

Children's Theatre Company

# BEHIND THE CURTAIN BEYOND THE STAGE

SUMMER 2024



John-Michael Zuerlein and Reed Sigmund in *A Year With Frog and Toad* photo by Glen Stubbe Photography



# Meet CTC's New Leadership Team

When you return to the theatre this fall, you'll be greeted by two new faces: Artistic Director Rick Dildine and Managing Director Jill A. Anderson. Joining us from Alabama Shakespeare Festival and Syracuse Stage, respectively, these two leaders are taking the helm as CTC's new executive leadership team.

In advance of their first day, we sat down with Jill and Rick to talk about their vision for CTC's next chapter, the power of philanthropy in the arts, and perhaps most importantly, which Minnesota State Fair food they are most excited to eat on a stick.

## *What excites you about joining Children's Theatre Company?*



**Rick Dildine**  
Artistic Director

**Rick Dildine (RD):** I truly feel that there is no nobler task than creating something for a young person. Especially in this moment, when we are still understanding the impacts of the pandemic and our young people are experiencing a mental health crisis, we need theatre more than ever. I want to create theatre that engages young people through every stage of their development and self-discovery, and CTC is precisely the place to do this work. It's an iconic institution, and one that sets the benchmark nationally and internationally for multigenerational theatre. I'm honored to be joining the team.

**Jill A. Anderson (JA):** I feel the same. I'm excited by the opportunity to consistently center the next generation—not just our future theatre artists, but also our future donors, trustees, and patrons. At CTC, our work with young audiences is not an add-on or a bonus; it's the heart and soul of what we do. And this role is a kind of homecoming for me—I started my career at CTC, and that experience has opened up countless pathways for me in the decades since. I'm particularly excited to be able to pay that forward.



**Jill A. Anderson**  
Managing Director

*You are both joining CTC from theatres that primarily serve adult audiences. What excites you about creating theatre for multi-generational audiences? Why do you think it's important?*

**RD:** In some ways, storytelling is storytelling—our job as theatre makers is to create a piece of work that translates from the stage to the audience. The difference now is that the audience we're choosing to center is made up of young people, who are intuitive, truthful, and totally present. Older audiences can sometimes come into a theatre with expectations—what a play is supposed to look like, how they're supposed to act or react—but young people are free from that. They are honest, for better or for worse, and that's what makes it special.



**JA:** The benefits that early arts engagement offers a young person are powerful and indisputable. For their academic lives, their future civic engagement, their professional skills, their mental health—theatre provides so many opportunities to cultivate a creative and confident sense of self. One of my biggest and most exciting questions is, how do we think about expanding that opportunity to serve even more young people? How are we meeting the needs of pre-verbal children, of non-English speaking children, of children with varying access needs? How can we make sure that every young person has access to this lifelong gift?

## *Which shows in our 2024-2025 Season are you particularly looking forward to?*

**JA:** So many of my own theatre passions converge this season. I love developing new work, so *Drawing Lessons* is exciting. I have some history in the world of puppetry, so I can't wait for *Leonardo*, *A Wonderful Show About a Terrible Monster*. And *Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* is iconic—for so many people, that's their first experience at CTC, and there is truly nothing like witnessing that kinetic connection of people discovering the magic of theatre.

**RD:** I'm excited about all of them, to be honest. One of the great things about CTC is that it's a world-class institution, which means we don't put something on stage unless we're proud of it. Every piece that makes it to stage has been carefully developed, rigorously examined, and thoughtfully brought to life.





***CTC has a co-leadership model, which means that you are working as equal partners to lead the theatre. What is your shared vision for CTC, and how do you imagine your partnership will support it?***

**RD:** I know I speak for both of us when I say, we love the CTC we see today. We're inspired by this theatre and its community, and we want to build on the decades of success. And, we share the vision of this being the nation's children's theatre—a place people travel to, with their families, to experience the transformational work that so many in this community already know and love.

**JA:** Absolutely. CTC is already in a place of incredible strength and reputation, and we get to build on that. This moment of transition is an opportunity for us to dig deeply into our mission, vision, and values. It's a chance for us to ask how we can reach more young people, how we can grow and deepen our existing programming. We're just one piece of CTC's history, so it's our opportunity to amplify the powerful work that's already happening and find ways to make it even better and stronger for the next generation.

***Philanthropic contributions make up nearly half of CTC's annual budget. What role do donors play in our theatre's community? How can we be good stewards of their investments, and work together to ensure the theatre thrives?***

**JA:** Donors play an impossibly important role in the life of CTC. The truth is, if ticket prices needed to cover all that it takes to run a theatre of this size and scale, CTC would simply be out of reach for most of our community. This work is so important, and we rely on our donors to preserve accessibility through affordable ticket prices, education scholarships, student matinees and more. Giving to CTC—at any dollar amount, at any level—is a way for each of us to live our values and demonstrate our commitment to this mission. Your contribution helps ensure that every young person in our community has the opportunity to walk through our doors and be inspired.



**RD:** Jill said that perfectly. Donors have always been at the heart of this theatre; they helped build this theatre into the world-class institution it is today. And because CTC is world-class—because we set the standard for multigenerational theatre—we can put those contributed dollars to the best possible use. We can

attract the top-tier artists of today, and simultaneously seek out and foster the up-and-coming talent of tomorrow. We can support and invest in our staff, making sure that they have what they need to create the best quality work. We can work at the highest level of professionalism that our field can offer, ensuring that no dollar is wasted along the way.

***If you could share one thing with our CTC donor community, what would it be?***

**RD:** First off, thank you! Your investment in CTC goes above and beyond the transaction of buying tickets. It's the bedrock of our institution, and it's the reason that we can continue to produce. And please introduce yourselves—you're going to know us before we know you, but we can't wait to meet you.

**JA:** Agreed. I can't understate how eager we are to meet you and to embed ourselves in this community. I hope to see you all early and often, and we can't wait to share an incredible year of theatre with you.

***We saved the hardest question for last: You are joining our Minnesota institution mere weeks before the Minnesota State Fair. What food are you most excited to eat on a stick?***

**JA:** My answer has to be walleye, but wouldn't it flake off of the stick? What's more Minnesotan than walleye in the summer?

**RD:** I have a huge sweet tooth, so any kind of sweet treat is a must for me. I want to try them all!



We're looking forward to hosting you at the theatre and out in the community this season for a chance to meet Rick and Jill. Keep an eye out for invitations coming soon!



**Questions** for the new leadership team? Email Rick Dildine at [rick@childrenstheatre.org](mailto:rick@childrenstheatre.org), and Jill Anderson at [jill@childrenstheatre.org](mailto:jill@childrenstheatre.org).

# DRAWING LESSONS

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## Production Spotlight: *Drawing Lessons*

### Generation Now's first commissioned play is about to premiere

For the last few years, we've been taking you behind the scenes of Generation Now: a groundbreaking commissioning partnership between Children's Theatre Company, Penumbra, Ma-Yi Theatre Company, Latino Theatre Company, and Native Voices. A landmark collaboration, Generation Now will bring to life 16 brand-new works for multigenerational audiences, all from BIPOC artists—expanding the canon of work for young audiences from traditionally underrepresented voices, and ensuring that new and previously unheard stories can take center stage.

After years of work, the first of the Generation Now commissions—*Drawing Lessons*—will be premiering at CTC this fall. Written by playwright Michi Barall, *Drawing Lessons* tells the story of Kate, a young graphic novelist who uses her creativity as a way to find herself. Dynamic, jump-off-the-page animation shows Kate's manhwa storyboards coming together, even as she deals with school, friends, and understanding how her Korean heritage fits into her American lifestyle. Innovative, poignant, and visually stunning, *Drawing Lessons* is a vibrant story about the struggle to find your own voice, and the power that comes with deciding to use it.

"I am so excited to share this celebration of the world of comic art and the unique artistic voice of Kate, the play's 12-year-old Korean American protagonist. A love letter to Minneapolis and its diversity, I'm especially happy that the first run of *Drawing Lessons* will take place at CTC."

—Michi Barall, *Drawing Lessons* Playwright



*Drawing Lessons* runs October 8-November 10. Get your tickets today at [childrenstheatre.org/drawing](https://childrenstheatre.org/drawing).

## Timeline

- ★ **2021** – With funding received from the Mellon Foundation, the Generation Now consortium is established. *Drawing Lessons* is the first play to be commissioned in a partnership between CTC and Ma-Yi Theatre Company.
- ★ **2022** – The first drafts of *Drawing Lessons* begin to come together. Playwright Michi Barall works to develop the storyline and characters.
- ★ **January 2023** – The first workshop for *Drawing Lessons* takes place at CTC.
- ★ **April 2023** – The full Generation Now team meets for an annual convening in New York City, hosted at Ma-Yi Theater. *Drawing Lessons* receives its second workshop.
- ★ **June 2023** – *Drawing Lessons* receives a reading in New York City at Ma-Yi Theater Company.
- ★ **July 2023** – *Drawing Lessons* receives a second reading in New York City at Ma-Yi Theater Company.
- ★ **October 2023** – *Drawing Lessons* receives its final workshop in Minneapolis at CTC.
- ★ **January 2024** – The full creative team for the world premiere of *Drawing Lessons* is finalized.
- ★ **March 2024** – CTC's 2024-2025 Season is announced, featuring the world premiere of *Drawing Lessons* on the Cargill Stage.
- ★ **May 2024** – The world premiere cast of *Drawing Lessons* is assembled.
- ★ **September 2024** – Rehearsals begin.
- ★ **October 12, 2024** – Opening night for the world premiere of *Drawing Lessons*.

A **reading** is a presentation of a play where a show is simply read aloud by a group of actors, often while they are seated at a table. Readings allow a creative team to focus on the text of the play and the relationships between the characters.

A **workshop** is a full presentation of a play in a rehearsal room. A director leads the process and works with the cast to create an initial staging of the work. Workshops allow a creative team to see how the play comes to life in real time, and to imagine what it will be like when it eventually comes to stage.

CTC will be co-hosting a Generation Now Reading Series Oct. 16-18, 2024. Stay tuned for more details coming soon!





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