

Children's Theatre Company

BEHIND THE CURTAIN BEYOND THE STAGE

WINTER | 2025



Generation Now: Shining a Spotlight on New Works

Reflecting on a year of progress and looking ahead to the future of Generation Now

CTC is privileged to be a partner in Generation Now, a national theatre cohort with a mission to expand the canon of work produced for multigenerational audiences by developing multiple commissions by BIPOC artists. This was a significant year for the cohort, with *Drawing Lessons*, a new play co-commissioned by CTC and Ma-Yi Theater Company opening as the first Generation Now world premiere. CTC also hosted the first Generation Now Reading Series, which featured live readings of three additional plays in development. The series was orchestrated by Generation Now Fellow Antonio De La Vega. We caught up with Antonio to learn more about the series and what is coming up next for the cohort.



Antonio De La Vega
Generation Now Fellow

Tell us a little about your role as the Generation Now Fellow and what inspired you to do this work at CTC.

I started as the Generation Now Fellow in July 2024 and since then, I have worked in vast administrative and producing capacities. Primarily, I serve as the liaison between CTC, Ma-Yi Theater Company (New York City), Penumbra (St. Paul), Native Voices (Los Angeles), and Latino Theater Company (Los Angeles). I provide event support for Generation Now-related workshops and readings, organize the virtual and in-person meetings for leaders and writers, and work to ensure the mission of commissioning 16 new plays for BIPOC multigenerational audiences comes to fruition.

Luckily, this is not my first time working at CTC—I'm just now on the other side of the stage. I've had the honor of growing up here as an artist in shows like *Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* (2017) and *I Come From Arizona* (2018). CTC has always felt like the origin of my passion for advocacy and artistry, so it is truly such a full circle moment to be back here for this opportunity. After completing my master's degree in arts management earlier in 2024, I knew I wanted to work for an organization that values authentic and intentional representation of BIPOC folks on their stage. When I found the Generation Now fellowship and discovered I'd have the chance to work with not one, but five of those theatres, I just had to apply. As a director and producer, creating platforms and avenues for fellow artists of color to have their stories told is why I do the work I do. I've found that Generation Now is the perfect encapsulation of this passion, and how it can be actualized for audiences of any age.

One of your major projects in 2024 was coordinating the first Generation Now Reading Series, hosted by CTC. Can you share more about how this series came to be and what it meant for the larger Generation Now cohort?

The Generation Now Reading Series was the first assignment given to me on day one of the fellowship, and at the time I had no idea how much I would grow as a producer, administrator, and artist from this project. Pre-production began in July and between then and October, I built out the schedule for the reading series, handled travel and accommodations for all visiting artists and leaders coming into town, cast the readings and managed contracts, provided internal communications to all CTC staff about the event, and served as the all-around "point person" for the event. It was the honor of a lifetime and a definite career high to be in charge of Generation Now's first ever public-facing event.

Historically, Generation Now has held internal workshops to provide valuable feedback for our commissioned plays. To be able to open these readings up to the public and gain their insight on the work signaled a huge milestone for the Generation Now initiative. We were finally able to share the brilliant work of our writers with our audiences here at CTC, which gave the writers a taste of what their work will sound like on the stage.

Reading Series' attendees also got to see a performance of *Drawing Lessons*, the first Generation Now play to receive a full production. How did it feel to see that come to life and to be able to celebrate that achievement with other Generation Now partners?

It was for sure a highlight of the Reading Series. We actually had Michi Barall, the playwright of *Drawing Lessons*, in attendance when our Generation Now team got to see the performance. Being the first Generation Now play to be in production here at CTC, it was truly a full circle moment to share that joy with the cohort and Michi. Personally, I will never forget moments like those as they serve as constant reminders to me as to why I love theatre in the first place: It has a power to bring us together unlike any art form. The fact that our Generation Now cohort, our writers, and invited guests were all in the same room watching Michi's brilliant work speaks to theatre's power to bring folks from across the globe to share space and celebrate the work of our collective.

What's next for the Generation Now partnership in 2025?

Most immediately, we are planning the next in-person convening of the Generation Now leaders in 2025. Each year, the cohort gathers over multiple days to assess where each commission stands and how to continuously strengthen our bond as creative partners. We are in the very early stages of planning the convening, and we are also looking to select the third and fourth round of commissions for each partner theatre. We have commissioned eight out of 16 pieces as of 2024, and we are looking to secure the next eight as soon as possible.

Visit childrenstheatre.org/GenNow to learn more about the Generation Now cohort.



Innovative Storytelling for All Ages

There's always something particularly magical about experiencing live theatre. While the story we watch unfold may be the same night after night, no two performances are quite alike. Audiences may laugh louder here. Actors may deliver their lines differently there. And each time, it's a reminder that every one of us on stage and off is enjoying something truly in the moment—together.

Throughout our 2024-2025 Season, CTC is finding new ways to enhance that feeling for theatre lovers of all ages—from teens and adults down to our earliest learners. Take a look behind the scenes and learn more about how two productions this season are using a range of technologies to bring their stories to life.

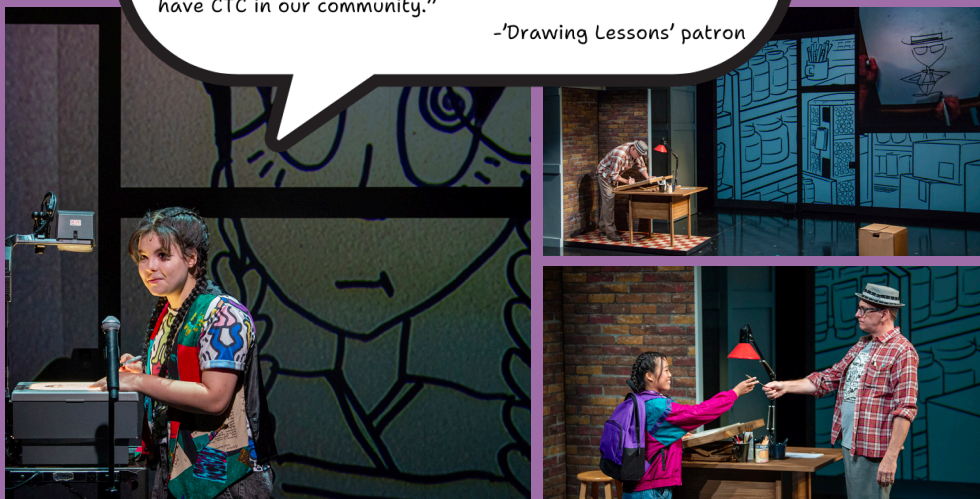
Drawing Lessons

Through a collaboration with contributing artist Blue Delliquanti, illustration played a central role in *Drawing Lessons*, which had its world premiere at CTC in October. Delliquanti, who teaches comics courses at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD), created custom artwork that flashed across the show's scenic design, immersing us in the mind of 12-year-old Kate as she adjusted to life in a new school and found her voice in the process.

The show also featured live illustrations to tell the story. As Kate received drawing lessons from mentor Paul, we watched as their work was projected in real time. That meant actors Olivia Lampert, Mars Niemi, Jim Lichtscheidl, and Ryan Nelson all received drawing lessons of their own from Delliquanti. For both our student performers and adult actors alike, these lessons during the rehearsal process were a way to learn new skills, support each other, and feel confident creating their art in front of thousands of audience members.

"We loved the way the drawing lessons were shared with the audience. We got to share in the experience and with each other later. It was so gratifying to see such an original story told in a creative way. That is why we are so lucky to have CTC in our community."

—'Drawing Lessons' patron



Photos of Mars Niemi, Jim Lichtscheidl, and Olivia Lampert in *Drawing Lessons* by Kaitlin Randolph



Leonardo! A Wonderful Show About a Terrible Monster

This winter, audiences of all ages are meeting Leonardo, a not-so-scary monster searching for the most scaredy-cat kid in the world. Nationally acclaimed theatre company Manual Cinema is combining handmade shadow puppetry, vintage overhead projectors, screens, live feed cameras, and innovative sound effects and live music to create Leonardo's story both on stage and on screen at the same time.

The story is best enjoyed by children ages 3-6 and these early learners may be most entranced by the hundreds of paper illustrations, two-dimensional set pieces, and fuzzy puppets that are used to introduce us to Leonardo and his friends on a projection screen above us. But the creative process of this show can be enjoyed by all ages, as older audience members can experience the process of making a movie right before our eyes as we watch each element of the show come to life onstage in real time.

"In every Manual Cinema show, we always show the process of making the performance, and I hope that we inspire the future generation to make their own art and tell their own stories."

— Sarah Fornace, 'Leonardo! A Wonderful Show About a Terrible Monster' playwright and director



Photos provided by Manual Cinema

Camp Rules!

How CTC encourages allyship at every age

Every production at CTC involves a shared cornerstone: the First Rehearsal Allyship Workshop. Led by the Artistic and Equity team, the Allyship Workshop sets a common foundation for the artistic process amongst the cast, crew, and creative teams. Over the course of several hours, participants devise strategies around identity, diversity, justice, and action that will help them be allies to one another throughout the production. At the end of the workshop, the teams collate these strategies into a collective community agreement—a guiding document of shared expectations that allows every person to feel supported during the rehearsal process.

While Theatre Arts Training (TAT) classes and camps don't go through this full allyship workshop, they do set community agreements on their first day. The teaching artist leads a discussion with all the students in the room, encouraging open conversation about what students feel they deserve and expect from one another over the course of their time together. Just like their professional counterparts, these students agree on set standards and post them visibly on the wall, so that everyone in the room can keep them in mind.



Amanda Espinoza
Theatre Arts Training Manager

“Classroom agreements are valuable for students because it gives them the agency to create a positive and inclusive learning environment,” explains Theatre Arts Training Manager Amanda Espinoza. “Mutual agreements encourage students’ responsibility for respect and cooperation with their peers, and can help young people feel safe to express their ideas and point of view. The agreements are a roadmap for the class to know that things can change, or disagreements can happen, but we can still hold on to the values of the class community to guide ourselves back to a good space.”

While our TAT students may not use the same language as adults, the principles they agree on are often quite similar—extend generosity, choose kindness, work hard, and show respect. And other times, they're a little more out of the box. Read on the next page some of the classroom rules that our youngest theatre artists suggested for their shared spaces.

Visit childrenstheatre.org/education for more information about CTC's educational offerings.

TAT STUDENTS SUGGEST WE SHOULD...



TURN ON OUR LISTENING EARS.



RESPECT EVERYONE'S IDEAS.



RAISE OUR HANDS WHEN WE WANT TO SHARE.



BE SILLY AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME.



RESPECT EACH OTHER'S DIFFERENCES.



NOT KICK PEOPLE.



DON'T JUDGE OTHER PEOPLE OR OURSELVES.



GIVE EVERYTHING OUR BEST TRY.



TAKE A BREAK WHEN WE NEED IT.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CTC'S ALLYSHIP WORKSHOP IN OUR PAST NEWSLETTER EDITION AT [CHILDRENTHEATRE.ORG/WINTER2024](https://childrenstheatre.org/winter2024)



HAVE AS MUCH FUN AS WE CAN!

Join us for a CTC
BEHIND THE SCENES
EVENT!

You're invited to our 'Milo Imagines the World' Show-N-Tell!

Join us on Saturday, February 22, to peek behind the curtain and discover how costume changes, set pieces, lights, and sounds all come together at CTC to make Milo's world come to life!

MiLO

Imagines the World

Proudly Sponsored by
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Register for the
Show-N-Tell today at

childrenstheatre.org/milosnt

JOIN US FOR

Summer Camp
2025!

Our Theatre Arts Training camps are back for another summer of fun for all ages!

Students K-12 will participate in age-appropriate lessons and activities that inspire creativity and foster a love of the arts. With over 11 weeks of camp, each week is sure to bring a new adventure.

Register Today!

childrenstheatre.org/summer

