



PRESS RELEASE

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World Premiere of *Spamtown, USA*

A moving portrait of the families, relationships, and children's perspectives during the P-9 Hormel Strike in Austin, MN

Minneapolis, Minn.— Children's Theatre Company (CTC) is proud to announce the world premiere production of [*Spamtown, USA*](#), running **February 16, 2020 through April 5, 2020**, written by **Philip Dawkins** and directed by **Will Davis**. The playwright met with and interviewed 25 people who were children in the city of Austin, Minnesota during the P-9 Strike against Hormel in the 1980s to gather their stories and perspectives. The play explores how pivotal events that occurred during the strike affected relationships inside and between three families. While five kids dream of space camp, tennis teams, and out-of-state college, they find their families and community suddenly divided by picket lines and opposing agendas. This is the story of having the strength to stand up for what you believe in, the challenge that comes in disagreeing with those you love, and the humor that helps keep friendships alive.

"My wish is for our audiences to leave the theatre inspired to collaborate with their neighbors for the good of their communities," stated *Spamtown, USA* Director **Will Davis**.

As previously announced, the cast includes **Malia Berg** (Carol Bolton), **Marcelo Mena** (Scott Olsen), **Arden Michalec** (Amy Bolton), **Isabella Spiess** (Jude Olsen), **Zachary Sullivan** (Travis Olsen), CTC Acting Company members **Dean Holt** (Mr. Bolton), **Autumn Ness** (Mrs. Bolton), and **Reed Sigmund** (Scott's Dad), along with **Dan Hopman** (Mr. Olsen), **Maureen Sherman-Mendez** (Scott's Mom), and **Sandra Struthers** (Miss Berg). The full cast list including external understudies and creative team bios are listed below and headshots are visible [here](#).

Spamtown, USA is the 57th world premiere developed and commissioned by Children's Theatre Company since Peter C. Brosius began as Artistic Director in 1997. Through its new play development work, CTC envisions a future of theatre for young audiences by inviting leading theatre artists to create new plays drawn from a wide range of source materials that expand and explode the repertoire and reflect our current global community. 95% of the plays commissioned and developed by CTC have their world premiere on CTC's stage. In most cases, the works are then licensed through the organization's licensing house, Plays for Young Audiences.

"As the nation's leading theatre for multigenerational audiences, Children's Theatre Company makes work that is local, national, and international," states CTC Artistic Director **Peter C. Brosius**. "One of our priorities is to tell stories that spring from the Midwest. The events in Austin, Minnesota were a critical part of Minnesota's history and became a national story. However, what was never fully told was the story of the lives of the young people who lived in Austin during that time. At CTC, we are extremely interested in examining the world through the lens of young people. We love to tell stories about the agency, the resiliency of young people, and the ways in which they navigate the complex world we live in. Our playwright interviewed around 25 people who were children living in Austin at the time of the events and five others who were adults during that time. Our goal is not a documentary but to look at the reality of these young people as they face a situation that is so new, so difficult, and so surprising. The characters are composites drawn from the interviews—all names of those who speak in the play are invented—but the

stories, challenges, and spirit of the characters is drawn from the extraordinary people who spoke to us, and were so open, generous, and forthcoming about their lives and this moment in their history.”

Spamtown, USA runs February 16 through April 5, 2020 on the Cargill Stage and is recommended for everyone ages 9 and up. Ticket prices range from \$15 through \$71 (subject to change) with ACT Pass tickets for \$5. For more information, visit us online at childrenstheatre.org or call the ticket office at 612.874.0400.

Spamtown, USA

Written by Philip Dawkins

Directed by Will Davis

A Children’s Theatre Company Original Production

Best Enjoyed by Everyone 9 and up

Cargill Stage

Creative Team & Production Staff

Christopher Heilman | Scenic Designer

Trevor Bowen | Costume Designer

Karin Olson | Lighting Designer

Victor Zupanc | Composer and Sound Designer

Miriam Weisfeld | Dramaturg

James Grace | Intimacy Choreographer

AnaSofía Villanueva | Assistant Director

Molly O’Gara | Assistant Costume Designer

Chris Schweiger | Stage Manager

Isabel Patt | Assistant Stage Manager

Cast

Dean Holt | Mr. Bolton

Autumn Ness | Mrs. Bolton

Dan Hopman | Mr. Olsen

Sandra Struthers | Miss Berg

Reed Sigmund | Scott’s Dad

Maureen Sherman-Mendez | Scott’s Mom

Marcelo Mena | Scott Olsen

Zachary Sullivan | Travis Olsen

Isabella Spiess | Jude Olsen

Malia Berg | Carol Bolton

Arden Michalec | Amy Bolton

External Understudies

Chance Carroll | Mr. Bolton, Mr. Olsen, Scott’s Dad

Lauren Drasler | Miss Berg, Mrs. Bolton

Janely Rodriguez | Scott’s Mom

John Lutterman | Scott Olsen

Ines Rose Mojica | Carol Bolton

Payton Seacrist | Jude Olsen, Amy Bolton

Courtland Shattuck | Travis Olsen

Runtime: To be determined

Tickets:

The Ticket Office is accessible by phone two hours prior to most performances. These posted hours are

subject to change.

Email: tickets@childrenstheatre.org (inquiries only, no ticket processing)

Phone: 612.874.0400

Website: <https://childrenstheatre.org>

Subscription packages are available. Please see website for complete details:

<https://childrenstheatre.org/tickets/subscribe>

Lap passes are not available for this production.

ASL/AD Performance: Friday, March 13 at 7pm

Sensory Friendly Performance: Friday, April 3 at 7pm

Group tickets up to 10% off regular tickets for groups of six to nine.

Group tickets up to 25% off regular tickets for groups of ten or more.

Performance Dates

Sunday, February 16	7pm (Preview)
Tuesday, February 18	7pm (Preview)
Wednesday, February 19	7pm (Preview)
Thursday, February 20	7pm (Preview)
Friday, February 21	7pm (Opening night)
Saturday, February 22	2pm and 5pm
Sunday, February 23	2pm and 5pm
Tuesday, February 25	7pm
Wednesday, February 26	7pm
Thursday, February 27	7pm
Friday, February 28	7pm
Saturday, February 29	11am and 2pm
Sunday, March 1	2pm and 5pm
Thursday, March 5	7pm
Friday, March 6	7pm
Saturday, March 7	11am and 2pm
Sunday, March 8	2pm and 5pm
Thursday, March 12	7pm
Friday, March 13	7pm (ASL/AD Performance)
Saturday, March 14	2pm and 5pm
Sunday, March 15	2pm and 5pm
Thursday, March 19	7pm
Friday, March 20	7pm
Saturday, March 21	2pm and 5pm
Sunday, March 22	2pm and 5pm
Thursday, March 26	7pm
Friday, March 27	7pm
Saturday, March 28	11am and 2pm
Sunday, March 29	2pm and 5pm
Thursday, April 2	7pm
Friday, April 3	7pm (Sensory Friendly Performance)

Saturday, April 4 11am and 2pm
Sunday, April 5 2pm and 5pm

CREATIVE TEAM BIOS

Playwright

Philip Dawkins' (he/him/anything respectful) plays include *The Burn* (Steppenwolf for Young Audiences); *The Gentleman Caller* (Raven); *The Happiest Place on Earth* (Side Show/Greenhouse); *Le Switch* and *The Homosexuals* (About Face); *Charm* (Northlight); and *Dr. Seuss's The Sneetches The Musical* with composer David Mallamud (Children's Theatre Company).

Director

Will Davis' Off-Broadway credits include: *Road Show* by Sondheim and Weidman (Encores! Off-Center); *India Pale Ale* by Jaclyn Backhaus (MTC); *Bobbie Clearly* by Alex Lubischer (Roundabout Underground); *Charm* by Philip Dawkins (MCC); *Men on Boats* by Jaclyn Backhaus (Clubbed Thumb and Playwrights Horizons—Lucille Lortel nomination); and *Duat* by Daniel Alexander Jones (Soho Rep). Regional credits include: *Everybody* by Brandon Jacobs-Jenkins (Shakespeare Theater Company); *A Doll's House, Part 2* by Lucas Hnath (Long Wharf Theatre); *The Carpenter* by Rob Askins (The Alley Theatre); *Colossal* by Andrew Hinderaker (Olney Theatre Center and Mixed Blood Theater—Helen Hayes award for best direction); *Evita* (Olney Theatre Center—Helen Hayes award nomination); and multiple productions for ATC in Chicago where Davis also served as artistic director. Davis is a trans identified director/choreographer focused on physically adventurous new work and old plays in new ways. He is an alum of the Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab, NYTW 2050 Directing Fellowship and Brooklyn Art Exchange's artist in residence program.

Costume Designer

Trevor Bowen (he/him) has had the pleasure of designing costumes for *Bob Marley's Three Little Birds*; *Corduroy*; *Last Stop on Market Street*; and *I Come From Arizona* at CTC. He has designed costumes for Jungle Theater, Minnesota Opera, Guthrie Theater, Pillsbury House Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, Seattle Children's Theatre, 5th Ave Theater, and Asolo Rep Theatre. Trevor has an M.F.A. from West Virginia University.

Lighting Designer

Karin Olson (she/her) collaborates locally at Guthrie Theater, Jungle Theater, Penumbra Theatre, Mixed Blood Theatre, The Ordway, and with many Twin Cities dance companies. She designs regionally for Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Syracuse Stage, and Trinity Rep. Upcoming projects include *Antigone* at Cleveland Playhouse, and *Redwood* at Jungle Theater. karinolsonlighting.com

Composer & Sound Designer

Victor Zupanc (he/him) is credited with approximately 300 productions as Composer, Musical Director, and Sound Designer throughout the country and around the world winning many awards and honors. Victor often composes for orchestras, choirs, films, and also for NPR. This is Victor's 30th season as Music Director/Composer at CTC. victorzupanc.com

Dramaturg

Miriam Weisfeld (she/her) was previously Senior Vice President at the Araca Group (Broadway) and Associate Artistic Director of Woolly Mammoth (Washington, D.C.). Additional credits: New York Theatre Workshop, American Repertory Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville. M.F.A., ART/Moscow Art Theatre Institute at Harvard University. Adjunct faculty, Minneapolis College of Art and Design.

Assistant Director

AnaSofía Villanueva (she/her) has directed *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train* (University of Minnesota/Guthrie BFA); *References to Salvador Dalí Make Me Hot* (Cornerstone Theatre Troupe); and *Water by the Spoonful* (Public Playhouse) among others. She has assistant directed with Mixed Blood and Guthrie Theater. She is the former artistic associate at History Theater.

Assistant Costume Designer

Molly O'Gara (she/her) works all over the Twin Cities in both design assistant and wardrobe capacities. Most recent credits include Minnesota Opera, Jungle Theater, and Pillsbury House Theater.

Stage Manager

Chris Schweiger has been at CTC for 18 seasons. She has worked across the country from NYC to Alaska including Arena Stage, Seattle Children's Theatre, Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, Guthrie Theater, Mixed Blood Theatre Company, New Victory Theater, Alpine Theatre Project, Utah Shakespeare Festival, and Perseverance Theatre. She graduated from Northwestern University and was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Mongolia.

Assistant Stage Manager

Isabel Patt *Spamtown, USA* is Izzy's fourth production at CTC! In addition to freelancing as a stage manager, Izzy is also a sound designer around town. Since graduating from the University of Minnesota and has worked in various capacities with companies such as Mixed Blood Theatre, Artistry, Walking Shadow Theatre Company, Yellow Tree Theatre, Dark & Stormy Productions, and Penumbra Theatre.

CAST BIOS

Mr. Bolton

Dean Holt is a member of CTC's Acting Company (1994—present), appearing in more than 100 memorable productions in his time at CTC. He is a two-time Ivey Award winner (*Reeling* and *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*) and the recipient of the Alumni Achievement Award from St. John's University for outstanding work in his field.

Mrs. Bolton

Autumn Ness (she/her) is celebrating 20 seasons with the CTC Acting Company, and some favorite shows include: *Cinderella*; *Roald Dahl's Matilda The Musical*; *The Biggest Little House in the Forest*; *Dr. Seuss's The Lorax*; *The Jungle Book*; *Shrek The Musical*; *Romeo and Juliet*; and *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Autumn is a recipient of the 2018 Fox Foundation Actor Fellowship.

Mr. Olsen

Dan Hopman (he/him) appeared in *The Wizard of Oz* at Children's Theatre Company. Other credits include: Theater Latté Da, Park Square Theatre, Illusion Theater, History Theatre, Pillsbury House Theatre, Walking Shadow Theatre Company, Yellow Tree Theatre, Girl Friday Productions, and The Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company.

Miss Berg

Sandra Struthers (she/her or they/them) has performed locally with Guthrie Theater, Ten Thousand Things, Frank Theatre, Mixed Blood Theatre, Pillsbury House, and regionally at Mint Theater, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, and Actor's Theater of Louisville. Sandra also works as playwright and teacher and holds an M.F.A. from ART/Harvard.

Scott's Dad

Reed Sigmund is loudly celebrating his 20th season as a Company Member at CTC, where he's appeared in shows such as: *Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*; *The Wizard of Oz*; and *A Year with Frog and Toad*. Recently, he's also been seen onstage at Jungle Theater and Theater Latté Da.

Scott's Mom

Maureen Sherman-Mendez (she/her) is making CTC debut! Previous credits include *West Side Story* (Guthrie Theater); *Mamma Mia!*; *In the Heights* (The Ordway); *Holiday Inn*; *Grease*; *The Little Mermaid*; *Bye Bye Birdie*; *Hairspray*; *Jesus Christ Superstar*; *All Shook Up*; *Footloose*; *The Producers*; *42nd Street*; *Joseph...Dreamcoat* (Chanhassen Dinner Theatres); and *Chicago* (Theater Latté Da).

Scott Olsen

Marcelo Mena (he/him), 6th grader, has enjoyed roles in *Three Snow Bears*; *Ludlow*; *Dear Edwina*; and *The Music Man*. He has performed in several theatres, including Stages Theatre Company, Nimbus Theatre, Yellow Tree Theatre, Miami Children's Theater, and Children's Theatre Company. Marcelo's film productions include *Minnesota in the Cosmos* and *Betta Fish* as well as other on-screen work.

Travis Olsen

Zachary Sullivan (he/him) is making his Children's Theatre Company debut. He has enjoyed roles in *The Scarlet Pimpernel*; *The Light in the Piazza*; *Chaplin: The Musical*; and *Beauty and the Beast* at Minnetonka High School. He has performed with several other organizations, including Stages Theatre Company and Theatre L'Homme Dieu.

Jude Olsen

Isabella Spiess (she/her) debuts at Children's Theatre Company this season! She has performed in CTC's Theatre Arts Training Senior Intensives such as *Carrie*; and *Chicago: High School Edition*, and at her high school, South High School.

Carol Bolton

Malia Berg has enjoyed performing in theatre productions such as *Disney's Freaky Friday, the Musical*; *Little Women, the Musical*; *Madeline's Christmas Musical*; *Disney's 101 Dalmations*; *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse* (Merrill Arts Center, Woodbury); *Disney's Mulan*; *Disney's Little Mermaid*; *Annie Jr.*; and *Charlotte's Web* (Zephyr Theater, Stillwater).

Amy Bolton

Arden Michalec (she/her) is overjoyed to be returning to CTC, having recently been a part of *Dr. Seuss's How The Grinch Stole Christmas!* She has also loved being a part of productions with History Theatre, Stages Theatre Company, Minnetonka Theatre, as well as several films and commercials. Arden would like to acknowledge Jerry and Adam, for their love of theatre—we miss you!

UNDERSTUDY BIOS

Mr. Bolton, Mr. Olsen, Scott's Dad

Chance Carroll (he/him) has been seen regionally in productions of *The 39 Steps*; *To Kill a Mockingbird*; *Twelfth Night*; *The Three Musketeers*; *As You Like It*; *Dogfight*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; and *Mr. Sasquatch Goes to Washington*. Chance is a proud graduate of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

Miss Berg, Mrs. Bolton

Lauren Drasler is thrilled to make her CTC debut! Lauren has performed onstage around the Twin Cities and onstage and screen in LA, where she was a kooky guest star on *The Middle* (ABC). She holds her M.A. from LAMDA. She loves 80's BANGS, synths and leg warmers!

Scott's Mom

Janely Rodriguez is a Miami native and Brenau University graduate. She has enjoyed roles in *In the Heights* (Gainesville Theatre Alliance); *Paige In Full* (Alliance Theatre); and *Schoolhouse Rock!* (Birmingham Children's Theatre). Janely is very excited to continue her journey with Children's Theatre Company as a Performing Apprentice.

Carol Bolton

Ines Rose Mojica (she/her) is absolutely delighted to make her CTC debut in *Spamtown, USA!* She is a fourth grader at Hale Community School in Minneapolis, and has attended classes and performed in productions at Lundstrum Performing Arts for the past three years. Ines loves to sing and dance, play her cello, science, and of course, theater. She is so excited to be a part of this production!

Jude Olsen, Amy Bolton

Payton Seacrist (she/her) is thrilled to be returning to the stage at CTC. She has been in *Dr. Seuss's How The Grinch Stole Christmas!*; *Chicago*; and *Carrie* (CTC); *Spring Awakening* (Chameleon Theatre Circle); and many productions at her high school. She is a senior at Eastview High School, and is in her fourth year of training with the Pre-Professional Program here at CTC.

Travis Olsen

Courtland Shattuck is thrilled to debut at Children's Theatre Company. Previously performed in *A Christmas Carol*; *Bad News! I Was There* (Guthrie Theater); *Narnia: The Musical*; and *A Year with Frog and Toad* (Youth Performance Company). Courtland is in 8th grade and is homeschooled.

Children's Theatre Company (CTC) is the nation's largest and most acclaimed theatre for young people and serves a multigenerational audience. It creates theatre experiences that educate, challenge, and inspire for more than 295,000 people annually. CTC is the only theatre focused on young audiences to win the coveted Tony Award® for Outstanding Regional Theatre and is the only theatre in Minnesota to receive three Tony® nominations (for its production of *A Year with Frog and Toad*). CTC is committed to creating world class productions at the highest level and to developing new works, more than 200 to date, dramatically changing the canon of work for young audiences.

CTC's engagement and learning programs annually serve more than 93,000 young people and their communities through Theatre Arts Training, student matinees, Neighborhood Bridges, and early childhood arts education programs. ACT One is CTC's comprehensive platform for access, diversity, and inclusion in our audiences, programs, staff, and board that strives to ensure the theatre is a home for all people, all families, reflective of our community. childrenstheatre.org

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