpected time on my hands. I couldn't engage in my regular creative outlets—making music with friends and family, teaching, performing—and so I returned to a childhood passion of writing, which I had kind of let fall to the wayside as I'd invested myself in other projects.

As I started toying around with this idea for this story, it was the music that came first—specifically, Eve's song. Her voice was the strongest and clearest from the beginning, and then I started filling in the story around the periphery of what I knew she needed to say. I took the project to a playwriting intensive through the Jen Waldman Studio (JWS) in 2021, applied for some commissions, performed a virtual concert—just continuing to chew and re-chew the words and the work and now it's finally coming together into a full production.

What excites you about bringing this project to CTC?

I was thrilled when CTC approached me about premiering this work as the Triple Threat summer production. Past Triple Threat productions have been so incredible—it's clear that these students are excited, exceptionally talented and trained, and willing to take risks. I'm excited to work with them, and to in turn give them the experience of being part of new play development. It's a whole different skillset to work with a playwright as a part of the rehearsal process, and something that many theatre makers aren't exposed to until much later in their careers. Working on a developing script gives you a lot more opportunity to leave your mark on something—there aren't any reference points of previous iterations, so you must be a lot more present with the work, and more willing to take risks and change directions as the piece continues to define.

I also think it's fitting to be bringing this show to stage with high school students, because those years are often defined by change. The narrative of the garden of Eden is that, in the beginning, it was this perfect place—but the truth is, beginnings are messy! To be creative, we need that permission to try and fail so that we can grow. Offering that narrative to young people who are in the thick of such intense growth and self-discovery feels incredibly powerful.

What is next for you?

The Garden is a piece about women finding their voices, and speaking passionately about what they want. I've needed to grow my own confidence to make it what it needs to be, so my focus for the next phase is to bolster those resources for myself and the artists with whom I'm privileged to collaborate. I was recently accepted into the Maestra mentorship program, which provides support, visibility, and community to the women and nonbinary people who make the music in the musical theatre industry; I'm excited to work with them on a number of projects, including *The Garden*, and to see where the next chapter leads me.

Auditions for this summer's Triple Threat Intensive will be held in March 2024. To learn more about CTC's summer programming, visit childrenstheatre.org/camps.

The Show Must Go On!

Spotlighting CTC's Plays for New Audiences Division

Over the course of our history, Children's Theatre Company has developed over 200 new works for multigenerational audiences, dramatically changing the canon of work for young people. We pour our hearts and souls into every one of these productions, and we are committed to making sure that these stories don't end with us, but instead that they keep growing and being shared with generations of young audiences around the country and the world.

As the licensing division of CTC, Plays for New Audiences (PNA) is at the heart of this work. Hosting a catalogue of over 300 plays and musicals, PNA partners with professional production companies, schools, and community theatres around the world to find the perfect production for their young audiences. Written by some of the world's most extraordinary playwrights, these contemporary stories and reimagined classics are topical, relevant, and sometimes even fantastical. And, because PNA is a part of CTC, it's also a nonprofit—so every dollar spent on licensing fees is invested directly back into supporting artists and creating even more new work.



"Plays for New Audiences allows us to foster a life-long connection with our playwrights, artists, and fellow regional theatres while expanding CTC's definition of our community to audiences around the world. It is incredibly special to see CTC stories reach communities who would not otherwise be able to experience them!"

Karli Twedten, Director of Plays for
New Audiences

Encore!

PNA holds the rights for many family-favorite CTC productions, and we love seeing how these special shows are reaching new communities every year. Since premiering at CTC...

- *Snow White* has been produced over 10 times
- *Corduroy* has been produced over 20 times
- *The Snowy Day and Other Stories by Ezra Jack Keats* has been produced over 30 times
- *Balloonancy* has been produced over 60 times
- *Alice in Wonderland* has been produced over 20 times

➔ **Catch this production back at CTC from Feb. 13-Mar. 31, 2024! Visit childrenstheatre.org/alice to purchase tickets today!**

Where in the Country is CTC? 📍

PNA licenses shows to theatres all over the country! Check out the map below to see where the shows you love are being shared.



Top Ten Cities

with the most PNA licenses

1. El Paso, Texas
2. Birmingham, Alabama
3. Little Rock, Arkansas
4. Savannah, Georgia
5. Greenville, South Carolina
6. Charlotte, North Carolina
7. Louisville, Kentucky
8. Olympia, Washington
9. Houston, Texas
10. Plano, Texas

Allyship in Action

How CTC's Allyship Workshop sets the stage for our productions

Every CTC rehearsal process begins the same way. The cast, creative team, and theatre staff gather for a meet-and-greet; the director speaks about their vision for the production, and the scenic and costume designers share their sketches and mock-ups. Then, after snapping a quick first day picture, the cast and creative team sit down to undertake a cornerstone of CTC's first rehearsal process: the Allyship Training Workshop.



Michael Winn
Associate Artistic Director/Director of Equity
and Community Partnerships

As a key component of CTC's ongoing commitment to creating just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive theatre, the Allyship Training helps to set a common foundation for every member of the artistic process. The question at the heart of this training is simple: **How can this multi-generational group of people work together to create a rehearsal environment that is safe, brave, and free for everyone?** With long hours, steep learning curves, and intense emotions in play, rehearsals can be taxing for both adult and youth actors. By beginning rehearsals with an allyship workshop, CTC sets the tone for an environment that values people over product—giving artists the space to be their full multi-dimensional selves and offering the security to make bold choices during the collaborative rehearsal process.

"Every first rehearsal, we go around the room and take the time for people to say who they are and what they do," explains Associate Artistic Director/Director of Equity and Community Partnerships Michael Winn, who leads the workshop. "But what is more important is that we see each other as full people—not just the character they play, a job they do, or a community they represent."

Over the course of the workshop, participants devise strategies around identity, diversity, justice, and action that will help them be allies to one another through the rehearsal process. Discussion topics include what it means to be an ally, and what individuals might need to feel supported and seen. The group also discusses microaggressions and unconscious biases, and how to navigate conflict when it inevitably arises.

"We are all human, and we all make mistakes," Winn says. "We often don't intend to do harm, but that doesn't discount the impact that our actions or words can have on someone else." Members of the cast and creative team are offered language to advocate for themselves and others, as well as a network of resources within CTC to help them feel safe and supported.



At the culmination of the workshop, members of the cast and creative team break out into small groups and are given time to reflect on what they personally need to feel safe and brave during the rehearsal process. Those statements of need are then collated and posted on the doors to the rehearsal room, so that every person is reminded of the collective agreement when they enter the space.

"This is highly personal work," Winn concludes. "What's on one person's list may differ or even contradict someone else's needs, but the reality is that we are all very different people, and we may need to be treated differently to do our best work as our best selves. Everything comes down to this question: **How do we treat people how they want to be treated?**"

CTC is committed to promoting justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in every aspect of our work. To learn more, visit childrenstheatre.org/JEDI.

A Selection of Community Agreements from
CTC's 2023-2024 production of *Dr. Seuss's
How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*



We Feel Safe, Brave, and Free When...

- We are humans first, before the role or job position.
- We assume that everyone is trying their best and giving with the best intent.
- Everyone is able to ask for help and we help others when they ask for it.
- We are compassionate.
- We respect all ideas, thoughts, and suggestions equally, no matter the age or experience of the person offering them.
- We lead with accountability and grace for others as well as our own selves.

Photo of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* Rehearsal by Kaitlin Randolph

BUSINESS & ARTS LUNCHEON

MAY 8, 2024
11:30AM-1PM

children's
theatre
company



Featuring
LILI HALL

Founder, CEO, and President of **KNOCK** inc.

Join featured guest Lili Hall, founder, CEO, and president of KNOCK, inc., and fellow Twin Cities business leaders for a lunch and conversation surrounding access to the arts and its ability to build community and inspire our future leaders. This event will also feature a special musical performance by CTC actors. Visit childrenstheatre.org/bza to purchase tickets today!