Othe

by Bekah Brunstetter

Directed by Chip Walton



September 1 - October 13, 2018

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THEMURAL

You might have noticed something different when you walked into Curious today – something brighter, something energizing, something Curious. The fabulous mural that now spans our South wall was designed and painted this summer by The Mural Class at Metropolitan State University of Denver.

Throughout June, 18 students painted for four hours a day under the tutelage of their professor, Carlos Fresquez, a celebrated local artist. The goal was to create a piece of public art that embodied the spirit of Curious, merging welcoming with challenging.

We hope you love this mural as much as we do. Thank you to the artists that made it possible!

Hadley Ambrose Lorena Aranda Spencer Eudaly Danielle Gyles Kerrie Hanlon-Delas Chris Jacobs Megan Keniston

Student Artists

Laurie Adams

Joyce Knight
Carly Mckenna
Cliff Nalty
Laura Nelsen
Margaret Pollack
Kristin Smith
Ramon Trujillo
Matthew Yocom





In the summer of 2019, The Mural students will (hopefully) return to Curious to paint the peak and backside of our building, which faces Broadway. We need you to make that beautiful dream real! In order to keep the artists safe while they paint, we need secured scaffolding in addition to purchasing the actual paint.

If you are moved by art, text PAINT to 1-844-544-7171 to give to this dedicated fund!

A Note from the Producing Artistic Director

Welcome to our 21st Season here at Curious and to the Regional Premiere of Bekah Brunstetter's timely new play *The Cake*. This is the perfect way to launch our new season: thoughtful, provocative, and (literally) ripped from the headlines! As we start our third decade producing contemporary theatre and sparking important conversations in our community, we're thrilled to continue our tradition of bringing you the best new plays by the best American playwrights – plays that you've never seen before in the Rocky Mountain Region!

This play makes me wonder: When was the last time you actually changed someone's mind about something important? Or better yet, the last time someone changed your mind? I find this to be a particularly interesting and important question given the last few years in this country. We've all heard someone say it: this country hasn't been this divided since the Civil War. It's called "affective polarization," and it is explained succinctly by a recent article in Scientific American: "U.S. liberals and conservatives not only disagree on policy issues: they are also increasingly unwilling to live near each other, be friends, or get married to members of the other group."

And yet, amidst all this noise coming from both sides of the divide – this curious, brave, and heartfelt play suggests the possibility that unconditional love is actually NOT dead just yet. It's a play about the people you respect most in your life upsetting your assumptions about the world, and it brazenly suggests that fellowship might still be possible amongst people with whom you fundamentally disagree, over a delicious piece of cake. And perhaps, most importantly, it is a play that audaciously reminds us that small acts of personal bravery do indeed still have the power to create positive change.

I will be honest with you: I *want* to believe this, but I'm not sure if I truly do right now, amidst the blatant falsehoods, prejudice, and xenophobia that continues to scroll across our screens on a daily basis. But pondering this question is also a huge part of what has made collaborating on this play with this wonderful group of artists so refreshing and challenging at the same time: can we really imagine this fellowship as a possibility?

The playwright Sarah Ruhl recently said, "The theater is one of the few places left in the bright and noisy world where we sit in the quiet dark together, to be awake." And that's what we aspire to do here at Curious, through the art and power of theatre: ask bravely the most difficult questions, challenge us all to be better citizens and artists, and upset our assumptions at every turn. And send you home entertained, as well as thinking and talking for days!

Stay curious.

Chip Walton

Producing Artistic Director

Who is Curious?

Curious Theatre Company is Denver's home for feisty, unapologetically progressive, professional theatre that you won't see anywhere else in Colorado. Our mission is to

ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN IMPORTANT CONTEMPORARY ISSUES THROUGH PROVOCATIVE MODERN THEATRE

and we take that seriously. We have the guts to make theatre that can change the world.



Appropriate, 2017



We focus on plays with something to say, something to explore, something to make you curious. We focus on playwrights that have a unique point of view and thrilling storytelling, often introducing them to our region. Both onstage and off, we are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

75% OF OUR PLAYS IN THE LAST 10 YEARS WERE WRITTEN BY WOMEN, LGBTQ+, OR PEOPLE OF COLOR.

We are deeply invested partners, allies, and leaders within the social justice community. We use theatre to launch conversation around topics that are challenging, uncomfortable, or sensitive, both within our theatre and throughout our community.



WE ARE A <u>SOCIAL JUSTICE</u> ORGANIZATION WHOSE PLATFORM IS THEATRE.

From our inception more than two decades ago, we committed to paying artists a living wage, joining the ranks of Actors' Equity Association, the professional actors' union. Our professional artists have been honored with hundreds of awards for their work.

IN 20 YEARS, CURIOUS HAS BEEN NAMED BEST THEATRE SEASON BY WESTWORD 8 TIMES.

As we launch our third decade here in Denver, we recognize the unique position we hold in this community and the unique impact this community has had on Curious. We stand as Revolutionaries linking arms with each of you – whether this is your first time in this old church or if you've made the pilgrimage for more than twenty years.



Detroit '67, 2018

We are Curious. And we hope you are too.

Curious Theatre Company

presents

The Cake

by Bekah Brunstetter Directed by Chip Walton

CAST

Jada Suzanne Dixon*, Macy Emma Messenger, Della Michael Morgan*, Tim Alaina Beth Reel, Jen

SETTING

Now, North Carolina. A Bakery; A Home.

SPECIAL THANKS

Kelly Gibson DCPA Education Schneck Matthews

PRODUCTION TEAM

Costume Design, Meghan Anderson Doyle
Lighting Design, Richard Devin**
Sound Design, Jason Ducat
Props Design, Donna Kanne
Stage Manager, A. Phoebe Sacks*
Assistant Director, Tara Wolfe
Assistant Stage Manager, Elizabeth Porter
Scenic Concept, Chip Walton
Scenic Collaborators, Richard Devin and Nick Kargel
Scenic Construction, You Want What? Productions,
Michael Morgan, Evan Mues
Scenic Change Artist, Sarah Talaba
Board Operator, Nick Cozzo
Run Crew, Brandi Glass, Paulina S, Koester

The Cake is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.

THE CAKE was originally produced by The Echo Theater Company, Los Angeles, California Chris Fields, Artistic Director | Jesse Cannady, Producing Director

THE CAKE received a developmental reading at The Alley Theatre Gregory Boyd, Artistic Director/Dean R. Gladden, Managing Director

THE CAKE was developed at the Ojai Playwrights Conference Robert Egan, Artistic Director/Producer

Bold = Curious Artistic Company Member

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

**Member of United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 IATSE



Bios



Jada Suzanne Dixon (Macy), is a Curious Artistic Company member and a two-time recipient of the True West Award. Jada is also an associate artist with Local Lab, last seen as Gaby in *The Firestorm*. Curious credits include: Chelle in *Detroit '67*,

Shatique in White Guy on the Bus, Oba in Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet, Mama Mojo/Nia/Woman Who Reminds You in In The Red and Brown Water, and Cadence in House with No Walls. Other theatre credits: Metamorphoses (Nursemaid), The Color Purple (Darlene), A Christmas Carol (Mrs. Crachit), and Crumbs from the Table of Joy (Sister Lily Ann Green) Aurora Fox Arts Center; Black Odyssey (Aunt Tina/Scylla/Alsendra/Sabine/Circe/Carib'dis/Calypso/understudy), Fences (Rose/understudy), Gem of the Ocean (Black Mary/understudy) Denver Center Theatre Company; One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (Nurse Ratchet), The Edge Theatre Company; Two Trains Runnin' (Risa), Waitin' 2 End Hell (Diane), and Macbeth (Lady Macbeth), Shadow Theatre Company; Doubt (Mrs. Mueller), Off Square Theatre Company. www.jadasuzannedixon.com



Emma Messenger (Della), is excited to be making her Curious Theatre debut. Her Regional Theater credits include All My Sons and Sense & Sensibility at The Arvada Center Black Box Repertory; Mud Blue Sky, Misery, Exit Strategies, Who's

Afraid of Virginia Woolf:, I'll Eat You Last, and The Beauty Queen of Leenane at The Edge Theater; Agnes of God, Stella & Lou, and 'night, Mother at Vintage Theatre; The Lying Kind at THEATREWORKS; The Women and The Birds Sing Too Loud at Circus Theatricals (New American Theatre); and Twelfth Night, The Early Girl, Stage Blood, and So Long on Lonely Street at American Stage. Emma has won the CTG Henry Award for

outstanding acting three times and received seven nominations. She is a three-time True West Award-winner and has been honored multiple times by Westword including being awarded Best Season for an Actress. Voice over work includes *Jane Eyre, Pride & Prejudice* and *Wuthering Heights* as well as numerous video games and commercials. She will appear next season at The Arvada Center in *The Diary of Anne Frank, The Moors*, and *Sin Street Social Club*.



Michael Morgan (Tim) is a Curious Company member and Technical Coordinator. He was most recently seen at the Arvada Center as Virgil in *Bus Stop* and Tartuffe in *Tartuffe*, and as H in *The Arsonists* with Benchmark. Other credits include: Shag in

Equivocation (Colorado Shakespeare Festival); Edward in 10 Myths on the Proper Application of Beauty Products (Buntport Theatre); James in Time Stands Still and Joey in The Lieutenant of Inishmore (Curious Theatre); Bryan in The Few (Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company); and Midas in Metamorphoses and Remnar in Escanaba in da Moonlight (Aurora Fox). Michael was the recipient of the Denver Post's 2011 Ovation Award for Best Supporting Actor as Quango Twistleton in Curious' Homebody/Kabul.



Alaina Beth Reel (Jen), is a Denver-based actor, musician, teacher, writer, and director with a BA in Theatre Arts from the University of Iowa. She is making her Curious mainstage debut in *The Cake*. She has been in the last three Denver Stories

at Curious, as well as many Curious New Voices productions. This year, she acted in the Colorado New Play Festival (Bruce Graham's *Sanctions*, Curious Theatre Company), the Colorado New Play Summit at DCPA (David Jacobi's *The Couches*), and played the titular role in *Wolff's Orlando*, by Sarah Ruhl (Trapeze

Bios

Theatre/DCPA Master Class). Denver credits include Jo March in the Catamounts' You On the Moors Now, Heidi in [title of show] in collaboration with the Fox Theatre, Alexi Darling in Rent at Town Hall Arts Center, and many children's theatre tours and shows. Miners Alley Theatre (Golden, CO) credits include 39 Steps (Annabella/Margaret/Pamela) Cabaret (Fraulein Kost) Little Shop of Horrors (Ronette), 4000 Miles (Bec), and Rose Colored Glass (Peg). Alaina is a teacher at Miners Alley Children's Theatre, and has adapted and directed Little Red Riding Hood and Sleeping Beauty. Alaina is represented by Radical Artists Agency in Denver, CO.

Bekah Brunstetter (playwright) hails from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and currently lives in Los Angeles. Plays include The Cake (Ojai Playwrights Conference), Going to a Place Where You Already Are (South Coast Repertory), The Oregon Trail (Portland Center Stage Fall 2016, O'Neill Playwrights Conference; Flying V) Cutie and Bear (Roundabout commission) A Long and Happy life (Naked Angels Commission), Be A Good Little Widow (Ars Nova, Collaboraction, The Old Globe), Oohrah! (The Atlantic Theater, Steppenwolf Garage, the Finborough Theater / London), *Nothing is the End of the World (Except for* the End of the World) (Waterwell productions), House of Home (Williamstown Theater festival) and Miss Lilly Gets Boned (Ice Factory Festival.) She is an alumni of the CTG Writers Group, Primary Stages writers group, Ars Nova Play Group, The Playwright's Realm, and the Women's Project Lab. She is currently a member of the Echo Theater's Playwright's group. She has previously written for MTV (Underemployed; I Just Want My Pants Back) ABC Family's Switched at Birth, and Starz's series American Gods. She is currently a Co-Producer on NBC's show, This is Us. BA UNC Chapel Hill; MFA in Dramatic Writing from the New School for Drama.

Richard Devin (Lighting Designer) has designed lighting for many Curious shows including *Detroit '67, Appropriate*, the three-part *Elliot Plays, The Flick, All the Rage, Good People, Rancho Mirage, Maple and Vine, 9 Circles, Charles Ives Take Me Home, On an Average Day* (Denver Post Ovation Award), *A Number, Opus,*

Yankee Tavern, How I Learned to Drive, The Long Christmas Ride Home, and Aphrodisiac. He recently designed Disgraced, Fade, and *The Christians* for the Denver Center Theatre Company. Richard also worked with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival for 17 years as Producing Artistic Director, and 26 years as lighting designer. He has designed lighting for more than 250 productions at 35 of America's regional theatres, as well as designing Off-Broadway and in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Cairo. He was Managing Director and Lighting Designer with Massachusetts' Williamstown Theatre Festival for eight years and is past president of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology. Professor Devin taught for more than 40 years in the Theatre Departments of Temple University, The University of Washington and The University of Colorado. He has served as theatre consultant on numerous new and renovated theatres. Recently, he was honored to become a Fellow of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. Dick received his BA in Drama from the University of Northern Iowa and an MFA from the Yale University School of Drama. He is a Member of the United Scenic Artists of America.

Meghan Anderson Doyle (Costume Design) is pleased to be returning to Curious where previous designs include *The Brother Sister Plays, Good People, A Number, Up,* and *tempOdyssey.* Other select credits include *American Mariachi, The Wild Party, An Act of God, DragOn, The Glass Menagerie, Sweet & Lucky* (Denver Center for the Performing Arts); *You Can't Take It with You, Love's Labour's Lost, The Taming of the Shrew, The Comedy of Errors* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival); *The Electric Baby, The Drowning Girls,* and *Waiting For Godot* (Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities). Meghan holds a B.A. from the University of Denver and an M.F.A. in costume design from the University of Florida. DoyleCostumeDesign.com

Jason Ducat (Sound Design) is a company member at Curious and has designed many shows at Curious including *Your Best One, Detroit '67, Appropriate, The Luckiest People, Venus in Fur, Good People, The Brothers Size,* and *Maple and Vine.* Jason worked as a resident sound designer at Denver

Bios

Center Theatre Company where he designed Glengarry Glen Ross, When Tang Met Laika, The House of the Spirits, Lord of the Flies, Shadowlands, Reckless, Superior Donuts, Heartbreak House, and Othello. Other designs include Henry IV, The Tempest, I Hate Hamlet, Macbeth and Richard II (Colorado Shakespeare Festival); Marat/Sade, The Winter's Tale (Purdue University); Lab Coats on Clouds (Prague Quadrennial); Hedwig and the Angry Inch (Elemental Theatre Company); Sideways Stories from Wayside School (Hope Summer Repertory Theatre); and Tribulation and the Demolition Squad (Chicago Dance Crash). Jason received his MFA in sound design from Purdue University.

Donna Kanne (Properties Design) is making her Curious debut. Her other designs include *The Spitfire Grill* and *The Oldest Boy* for Vintage Theatre. Donna received her BFA in Theatre from the Metropolitan State University of Denver.

A. Phoebe Sacks (Stage Manager) has been the stage manager for *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide..., The Body of an American, Appropriate, Hand to God, Constellations, The Luckiest People, White Guy on the Bus,* and Sex with Strangers. She previously served as stage manager or assistant stage manager for more than 30 productions at Denver Center Theatre Company. Favorites include the world premieres of *The Legend of Georgia McBride* and *The Whale.* Phoebe has also stage managed for Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, New Denver Civic Theatre and Lizard Head Theatre Company. She holds a B.A. in Technical Theatre from the University of Northern Colorado and is a member of Actors' Equity Association, and is the Production Manager for Curious.

Chip Walton (Producing Artistic Director) co-founded Curious Theatre Company in 1997 and has served as Producing Artistic Director for the entire history of the organization. Named Denver's "2005 Theatre Person of the Year," he has directed 50 shows for Curious over the past 20 years and his work has garnered more than 100 local and national awards. In 2008, Curious was honored with the Mayor's Award for Excellence in the Arts. Chip has served as the President and Vice President of the National New Play Network, a network of professional, non-

profit theatres across the country dedicated to the development and production of new plays for the American theatre. Chip was also selected in the inaugural class of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Livingston Fellows, recognizing exceptional non-profit leaders with significant potential for contribution, change and leadership in Colorado's nonprofit sector; additionally, he served on the Board of Directors of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation as their first Community Trustee. Chip has participated in the Visiting Professionals program at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, as well as serving on the Leadership Group for Imagine 2020: Creating a Future for Denver's Culture. He has directed in the National New Play Network Showcase of New Plays, the Kennedy Center's MFA Playwriting Festival in Washington, D.C., and accepted a National Theatre Company Award in New York for Curious from the prestigious American Theatre Wing. Most recently, Chip was honored to serve as a 2017 Aspen Ideas Festival Speaker.

Actors' Equity Association ("AEA" or "Actors' Equity"), founded in 1913, represents more than 49,000 actors and stage managers in the United States. Equity seeks to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions, providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. AEA is a member of the AFL-CIO, and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. The Equity emblem is our mark of excellence. www.actorsequity.org

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How it happened...

The real life story of David Mullins, Charlie Craig, Masterpiece Cakeshop, and the Supreme Court



David & Charlie meet at a party in Denver; Charlie was the emcee and David was in the band



David & Charlie get engaged!



The engaged couple and Charlie's mom go cake shopping at Masterpiece Cakeshop and are denied service

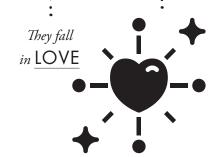




SEPTEMBER 2012

David & Charlie get married

with a cake from another bakery.





DECEMBER 2013

Judge Robert Spencer decides that Masterpiece had violated Colorado law that prohibits businesses refusing service on the basis of sexual orientation; Masterpiece appealed



MAY 2014

Colorado Civil Rights
Commission decides
that Masterpiece
violated the Colorado
Anti-Discrimination Act

Masterpiece was ordered to change its policies and offer comprehensive staff training



Same-sex marriage is recognized in Colorado



JUNE 2018

Supreme Court reversed the 2015 decision, siding with Masterpiece in a narrowly defined ruling that the Colorado Civil Rights Commission used bias in its decision.



Colorado Court of Appeals rules that the bakery's refusal was discriminatory based on sexual orientation and that religion can't be used in refusal

2016 Supreme Court of Colorado refuses to hear the case

2017 Supreme Court of the United States puts it on the docket



For more details on this case, the final ruling, and what it all means, visit our Go Deeper section online. CuriousTheatre.org/event/the-cake

Bekah Brunstetter: Can she have her Cake and Eat it too?

Bekah Brunstetter's career is moving faster than the timer on *The Great British Baking Show.* With its humanity and topicality, *The Cake* is being produced across the country. In addition to a growing resume of plays, she's also an indemand television writer for shows such as *American Gods* and is currently writing and producing for NBC's *This Is Us.*

Raised in a conservative, Baptist church-going home in Winston-Salem, NC, Bekah Brunstetter is an unlikely playwright. Her three brothers, homemaker mother, and lawyer-turned-(Republican)-politician father did not have an affinity for the arts. She originally got involved in theatre as a way to make new friends in her public high school after attending a private Christian middle school.

Theatre exposed her to different people and new viewpoints. In an article for the Contemporary American Theatre Festival, she says, "Since high school, I've had many gay friends, and my support of them and their relationships has always been a point of contention [in my family]."

When studying theatre at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, she began writing plays. In part, to explore her feelings about her upbringing and her expanding sense of social justice. "My parents didn't see anything that I wrote for the first two or three years, because I was really writing about stuff that I couldn't quite share with them yet," she told American Theatre writer Suzy Evans.

In many interviews, Brunstetter talks about her ability to see both sides of contentious issues. She fondly remembers the conservative home-grown values and the loving people of her youth, while sharing a more liberal point of view with her politically progressive friends in NYC and LA. "I hear the other point of view echoing in my head," she told the LA Times, "I see myself getting split, ripped in half. On both sides, they're forgetting the human being that's at the center of this."

And that's the place her writing springs from...the human being. She's a keen observer of people and in *The Cake* she explores her ability to see the best in people despite their shortcomings.

"A lot of plays are more on the scathing side when it comes to organized religion," Bekah says in the Times article. "It was really important to me to start with a character who has conservative values and make her the hero — start the play with her and, hopefully, have an audience fall in love with her. And then, after we get to know her, have her do something that, quote-unquote, 'we' — the liberal theater audience — don't agree with. And then we have to wrestle with how we feel about her, just like she's wrestling with her belief system."

"My hope with the play is to show how its possible for two people to kind of take little steps toward understanding each others points of view because they have to see each other as human beings."





To learn more about Bekah, her fascinating duality, and to read excerpts from her blog (which she updates religiously every day), go to our Go Deeper section on the Curious website: **CuriousTheatre.org/event/the-cake**.

Discussion Questions & Resources



Some of these questions include spoilers. Read early at your own risk.

- 1. When Macy and Della first meet, Macy is critical of Della and diminishes her line of work off-hand while Della tries kindness; this sets the play up for a flip of the narrative that played out during the Masterpiece Cake Supreme Court Case. How did this interaction affect the way you watched the play?
- 2. Macy makes the statement that "ambivalence is just as evil as violence" in reference to being politically engaged; she later tells Jen that it is her responsibility to open Della's mind. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- 3. A constant theme for Della is that you must follow the instructions a recipe for cake and the Bible for life yet in the end, she questions whether the way the Bible has been interpreted is correct. What do you think Della truly wants the "answer" to be?
- 4. What do you believe Della's daydreams of the baking show represent in her life?
- 5. Throughout the play, Jen struggles with reconciling her roots with her current self. Have you ever felt this internal tug-of-war? Did you find a balance or choose one over the other? How did that affect your relationships?

GET INVOLVED DENVER RESOURCES

Denver has amazing resources and organizations that are centered around social justice and equality, especially for LGBTQ+ people. Here are a few we have connected with around *The Cake*. Please check out their work!

One Colorado

Leading advocacy organization for Colorado's LGBTQ+ people and their families. www.one-colorado.org

The Center

Support and resources for the LGBTQ+ community in Denver. www.glbtcolorado.org

ACLU of Colorado

This organization works diligently to provide civil rights for all people and were heavily involved in Charlie and Dave's case. www.aclu-co.org

Colorado LGBT Bar Association

Voluntary professional association that provides LGBTQ+ presence to Colorado's legal community. www.coloradolgbtbar.org

The Human Rights Campaign, Colorado

The Human Rights Campaign fights for LGBTQ+ rights on various platforms. www.hrc.org/local-issues/colorado

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