Children’s Theatre Company

BEHIND THE CURTAIN
BEYOND THE STAGE

FALL | 2020

Ileri Olikkolu as Lisa in Corduroy | Photo by Dan Norman
The Show (Class) Must Go On!

Thanks to your support, arts-hungry students enjoyed high-quality education programming online after in-person summer camps were cancelled.

Summers at CTC are typically marked by the energy and enthusiasm of hundreds of young people enjoying Theatre Arts Training classes and camps. When the coronavirus pandemic made in-person experiences impossible, we knew we had to find a way to continue to provide joyful, inspirational summertime fun online. But when faced with the specter of pivoting CTC’s vibrant and robust Theatre Arts Training program to a virtual platform in June, Director of Education Ellie McKay reflects, “To my colleagues and employees, I’d say, ‘We will be fine—as theatre artists we’re experts at trying new things.’ And at home I’d say, ‘This will never work.’”

To Ellie’s delight, Theatre Arts Training transitioned beautifully to Virtual Academy, and students and parents craving arts-based education are eagerly engaging with us online.

After starting small, asking for feedback, and making tweaks along the way, we have observed the following about online theatre education:

1. Students are learning from familiar surroundings, which has led them to engage more deeply, more quickly. We see students jump in more fully and express themselves in bigger, bolder ways.

2. We’re meeting people from far and wide. Registrations have come from 30 states (including all corners of Minnesota) and three countries.

3. Theatre (and theatre teachers) have long battled with technology. To embrace it or stick to the origins of the form? In Virtual Academy, we are leaning into the technology and finding that it can enhance our teaching, our art, and our community.

4. Now is the time to model the benefits of arts learning in terms of creative thinking and problem-solving. Teaching artists can be vulnerable, try something new, fail in front of the class, solicit feedback from students, and learn from them.

“I miss being in the theatre. I miss being in my classrooms. I miss high-fiving my students,” says Ellie. “But, we did it. And it’s actually really fun.” Most importantly, our students and their families have access to meaningful artistic opportunities when they need it most.

Thanks to the support of donors like you, CTC was able to pivot programming in response to the pandemic and continue to serve the kids and families who rely on us for high-quality theatre arts education. With your help, we have continued to offer scholarships to these meaningful experiences, awarding more than 120 scholarships to Virtual Academy to date. On behalf of all our students, thank you for your generosity!
Embracing the Unknown: Pivoting from Stage to Screens

CTC education students welcome you to COVIDtown the Musical!

This October, CTC launched the world premiere of COVIDtown the Musical! Created by an intrepid group of middle and high school students, with support from invaluable teaching assistants and a tireless professional creative team, this original musical epitomizes resilience, creativity, and the rewards of the unknown.

COVIDtown started as an intention to produce a live, summer staging of Urinetown: The Musical, the satirical comedy that debuted on Broadway in 2001. Peter Brosius would direct, CTC’s Victor Zupanc would be the musical director, and Linda Talcott Lee would choreograph. The show was cast, but when the pandemic upended live theatre, we couldn’t secure the rights for a streaming production. Thanks to the philanthropic support of donors like you, CTC was able to respond to this unexpected challenge quickly and continue to provide young people with a creative outlet during these difficult times. The creative team met with CTC’s Director of Education, and the idea to devise something original, reflective of the moment, and appropriate for the Zoom format, was born.

Seventeen students were ready to go. “When we started,” says Peter, “I certainly had my doubts about making theatre on Zoom, but by the end—even with all the technical challenges and malfunctions—we all felt that we had made something.”

Hundreds of hours of footage were shot, with original songs, monologues, and scenes created by the students. Victor taught them about composition and Linda coached them on movement. Green screens were delivered to their homes, where they created magic and learned fight choreography so they could create epic battles in front of their computers. One of the students said, “I had never written a song before and now I am so excited to keep writing new songs.”

In the end, they pushed themselves, challenged themselves, and came together to make a 45-minute piece that is wholly new and completely original. Peter reflects, “The discussions were real and deep and provocative, and they all brought their full selves to this.” Students discussed people’s capacity to change, the meaning of forgiveness, and learning from our mistakes.

As we know from past experiences, devising work with students is incredibly rewarding. We hope you’ll watch the first of what will be multiple student works made just for our screens.

Now Streaming: COVIDtown the Musical! Watch at childrenstheatre.org/studentvoices

The students of COVIDtown the Musical thank you for giving them the opportunity to create theatre during the pandemic!
The Best Party of the Year became the Best Virtual Gala in Town!

2020 Curtain Call Ball Celebrates CTC

You are at the heart of all we do at CTC and we can’t thank you enough for the many ways you have supported us in this challenging year.

For all of us at CTC, it is a privilege to create and share extraordinary theatre experiences with you, and while our curtains remain closed and our seats empty, we are desperately missing the opportunity to welcome you to the theatre for a night of inspirational, joyful, theatre.

Each year, we look forward to one night of pageantry in particular: the annual Curtain Call Ball in early September. This important fundraising event is both a celebration of CTC and of the philanthropic community that supports our work. This year, due to the coronavirus pandemic, we were unable to gather in person, but that didn’t stop us from having a wildly successful event!

While virtual was new to us, a thrilling gala was not! Together, we watched show-stopping numbers with special guests and CTC regulars, including the Acting Company. More than 1,000 people participated in the 2020 Curtain Call Ball online. We bid on spectacular auction packages, and gave generously to support the family-friendly theatre we are missing.

Ultimately, CTC friends and family raised more than $725,000 to support our mission to educate, challenge, and inspire young people and their communities.

We can’t wait to welcome you back to the theatre, and are grateful for the ongoing, generous support from donors like you. Your gifts ensure we can bring you exciting and engaging online content today, while we continue to plan for inspirational productions on our stages when it is safe to reopen in the future. Thank you again for sticking with us in this challenging year!

Missed the show?

Greta Oglesby and the rest of the star-studded cast shine in the family-friendly program. Watch the show and make your gift at childrenstheatre.org/curtaincallball.
Turn Your Home into CTC for a Day!

Don’t miss *Last Stop on Market Street*, available for streaming now through November 22.

[childrenstheatre.org/laststop](http://childrenstheatre.org/laststop)

The cast of *Last Stop on Market Street* | Photo by Dan Norman

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